

# Analysis on the External Influencing Factors of Traditional Mountain Settlement Space Forms

----Jishan Village in Yong'an City of Central Fujian is taken as Example

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**ABSTRACT:** The central Fujian area features a variety of mountains and traffic block. It forms unique forest culture trait which is different from costal zones and other areas with convenient transportation. This article will explore further the external influencing factors via research in related background materials of Jishan Village in Yong'an City of central Fujian.

**KEYWORD:** Central Fujian; Mountain Settlement; Jishan Village; External Influencing Factors

Yong'an mountainous area is located in western area of central Fujian (Fig 1) with transport hurdles in history so that a relative closed living space is formed. It has been considered as the interim government station of Fujian in the war during 1938-1945 thanks to the unique location advantages. There are a lot of excellent traditional villages and Jishan Village is the strong performer.

Jishan Village lies in Southwest Suburb, Yong'an City, where is about 5 km to downtown. The people who live there whose surname are Liu and it has a history of 470 years. According to *Jishan Liu Genealogy*, Liu is originated from surname Qi. In Jiaping 15 year in Ming Dynasty (1536), the 26<sup>th</sup> Guisangong moved to Jishan from Yutan in Puling, the southwest of Yong'an, becoming the first ancestor of Liu in Jishan. People who have surname Liu focused on culture and education. There are a lot of people who passed the official examination and became the officer. From the set up of village to the late Qing Dynasty, 1 Jinshi (a successful candidate in the highest imperial examinations), 5 Juren (a successful candidate in the imperial examinations at the provincial level), 10 tribute students and 191 Xiucan (one who passed the imperial examination at the county level) were born in silence in this nameless remote village.

## 1 THE INFLUENCE OF NATURAL GEOGRAPHICAL ENVIRONMENT

### 1.1 *Geographical Conditions in Yong'an*

Yong'an is located in mountain belts between central Fujian and western Fujian. In terms of topographical advantages, the *Yong'an County Annals* points out

that "The southeast area faces the mountains and the northwest is confronted with water, which is full of dangers and difficulties....The appearance is full of grandeur which can rule the roost."(Office of Yong'an Local Records Editorial Committee. 2004.) "The mountains stretch long and unbroken, land route transportation is inconvenient that is narrow as well as small, featuring bumpiness....Since the year of 1938, the provincial capital was transferred to Yong'an, the county has turned into the political center of this province. Hence, the highway traffic will be boosted."(Office of Yong'an Local Records Editorial Committee. 2010.) Such a closed and precipitous geographical condition turns into material insurance unique forest culture and a perfect place to move of distinguished family to avoid the war in the North.



Figure 1. The Zone Bit between Counties and Cities Fujian and Yong'an City. (Data Source: <http://pic.5tu.cn/>)

As regard to waterway, the river where ships can go through is Sha Creek and Wenchuan Creek (also named as Ji Creek). "Sha Creek is the main stream

in the county. The freight transportation of the entire county and the adjacent areas is carried out via the creek. .... Wenxi Creek has a depth of 16 meters, and for the shallow district, the depth is merely 0.8 meters. Therefore, only small privately owned boat can pass through.”(Office of Yong'an Local Records Editorial Committee. 2010.) Compared with closed land route, the not enough favorable water transport is the most convenient transportation method at that time. Based on *Yong'an County Annals* that Sunbanggongzhan in Gongchuan Town, Yong'an is established in Shunzhi year in Qing dynasty (1646), which is the earliest conference site in the industry of bamboo shoot. It was the central contact agency of the bamboo shoot industry trade group in Fujian, Zhejiang, Jiangxi and Henan etc with momentary boom. In terms of Gongchuan Town, according to *Yong'an County Annals* that “Gongchuan is forty miles to the north of Yong'an County, Ting river and Qing river flow together so the name Gong Creek is formed. A lot of trade caravans are gathering here. It is a hub portal of currencies.”(Office of Yong'an Local Records Editorial Committee. 2004.) Thus, “As early as Ming dynasty, people of Yujingshan Village, Gongchuan Town, Yong'an City went to Suzhou to sell dried bamboo shoot and even exported it to Japan.”(Pei, Y.S. 2011.) Consequently, Yong'an promotes the material and cultural exchanges with the outside world through the less developed waterway transportation.

### 1.2 Surrounding Geographical Environment of Jishan Village

There are three mountains in Jishan Village, Mountain Ji, Mountain Bei and Nanshanqi. *Yong'an County Annals* points out that “Jishan is about one li southwest of the county, near Creek Ji. ...Beishan is located in Jishanli, facing against the Nanshanqi... Nanshanqi, southwest of the county, the appearance is liken to a flag of senior general” (Office of Yong'an Local Records Editorial Committee. 2004.). Jishan Village and the surrounding terrain are lower from north to south. The northeast of village faces Mountain Bei (also named as Beiling), *Jishan Liu Genealogy* said that, “Ascend to Beiling, one can view the all the beauties in Mountain Xi”. The location of Jishan Village is on the valley between Beiling and Creek Ji. Beiling has become the natural screen of the village.

The main river of Jishan Village is Creek Ji, according to *Yong'an County Annals* that “Creek Ji is one mile from Yexinan” (Office of Yong'an Local Records Editorial Committee. 2004.). Creek Ji is originated from Liancheng County, flowing across Xiaotao Town, Hongtian Village, Yanxi to entrance of Mountain Ji. And it is ji (a Chinese character) shaped around the village from south to north (Fig 2 -3).

There are a lot of mountains and hills in Jishan Village, where the earth layer contains mainly granite, which provides necessary architectural materials to buildings. Meanwhile, the alluvium on both sides of Creek Ji features fertile soil that will offer favorable condition for food crops. The overall area of village is 16980 Mu with poor agriculture land that is 1696 Mu. Except for farmland and house which occupy the land, the mountain forests take up 13820 Mu, which is 81.39% of the whole used land in the village. A variety of plants can be seen there, presenting rich production and living resources for people. On top of that, it protects the local water source effectively.



Figure 2. Jishan Village Western View (Date source: Taken by the author)

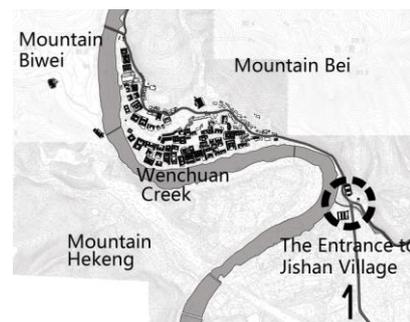


Figure 3. Overall Spatial Form of Village (Data Source: Owner-drawing)

## 2 INFLUENCE OF ECONOMIC FACTORS

In traditional agricultural society in China, “Plough” is the basis of life. Therefore, fertile lands impose a significant impact on the location of village at an early time. *Fujian Log* points out that, “There are few farmlands in central Fujian, the foothills are treated as farmlands, which were considered as terraces by the ancient people.”(Zhang, F. 1995.) Based on *Yong'an County Annals*, “The food produced in Qing Dynasty should be transported from the other areas due to little food production in Yong'an”. Nevertheless, in terms of *Jishan Liu Genealogy*, land cultivation was the one of the main living methods in the current age despite of shortages in food.

Apart from farming, clansmen employs sufficient bamboo resources and convenient water condition to trade with people in Fuzhou as well as areas beyond

the province. Before the Republic of China, the main commodity transported from Yong'an is wood. The forests resources are very rich, and Jishan Village is the principle producing area. It became the most direct way that Jishan Liu's family lived a richer and better life to depend on the mountain.

Furthermore, Wine brewing and selling has turned into the most common industry among clansmen. The street stalls were filled with a much told tale that "The Jishan Wine has occurred since the emerge of Wenchuan Creek". People sent the goods from the outside to Yong'an when they were selling the products to the outside so that the commodity exchanges have been promoted in Jishan Village. At that time, agricultural economy in village displayed signs of commercialization. "Ancient Streets Thirteen-Trade Monopoly" has also been generated because of this during the period of Kangxi of the Qing Dynasty. Based on *Jishan Liu Genealogy*, the shops were the famous county fair at that time. In terms of the borrowing of "Thirteen-Trade Monopoly" of Guangzhou and the commercial activities held to the outside, the economic features of Jishan Village since Qing dynasty can be seen.

All in all, in feudal age, the traditional economic development of Jishan Village was carried out through agriculture as well as commerce.

### 3 THE INFLUENCE OF IDEOLOGICAL AND CULTURAL FACTORS

Rapoport believed: "Forms of housing are not the simple result of substantial strength or a sing factor, but the common result of social and cultural factors in the broadest sense." (Rapoport. Minguo 68 years.)

#### 3.1 *Clan consciousness*

China has a profound clan tradition, as a result of which the establishing of state power was not beyond the level of county, and regional autonomy was implemented in townships and villages. In fact, this kind of autonomy was often accomplished by clansmen (and the local squires) (Dai, L.Z. 2004.) .

Mr. Lin Yaohua found that family concepts had the characteristics of clan from the perspective of the developmental relationship between family and clan through his exploration of Yixu Town, Fujian, that is, "Family is the most fundamental unit with a head of the family; several families consist of a household with a head of the household; several households consist of branch with a head of the branch; several branches consist of the elder branch with head of it; several elder branches consist of clan with a head of the clan, and so on, which are well arranged in order." (Lin, Y.H. 2000.) The results of the anthropologists' exploration of Yixu Town, Fujian have further confirmed that in the 1930s and 1940s,

Fujian clans had developed organizations, complicated rules and complete ceremonies, and at the same time played an irreplaceable role in peasants' daily life (Lin, Y.H. 2008.). The people of Yong'an were simple and honest, and Jishan Village completed the development from settlement to prosperity during the period of Ming and Qing Dynasties when thoughts were unprecedented active.

#### 3.2 *Geomantic principles*

As a traditional and practical representative of culture, geomancy has a fairly profound influence on the whole Chinese nation. "One argument was that the methods of arranging the houses came from the central parts of Fujian, ..... The other argument was that the methods of Jiangxi originated in Ganzhou....., all were determined by the situation,....." (Zhao, Y. 1963.) However, Yong'an learned from their strong points, that is, good or evil fortunes were determined by the housing location, adopting local group (Liqi group) methods of removing obstacles, however, the site selection of villages and houses used the methods of Jiangxi School. Since there are many mountains and long streams in Fujian with the characteristics of refreshing breeze and clear water, both the immigrant Han people and natives contributed to the atmosphere of geomantic custom. In the 1940s, Mr. Lin Yaohua explained their family's destiny by means of geomantic ideas at the home of the Golden Wing Family, Fujian. (Lin, Y.H. 2008.). Later, Later, Mr. Zhuang Kongshao revisited Huang Village Valley where the Golden Wing family settled, which highlighted the family's geomantic practice of the village and geomancers' role of "Culture Matchmaker (Zhuang, K.S. 1999.). The typical case showed the degree of clans' recognition to geomancy in the central parts of Fujian and the western mountainous regions.

Fujian clans attached importance to geomancy deeply and widely, with three features: Firstly, the landscape of high mountains and deep streams in Fujian possesses geomantic characteristics; secondly, the hostile natural and ecological environment gave the people a sense of adoration and destiny, and as the dependence in their deep soul, geomancy was provided with rich soil to survive; thirdly, the sense of superiority of Fujian immigrants clans over the "backward" "natives", as well as clan consciousness of holding together for warmth and survival strengthened the requirement of geomancy. Yong'an clans paid great attention to geomancy in the central parts of Fujian, especially to the sites selection and structures of ancestral houses, ancestral temples, and ancestral graveyard, in which geomancy played an important role. There appeared many geomancers and classics among the people, and site planning became a common custom locally.

People of Liu Family in Jishan lived and multiplied in the environment characterized by such a geomantic view, and it was exactly during the period of Ming and Qing Dynasties when geomantic thought was flourishing that the village developed from settlement to prosperity.

### 3.3 Thought of the Fujian Studies

The Min School, also called Cheng-Zhu's Neo-Confucianism became the ruling thought, lasting for 700 years after the Song Dynasty. During the period of the northerners' migration to the south, Jianzhou( now Jianou City in the north of Fujian) located near the junction of Fujian, Zhejiang, Jiangxi, was the frontier where the people and culture from the central plain entered Fujian, thus the north part of Fujian became one of the first regions for the development of Fujian culture. During the period of the South Song Dynasty, the north part of Fujian became the national cultural center after Yangshi, the father of Min School, went to the south for spreading knowledge, and Zhuxi created the Min School collecting the achievements of Confucian scholars. At that time, "all the regions in Yong'an (including Jishan Village) were ruled by Nanping, and meanwhile, Yong'an was located between Sha and You, and especially the site where the five sages of the Song Dynasty used to travel. (Office of Yong'an Local Records Editorial Committee. 2004.) Therefore, Jishan Village, Yong'an were greatly influenced by the thought of the Min School.

The thought of the Min School had the greatest impact on Guangjian Academy in the construction of the villages. There are nine academies near Jishan Village since Shunzhi of the Qing Dynasty, enough to show the clansmen attached great importance to reading (Fig 4). In addition, in terms of the plane layout of the village, it is axisymmetric and the hall was in the middle, the whole of which is particular about the arrangement of seniors and juniors, each in their places. The ethical spirits and hierarchical order that the thought of the Min School highly praised was fully displayed on the buildings (Fig 5). At the same time, couplets and plaques and things like these promoting reading, diligence and righteousness can be seen anywhere in the buildings. Moreover, influenced by the thought of the Min School, the clanmen didn't forget to bring benefit to the village after succeeding in the imperial competitive examinations; they contributed funds to build roads, bridges, ancestral temples and academies, greatly enriching spatial landscape of the village.

## 4 CONCLUSION

Settlement spatial form results from specific geographical environment, regional economy,

ideology and culture as well as social context. The paper discussed that Jishan traditional village formed its unique quality of mountain culture in the central parts of Fujian due to its particular external factors, which imposed a great influence on the village substances.



Figure 4. Cuiyuan Academy (Source: taken by the author)



Figure 5. Dafudi flat (Source: surveyed and mapped by the author)

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