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Article



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THE COMMUNICATION BETWEEN REGIONS ALONG THE GREAT WALL OF INNER MONGOLIA AND SHANXI IN MING AND QING DYNASTIES OF CHINA

Abstract: *The Great Wall is a magnificent project in ancient China, also the achievement of sweat and wisdom of Chinese ancestors. As a solid fortification, successive dynasties had built the Great Wall to protect their territories. The Ming and Qing Great Wall, which is the largest and best preserved, is the representative of the Great Wall of China, mainly distributed in today's shanxi (is called Jin for short), Inner Mongolia (is called Meng for short) and other northern regions. Based on the Meng-Jin region, this article focuses on the relevant concepts and geographical location of the Great Wall during the Ming and Qing dynasties, and summarizes the effects of the Great Wall from the aspects of military, economic and cultural communication, so as to fill some academic gaps.*

Key words: Ming Qing Great Wall; Shanxi and Inner Mongolia; Military, Economic and Cultural Communication.

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Introduction

The Great Wall is not only a representative building of Chinese nation, but also a symbol of China long history and profound culture. As a stronghold area combining farming and nomadic civilization, Ming Qing Great Wall in Meng-Jin region effectively promoted the interaction of a series of living styles, customs, culture and art, also accelerated the development of military facilities, economic trade and other fields. However, current historical circle regards the research of the Great Wall as a whole, and there are relatively few studies on the Great Wall of Meng-Jin region in Ming Qing dynasties. Taking the regional history as the starting point, this article systematically introduces the evolution of the Great Wall of Meng-Jin region in Ming Qing dynasties, and illustrates its unique significance.

The concept of the Great Wall in the Ming Qing Dynasties

The Great Wall is a grand defense project in

ancient China, it shows ancestors' extraordinary creativity, superb scientific level and lasting perseverance. It is a symbol of great unity of Chinese nation. "The Great Wall is a continuous high wall made of soil, stones and bricks. It is a military project used in ancient borders to resist enemies." The emergence of the Great Wall was closely related to the change of the society at that time. Its connotation and extension had also been enriched in historical evolution.

During the Eastern Zhou Dynasty, wars among principalities became the theme of the times, and many countries built the Great Wall to defense. In that period, relatively backward northern nomads often went south to plunder, which seriously damaged the economy of Central Plains. Consequently, adjacent countries such as Yan and Zhao built the Great Wall to defend.

In 221 B.C., Qin Shihuang established the first unified autocratic centralized feudal dynasty in Chinese history. In order to remove the threat of

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northern borders, hesent General Meng Tian to lead the army attacked Xiongnu, occupied Hetao Area and began to build the Great Wall massively. On one hand, the Great Wall was built in new territories. On the other hand ,they“repaired the original north Great Wall of Yan, Zhaoand reinforced part of the walls built during the reign of King Zhao of Qin.”[2]In this foundation, the Great Wall, as a fortress, was built from Lintao in the west to Liaodongin the east.

When emperor Han Wudi was in power, the Great Wall continued to be fortified. “The northern border against Xiongnu was advanced to the southern foot of Yin Mountain in present Inner Mongolia.” [3] Later, the rulers of the Bei Qi, Bei Zhou, Sui, Liao and other dynasties all successively built the Great Wall in different degrees.

The Ming Dynasty learned the painful lesson from Song Dynasty lost half of territories and built the Great Wall on the northern border to defend against attacks. In more than two hundred years, the Great Wall had been rebuilt several times, forming the new Great Wall — west from Jiayuguan in Gansu, passed through Ningxia, Inner Mongolia, Shanxi and other places, to the Yalu River in Liaoning, “the total length was 8851.8 kilometers.” [4]

During the reign of emperor Shunzhi and Kangxi in Qing Dynasty, a section of the Great Wall, called Wicker Border, was built in Liaoning and Jilin provinces. However, in Qing Dynasty, most of them continued to use Ming Great Wall, so this article studies the Great Wall of Ming, Qing dynasties as a whole.

The middle and western sections of Ming Great Wall mainly passed through Shanxi and Inner Mongolia. Shanxi province, located in north China and adjacent to Inner Mongolia, is a blend area of farming and nomadic culture, has a strategic position. So many dynasties built the Great Wall here, especially Ming Dynasty.

The Ming Great Wall in Shanxi was more than 800 kilometers long, including three parts: “the outer Great Wall’s starting point was Huai’an, Hebei, ended in Pianguan, Shanxi, about 380 kilometers long; the inner Great Wall started from Pingshan, Hebei, turned to Pianguan through Hunyuan and Shenchi; the third was the section from Pianguan to Hequ in the west, about 70 kilometers along the Yellow River.” [5] The construction of these walls created a balanced environment for the development of feudal security and economy, and also made people’s lives more stable.

Inner Mongolia, with its vast territory spanning northeast and northwest China, has unique geographical advantages. It has always been an important area for nomads to compete with farming dynasties in the Central Plains. Hence it has become a key place for the distribution of the Great Wall. The Ming Great Wall, with a total length of more than

700 kilometers, mainly distributed in five places, namely Alxa, Wuhai, Ordos, Hohhot and Ulanqab.

The Effects of the Great Wall in Ming Qing Dynasties

The Great Wall of Ming Qing Dynasties is one of the great military defense projects in the world. It is not a simple isolated wall, but organically connects castles with military towns to form a complete system. The Great Wall is the guarantee of peace in the agricultural society during Ming Qing dynasties, so that Chinese culture can be inherited today. Specifically speaking, its effects are mainly reflected in the following aspects:

1. The aspect of military

During the Ming and Qing dynasties, protecting national security and the stability of people’s lives were still the main tasks of the Great Wall. In particular, the Ming Dynasty, established on the Yuan Dynasty, which overthrew the feudal lords of Mongolia, “paid special attention to the construction of northern Great Wall. In more than 270 years, Ming Dynasty never stopped building the Great Wall and managing its defense system.” [6]

The Great Wall was called BianQiang in Ming Dynasty, which was the boundary

wall. The Ming Dynasty set up nine defense areas along the Great Wall, called Nine Sides or Nine Towns: Liaodong Town, Ji Town, Xuanfu Town, Datong Town, Shanxi Town, Yansui Town, Ningxia Town, Guyuan Town and Gansu Town. The chief officers were responsible for commanding troops and other affairs. Nine Sides had made indelible contributions to defending the capital and territories since Ming Dynasty.

The Ming Dynasty ingeniously combined army farming with lifelong enlistment system, so that daily production and combat formed a virtuous cycle. “As a support point, Guancheng was not only primary command center, but also a place for troops to store grain and weapons; it was not only a camp for military training, but also a solid fortress.” [7] It formed an integrated defense system on the basis of Guancheng, which played an important part in promoting social stability.

In addition to defense, the Great Wall in Ming Qing dynasties also embodied brilliant achievements of ancient Chinese architectural technology. Ming Great Wall was not only grand in scale, but also had different styles. These buildings integrated natural beauty with artificial beauty well, which enabled people to appreciate the scenic spots as well as showed ancestors’ extraordinary charm vividly.

2. The aspect of economy

Throughout the history of northern frontiers’ development in ancient China, most of them were closely related to frontier defense construction with the Great Wall as the core. During the Ming Dynasty, the emperors’ measures of constructing the Great

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Wall, which effectively promoted the economic exploitation of relevant areas, as well as the irrigation of farmland and road networks. Especially in the early Ming Dynasty, roads directly to the capital were built, which not only facilitated the transportation of grain and soldiers, but also greatly stimulated the cultural and economic communication in the northern border regions.

One of the economic measures that matched the military system of Ming Dynasty was Tea-Horse Trade, which mainly involved trading tea for horses or horses for tea in areas along the Great Wall, including today's Shanxi province and Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region. Generally, trade was conducted at the designated place on the borders. In order to ensure the smooth progress of Tea-Horse Trade, Ming governments successively established the Tea Division, Tea and Horse Department and other organizations to manage trade.

A number of measures such as Tea-Horse Trade brought lots of benefits to the defense and cultivation of the Great Wall at Meng-Jin area in the Ming Dynasty, the horses needed in this area were also met in time. These horses, besides military needs, played a momentous role in the progress of the agricultural economy. "In the late Ming Dynasty, along the Great Wall, the rise of folk exchanges, equal and mutually beneficial national trade brought about the rapid development of economy in the Great Wall areas, which provided preconditions for the integration of agriculture and animal husbandry economy in the Ming Dynasty, such as Hexi region." [8]

During the Qing Dynasty, because of the rapid population growth and frequent natural disasters, people from Shanxi and other provinces flooded into Tumet, Ordos, Chahar and other places in Inner Mongolia through passages along the Great Wall, which brought unprecedented changes in this region. This historical event was called Going West, it had gone beyond simple population migration. More importantly, the presence of a large number of businessmen in Mongolia had deepened the integration and communication among ethnic groups, also promoted national unity, and opened a window to the north, which had a far-reaching impact.

3. The aspect of culture

During Ming Qing dynasties, owing to construction of the Great Wall, cultural communication between the Han and Mongolian people became more and more frequent, which were reflected in following aspects:

In terms of diet, the northern Shanxi was rich in naked oats, millet, sorghum and other coarse grains, as well as potatoes, cabbage and other vegetables. Local people were fond of eating [wheaten food](#). The Mongolian people living on the prairie love all kinds of meat and dairy products. After Shanxi people moved into Inner Mongolia, the eating habits of both

sides were influenced and attracted by each other. Sliced noodles, stewed pickled vegetables, hand-held meat is still the daily diet of these two regions nowadays.

Apart from lifestyle, language had also changed. The western dialect areas of Inner Mongolia were deeply influenced by Shanxi and Shaanxi dialects. Similarly, words with overlapping morphemes were often used in northern Shanxi dialects. The word-formation of these dialects was very similar to the central and western Inner Mongolia dialects, which showed that they had a great relationship of origin. "These dialects and western Inner Mongolia dialects were similar in morphology, which indicated that they were closely related." [9]

In terms of literature and art, there were plenty of historical monographs introducing the strategic position of the Great Wall due to the continuous conflicts in the northern border areas during the Ming Qing dynasties. Fortunately, these books had been handed down today, such as *Jingshi Qiyao* by Zhang Sui of Ming Dynasty, and *The Strategy of Defeating Enemies in Nine Borders* compiled by Li Zaiting. Meanwhile, many poems and prose describing the Great Wall were also widely spread, such as Qi Jiguang's poem *Shanhaiguan Tower* and so on.

In the Qing Dynasty, the emigration wave of Going West in Shanxi, Shaanxi and Inner Mongolia greatly promoted the cultural communication. "The refugees who escaped from the famine through the western entrance spread to Inner Mongolia, and gradually formed a new kind of art—ErRenTai, by absorbing many elements of Mongolian songs." [10]

ErRenTai, was a local opera integrating folk songs, instrumental music and dance, vividly reflected the daily life and emotional appeal of labouring people, was the representative of artistic integration of Mongolian and Han cultures. Today, it is still popular in these areas.

Conclusion.

The Great Wall of the Ming and Qing dynasties is a miracle created by labouring people in ancient China, is a monument recording the long history of Chinese nation, is a concentrated embodiment of excellent military thoughts of ancestors, it is also the link of national communication. It has accelerated the communication and development of military, economic and cultural aspects among different ethnic groups and make great contributions to the formation and evolution of Chinese nation. What's more, as a precious heritage in human history, "the Great Wall plays an irreplaceable role for the world to understand China and for China moves towards the world." [11] The Great Wall belongs to both China and the world. Today, we should protect the Great Wall, protect our history.

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