

สถาปัตยกรรมวัฒนธรรมของที่อยู่อาศัยชาวแมนจูในสภาพอากาศหนาวเย็น:

กรณีศึกษาการอนุรักษ์และสืบทอดของเมืองถนนอุลา

The Architectural Culture of Manchu Dwellings in Cold Climates:  
A Case Study on the Preservation and Inheritance of WuLa Street Town

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### บทคัดย่อ

การศึกษานี้มุ่งเน้นที่การอนุรักษ์และสืบทอดบ้านเรือนของชนเผ่าแมนจูในเมืองอุลาเจียะ จังหวัดจีหลิน โดยใช้กรณีศึกษาเพื่อวิเคราะห์ลักษณะทางสถาปัตยกรรม สถานะการอนุรักษ์ และปัญหาที่เกิดขึ้น บ้านเรือนของชนเผ่าแมนจูเป็นส่วนสำคัญของวัฒนธรรมแมนจูที่แสดงถึงการปรับตัวของชนเผ่าแมนจูต่อสภาพอากาศที่หนาวเย็น แต่กระบวนการทันสมัยทำให้เกิดภัยคุกคาม เช่น การเสื่อมสภาพของฟังก์ชัน ความเสียหายของโครงสร้าง และการรับรู้ทางวัฒนธรรมที่ลดลง การศึกษาผ่านการทบทวนวรรณกรรม การสำรวจภาคสนาม การวิเคราะห์กรณีศึกษาและนโยบาย พบว่าแม้ว่าบ้านเรือนของชนเผ่าแมนจูในอุลาเจียะจะได้รับการอนุรักษ์ที่ดีโดยรวม แต่เทคนิคการซ่อมแซมยังขาดมาตรฐาน และบางอาคารสูญเสียความสมจริงในระหว่างกระบวนการฟื้นฟู นอกจากนี้ กลไกการอนุรักษ์ยังขาดความเป็นระบบ การดำเนินการตามกฎหมายและนโยบายไม่เพียงพอ ทำให้เกิดข้อพิพาทด้านสิทธิในทรัพย์สินและปัญหาการบำรุงรักษาที่ล่าช้า อีกทั้งการพัฒนาการท่องเที่ยวทางวัฒนธรรมยังไม่เชื่อมโยงกับคุณค่าทางวัฒนธรรมของบ้านเรือนแมนจูอย่างเต็มที่ และยังไม่ได้สำรวจความหมายทางประวัติศาสตร์และวัฒนธรรมของบ้านเรือนเหล่านี้อย่างเพียงพอ

การศึกษานี้เสนอแนวทางในการแก้ปัญหา ดังนี้ 1. การจัดทำมาตรฐานการซ่อมแซมเฉพาะสำหรับบ้านเรือนแมนจู โดยใช้เทคโนโลยีเพื่อพัฒนาคุณภาพการฟื้นฟู พร้อมทั้งรักษาความเป็นเอกลักษณ์ทางวัฒนธรรม 2. การสร้างกลไก

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การจัดการการอนุรักษ์มรดกทางวัฒนธรรมที่ครบวงจร โดยการชี้แจงสิทธิในทรัพย์สินและการดำเนินการตามกฎหมายอย่างมีประสิทธิภาพ 3. การส่งเสริมการท่องเที่ยวทางวัฒนธรรมโดยการสำรวจความหมายทางประวัติศาสตร์และวัฒนธรรมของบ้านเรือนแมนจู ใช้บ้านเรือนเหล่านี้เป็นแหล่งทรัพยากรหลักในการสร้างแบรนด์การท่องเที่ยวทางวัฒนธรรมในภูมิภาค และสร้างสมดุลระหว่างการอนุรักษ์วัฒนธรรมและการเติบโตทางเศรษฐกิจ การวิจัยนี้ไม่เพียงช่วยให้ความเข้าใจลึกซึ้งเกี่ยวกับบ้านเรือนของชนเผ่าแมนจูในภาคตะวันออกเฉียงเหนือของจีน แต่ยังเสนอแนวทางปฏิบัติในการอนุรักษ์และสืบทอดมรดกทางวัฒนธรรมอย่างยั่งยืน ซึ่งมีความสำคัญในการพัฒนาการอนุรักษ์มรดกทางวัฒนธรรมและการพัฒนาวัฒนธรรมที่ยั่งยืน

**คำสำคัญ:** กลยุทธ์ในการปกป้อง, บ้านเรือนของชาวแมนจูในภาคตะวันออกเฉียงเหนือ, เมืองอู่หลาเจีย

## Abstract

This study focuses on the conservation and transmission of Manchu dwellings in Wulajie Town, Jilin Province, using a case study approach to analyze architectural characteristics, current preservation status, and existing challenges. Manchu dwellings represent a significant aspect of Manchu culture, reflecting the adaptation of the Manchu people to harsh climatic conditions. However, modernization has introduced threats, including functional degradation, structural deterioration, and a decline in cultural awareness. Through a combination of literature review, field investigations, case studies, and policy analysis, the study finds that although the overall preservation of Manchu dwellings in Wulajie is relatively good, restoration techniques often lack standardization, leading to a loss of authenticity in some cases. Moreover, conservation mechanisms remain fragmented, legal enforcement is insufficient, and issues such as property disputes and delayed maintenance persist. In addition, cultural tourism development has not been fully integrated with the cultural values of the dwellings, and their historical and cultural significance remains underexplored.

This study proposes several solutions: 1. establishing specific restoration standards for Manchu dwellings, utilizing technological innovations to enhance restoration quality while maintaining cultural authenticity; 2. developing a comprehensive cultural heritage management framework that clarifies property rights and ensures effective legal and policy implementation; and 3. promoting cultural tourism by uncovering and emphasizing the historical and cultural significance of Manchu dwellings, leveraging them as core resources for regional cultural tourism branding, and balancing cultural preservation with economic development. This research not only deepens the understanding of Manchu dwellings in Northeast China but also provides practical strategies for sustainable cultural heritage conservation and transmission, contributing to broader efforts in sustainable cultural development.

**Keywords:** Protection Strategies, Manchu Dwellings in Northeast China, Wulajie Town

## Introduction

Northeast China, as one of the birthplaces of Manchu culture, has a profound historical and cultural heritage. Manchu dwellings, as a core component of this cultural diversity, reflect the architectural wisdom of the Manchu people in harsh climates and also embody their unique social structure, religious beliefs, and cultural inheritance. However, with the acceleration of modernization, many traditional Manchu dwellings are facing the threat of destruction and disappearance. In recent years, both the academic community and the government have increasingly focused on the protection of traditional Manchu architecture, with growing investments in cultural heritage and intangible cultural heritage protection. For example, in 2018, Jilin Province launched the Manchu Traditional Dwellings Protection Project, restoring and preserving representative buildings, which demonstrates the importance placed on traditional architecture by the government and society. Despite these efforts, there remains a significant gap in research on how to effectively protect and inherit this cultural heritage, especially in terms of the lack of a systematic theoretical framework and practical approaches. Therefore, balancing the cultural value and social needs of traditional architecture within the context of modernization has become a critical issue that needs urgent attention.

Wulajie, located in Longtan District, Jilin Province, is an important representative area of Manchu culture in Northeast China. The town has preserved a large number of typical Manchu historical dwellings, especially architectural groups from the Qing Dynasty, such as Kuifu, Houfu, and Safu. These dwellings not only represent the unique lifestyle and cultural forms of the region but also reflect the Manchu people's wisdom in adapting to the harsh climate and the challenges posed by the natural environment, as well as the social hierarchy, religious beliefs, and daily life needs of the Manchu society. While scholars have studied the architectural functions and cultural symbols of Manchu dwellings, there is still a lack of in-depth research on how these traditional buildings can be effectively inherited in the process of modernization. The existing literature mainly focuses on the description and analysis of architectural features, and rarely addresses how modern technology, policy support, and social participation can help achieve long-term protection and innovative inheritance of cultural heritage. For example, Zhang Yao (1993) pointed out that the design of the "Wanzi Kang" and "Hulan Chimney" in Manchu dwellings not only improves indoor warmth but also deeply reflects the social hierarchy and religious functions of Manchu society. Zhou Lijun (2009) studied the uniqueness of the "small pocket house" design, which he believed was highly suited to the climate and social needs of Northeast China. The "small pocket house" is a compact structure that efficiently utilizes limited space and is particularly adapted to the severe cold climate, ensuring that

residents can better endure the cold. It not only meets functional needs but also carries rich social and cultural significance, reflecting the Manchu people's emphasis on family warmth and comfort. Although these studies provide valuable perspectives on the architectural characteristics and functions of Manchu dwellings, they have not fully addressed how to protect these historically valuable buildings and cultures in the context of modern society.

This study aims to fill this academic gap by analyzing the architectural features and cultural symbols of typical Manchu dwellings in Wulajie. It will explore their uniqueness in design and function, and how these designs reflect the social structure, religious beliefs, and life wisdom of the Manchu people. Additionally, the study will investigate the impact of modernization on the protection of these traditional dwellings, focusing on how to find effective adaptive protection methods in a rapidly changing society. Finally, the study will propose targeted protection and inheritance strategies that combine current architectural protection technology, policy frameworks, and social participation mechanisms to maintain the historical authenticity of Manchu dwellings while meeting modern life needs.

## Objective

This study guides the analysis through the following core questions:

1. How can the architectural structure of Manchu dwellings in Northeast China effectively adapt to the local cold climate?
2. How does the design of Manchu dwellings reflect the hierarchical structure and religious beliefs of Manchu society?
3. How to formulate practical strategies to protect and inherit these cultural heritages in the context of modernization?

## Research Methods

This study utilized multiple research methods to ensure scientific rigor and accuracy.

### 1. The methods employed are detailed as follows:

**Case Study Method:** The study analyzed typical Manchu residential buildings in Wulajie Town, such as Kuifu, Houfu, and Safu. This method helps uncover regional characteristics and cultural symbols, aiding in the detailed examination of the uniqueness of Manchu architecture (Yin, 2014).

### 2. Combination of Quantitative and Qualitative Methods:

**2.1 Architectural Mapping:** Modern mapping technology was used to collect floor plans and cross-sectional data, facilitating structural analysis (Groat, & Wang, 2013).

2.2 Interview Method: Semi-structured interviews with local residents and cultural experts provided insights into the inheritance and functional changes of Manchu architecture (Kvale, 2007).

2.3 Literature Analysis: A systematic review of existing literature integrated historical and cultural research on Manchu architecture (Booth, et al., 2016).

### **3. Data Analysis Method:**

3.1 Quantitative Analysis: Statistical tools were used to analyze the relationship between architectural features and protection measures (Bryman, 2012).

3.2 Qualitative Analysis: Thematic analysis of interview and literature data explored the inheritance paths and protection strategies for Manchu architecture (Creswell, 2013).

Multidisciplinary Cross-Disciplinary Research Method: This study integrated architectural, ethnological, historical, and cultural heritage protection methods to explore the cultural significance of Manchu architecture (Ashworth, 2011).

These methods enhance the scientific validity of the study and strengthen its overall persuasiveness.

### **4. Research Analysis**

This study adopts qualitative research methods such as thematic analysis and case analysis to investigate the architectural culture of Manchu dwellings in Northeast China. These methods provide a solid foundation for understanding the architectural characteristics, cultural significance, and challenges of Manchu architecture in Wulajie Town.

4.1 Thematic Analysis: Key themes related to Manchu dwelling culture were identified:

4.2 Regional Adaptability: Manchu dwellings demonstrate adaptability to cold climates through features like the "Wanzi Kang" heating structure and "small pocket rooms" for heat preservation.

4.3 Cultural Symbols: Manchu architecture reflects family systems and religious beliefs, such as ancestor worship in western kang spaces.

4.4 Protection Challenges: Traditional Manchu dwellings face risks due to modernization, and protection measures are limited by technology, funding, and policies.

4.5 Case Analysis: Three representative buildings—Kuifu, Houfu, and Safu—were analyzed:

4.5.1 Kuifu: A historical building showing typical Qing Dynasty Manchu architecture, with a courtyard layout reflecting social structure and insulation strategies.

4.5.2 Houfu and Safu: These buildings demonstrate class differences in architectural design, with Houfu showcasing cultural symbols and Safu emphasizing functionality for cold climates.

4.5.3 Depth of Data Analysis: The study combines qualitative and quantitative analysis. For example, precise measurements of materials and layout were used to assess the adaptability and insulation effectiveness of Manchu architecture, providing objective support for the research conclusions.

4.5.4 Logical Relationship: The research findings are consistent, combining thematic and case analysis to provide a well-rounded understanding of Manchu architecture's cultural, social, and functional aspects. The integration of quantitative data further validates the conclusions.

In conclusion, this study, through its multi-dimensional approach, offers valuable insights into the protection and inheritance of Manchu dwelling culture, revealing both historical significance and practical strategies for future preservation efforts.

## Research Results

This study conducted an in-depth investigation of the Manchu residential buildings in Wula Street Town and analyzed their architectural adaptability and cultural connotations in the cold climate of Northeast China. The results show that the Manchu residential buildings in Wula Street Town not only show uniqueness in architectural style and design, but also reflect the life wisdom and religious beliefs of the Manchu people in terms of functional layout, material selection and cultural symbols. The following are the main results obtained based on the research and analysis:

### 1. Regional Adaptability of Building Structure

The results of the study revealed that Jilin Province, where Wulajie Town is located, is located in Northeast China (Figure 1) and is in the fifth cold climate zone, with extremely cold winter temperatures. According to meteorological data, the lowest temperature in the region in winter can reach below  $-30^{\circ}\text{C}$ , the average temperature is around  $-15^{\circ}\text{C}$ , and the highest temperature is usually between  $-10^{\circ}\text{C}$  and  $-5^{\circ}\text{C}$ . The traditional Manchu residential buildings involved in the study, such as Kuifu, Houfu, and Safu (Table 1), were designed with these extreme climatic conditions in mind. By measuring and analyzing the temperature control systems of these buildings, the study found that traditional residential buildings adopted design methods with high thermal insulation performance, such as "small pocket rooms", "Wanzi kang" and "Hulan chimney" (Table 2), which effectively reduced heat loss and kept the room warm. Specifically, the indoor temperature can be maintained above  $10^{\circ}\text{C}$  in the cold winter, especially through the "Wanzi kang" design, the indoor ground temperature can usually reach about  $15^{\circ}\text{C}$ , thereby enhancing comfort and livability.

The design of these traditional buildings not only provides the necessary warmth in cold climates, but also demonstrates the wisdom of humans in extreme environments.



**Figure 1** Map of Wula Street Town Note. (Drawn by the author, 2024)

**Table 1** Surveying and Analysis of The “Three Prefectures” (Kuifu, Houfu, Safu)

Name	Kuifu
Summary	The building is a quadrangle with two entrances, with a total area of about 200 square meters. The main house and the east and west wing rooms are compactly laid out, with a typical "Wanzi Kang" structure. The Kang is connected to the stove, which optimizes heat conduction and is equipped with a Hulan chimney system. The main house faces south, with delicate doors and windows to increase lighting and insulation.
Analyze	The architectural features fully demonstrate the adaptability of Manchu architecture to cold climates. Through field measurements, it was found that the wall of the main house is about 50 cm thick and is made of blue bricks, which helps to keep warm. The design of the east and west wing rooms further optimizes the windproof effect of the house. The Hulan chimney is used in combination with the Wanzi Kang to ensure that heat is evenly distributed throughout the building.





Figure 2 Photographed by The Author, 2023

Table 1 Surveying and Analysis of The “Three Prefectures” (Kuifu, Houfu, Safu)

Name	Houfu
Summary	The building area is about 180 square meters, which is a typical Manchu courtyard layout. The main house is spacious and equipped with a "Wanzi Kang". The east and west wing rooms are smaller, but they are also designed with a connected Kang system and independent Hulan chimneys. The building has windows facing south, and the windows are small to avoid heat loss.
Analyze	Surveying and mapping data show that the walls of the main house are relatively thick, about 55 centimeters, which can effectively resist the cold wind in winter. The main house and the wing rooms are connected by corridors, which reduces the intrusion of wind and snow and further enhances the warmth of the building. The addition of the Hulan chimney design makes the heat circulation in the internal space more efficient.



Figure 3 Photographed by The Author, 2023

Table 1 Surveying and Analysis of The “Three Prefectures” (Kuifu, Houfu, Safu)

Name	Safu
Summary	The building area of the Safu is about 210 square meters, with a more complex design, a five-bay main house structure, equipped with a large "Wanzi Kang" and an independent "Hulan chimney" system. The chimney is designed on the north side of the courtyard and connected to the Kang through a special underground passage, which enhances the heat circulation inside the house.
Analyze	The uniqueness of the Safu is its "Hulan chimney" design, which is located on the ground of the courtyard and connected to the kang system, enhancing the overall warmth of the building. This design is relatively rare in Northeast Manchu architecture and reflects the integration of Safu's architectural functionality and innovation.



Figure 4 Photographed by The Author, 2023

The study found that these buildings generally adopt design forms such as "small pocket room", "Wanzi kang" and "Hulan chimney" (Table 2) to enhance the warmth effect.

Table 2 Results of Mapping The Chimneys of "Pocket Room", "Wanzi Kang" and "Hulan"

Name	Pocket House
Introduction	It is usually a three or five-room house, facing south, with a roof covered with thatch or tiles and walls made of adobe.
Features	The door is on the east side. After entering the door, the first thing you see is the kitchen, also called the outer room or the main room, while the west side or the east and west sides are the inner rooms, that is, the bedrooms.



Figure 5 Photographed by The Author, 2023

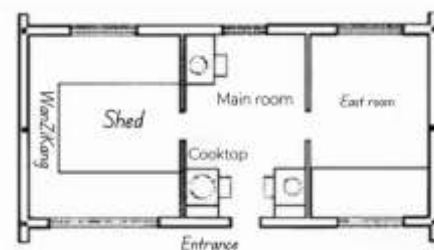


Figure 6 Pocket Room Floor Plan (Drawn by The Author, 2024)

Table 2 Results of Mapping The Chimneys of "Pocket Room", "Wanzi Kang" and "Hulan"

Name	Wanzi Kang
Introduction	It is composed of three connected kangs on the south, west and north sides, forming a "└" shape, also known as "circular kang", "crooked kang" and "vine kang".
Features	The Wanzi Kang is a special fire bed in traditional Manchu dwellings. It has important living, heating and cultural functions, and reflects the Manchu people's adaptability to the cold climate and their unique living habits.



Figure 7: Photographed by The Author, 2023

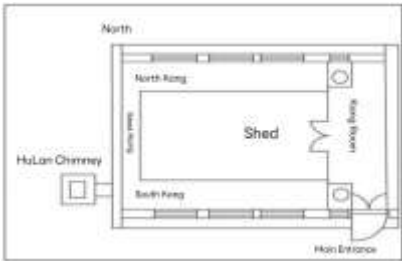


Figure 8 WanZi Kang Floor Plan (Drawn by The Author, 2024)

Table 2 Results of Mapping The Chimneys of "Pocket Room", "Wanzi Kang" and "Hulan"

Name	Hulan Chimney
Introduction	Like a small tower, it stands on the side of a house or in front of a south window.
Features	It is several feet higher than the eaves and is connected to the kang in the room through a hole to exhaust smoke and provide warmth.



Figure 9 Photographed by The Author, 2023

2. Manchu Culture and Architectural Symbols

The Manchu residential buildings in Wulajie Town carry rich cultural symbols and reflect the deep-seated characteristics of the Manchu social structure and religious beliefs. The main cultural symbols identified by the thematic analysis method include:

Spatial organization of religious functions: The west kang, as a sacred space for the worship of ancestors and gods, reflects the religious belief of the Manchu society that "the west is precious". The west side of the building is usually the area where the elders live, and it is also an important place for sacrifice.

Cultural connotations of decorative art: Through field research on architectural details, brick carvings, wood carvings and other decorative details such as "qin, chess, calligraphy and painting"

and "rich and abundant" express the Manchu people's pursuit of family happiness and prosperity of descendants. Decoration not only has aesthetic value, but also carries profound cultural connotations.

### 3. Challenges of Protection and Inheritance

Although the Manchu dwellings in Wula Street Town show unique regional adaptability and cultural symbolism in architectural features, the results show that these buildings are facing serious protection challenges under the impact of modernization. Through the analysis of existing protection measures, this study found that:

**Insufficient repair technology:** Many traditional buildings are in disrepair and need timely repair. The sinking of the foundation and the tilting of the beams of the wing rooms of Kuifu and Houfu urgently need professional technical support, but the current repair work is progressing slowly.

**Insufficient laws and policies:** Although the building complex of Wula Street Town has been listed as a national key cultural relic protection unit, the law is not enforced enough and the relevant protection policies are not yet perfect, resulting in a lag in the progress of building protection.

### 4. Countermeasures for Architectural Protection and Cultural Inheritance

To cope with the challenges of protection and inheritance, this study proposes the following countermeasures:

**The principle of repairing the old as it is:** scientific repair technology should be adopted to ensure that the original style of the building is maintained during the repair process. The study recommends the introduction of modern construction technology while respecting the materials and craftsmanship of traditional Manchu architecture.

**Improve the legal system:** local governments should strengthen cooperation with academia and cultural relics protection institutions, formulate and implement more detailed laws and regulations, and ensure that architectural protection work has a legal basis.

**Combination with cultural tourism:** through the rational development of cultural tourism resources, these historical buildings can be used as the core content of cultural tourism to enhance their cultural value and economic benefits. At the same time, the development of cultural tourism also provides financial support for the long-term maintenance of buildings.

### 5. The Social and Academic Value of Manchu Dwellings

This study reveals the dual value of Manchu residential architecture in social and academic aspects through a multidisciplinary approach. These buildings are not only important material carriers of Manchu culture, but also physical evidence for understanding the social structure, religious beliefs and lifestyle of the Manchu people. The research results show that the Manchu

dwellings in Wulajie Town have great potential in academic research and cultural tourism development, and can provide society with broader historical and cultural values through systematic protection and inheritance strategies.

## **Discussion**

This study explores the protection and inheritance of Manchu residential architectural culture in Wulajie Town, Jilin Province, focusing on analyzing the architectural features and cultural connotations of Manchu residential buildings in this area. Research shows that although these dwellings show unique architectural design and adaptability in cold climate conditions, they still face multiple challenges such as policy implementation, financial support, and technical adaptation during the protection and repair process.

### **1. Architectural Adaptability and Cultural Value**

The Manchu houses in Wulajie Town show remarkable architectural adaptability in severe cold climates, usually using thick walls and double-layer structures to cope with low temperature weather. These buildings not only reflect the life wisdom of local residents, but also carry the Manchu religious beliefs and social structure. For example, some houses have shaman sacrificial spaces, reflecting the unique religious and cultural traditions of the Manchu people.

### **2. Restoration and Conservation Challenges**

In the process of repairing traditional Manchu houses, the application of modern building materials and technologies may not fully meet the needs of traditional architecture, resulting in the preservation of the original historical appearance being affected. In addition, insufficient funds for repairs and weak policy implementation have also become major obstacles to conservation efforts, restricting the long-term sustainable protection of traditional dwellings.

### **3. Cultural Tourism and Community Engagement**

Wulajie Town has rich folk culture and great cultural tourism potential. Through the rational development of cultural tourism projects, it can not only promote local economic development, but also provide financial support for the protection of residential buildings. However, the development of cultural tourism must be cautious to avoid damage to cultural resources caused by over-exploitation. At the same time, improving community residents' awareness of and participation in traditional culture will help enhance the effectiveness of conservation efforts and ensure the long-term sustainability of conservation measures.

## Conclusion

This study investigates the Manchu residential buildings in Wula Street Town, highlighting their distinctive architectural features shaped by the cold climate of Northeast China and their rich cultural significance. The findings reveal that these buildings reflect the wisdom and living practices of the Manchu people in their design, material choices, and decorative elements. However, with modernization, these structures face serious challenges to their preservation.

### Key conclusions are as follows:

**Architectural Uniqueness:** The design of Manchu residential buildings in Wula Street Town is tailored to the harsh cold climate. Features such as the roof design, wall structure, and interior layout demonstrate the adaptive ingenuity of the Manchu people in combating cold weather.

**Protection Status and Challenges:** While these buildings are relatively well-preserved, protection efforts remain insufficient. Inadequate repair techniques, lack of relevant legislation, and insufficient awareness pose risks to their preservation.

**Protection and Inheritance Strategies:** To ensure the protection and inheritance of Manchu folk architecture, the study proposes several measures:

**Enhance repair techniques:** Adopt suitable methods to preserve traditional architectural styles. **Strengthen protection regulations:** Implement comprehensive policies and enforce laws. **Promote cultural tourism:** Use tourism to raise awareness of traditional houses, increase funding, and resources for protection.

In conclusion, preserving Manchu folk houses is not only a tribute to history but also a responsibility for future generations. Through effective protection measures and inheritance strategies, this unique cultural heritage can be better maintained, enriching society with its historical and cultural values.

## Suggestion

Based on the findings and conclusions of this study, the following suggestions for research and application are proposed:

1. **Expand the scope of research:** Conduct research on Manchu dwellings in other Northeast regions, compare the architectural styles and cultural connotations of different regions, and deepen the understanding of Manchu architectural heritage.

2.Promote public education and participation: Through lectures and exhibitions and other activities, improve the public's awareness and participation in the protection of Manchu traditional dwellings.

By implementing these suggestions, we can better protect and inherit the Manchu residential architectural culture of Wulajie Town, and promote the research and promotion of cultural heritage.



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