

Empirical Study on Utilizing Rural Settlement of Manchu

Taking Qidaoliang Village, Manchu, Beijing as An Example

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Key words: land consolidation; rural settlement; rural tourism; Manchu

SUMMARY

At present, most of rural settlements in China are faced with such problems as decentralized distribution, inadequate use, severe shortage of infrastructure and supporting facilities, low living standards of farmers. Improving living standards of farmers through land consolidation and planning is critical to safeguard China's eco-social stability. This essay takes Qidaoliang Village, Manchu, Beijing as an example, analyzes reasons responsible for low efficient use of rural settlement through documents research and field study. Based on the re-understanding of rural settlement's nature, this essay proposes to better use rural settlement through such means as collective management and rural-urban interaction. In addition, this essay draws on experiences of Manchu Villages to discuss ways to restore original customs and appearance of ethnic minorities through land consolidation.

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1 BRIEF INTRODUCTION OF QIDAOLIANG VILLAGE, MANCHU, BEIJING

The village is located in Huairou district of Beijing, 78km away from downtown area of Huairou, and 130km away from downtown area of Beijing. It belongs to mountainous areas of distant suburbs. This part will introduce Qidaoliang Village from three aspects, namely, population, economic development and utilization of rural settlement.

1.1 Population

1.1.1 Population Size

China started to adopt the policy of family planning in 1981. Given the special conditions of Qidaoliang village, couples are allowed to have a second child if their first child is girl. After family planning, birthrate of the village decreases by a large margin. According to incomplete statistics, one couple had 5 to 6 children before family planning on average.

At present, Qidaoliang Village has 312 registered permanent residents, 106 households. Most of villagers are Manchu. The number of permanent population is 200 and more, accounting for 66.7% of the total. According to field study, the number of population was 620 in 1986, around 423 in 1996. We can see that the population size is decreasing by a fairly large margin.

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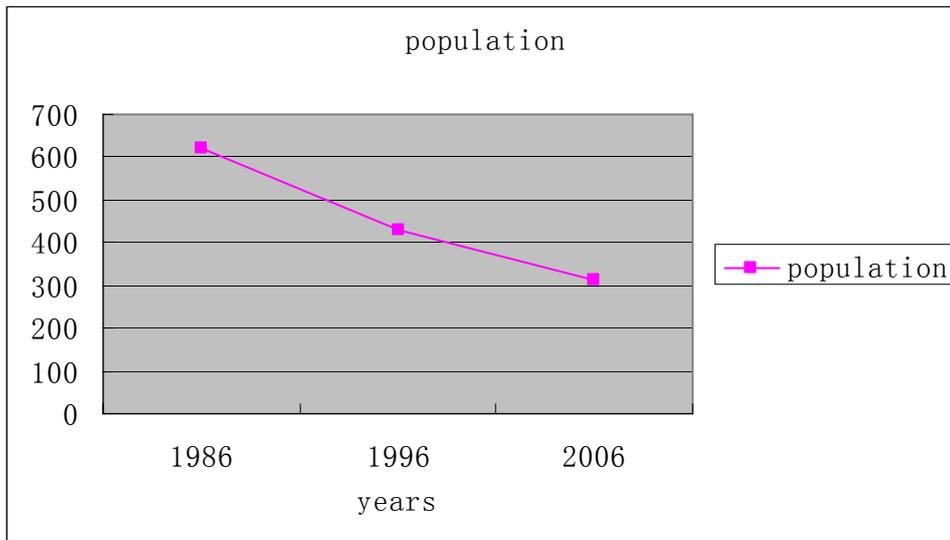


Table1: Trend of Changing Population Size

Viewing from Table1, the decreasing trend of population size over the past 20 years is like a beeline, with a decrease of 15 people year on year. Main reasons are as follows: Lower birthrate brought about by family planning, death, farmers working out of home, entering universities, relocation due to debris slide, and joining the army. The biggest reason is migration of farmers. They are registered permanent residents in the village, but they are living out of home for most part of the year.

1.1.2 Demographic Structure

According to field study, the current demographic structure is as follows:

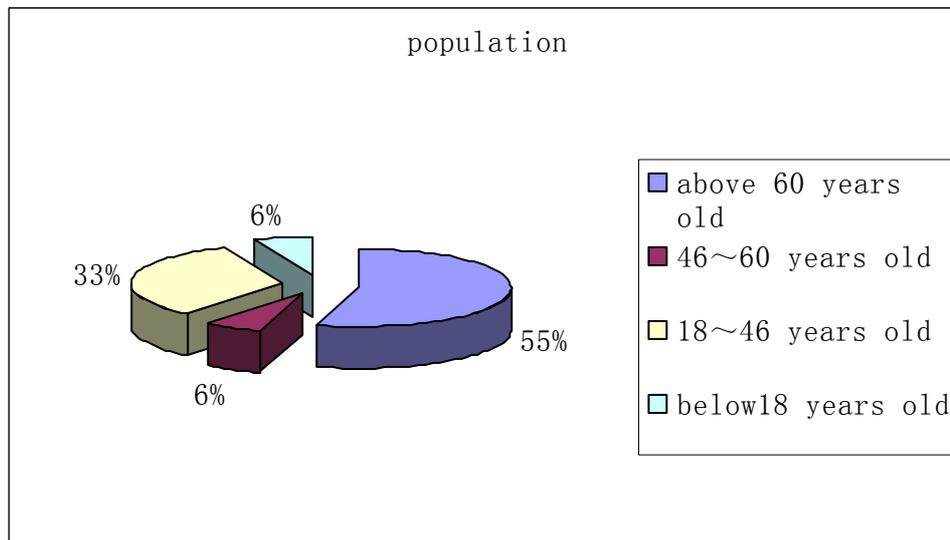


Table2: Demographic Structure

Villagers beyond 60 years old account for 55% of the total, beyond 46 years old 61%, who are unlikely to have new children, from 18 to 46 years old 33%, among which only 76 people are women of childbirth age. Deducting farmers working out of home, villagers are mainly elders beyond 40 years old and children. The above-mentioned data shows that the village is featuring aging of society.

1.2 Economic Development

The village has 14,241mu forests, and 580mu cultivated land, among which 80mu are financed by 2006 national special development fund for land consolidation, and 1.8mu per capita cultivated land. According to field study, the village had 2.97million RMB of income in 2005, 1.92million RMB of net income, 6,160 RMB per capita annual incomes. In 2006, the per capita annual income increased to 7,100 RMB. Compared with 600 RMB of per capita annual income 20 years ago, the livelihood has been improved fundamentally. The income structure is as follows:

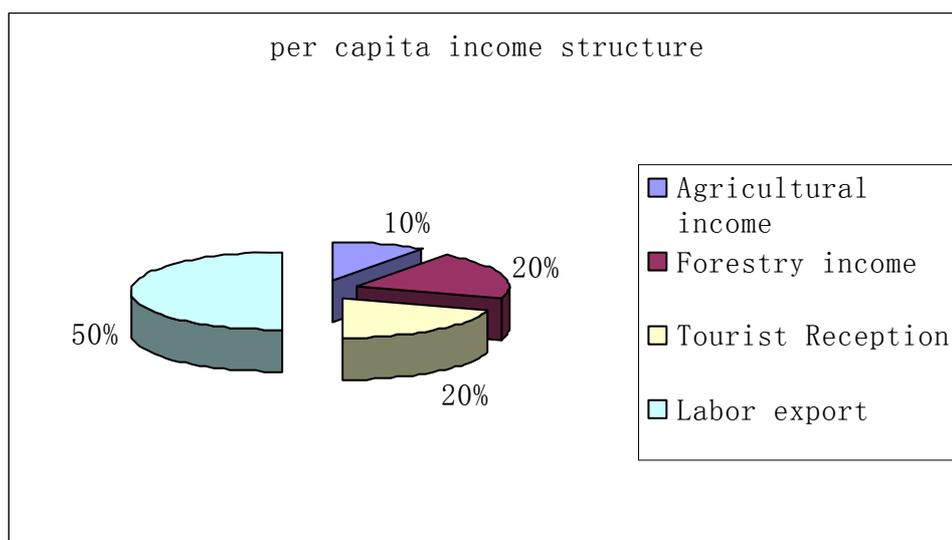


Table 3: Per Capita Income Structure

Viewing from Table3, most of incomes come form migrant workers, accounting for 50% of the total. Incomes from tourism are enjoyed solely by 21 households who receive travelers. In addition, incomes from forestry are fiscal grants allocated by the government for guarding forests. The village officials assign the work of guarding forests to elders who live a difficult life and are unable to cultivate land. Income from agriculture is not the major income source of farmers any more.

1.3 Utilization of Rural Settlement

The village is the demonstration village of building new villages in Huairou. The planning and consolidation of rural settlement was started in May, 2005. Villagers in 3 residential districts are now concentrated in 1 village. The program focused on building new houses and infrastructure with a total investment of 13.6million RMB. 402 houses were built with a total area of 6,855.66 m² and per household area of 123.1 m². Calculated by permanent residents, per capita housing area are above 62 m², far exceeding the per capita housing area of urban residents in Beijing, which are 25.9 m². Government gave subsidies to villagers who build or repair their houses, with a maximum of 25,000 RMB, and minimum of 10,000 RMB. Over 5million RMB were put into infrastructure. Water pool and 1,660m pipes were built, through which height difference formed gravity-flow to provide water for villagers. In addition, 2 level-3 toilets and a level-2 toilets were constructed, thus the livelihood of villagers were improved greatly. New constructions also included ditch control of flood disaster, sewage treatment stations, health care offices, digital cinemas and other facilities. 90% and more villagers now can use liquefied natural gas, and every household has installed solar water heater and heater in winter. In a word, the living standards of villagers have been

improved by a large margin.

According to field study, the efficiency of using rural settlement is low and resources are wasted a lot. Only 1 or 2 people per household are living at home for most part of the year, so most of rural settlements are laid idle. During paying home calls, the author was told that only one elder was at home, but he occupied 5 rooms with a total area of about 130 m², courtyard excluded, for the sake of letting his children live when back home in Spring Festival.

2 PROBLEMS IN USING RURAL SETTLEMENT

2.1 Low Efficiency or Waste of Rural Settlement Utilization

Current problems in using rural settlement in China are mainly reflected in the following 2 aspects. One is the low efficiency brought about by migrant workers occupying rural settlement. The other is waste of rural settlement utilization featuring *1 household with many houses* resulted from heritage.

2.1.1 Low Efficiency Brought About by Migrant Workers Occupying Rural Settlement

According to field study and data collection, farmers working out of home and youths entering universities are 2 driving forces behind migration of rural population. Villagers ranging from 20 to 45 are living out of the village for most part of the year. However, due to such restrictions as laws, policies, and economic income, migrant workers continue to occupy original settlement in the village.

Economically speaking, high living costs in cities impede migrant workers to settle down. According to statistics, the average monthly pay of migrant workers is about 875 RMB, making them impossible to buy commercial houses in cities and buy affordable houses because they are excluded from urban housing safety systems. Most of migrant workers in the village rent rooms together in cities, and only go back home in the Spring Festival. In addition, it's stipulated in the fourth clause of article 62 of Land Administration Law of the People's Republic of China that reapplication for a house site by a villager in a rural area who has sold or rented out his/her house shall not be approved. This law makes migrant workers continue to occupy rather than transfer rural settlement.

It leads to inadequate use or even waste of rural settlement. Though the total area of rural settlement remains the same, the efficiency of using it decreases as permanent residents reduce constantly. For instance, despite unified planning and consolidation of Qidaoliang

village and effective control of per family housing area, the efficiency of using rural settlement remains low. It deserves further discussion to better use rural settlement.

2.1.2 A Household with Many Houses Resulted from Heritage

In the practice of managing rural settlement, rural settlement can be inherited. Its nature is land will be followed by houses. According to the third clause of *Heritage Law*, parents' houses can be inherited. Rural settlement cannot be separated from houses, so the right to use rural settlement is also inherited. It's also resulted from the concept of private ownership of family houses in the countryside. At present, in China's countryside sons often live separated from their parents, so a household with many houses is a frequent phenomenon. Inherited houses are rarely used because of long history and decreased functions. Therefore, the key is to effectively use rural settlement after in heritage.

2.2 Trend of Over-supply of Rural Settlement

Main reasons affecting the demand of villagers on rural settlement are total population, household formation, and cost of gaining rural settlement. The demand trend is changing with total population. That's to say, when the population decreases, the demand will also decrease. But sometimes the fact is the opposite situation, especially in suburbs. The main reason is the increasing demand of houses by migrant workers in suburbs. For instance, Beijing has over 3million permanent migrant workers, and low-incomers are living in rural settlement of suburbs.⁵

Since 2004, the birthrate of Qidaoliang village is 0. Over the past 20 years, only 1 child was delivered in the village every three years. From a long-term of view, as elders accounting for 55% of the total pass away, total population will decrease by a large margin, so will the demand of villagers on rural settlement. Qidaoliang village is located in mountain areas of distant suburbs. Therefore, there is no demand on rural settlement by migrant workers. 403 newly-built houses are likely to lie idle.

5张秀智、丁锐，“大都市周边新农村建设中土地合理利用研究”，《推进社会主义新农村建设研讨会论文集》，民革中央调研部，2006。

3 SOLUTIONS

On the basis of above analysis of problems in the use of rural settlements and Qidaoliang village's consolidation experiences, this article, while re-understanding the nature of rural settlements, proposes to solve the problems from two aspects: rural settlements consolidation and its efficiency.

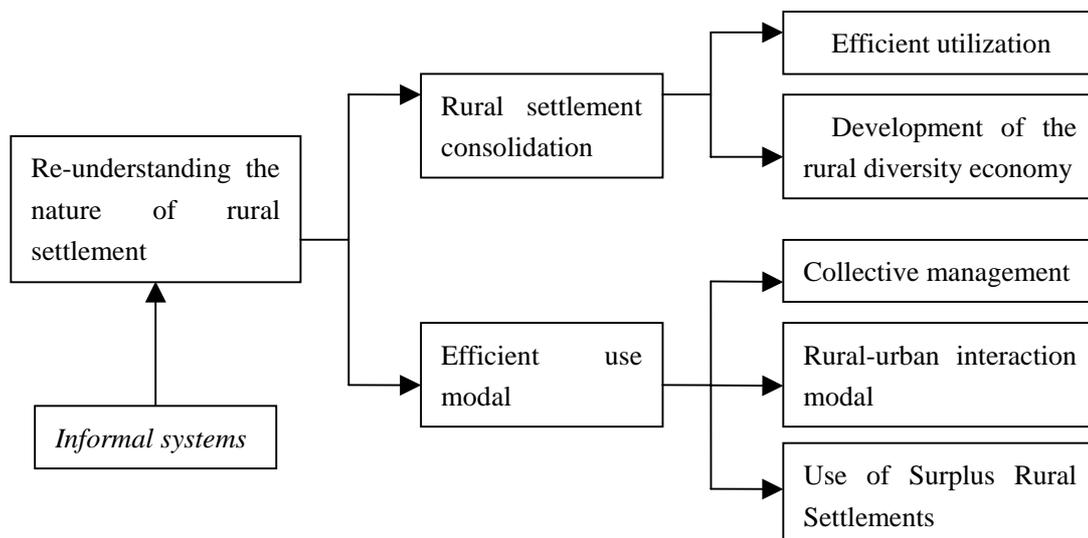


Table 4 : the framework of solutions

3.1 Rediscovery of The Nature Of Rural Settlement

Current laws and regulations have rigid restrictions on the rural settlement use right. For instance, rural settlements are prohibited to be sold or rent to urban residents; the rural settlements use right can't be used as a mortgage or for business purposes. On the other hand, a series of informal systems in the rural areas are much closer to the core of rural culture than formal systems and they're having a more direct effect on the farmers' behavior.

The important impacts of family and kin values, public and private property values, superstitions and other values and thinking can never be overestimated. Rural settlements are taken as private properties by the farmers of which they have full disposal including the right to transfer, inherit, deal and so on. Most of the farmers, following the traditions, will prepare for their sons new rural settlements to set up their own families, even when the sons are out in the cities working or studying.

The informal rural systems are far more influential than the formal ones. Take Qidaoliang village as an example. The villagers consider residential houses fully private

property and rent them at 500 Yuan RMB per month or sell them at about 70,000 Yuan RMB per set. They also believe that the identity of the renter or buyer is unrestricted. For instance, they may come from other villages or from the cities. This means when there is a conflict between the formal and informal systems, the formal ones may probably be crippled.

Thus, it is important to consider the concept which the farmers take land as private property fully⁶, when building the formal rural systems. The restrictions on the rural settlement use right, including transference, inheritance and use, should be appropriately relaxed. Firstly, the rural settlement use right can be transferred under the following conditions:(1)if buyers are urban residents, they must have the evidences which can prove that they don't have or have given up the houses in the urban area;(2) the tenure of the rural settlement use right will be twenty to thirty years. When it expires, the land will be reclaimed by the village. The buildings on the ground should be appropriately compensated. The land users can apply for extension. If approved, the fee for the extending use must be paid. Second, the rural settlement can be used for business purposes, such as stores, food processing, handicrafts. At last, the use right of rural settlement may be used as a mortgage. It will be helpful for the villagers to raise the production capital, which will promote rural economic development.

3.2 Rural Settlements Consolidation

The unified planning and consolidation of rural settlements is in favor of the efficient use of rural settlements and land conservation thus makes room for farm lands and infrastructure land. Villages with unique advantages can promote folk culture tourism, holiday visits to farmhouses and other forms of rural economy through setting up diversified goals of consolidation.

Take Qidaoliang village for instance. Besides the intensive use of rural settlements, improving infrastructure, the village also makes developing Manchu culture tourism one of its major goals, aiming at the coordination between promoting the local economy and preserving the Manchu traditions. Currently, the culture tourism has increased local incomes. Apart from the economic returns it brings to the 21 households who receive the tourists, it also gives other villagers a chance to profit through providing supporting services, such as agricultural and sideline products processing and handicrafts making. In addition, the capital and human resources Qidaoliang village invested to restore Manchu customs and traditions has helped to preserve the Manchu culture. For example, the village has employed folklorists as tourism development advisors and invited themes to give lectures on Manchu culture and etc. To

⁶China implements the socialist public ownership of land. The ownership of the rural land is held by the collective, and the villagers only have the land use right.

maximize the benefits, the villagers also start to cherish and preserve their traditional dishes, costumes and customs related to marriage and funeral and etc.

3.3 Efficient Use Model for Rural Settlements

The 3 major reasons for extensive use or vacancy of China's rural settlements are as follows: 1) inefficient use of migrant workers; 2) a household with many houses due to property inheritance; 3) potential surplus in the future. To tackle these problems, a rediscovery of the nature of rural settlements is a prerequisite and an innovative thinking for reform that conforms to the informal rural systems is must. The proposed models are demonstrated in table5.

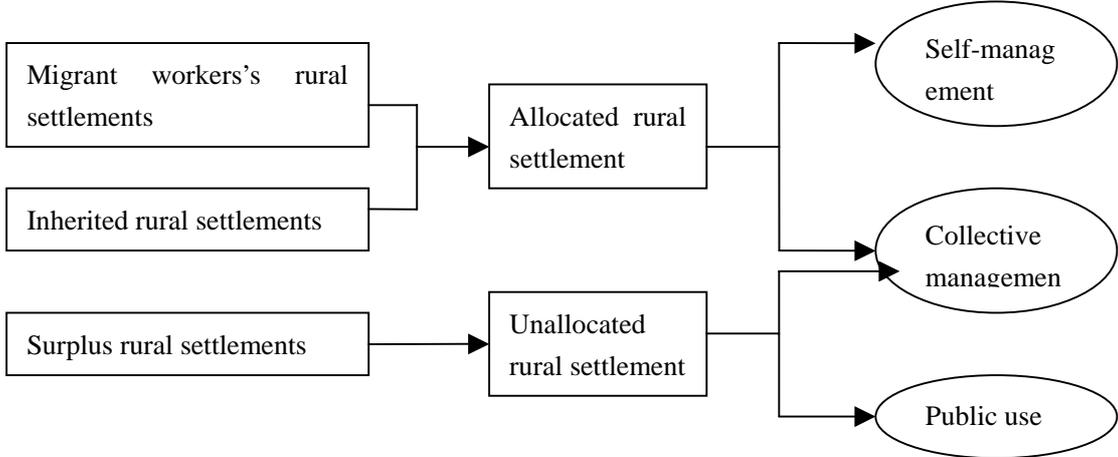


Table5: Efficient Use Models for Rural Settlements

3.3.1 Collective Management Model

Rural household settlements in inefficient use or vacancy, including those of migrant workers and inherited, can be entrusted to the village's collective businesses for unified management by the land user. The land will be evaluated and used as stock capital. The dividend on the shares belongs to both the clients and the collective businesses. Upper land management agencies should supervise the use of these rural settlements in case the collective businesses occupy rural settlements and farm lands excessively and illegally for profits.

The specific management model should depend on the real situations of the village. Take Qidaoliang village as an example. With its Manchu background, it can use its rural settlement for folk culture tourism building folk culture holiday mansions or exhibition halls. Or it can

develop related sidelines such as food processing, handicrafts and etc. For those villages without unique features, they can set up village or township enterprises, profitable social service centers or shops. Villages near the cities can concentrate the vacant rural settlements to build nursing houses for senior citizens.

The collective model proposed by this article can avoid contradicting the informal Chinese rural systems while achieving efficient use of rural settlements. In addition, the introduction of diversified economic modes is favorable to the local economy as well as raising the local living standards.

3.3.2 Potential Use of Surplus Rural Settlements

Rural settlements that become surplus because of the reduced demand of local residents should be reclaimed by the village. This article suggests two approaches for its use: 1) evaluate the land and use it as stock capital to join the collective management mentioned in 3.3.1. After paying the dividends, reserve an appropriate amount of the revenue as infrastructure investment, then distribute the remaining part in average for the villagers. The reserve ratio should be voted on and passed by 2/3 of the villagers and the distribution and management systems of the revenue must be transparent and be publicized on a regular basis; 2) choose certain cluster of rural settlements with proper layout and rebuild them for public use, for instance, an entertainment center, a kindergarten or a clinic.

3.3.3 Rural-Urban Interaction Model

According to recent census, China is in the second phase of a fast aging society during which the aging ratio raises 3.99% every 10 years, especially for Beijing, Shanghai, Shenzhen and other developed local economies. Living in separate houses with their children has also become a trend for senior citizens and they usually have special needs for the surroundings, layout and etc. Based on these two trends, this article proposes the Rural-Urban Interaction Model for using the rural settlements. The model doesn't change the land ownership but make conveniently-located vacant rural settlements in the suburbs residential areas for urban senior citizens while saving the urban houses for the migrant workers. This needs government coordination and suits the villages that: 1) are in the suburbs of big cities and enjoy good public transportation; 2) are with better natural environment and infrastructure; 3) have large number of migrant workers.

Given the house demand and the scale of construction, this model may expand to cover more than a single village, for instance, an administrative district or a town. If senior citizens have a larger demand for houses, a specific district of the city can be designated as migrant

workers' residence in exchange for their original rural settlements.

4 CONCLUSION

With the comprehensive implementation of family planning policies and the acceleration of urbanization, the extensive use, vacancy of and other related problems in rural settlements prevail. The current rural settlements management systems contradicts the farmers' traditional concept of land and lacks the external environment for its effective operation. Therefore, to promote the intensive use of rural settlements and the rural economy, taking full consideration of farmers' traditional thinking and rediscovering the nature of rural settlements is a must. This will lay the way for diversified models of land use for rural settlements which are conducive to land conservation and increasing land use efficiency.

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