

# On the Relationship between the Great Founding Spirit of the Party and the Spirit of the Red Boat

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**Abstract:** *The spirit of Party-building is the root of the Communist's spiritual pedigree. Chinese Communists have always attached importance to the condensed and inherited spirit of Party-building. The great founding spirit of the Party and the spirit of the Red Boat are also expressions of the Party-building spirit, so it is of great significance to clarify the relationship between the two, discover their positioning, and give play to their respective values to continue to move towards the new goal. The great Party-building spirit, which underpins higher political tasks, is higher than the spirit of the Red Boat in both scope and political status. It is the development and deepening of the Red Boat spirit and the source of the spiritual pedigree of Communists. Meanwhile, the spirit of the Red Boat has a unique value that cannot be ignored, as it marks the place where the Communist Party was founded; it thus passes down the red gene and stores the red memory of Communists.*

**Keywords:** *the great founding spirit of the Party; the spirit of the Red Boat; the spiritual pedigree*

General Secretary Xi Jinping pointed out in his July 1st speech, "One hundred years ago, the pioneers of the Communist Party of China founded [the Party] and formed [its] great founding spirit, which is to uphold the truth, adhere to the ideal, fulfill the original aspiration, assume the mission, fear no sacrifice, fight bravely, be loyal to the Party and live up to the people. This is the source of the spirit of the Communist Party of China."<sup>[1]</sup> However, before that, the General Secretary also put forward the spirit of the Red Boat in 2005, which is likewise used as the expression of Party-building spirit. What is the difference between the two? This paper attempts to explore the relationship between the great spirit of Party-building and the spirit of the Red Boat, and puts forward some opinions for academic discussion.

## 1. The relationship between the great founding spirit of the Party and the spirit of the Red Boat

The great Party-building spirit and the spirit of the Red Boat are both expressions of the Party-building spirit. It is of great significance to clarify the relationship between the two, find their respective positioning and give full play to their respective values for the continued march towards the new goal. The author believes that the great Party-building spirit, proposed at the intersection of two hundred years of history, bears a higher political mission than the Red Boat spirit in terms of both coverage and political status—it further develops and deepens the rich connotation of the Party-building spirit by continuing the core of the Red Boat spirit.

### 1.1 In order of time: The great Party-building spirit is the development and deepening of the Red Boat spirit

As a product of history, spirit will continue to develop and deepen with the advancement of time. In 2005, General Secretary Xi Jinping put forward the Red Boat spirit for the first time, and summarized its profound connotation as "the pioneering spirit of breaking new ground and daring to be the first, the striving spirit of firm ideals and indomitable strength, and the dedicated spirit of building the Party for the public and being loyal to the people".<sup>[2]</sup> Since the spirit of the Red Boat was put forward, the Party-building spirit as a theoretical subject has been widely discussed in academic circles, and research on the subject has been pushed further and further.

In recent years, academic research on the spirit of the Red Boat mainly focuses on the following two viewpoints. On the one hand, some scholars believe that the spirit of the Red Boat is a profound summary

of the Party-building spirit, and equate the two with each other, believing that the spirit of the Red Boat is the same as the Party-building spirit. For example, Lv Tingqin and Zhao Jinfei believe that the spirit formed by the Communist Party of China in the practice of Party-building "can also be called the Red Boat spirit."<sup>[3]</sup> On the other hand, some scholars believe that while the spirit of the Red Boat is an important part of the Party-building spirit, the two cannot be completely equated, and the relationship between the Party-building spirit and the Red Boat spirit is integral and partial. For example, Qi Weiping believes that it is not precise to apply "the connotation of the 'Red Boat spirit' to the elaboration of the connotation of the Party-building spirit," and that doing so will "blur the boundary of the two concepts and [cause them to] become identical."<sup>[4]</sup> The above will continue to push the study of the Party-building spirit to its depths, but also indicates the importance and urgency of further summarizing the Party-building spirit to encourage Communists to forge ahead at the key point of the Party's centennial.

Standing at the historical height of the century-old founding of the Chinese Communist Party, the General Secretary put forward the great spirit of building the Party—a concept that more perfectly condensed the spirit of building the Party. The latter is itself a deepening of the spirit of the Red Boat, but also a major innovation of the Party's revolutionary essence.

Xi Jinping pointed out: "The era is the mother of thought, practice is the source of theory. There is no end to practical development, and no end to our understanding of truth and theoretical innovation."<sup>[5]</sup> The great Party-building spirit was condensed on the basis of the spirit of the Red Boat and presented under the new historical position that socialism with Chinese characteristics has entered a new era. Therefore, the great Party-building spirit injected new characteristics of The Times into the continuation of the Red Boat spirit's core, further enriching the spiritual pedigree of Communists.

### ***1.2 A scope both large and small: The spirit of the Red Boat is an important part of the great Party spirit***

A spirit not only has its place in time, but also has its scope. The establishment of a political party has to go through several processes, such as identifying doctrine, organizing party members, and many meetings and discussions. Although our Party was brought into existence on the Red Boat on the South Lake of Jiaying, the practice of founding the Party of Chinese Communists should be counted from the time when Marxism was introduced into China, before and after the May 4th Movement, through the whole historical period when the Party was created.

During this period, the Red Building of Peking University, Shikumen in Shanghai and South Lake in Jiaying were the three important geographical settings of the CPC's creation, which witnessed the complete process of founding early Chinese Communism. First of all, the pioneers of the Chinese Communist movement devoted their blood to spreading Marxism in the Red Building of Peking University. As General Secretary Xi Jinping pointed out, "The main founders of the Communist Party of China and some famous early activists began to read Marxist works and spread Marxism while working or studying in Peking University, and promoted the establishment of the Communist Party of China."<sup>[6]</sup> It can be said that the Red Building of Peking University was an important front for Communists to firmly believe in and spread the doctrine. With the spread of Marxism and the deepening of theoretical research, the early Communists gradually realized that "the study of Marxism is not the most important work now, and it is necessary to organize a Chinese Communist Party immediately."<sup>[7]</sup> In August 1920, the Communist pioneers represented by Chen Duxiu set up the Shanghai Communist Group in the editorial office of the New Youth, located in the Old Yuyang district of Shanghai. From then on, the national Communist movement had a real leadership center.

In July 1921, early Chinese Communists gathered in Shanghai's Shikumen building to hold a major conference. Although the conference was interrupted due to the impact of external factors, most of the Communist Party of China's agenda was completed there, so it can be said that Shikumen witnessed the initial establishment of the Communist Party of China. In order to discuss such important matters as the party constitution, a "large number" of delegates traveled by train in batches, headed to Jiaying. It was there, on a small boat on the South Lake, that the Chinese Communists adopted the party's platform and formally established its name: the Communist Party of China.

It is clear that the great Party-building spirit includes all of the spiritual achievements during the founding and development of the Party, such as those which occurred at the Red Building of Peking University, Shikumen in Shanghai and the Red Boat on Jiaying South Lake. Meanwhile, the spirit of the Red Boat is an important component and spiritual core of the great Party-building spirit.

### ***1.3 Political status: The great Party spirit is higher than the Red Boat spirit***

General Secretary Xi Jinping put forward the great Party-building spirit based on a history of one hundred years, emphasizing that the spiritual pedigree of Chinese Communists is built in the process of carrying this spirit forward and clearly defining the great-Party building spirit as the "spiritual source of the Communist Party of China." This provides an important theoretical basis from which we can correctly understand the relationship between the great Party-building spirit and the spirit of the Red Boat.

The great spirit of Party-building is the spiritual matrix that generates and develops the Communist revolutionary spirit. All the revolutionary spirits cultivated by the Party in the process of revolution, construction and reform are products of the combination of the great spirit of Party-building and the theme of The Times. Therefore, all the revolutionary spirits formed in practice, including the spirit of the Red Boat, reflect the profound connotations of the great spirit of Party-building. At the same time, General Secretary Xi Jinping first put forward the great Party-building spirit and named it "great." This echoes the Chinese dream of realizing the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation and reflects the higher political requirements placed by our Party on the great Party-building spirit. Therefore, compared with the spirit of the Red Boat, the great Party-building spirit, which is present through the whole process of Party creation, rejuvenation and strengthening, has a higher political duty.

In short, compared with the Red Boat spirit, the great Party-building spirit engulfs a larger span of time and space, a wider coverage in theory, a stronger leading role in practice, and a higher political positioning; undertakes a higher political duty; and contains the key to the Communist Party of China's origin and its future path.

## **2. Exploring the contemporary value of the spirit of the Red Boat**

Like the great Party-building spirit, the spirit of the Red Boat has an important value that cannot be ignored. Under the new historical conditions, we must further "carry forward the Red Boat spirit, walk in the forefront of The Times," explore the contemporary value of the Red Boat spirit, and provide important spiritual nourishment to promote the cause of socialist construction.

### ***2.1 Indicates the location of the founding of the Communist Party***

In the discourse system of Chinese Communists, the naming logic of a revolutionary spirit can be roughly divided into the following three categories. The first type is named after the specific places or figurative things that breed the revolutionary spirit, such as the Jinggangshan spirit and Yan 'an spirit. Such symbolic geographical names or figurative objects can commemorate the specific places where the spirit originates and have more intuitive spiritual characteristics. The second type is named after advanced organizations or individuals, such as the spirit of Zhang Side, the spirit of the women's volleyball team, etc. This kind of naming after advanced organizations or individuals has the characteristic of comparison. Spiritual values are more directly displayed when comparing the great deeds of advanced collectives and individuals, giving full play to the exemplary role of spiritual subjects. The third type is named after major historical events or achievements, such as the spirit of reform and opening up and the spirit of fighting against COVID-19. This kind of generalized summary highlights the important characteristics of comprehensiveness and summation.

Taking the above three categories as reference, we can clearly see that the great Party-building spirit belongs to the third category, generalized expression, while the spirit of the Red Boat belongs to the first category of specific expression. Compared with the great founding spirit of the Party, the spirit of the Red Boat clearly reflects the historical birthplace of the Communist Party of China—the Red Boat on the South Lake in Jiaxing. Solemnly declared the founding practice of the Communist Party of China by the CPC National Congress, it clearly marks the political character of Chinese Communists—the spirit of initiative. As a figurative expression, the spirit of the Red Boat fully reflects the practice of the Party in a specific historical field, and plays an outstanding role in the embodiment of the great spirit of Party-building. Therefore, the Red Boat on the South Lake is an important symbol of Chinese Communists' revolutionary spirit, as well as carrying forward the determination to "create the world and dare to be the first." The spirit of the Red Boat is the spiritual pillar by which Chinese Communists will sail from the South Lake to the bright shore of the Chinese nation's great rejuvenation.

## 2.2 Passes on the red gene of Communists

The red gene is the fine character and bright background formed by Chinese Communists during their long struggle. It is the soul and foundation of Chinese Communists, embodies the nature and purpose of the Party, and represents the powerful force whereby we realize the glorious mission of the Party. Under the new historical conditions, Chinese Communists need to further absorb the red gene and ceaseless spiritual blood. As the red gene's source, the spirit of the Red Boat is an important embodiment of the original aspiration and mission of the Communists and a vital spiritual support for the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation.

As the birthplace of the Red Boat spirit, Jiaying South Lake has rich red cultural resources, such as the South Lake Revolutionary Memorial Hall, South Lake Red Boat, Yanyu Tower, Martyrs' Loyal Bones Hero Park and so on. Red cultural resources, including the Nanhu Red Boat, are material carriers by which we inherit red genes and ceaseless spiritual blood. They are a strong witness to the founding of the Communist Party of China and a vivid portrayal of Chinese Communists' commitment to their original aspiration and mission. Therefore, compared with the great Party-building spirit, the spirit of the Red Boat, as a kind of consciousness, has more specific material support. It plays an irreplaceable and valuable role in passing on the red gene, promoting education in Party spirit, carrying forward the national spirit and deepening the learning of patriotism.

## 2.3 Stores Communists' red memories

Over the past 100 years, the Communist Party of China has made remarkable achievements while striving for the happiness of its people and the rejuvenation of the nation. The ancestors of the Communist Party of China left a touching story, which has become the red memory of the Chinese Communists and inspired generations of Communists to continue their long struggle.

As an important core of the Communist Party spirit, the spirit of the Red Boat is unified with the carrying forward of red memory. Chinese Communists, in the practice of founding the Party, left us revolutionary relics and other precious red historical resources as important cornerstones for us to store our red memory. Under the new historical conditions, we should further expand upon the unique role of red resources, such as the Nanhu Revolutionary Memorial Hall and the Nanhu Red Boat, in carrying out education on the red theme. In this way, the red memory of the Party's foundation can be stored by carrying forward and inheriting the spirit of the Red Boat, and be full of vitality for the development and protection of red resources. The spirit of the Red Boat, therefore, has become an important force to gather the will of the Party, consolidate its ruling foundation, and construct the identity of party members.

## 3. Summary

Marxist philosophy tells us that development is a process of spiraling upward and wave-like progress. A spirit starts to negate itself from the day it comes into being. This negation is not an absolute abandonment, but a process of sublation. The great founding spirit of the Party was condensed in a time node at the centenary of the Party's birth and fully embodies the theoretical characteristics of the Red Boat spirit. Therefore, its scope and political status are higher than those of the Red Boat spirit. Nevertheless, each spirit is the essence of its time and plays an important guiding role in practice and development, and the spirit of the Red Boat is no exception. Compared with the great Party-building spirit, the spirit of the Red Boat commemorates the place where the Communist Party was founded and its party-building practices; it passes on the red gene of the Communist Party and stores its red memory. The little red boat is where the original aspiration of the Communist Party of China lies, and it is an important vehicle for the continued inheritance of the red gene and the continued spiritual blood of the new era. At a new historical starting point, we should give full play to the guiding role of the great founding spirit of the Party, fully explore the unique value of the Red Boat spirit, and make inexhaustible contributions to the realization of the second centenary goal.

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