

# ***“Neglected” Geographical Names: A Study of the Names of the City Gates of Shaanxi Prefectures in the Ming and Qing Dynasties***

**Wei Xinbao**

*School of History, Nanjing University, Nanjing, China*  
*w\_xinbao@163.com*

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**Abstract:** This paper studies the names of the city gates of Shaanxi Province in the Ming and Qing dynasties. During the nearly six hundred years of the Ming and Qing dynasties, 347 names of city gates in 88 cities in Shaanxi Province have been preserved, and the names of these city gates show distinctive features of stable inheritance and rich connotations. Numerous city gates have names that were mostly chosen “for good intentions”, “according to the landscape/environment”, and “according to the concept of Fengshui”; 183 of them were named for good intentions, making up more than half of the total. The naming of gates in the three regions of Guanzhong, Northern Shaanxi, and Southern Shaanxi clearly differed according to the effects of various historical processes and natural settings between regions. The naming of the gates adheres to the tenets of respect for the region’s history, the wishes of the populace and the natural surroundings, and the matching of the name to the location. The name of a city gate has significant cultural and social significance and is used in modern academic study and urban planning as a type of geographical name.

## **1. Introduction**

The city gate is a significant node in the city’s spatial layout, and since it served as a vital conduit for communication between the inside and outside of the city wall, it left a lasting historical impression on the Chinese people. At the same time, the base sites of city gates preserved in some cities and a large number of ancient place names surrounding city gates left in the cities still profoundly affect the daily life of modern people. Academic research on city walls has been increasing, but there has been little thematic research on city gates, an important component of city walls, and this limited research has focused on aspects such as the management system of city gates. Similarly, most of the numerous toponymic studies have focused on verifying the origins of specific names through language, culture, etc.<sup>[1][2]</sup>, and have concentrated on political districts, village

geographic landscapes<sup>[3][4]</sup>, and so on. However, research on the topic of city gate names, which are an important part of urban geographical names, is relatively weak, and the limited research focuses on the changes of specific city gate names<sup>[5][6]</sup>, with less research on the history, humanity, geography, culture and other aspects behind the names. Accordingly, this paper takes the prefectures and counties of Shaanxi Province in the Qing dynasty as the research area and focuses on the names of city gates as the research object, striving to explore the naming methods, principles, roles, and differences between different regions in the late traditional era, and so on, as far as possible according to our means.

Geographical names generally include common names and proper names; for the names of city gates, their common names are gates and the names of the gates mentioned in this paper are “proper names”. In terms of the study area, the political area of Shaanxi changed frequently before and after the Ming and Qing dynasties, so in this paper we take the *Jiaqing Yitong Zhi* as the deadline for the 25th year of the Jiaqing period (1820AD) as the criterion for Shaanxi prefectures and counties, including Xi’an, Fengxiang, Tongzhou, Hanzhong, Yan’an, Yulin, Xing’an, Qianzhou, Binzhou, Fuzhou, Suide, and Shangzhou, involving a total of 337 names of the gates of 88 city walls.

## 2. Overview of the Names of the Gates

The image of the “ramparts of metals and a moat of hot water” is inherent to the traditional Chinese city, and some researchers have emphasized that “the city wall has always been so important to the Chinese concept of the city that the traditional terms of city and city wall are one and the same”. Similarly, as the layout of Chinese cities and the structure of city walls remained stable over time during the traditional period, a “walled culture” was formed with special characteristics and has long regulated the urban way of life<sup>[7]</sup>. As an important part of the city wall, the name of the city gate is one of the typical ways of reflecting the culture of the city wall.

The origin of the Chinese city wall is very early, in the middle and late primitive society; that is, in the Yangshao, Longshan culture period, as sufficient archaeological excavations have confirmed. The city gate is a communication channel between the inside and outside of the city wall, and the early city gates were mostly differentiated by their orientation; exclusive names of city gates were relatively late. Restricted by the limitations of historical materials, exclusive names of the city gates in the pre-Qin period are difficult to examine; the literature in the Qin–Han period began to focus on the emergence of clear, exclusive names. After that, in the history of successive generations of records of the capital, the important cities recorded the names of their gates more often; the names of city gates in ordinary, local cities are rare in the documentary records. In the Ming and Qing dynasties, on the one hand, the general construction of city walls set off several waves of city building; on the other hand, due to the importance of the construction of the square records, the local records of the “Jianzhi Zhi” for the construction of the city wall are quite detailed, and therefore a large number of the names of the city gates have been retained.

As a kind of place name, the names of city gates are extremely elaborate, with complex connotations behind them, and as important symbols reflecting the geographic environment and humanistic development of the city in the historical period, they deserve our attention. Through the collation of historical materials, there have been 347 names of city gates found for 88 cities in Shaanxi Province during the Ming and Qing Dynasties. By analyzing the names of the city gates, we can find that they have distinctive features of inheritance stability and richness of connotation.

From the inheritance stability point of view, of Shaanxi's 88 city walls, 64 have kept their original name since the city was constructed, even throughout periods of much work in the city, demonstrating continued inheritance. A typical example is Xi'an Prefecture: in the early Ming dynasty, when the city was expanded, a pattern of four gates was determined. The east gate was named Changle, the west gate was named An'ding, the south gate was named Yongning, and the north gate was named Anyuan. Throughout the Ming and Qing dynasties, for nearly six hundred years, and despite Xi'an City undergoing more than 20 periods of repair<sup>[8](p16-17)</sup>, the city gate names have not changed and are still used to date.

The naming of the gate involves nature, history, society, culture, and other aspects, and different factors work together to form the rich connotation of the characteristics of the gate. The natural name of the gate can describe the city wall and the surrounding geographic environment, and the character of the city can be perceived in the long history of the place; the traditional concept of Fengshui can also have a subtle influence on the name of the gate. The name of the city gate can also show the ancients' desire for a better life; Xixiang, for example, is a city on the east and north sides of the Sixi River, west and south of the Sanli River. The city was surrounded by rivers, and therefore faced the threat of flooding for a long time, as recorded in the literature: "the Wanli sixteen years in the fall, the flood rushed to the Nanguan, destroying the residence of hundreds of people", and "the (Wanli) forty-first year in the fall, the flood flooding of the Dongguan"<sup>[9](Volume 4)</sup>. Because of the frequent flooding, the Kangxi fifty-five years after the end of the city wall repair project, the Xixiang county head magistrate, Wang Mu, named the north gate "Anlan", hoping that the river would no longer flood and affect the lives of the people.

### 3. Nomenclature of the Gates

By analyzing the names of 347 gates of 88 city walls in Shaanxi Province and combining them with theories and methods of related toponymy, the authors believe that there are seven naming methods, namely, "named according to the concept of Fengshui", "named according to the landscape/environment", "named for good intentions", "named for history", "named for road", "named for season", and "named for legend". Among them, "named for good intentions" is the most frequent, at 183, accounting for more than half of the total, followed by "named according to the concept of Fengshui" with 77, and then "named according to the landscape/environment", with 59 cases, and "named for history" with 16. The remaining three types, "named for road", "named for season", and "named for legend" were fewer in number. Detailed types of city gate names of different regional prefectures and counties in Shaanxi Province can be found in Table 1. Compared with the origins of the place names of prefectures in Shaanxi Province recorded in the "Shaanxi Zhi Jiyao" by Wang Zhiyi, the place names of prefectures in Shaanxi Province are mainly named "for water", "for mountain", "for direction", etc. This shows that the naming process of city gates is more subjective.

Table 1: Naming conventions by region in Shaanxi Province.

Nomenclature District	Guanzhong	Northern Shaanxi	Southern Shaanxi
Named for good intentions	97	40	46
Named according to the concept	41	16	20

of Fengshui			
Named according to the landscape/environment	34	6	19
Named for history	16		
Named for legend	6		
Named for season	2	1	1
Named for road	1		1

Specifically, the predominance of the “named for good intentions” category of city gate names in Shaanxi Province among the general distribution is mainly influenced by two reasons: on the one hand, in the traditional period, the farming economy was dominant and people looked forward to the wind and rain, which are conducive to agricultural production; on the other hand, the Ming and Qing dynasties took place in the “Little Ice Age”, so the climate conditions were not stable and disasters occurred frequently. The names of city gates therefore commonly used “Xifeng”, “Xiqing”, “Xiexue”, “Fumin” <sup>[10](Volume 2)</sup> and other names to show that the people valued the agricultural harvest and a desire for a better life. In addition, during the Ming and Qing dynasties Shaanxi Province was extremely important as a national wartime front line because of its “remote control Long Shu, near the Union Yu Jin, four plug the river and mountain” geographic location, allowing it to communicate with north-west, south-west, and north China as an important channel. Its strategic position was extremely important, so the city gate was named using “An”, “Ning”, “Ping” and other words; for example, the north gate of Xi’an City was named “Anyuan”, the south gate was named “Yongning”, and the west gate was named “An’ding”, demonstrating a hope to realize social stability through peace.

“Named according to the concept of Fengshui” is an evolution of the traditional “naming by location”. The traditional “naming by location” was first proposed in the Western Han dynasty, and gradually matured in the Tang and Song dynasties, generally adhering to the principle of naming places by the formula “north of the water is Yang, south of the mountain is Yang”<sup>[11](p18)</sup>.

Because in the historical period, China's cities were basically dominated by the city of governance, especially in the Ming Dynasty, the city planning in the institutional requirements of the return to the traditional ritual system<sup>[12](p385)</sup>, and then inherited by the Qing Dynasty, so the naming of the name of the city gates was deeply influenced by this planning concept. In this context, in the naming process, the orientation of the city gates and Fengshui may be fused in conjunction with, and in the light of, celestial phenomena, and different proprietary names are included for different orientations, resulting in a naming scheme based on the concept of Fengshui. For example, many cities name their east gate “Yingxu” meaning the sun rises here, or their north gate “Gongchen” meaning the defense of the North Star. This type of gate naming is very common, not only in Shaanxi Province but even nationwide, and does not vary according to the administrative rank and size of the city itself.

In addition to the two naming styles of city gates in Shaanxi Province mentioned above, “named for good intentions” and “named according to the concept of Fengshui”, the “named according to the landscape/environment” type is also prevalent. There have been numerous names for gates that represent the geographic environment surrounding them because different cities are situated in various geographic environments, which means that the naming process of gates is inevitably influenced by the neighborhood’s geographic environment. For example, the east gate of Wugong County is named “Guanlan” because the city’s east gate is outside the “Wu River” <sup>[13](Volume1)</sup>, which

flows through and gives its name. There are numerous other examples, as well, including the east gate of Chaoyi wall, which was given the name “Linhe”<sup>[14] (Volume1)</sup> because it is ten miles from the Yellow River; the south gate of Huazhou wall, which was named “Guanshan”<sup>[15] (Volume1)</sup> because it is fourteen miles south of Mount Hua; and the east gate of Wubu wall, which is called “Guanlan”<sup>[16] (Volume2)</sup> because it is adjacent to the Yellow River.

The three methods mentioned above make up a sizable share of the numerous ways city gates are named in Shaanxi Province. The four other naming conventions are “named for history”, “named for road”, “named for season”, and “named for legend”. Specifically, for “named for history”, Lintong city wall’s south gate was named “Huaqing”<sup>[17] (Volume54)</sup> because the Tang dynasty’s Huaqing Palace was in Lintong County, outside the south gate; for “named for road”, in Baocheng City, the west gate of the city wall was named “Shudao”<sup>[18] (Volume6)</sup> because Baocheng City is an important transportation hub to communicate with Shaanxi Sichuan.

At present, some researchers believe that “in ancient China, the name of ordinary city gates was simpler than the name of the capital city gates, so the gates of local cities were named in the simplest and easy-to-remember way”<sup>[19] (p55)</sup>; it is therefore concluded that there were differences in the naming of gates in cities at different administrative levels. However, by analyzing the names of all the city gates in Shaanxi Province, it can be seen that the naming of the city gates had no relationship to the administrative level of the city, and the naming of the city gates was closely related to the humanistic history and geographic environment happening around the gates. Therefore, through systematic analysis, it can be found that there are distinct regional differences in the names of city gates.

Shaanxi Province can be divided into three regions, Guanzhong, Northern Shaanxi, and Southern Shaanxi, according to different geographic environments and historical and human conditions, and the cities in these three regions reflect different characteristics in the naming of city gates. The terrain of Guanzhong is mainly plain, with moderate rainfall, fertile soil, and the Wei River flowing through it, making it very suitable for agricultural activities. Therefore, against this background, Guanzhong was one of the important farming regions in ancient China, and dynasties such as the Zhou, Qin, Han, and Tang established their capitals here. Influenced by the agrarian mode of production and the long historical background, the city gates of the Guanzhong region were mainly “named for good intentions” or “named for history”. This background was also reflected in the fact that when choosing specific words for the gates that were “named for good intentions”, many of them used words such as “Feng”, “Fu”, and so on, which are associated with the vision of an abundant agricultural harvest.

In contrast, historically the Northern Shaanxi region has long been at the junction of the conflict between farming civilization and nomadic civilization, and even in the Ming dynasty, the city of Yulin in Northern Shaanxi was the front line of the confrontation between the Ming dynasty and Mongolia. Therefore, in this context, the city gates in Northern Shaanxi Province adopted the “named for good intentions” approach, with more frequent use of “Zhen”, “Wei”, “An”, “Ning”, “Ping” and other words. This is most obvious in the cities along the Great Wall; for example, the city of Yulin has gate names such as Zhenwu, Weining, Xuanwei, and Zhenyuan. At that time, people used to inject characters representing goodwill into the names of city gates to express a desire for social peace and stability. This reflects the people’s desire for a safe and stable life in Northern Shaanxi, as well as the history of the development of the border area, which is different from that of the Guanzhong area.

Southern Shaanxi is located within the Qinba mountainous area. Historically, in addition to Hanzhong, Mianxian, Chenggu, Yangxian, Xing'an and other areas located in the valley of the Han River developed earlier, and during the Ming and Qing dynasties the rest of the region became fully developed due to a large number of immigrants moving through the region. In regions that developed earlier, the naming of the city gates focused on the "named according to the landscape/environment" method, such as in Hanzhong City, where the east gate was named "Chaoyang" and the south gate was named "Wangjiang"<sup>[20]</sup> (Volume8). However, in areas developed at a later period, the gates were named with a focus on "named for good intentions", such as in Zhen'an, where the names of the three gates were Yongqing, Yong'an, and Yongfeng<sup>[21]</sup>(Volume2). The reason for this difference is not difficult to understand. During the Ming and Qing dynasties, a large number of immigrants came into the undeveloped areas of Southern Shaanxi to satisfy the basic needs of survival, so the local people named the city gates to give a good vision for the city gates, and also to provide a spiritual impetus for the productive lives of the residents. The differences in the naming of city gates within the Southern Shaanxi region can reflect the differences in the development process within the Southern Shaanxi region.

In general, the naming of city gates in the city walls of Shaanxi Province was carried out in a variety of ways, especially when compared with administrative place names, in which the subjective will of human beings was stronger. Moreover, the geographical environment and historical and humanistic backgrounds faced by different regions of Shaanxi are different, resulting in the naming methods adopted in the naming process of city gates in different regions being emphasized, and allowing the naming methods to show distinct regional differences.

#### 4. Principles of Naming Gates

The origins of geographical names are very ancient, often dating back to barbaric times when primitive human beings created languages, and in the course of history a large number of geographical names with wide coverage have been produced. People of different times have explored how to rationalize the naming of geographical places to facilitate the communication and application of geographical names in production and life. Therefore, a series of naming principles have gradually evolved in the process of naming city gates, as follows.

Firstly, the name of the city gate upholds the principle of respecting local history. For the people of any region, the development of the region's historical process always affects the local people's spiritual support and the pursuit of values, especially for a region with a bright and notable history. Fengxiang Prefecture, in the western part of the Guanzhong region, is a typical example of the above principle. It was here that the ancestors of the Zhou dynasty in ancient China gradually began to prosper and eventually established a unified dynasty, so Fengxiang prefecture and the counties under its jurisdiction were influenced by this historical background. For example, in Qishan County, which is under the jurisdiction of Fengxiang Prefecture, the west gate of the city was named "Huaibin"<sup>[22]</sup>(Volume2), which commemorates the Bin regions where the Zhou people used to live, because the ancestor of the Zhou people, Gugong Danfu, who was trying to avoid the intrusion of the nomadic tribes, led his people from the Bin regions to cross the Qi River, the Ju River, and the Liang Mountain and finally arrived at the Zhouyuan in Qishan Mountain<sup>[23]</sup>(pp113-114); the name of the city gate was a remembrance of the past, so this gate was named after the Zhou dynasty. Another example is that of Linyou County, where the north gate of the city wall is named "Binfeng" because

Linyou is connected to the Bin regions in the north, which were inhabited by Gongliu, the ancestor of the Zhou people, a long time ago, and Gongliu led his people to engage in agriculture in the area during his residence, forming a social culture that favored cultivation and pragmatism. This historical background has deeply influenced the local people of Linyou, so the local people named the north gate “Binfeng”.

Compared to the western part of Guanzhong, centered on Fengxiang Prefecture, which memorializes the Zhou dynasty, the central-eastern part of Guanzhong, centered on Xi'an Prefecture, mainly memorializes the Han and Tang dynasties. For example, the north gate of the Xianyang city wall was once named “Wuling”, the main reason being that after going out of the north gate of Xianyang city, you can climb up to the Xianyang Plateau, where there are the tombs of five emperors of the Western Han dynasty, namely, the Changling Tomb of Liu Bang, the Anling Tomb of Liu Ying, the Yangling Tomb of Liu Qi, the Maoling Tomb of Liu Che, and the Pingling Tomb of Liu Fuling. The five mausoleums gradually evolved into a kind of cultural imagery for remembering history, and appeared in Tang poems with enriched connotations, such as in the poems of Li Bai, Bai Juyi, etc., and eventually the “Wuling” became a kind of cultural imagery for remembering the grand days of Han and Tang. The local people of Xianyang named the northern gate near the Xianyang Plateau “Wuling” in this historical context. Another example is the south gate of the Lintong city wall, which was once named “Huaqing” because the historical Huaqing Palace was located outside the south gate of Lintong. Huaqing Palace can be traced back to the Qin dynasty, when Emperor Qin Shihuang established a royal bath in this place, which was later expanded by Emperor Liu Che of the Han dynasty. In the Tang dynasty, Emperor Li Longji expanded the Qing Palace and brought his favorite concubine, Yang Yuhuan, to visit the hot springs frequently. It was the frequent visits of Emperor Li Longji that made the name “Huaqing” frequently recorded in history, and it became a cultural image of the Tang dynasty, which was the glorious period of Lintong's urban development history. Therefore, during the Ming and Qing dynasties, the local people named the south gate of Lintong “Huaqing” to remember this period of history. It is crucial to fully consider and respect the local historical background when naming the city gate because the name of the gate is generally a significant cultural landscape for locals to enhance their local identity and for outsiders to understand the regional history of the place.

Secondly, the naming of gates should take into account the principle that the beautiful vision of the local people is compatible with the natural environment of the region. Shaanxi Province spans three different physical and geographic regions, so some of the cities face relatively complex natural environments. Even though the city sites were very carefully chosen at the beginning of their construction, some of them are still unavoidably threatened by many natural disasters. Therefore, when naming the gates of these cities, the local people would add a lot of beautiful visual language to the connotations of the gates in the hope of reducing the threat of these natural disasters to the city. For most of the cities in Shaanxi Province, the main natural disaster they face is the threat of flooding. The destruction of the natural environment in these areas and the decrease in the ability to contain water, which caused great potential danger to the safety of the city and the life of the people in the climatic context of the monsoon climate and the concentration of precipitation. As a result of these two factors, some cities in Shaanxi Province face the threat of flooding whenever there is heavy rainfall. For example, the east gate of the city of Fuzhou was named “Zhenluo” by the local people, because the east side of Fuzhou city was adjacent to the North Luo River and when it rained heavily in the summer every year, the rainfall inside the city and the water



from the mountains outside the city flowed into the Luoshui, which led to the frequent flooding of the North Luo River, and Fuzhou city, which was adjacent to the North Luo River, was often faced with the damage of flooding<sup>[24](Volume8)</sup>. Because of this, the local officials and people of Fuzhou repaired the riverbank and city wall many times and named the east city gate Zhenluo in the hope that the flow of North Luo River could be smoothed out and no more flooding would occur.

In addition to the general plague of flooding, some cities in the Southern Shaanxi region also face a very serious threat of tiger infestation. In the Ming and Qing dynasties, due to the increasing number of immigrants in Southern Shaanxi, human production activities continued to expand into the mountains and old forests, as a result of large-scale reclamation of mountain slopes and forests, resulting in the local ecological balance being broken and tigers gradually losing their original survival patterns and habitats, so that the opportunities for human–tiger encounters increased and conflicts between the two sides intensified, resulting in the frequent occurrence of tiger infestation. In terms of geographical distribution, the threat posed by tigers to people during the Ming dynasty was limited to certain regions of Southern Shaanxi, whereas during the Qing dynasty the risk extended to almost the entire area of Southern Shaanxi<sup>[25](p211)</sup>. Due to the threat of tigers, the construction of city walls became important for the people of some cities in Southern Shaanxi Province, and the naming of the city gates after the construction of the walls also included good wishes for calming down the tiger. For example, the west gate of Xixiang County was named “Shehu” by the local people. Because of the dense forests in Xixiang and the large number of tigers, these tigers often came into the city in the evening and harmed the people and livestock, and the people at that time lamented that no place faced the threat of tigers as seriously as Xixiang<sup>[26](Volume5)</sup>. In response to this situation, Xixiang, under the auspices of Governor Wang Mu, rebuilt the city wall, named the west gate “Shehu”, and recruited dozens of tiger hunters to kill the tigers, which eventually calmed down the tiger infestation in Xixiang.

Thirdly, the name of the city entrance should always correspond to the reality. For example, when the city gate has been “named according to the landscape/environment” and the relevant names of the mountains and rivers are involved, there must be corresponding geographical entities. The west gate of the Weinan city wall was named “Jinqiu” because of the Qiu River outside the west gate, and the north gate was called “Daiwei”<sup>[27](Volume5)</sup>, because the Wei River flowed ten miles north of the county. This naming principle also applies to gates “named according to the concept of Fengshui”. For example, the east gate is often named “Chaoyang”, “Risheng”, “Yingxu”, etc., mainly because the east gate faces the sun and can see the sun rising every day. Another example is that the west is considered to be “Jin” in the Bagua’s five elements, so many cities that name their west gates frequently use the word “Jin”. For instance, the west gate of Zhouzhi County was named “CuiJin”, the west gate of Yongshou County was named “Jinpan”, and the west gate of Huayin County was named “Jin’e”. In general, this naming principle introduces mandates for the locals in gate naming, strictly prohibiting that city gate names involve mountain ranges when there are no surrounding mountains or include rivers when there is no river flowing nearby. Otherwise, the name is difficult for the locals to accept and also causes confusion for outsiders regarding their concept of the city.

## 5. The Role of City Gate Names

As a type of place name, the name of the city gate contains rich cultural elements and social



significance, from which you can sense the Chinese people's pursuit of their values, their fear and veneration of nature, their belief in the harmony of man and nature, and their desire to live in peace and happiness in the expectation of good.

Specifically, first of all, the name of the city gate has a distinct social function. Shaanxi in the Ming and Qing dynasties was a "remote control Long Shu, near the Union Yu Jin" important channel, and for outsiders the name of the city gate was an important tool to understand the geography, history, and culture of the place. For example, the south gate of Chaoyi County was named "Wangyue" because, on the one hand, when the weather is clear, people can look at Mount Hua from afar and imagine the grand view, and on the other hand, it alludes to an important transportation route; that is, from Chaoyi out of the south gate, you can go through Yaoqian, Shizi, Dachengzi, Diaoqiao, and other places to arrive at the northern side of Mount Hua in Huayin County, and then you can go east through the Tongguan to Henan Province, and then you can go west to Xi'an, Xianyang, which is connected to the three provinces of Shanxi, Shaanxi, and Henan. Therefore, the name of Wangyue is extremely practical and meaningful for traders and visitors. For locals, the names of the gates help them to understand the natural features and historical development of their hometowns, which helps to strengthen their identification with their hometowns and consolidate their desire to stay. The name "Haozhi" has been present in the history of Qianzhou for more than 2000 years, such as when Emperor Qin Shihuang visited Liangshan Palace in the 35th year of his reign, or when Zhou Bo conquered the city to pacify Guanzhong during the war between the Chu and Han Dynasties. There are many other examples of "Haozhi", too numerous to list here.

Similarly, the different names of the gates reflect the different historical processes between the regions. This is evident in the different regions of Shaanxi Province, for example when comparing the Guanzhong region with the Northern Shaanxi region. The Guanzhong region was once the seat of the former capitals of the Zhou, Qin, Han, and Tang dynasties, and therefore the names of the city gates are often used to recall the prosperity of the past by using allusions to the olden times. On the other hand, the Northern Shaanxi region has a long history of farming civilization and nomadic civilization in the border zone, and has often faced conflict between the two civilizations, so the name of the local city gates there often show the force of the central dynasty of the place name, or look forward to peace on the border, which also reflects the north of the region being different from the Guanzhong region in the historical process of development. As for the Southern Shaanxi region, the focus on naming gates can also reflect different human development processes between the Hanshui valley and the surrounding mountains.

Finally, the name of the city gate has a distinct political color and edification. Academics generally believe that "the city of the Ming and Qing dynasties, generally have planning"<sup>[28](pp.259-262)</sup>, especially in the Ming dynasty, when people overthrew the Mongols and planned to restore the original Confucian ideas of etiquette and hierarchical concepts, which were then completely inherited during the Qing dynasty. Moreover, during the Ming and Qing dynasties, local officials and gentry were keen to dominate the naming and renaming processes of city gates in the process of repairing the city walls in various places, to achieve the role of instilling ideology and reinforcing political authority<sup>[29](p133)</sup>. Therefore, the name of the city gate is also an important reflection of the political color and ritual regulations in urban planning.

In total, 11 of the 88 cities in Shaanxi Province have city gates named "Yingen", which means to welcome great imperial favor. In terms of orientation, these gates are located in the east or north;

the capital of the Ming and Qing dynasties was Beijing, which was located in the northeast of Shaanxi Province, and these cities named their gates “Yin’gen” precisely to achieve the purpose of bathing in the imperial grace and defending the capital. In addition, there are a large number of gates named “Chongli”, “Shangyi”, “Tiren”, “Chenghua”, and other names; “Chongli” means that the people should respect the etiquette of the teachings of the official. The naming of the gates and renaming of the mainstream values in the daily life of the masses was used to achieve the people’s indoctrination.

Of course, as a kind of place name, a large number of preserved names of city gates have very important value for contemporary academic research and city construction. For contemporary academic research, the names of city gates cover a large amount of historical information, which is very beneficial in academic research. For example, the names of city gates may prove aspects of history, many of the names of the city gates themselves are witnesses to history, both for human society and the natural environment, and implied information can be found in the names of gates to provide supporting evidence for traditional historical materials. For example, from the Eastern Han dynasty to the Wei and Jin dynasties, a large number of Qiang ethnic groups from the Hehuang region moved into the Guanzhong region, and through long-term settlement and reproduction the Qiang population reached more than one million people<sup>[30](p1533)</sup>. In the area of the Fengyi, a large number of Qiang ethnic groups settled and the famous Qiang ethnic group surname “Wang’s Fengyi” was developed. The fact that the west gate of Chaoyi County was named “Zhenqiang”, and that there are a large number of place names containing “Qiang” in Chaoyi and Dali Counties, such as Qiangbai Town, Eastern Qiangbai, Qiangbai Tun, and so on, makes it possible to combine the traditional historical records with those of the Qiang ethnic groups in Guanzhong to provide corroborating evidence for the study of their gathering, distribution, migration, and so on.

For contemporary urban construction, and especially for the preservation and utilization of the ancient city and the continuation of the regional cultural lineage nowadays, the preserved names of city gates are of great value. For example, during the construction of the city subway the name of the city gate will often be used as a station name. Beijing subway has Chongwen Gate, Xuanwu Gate, and other stations; Xi'an Subway has Yongning Gate, Anyuan Gate, and other stations; and Nanjing Subway has Hanzhong Gate, Jiqing Gate, Wuding Gate, Xuanwu Gate, and other stations. Another example of municipal planning involving the name of the city gate is in road naming; during urban planning and redesigning, Xianyang City used the Nanyang and Beiping gates, built in Nanyang Street, Beiping Street, Nanyang District, Nanyang New Village, etc., to retain the city's historical memory.

## 6. Conclusions

For 88 cities in Shaanxi, 347 city gate names have been retained since the Ming and Qing dynasties thanks to the combined influence of the universal construction of city walls and the widespread compilation of local chronicles. The investigation reveals that the names of city gates as a type of toponym have two specific characteristics: stability of inheritance and richness of connotation. By analyzing these names and combining them with relevant toponymic theories and methods, seven ways of naming city gates can be summarized, namely, “named according to the concept of Fengshui”, “named according to the landscape/environment”, “named for good intentions”, “named for history”, “named for road”, “named for season”, and “named for legend”.

An analysis of the naming of city gates in Shaanxi Province can show that different regions of the city face different natural geographic environments and historical development processes, resulting in distinct regional differences in the naming of city gates, which is different from the traditional academic understanding of the naming of city gates.

In the process of naming city gates all over Shaanxi Province, these gates strictly follow the three principles of naming city gates, which are respecting the local historical background, taking into account the humanistic will to be compatible with the natural environment of the region, and matching the name with the reality. The names of city gates are closely related to people's daily life, and behind them are rich connotations of geography, history, culture, and folklore, from which we can view the beautiful mountains and rivers of China, feel the ancient people's affection for their homeland, trace the long historical memory, and understand the wisdom of the Chinese contained in the names, which is an important way to unite the people's hearts, enhance patriotic feelings, and stimulate the identity of the nation. In addition, the names of city gates are of great value to contemporary academic research and urban construction.

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