

# Study on plane composition changes of Manchu residence in *Shengli Village* of *Liaoning Province*, China

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## Abstract

*Shengli* village is a typical Manchu-colony village that with development of economic and improvement of living standards, the traditional Manchu residence is not suitable for the villagers' needs of modern life. The object of this study is that basing on visiting the villagers, surveying and mapping houses, summarized that the changes of residential plane layout can be divided into three stages in nearly thirty years, and combined with the typical examples to analyze the characteristics of each stage and the cause of the changes.

**Keywords:** *Shengli* village; traditional residence; plane composition; *Kang*

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## 1 Introduction

Manchu has a long history, it is one of the major minority nationalities in China and once established *Qing* Dynasty that governed China nearly three hundred years and has a great influence on China's politics, history and culture. Manchu traditional residence is also a unique one in Chinese residence.

Since China's reform and opening-up in 1979 and with the rapid development of rural economy, the traditional Manchu residences are gradually disappeared. In the process of the fieldworks it was found that most houses have been rebuilt. The object of this study is the influence on Manchu residence in *Shengli* Village by the shock of economy and culture in recent decades, and focuses on the plane composition changes and summarizes the rules of Manchu residence changes.

## 2 Investigation overview

### 2.1 Choice of investigation sites

More than half of the Manchu people live in *Liaoning* Province, author visited many villages in *Xinbin* and *Xiuyan* Manchu Autonomous County in

September, 2013, and finally chose *Shengli* village as the object and went there again to have a detailed investigation in March, 2014.

(1)*Xinbin* is birthplace of *Qing* Dynasty which was established by Manchu and *Qing* ancestors' Mausoleum-*Yongling* is here.

(2)The development of *Shengli* village is representative: First, it relies on *Lianhua* Mountain to keep out cold northwest monsoon and faces *Wulong* River to get water which fully reflects the principle of site selection. Second, because the development is relatively slow, some characteristics of Manchu traditional residence are retained.

### 2.2 Research content and methods

(1) *Shengli* village's history, ethnic composition, agriculture and stock raising production are understood through the help of village committee.

(2) The houses' plans are drawn according to the practice measurement.

(3) The family situation and the use of rooms are learned through the means of visit.

## 3 *Shengli* Village Overview

### 3.1 Nature information

*Shengli* village is located in *Shangjiahe* town *Xinbin* Manchu Autonomous County of *Liaoning* Province(Fig.1). The north is *Lianhua* Mountain, and the south is *Wulong* River.

*Xinbin* county is temperate continental monsoon

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climate and the characteristic is that it has four distinct seasons, spring is dry, summer is hot and rainy, autumn is sunny but heavy frost, winter is cold and long. The average temperature is 20.7° in summer, -9.5° in winter, the January temperature is the lowest and the average temperature is -21.4°

The population of *Shengli* village is 1970 people in 2013 and about 95% are Manchu people. Its agriculture is mainly based on maize production, and there have a pig farm and a large-scale chicken farms in village, many villagers are working in these farms(Fig.2).

### 3.2 Historical and Cultural Background

In *Ming* Dynasty *Shengli* village was the main battlegrounds which *Nurhachu* united all *Jurchen* tribes. In 1644, civilian and army mostly followed



Location	41°N 125°E
weather	Temperate continental climate
Average temperature in July	28.1°
Average temperature in January	-21.4°
production	Agriculture , animal husbandry

Fig.1 This is *Shengli* Village Location Map

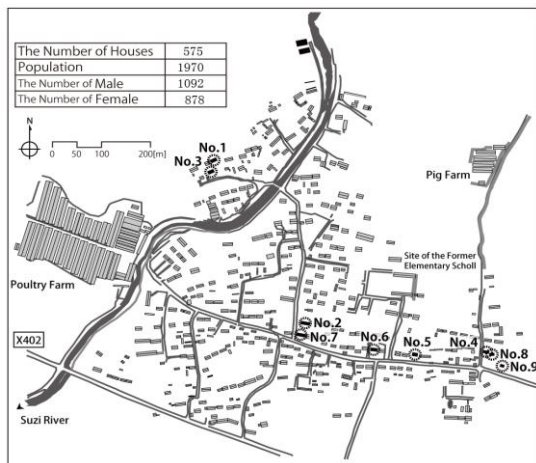


Fig.2 This is *Shengli* Village Map

the emperor to Beijing and there was no people here until 1686 the Royal offshoot *Atta* was ordered to guard Yongling mausoleum. *Atta* left six sons here to procreate who are the Zhao's ancestors.

## 4 Comparison of Manchu traditional residence in Northeast with Han traditional residence

### 4.1 Characteristics of Manchu traditional residence in the Northeast

The Northeast Manchu residence developed from cave-living and deeply affected by Han nationality. Because their natural environment and national culture are different from the Han, they developed special residential forms. There is a saying in Manchu residence that 'the west is top position, near water is fortunate and near mountain is rich'. The courtyard is composed by Principal room and wing rooms, the wall is low and the door is at the central axis. Solon pole locates in the southeast corner of courtyard. *Cross-sea* chimney is independent and most are on the gable sides.

The principle building generally has three to five rooms and it faces south, the room with door is kitchen, the west and east room are bedrooms (Fig.3), the elders live in the West room that is opposite to the Han.

The main feature of bedroom is a heating brick bed that surrounds the three sides of room, it's known as "*Wanzi kang*". Because *Wosaku* (shrine) is enshrined on the west side wall so the west *kang* is the place of putting offerings. On the *wall* there has a board with pasted paper which is called "soft partition" is set in order to avoid living inconvenience. The south windows are large and the north windows are small.

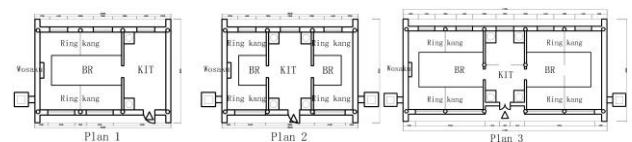


Fig.3 Manchu Traditional Residence Plan

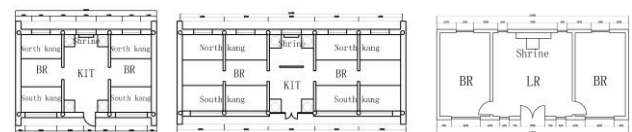


Fig.4 Northeast *Han* Plan Fig.5 South *Han* Plan

## 4.2 Characteristics of Han traditional residence in the Northeast

The Han that in the Northeast mostly migrated from the Central Plains in different historical periods, therefore the Han's residence not only had the Central Plains residential characteristics but also formed new features. Because the bitter cold winter is half a year, the space of *Kang* becomes the core space. In the Central Plains, the central room is regarded as core space and be changed into kitchen in the Northeast, but the custom that people hang genealogy on north wall was kept(Fig.4,5).

<p>NO.1 160 years</p> <p>W:D=2.1:1 w:d=0.8:1</p>	<p>NO.4 30 years</p> <p>W:D=2.1:1 w:d=0.6:1</p>	<p>NO.7 5 years</p> <p>W:D=1.3:1 w:d1=0.6:1 w:d2=1:1</p>
<p>NO.2 80 years</p> <p>W:D=2.3:1 w:d=0.9:1</p>	<p>NO.5 15 years</p> <p>W:D=1.4:1 w:d1=0.7:1 w:d2=1.2:1</p>	<p>NO.8 4 years</p> <p>W:D=2.0:1 w:d1=0.9:1 w:d2=1.5:1</p>
<p>NO.3 20 years</p> <p>W:D=2.0:1 w:d=0.6:1</p>	<p>NO.6 14 years</p> <p>W:D=1.4:1 w:d1=0.8:1 w:d2=1.7:1</p>	<p>NO.9 1 year</p> <p>W:D=1.9:1 w:d=0.6:1</p>

## 5 Analyze the changes of residential plane

### 5.1 Process of the residential plane changes

According to the time, the process of the residence can be divided into three stages(Table1):

Stage 1, the houses that were built before 1980s, the characteristic of Manchu traditional residence is obvious. The plane layout basically continued the traditional form, only have two functional space that bedroom and kitchen. The bedroom area covers more than two-thirds, and the *Wanzi kang* is the center of people's daily life, such as No.1 and No.2 in table 1.

Stage 2, 1980-2000, although *kang* is still the center of people's daily life in this period, there is a weakening trend and the plane layout changes much as the No.5 and No.6 in table 1.(1)The northern half of the original kitchen still as kitchen, and the southern half space as bedroom(it is a transitional

phase to living room). It not only reduces the waste of south space but also hides kitchen to north side and increases the house's cleanliness. (2)The north side of the bedrooms are separated as children's room, that emphasizes the privacy of family members. (3) The *Wanzi kang* has been rarely used, more fuel efficient *Diao kang* comes into common use which is only set on the north side of bedroom and sofa or chairs are set at the south window. Thus it can be seen that the people's daily activities on the *kang* began to reduce.

Stage 3, there are several changes of newly-built house since 2000, such as No.7, No.8 and No.9 in table 1:(1)The function is more perfect, the outdoors' toilet is canceled and bathroom is added on the north side of bedroom. It makes the daily life more convenient and greatly improves the house's cleanliness. (2)The bedroom area is decreased, the living room is added and larger. (3)The new technology brings new heating methods. *Dikang* can maximally heats room and Dire can conserve energy and clean. (4)The cleanliness is emphasized, because indoor is generally laid floor or floor tile so before entering the room people should change shoes at the entrance. In the past people took off shoes only when going on the *kang*. (5)The new house usually built on a 1.5-2 meters platform and below is storehouse. It can increase the usable area, and also can prevent the house damaging from flood.

### 5.2 The reason of plane changes

(1) Family structure has changed, the nuclear family becomes the main body. With increasing of smaller families and the migrant workers, a lot of old houses' space are unused, meanwhile the demand for *kang* is also greatly reduced.

(2) The new technology brings various heating methods. In recent years, except the widespread use of "*Diao Kang*", the "*Di Kang*" (houseful Kang) and the pollution-free and energy-saving "*Di Re*"(low temperature and hot water radiant floor heating) are also appeared. The house has become more clean and tidy.

(3) The impact of urban culture has prompted the *Shengli* villager's values to change. They pursue the advanced urban living concept and the way of life.

(4)The contradictions between the single function of traditional houses and the residents' new life

needs have become increasingly prominent, so a large number of traditional houses were demolished or rebuilt.

(5) National support policies for rural areas and the improvement of economic conditions in the *Shengli* village have promoted the urgent need of villagers for improving housing conditions.

### 5.3 Instance analysis

#### (1) Zhao house

*Zonghua zhao*(1937-) lives with his wife and brother, his ancestor was *Ata* who was ordered to guard *Yongling* mausoleum. This house was built about in 1844, and it first was *Siheyuan* that had five-room's principal house, five-room's gate house, east and west wing rooms. Because the family members increases so the house was divided into four in 1914 and shortly after separation the gate house was demolished. *Zonghua Zhao's* grandfather was shared the east room of the principal house and east wing room that is the house today. During the Land reform the West room of the Principal house was assigned to *Li* family and the west wing room was assigned to *Guo* family by government. These two family both rebuilt new houses 20 years ago.

Today, the Zhao house exists three-room's principal house and three-room's wing house. It retains the Manchu traditional residential plane form and was identified a county-level relic protection unit in 2001(Fig.6).

#### (2) Liang house

*Baocai Liang* is 90 years old and his wife is 87 years old, he has three sons and a daughter. The eldest son is 60 years old and works in the mine. The second son is 58 years old and works in the community. The third son works in the chicken farm. The daughter lives in the *Nanzhamu* town and usually comes back to visit parents. The old married couple live with the third son.

This house has five rooms and built nearly eighty years, because of disrepair, there is no people living in and it is used as a storehouse now. Liu grandmother introduced that, this house was the supply and marketing cooperative of *Shengli* village. During the land reform it was given to *Baocai Liang*. *Wanzi Kang* are used in the east-room and the west-room which connected to four large stoves in kitchen. This house is the typical layout form of Manchu traditional residence(Fig.7).

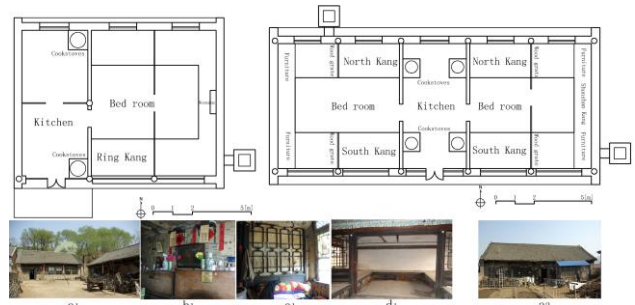


Fig.6 Zhao House

Fig.7 Liang House

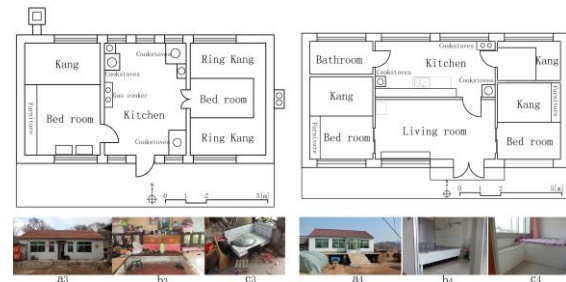


Fig.8 Guo House

Fig.9 Fu House



Fig.10 Liang House

Fig.11 Guan House

#### (3) Guo house

The owner *Long Guo* has passed away several years, his wife, his son and his grandson are living in this house together. His wife is 65 years old and farms, his son is unemployed now, his grandson is 24 years old and a truck driver. They have 10 *Mu* farmland and mainly plants maize.

This house originally was the west wing room of Zhao house, it had three rooms and the kitchen is in the middle. There were four stoves(c3)connected to the *Wanzi kang* of bedrooms. *Guo* got this house during the land reform from government and rebuilt it with original material 20 years ago when his son married. The new house keeps the original plane form, the east room that *Guo's* wife living now is still set *Wanzi kang* (b3) that north *kang* is used in summer and south *kang* is used in winter. The west room only has north *kang* that *Guo's* son and grandson are living in(Fig.8).

#### (4) Fu house

Mr. *Fu* lived in the house which has five rooms with his grandfather, parents and brothers in the

past, he rebuilt the east two rooms in 2010 and lives with his wife and son. He is working at the pig farm and his son is in primary school in *Shangjiahe* town.

This house is built on a 1.8 meters high platform, and the below are parking and storehouse. The interior layout is the new form of rural residence: The east and the west bedroom are smaller and the north side in these room are *Diaokang*(b4). The bathroom is at the north side of the west room, and there is a small bedroom(c4) at the north side of the east room. The living room area is large and the north is kitchen. Indoor is laid floor tiles and slipper-change place is at entrance(Fig.9).

#### (5)Liang house

This house was built on a 1.8-meter high platform (under the platform is storehouse) and located about 20 meters in front of the old one by *Baocai Liang's* youngest son in 2009. The west half is left to his son for marriage who is still in the university now. Therefore it is not renovated. *Liang* and his wife use the east half, the interior layout is new form that setting *DiaoKang* in the bedroom and a small bedroom(c5) in the north side of it is left to his sister to live when she returning. The living room's area is large(b5), kitchen and bathroom are located in the north side of living room. Because of laying floor tiles indoor so it's necessary to change slippers at the entrance(Fig.10).

#### (6)Guan house

Because children are working in *Shenyang* so only Guan and his wife live here. This house has three rooms and it was built in 2013, the west room and east room are bedroom and the middle room is living room, kitchen and bathroom are in the north side. Shoes should be changed at entrance. The biggest feature is having three new heating way that *DiaoKang*(c6)is set in west-room and be used in the summer, *Dire* is set in living room and *Di-kang* (b6)is set in east-room. *Di-kang* and *Dire* are both connected to same stove that east-room and living room can be heated when cooking in winter(Fig.11).

## 6 Conclusion

(1) The *Shengli* village, Xinbin town, Liaoning province China is inhabited by the descendants of

the Qing Dynasty royal, where the economic development is relatively slow, and still retains some characteristics of Manchu traditional residence, therefore it is the typical village for studying the developments of modern Manchu's residence.

(2) Although the Northeast Manchu traditional residence is deeply influenced by the Northeast Han's, it still has its own characteristics: the Pocket House, *Wangzi Kang*, the west room for honor and worshipping the *Wosaku* on the west gable. The characteristics of the northeast Han's traditional residence are : the North-south Kang, the east room for honor, and worshipping their forefathers on the north wall of the main room .

(3) For nearly three decades, due to the support of national policies, the impact of urban culture, the improvement of villager's economic conditions, the change of rural families' structure and other reasons, the plane structure of the *Shengli* residence has changed greatly. Main features: First, the kitchen area is reduced and moved to the north side. Second, it adds living room, bathroom, toilet and other functional spaces. Third, the master bedroom area is reduced and separated small bedroom, the need for privacy of family members is emphasized. Fourth, the form of kang changed, the *Wanzi Kang* became the *Diao Kang*. Fifth, it adds Shoe Changing Area at the entrance, and improves the requirements for cleanliness indoor.

## Acknowledgement

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