

# *Investigation of Manchu Plaques in Yitong Manchu Autonomous County*

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**Keywords:** Yitong Manchu Autonomous County; A plaque; The Manchu language; Investigate; norm

**Abstract:** Yitong Manchu Autonomous County in Jilin Province is one of the important birthplaces of Manchu. It had important historical influence when the regime changed in Ming and Qing dynasties. In Qing Dynasty, Yitong celebrities came out in large numbers and played an important historical role. Nowadays, with the prosperity and development of social economy, the government of Yitong County is also actively creating a good Manchu cultural atmosphere, trying to improve the popularity of Yitong Manchu Autonomous County, and vigorously promoting the local products of Yitong. In order to highlight the Manchu cultural characteristics of the area, the buildings along the streets in the county were constructed in imitation of ancient times, and the shop plaques and road signs used both Chinese and Manchu characters. However, through investigation and research, it was found that most of the Manchu characters on the plaque were wrong. Such widespread errors have had a negative impact on Yitong's image and national unity work. Therefore, this paper puts forward specific and specific normative opinions on various errors in the Manchu characters used in the plaque of Yitong, in order to promote the development of Manchu culture, characteristic economic construction and national unity work.

## 1. Introduction

Ethnic language work is an important part of our Party and state ethnic policy and ethnic work. Article 4 of the Constitution of the People's Republic of China stipulates that "all ethnic groups have the freedom to use and develop their own spoken and written languages." Article 10 of the Law of the People's Republic of China on Regional Ethnic Autonomy stipulates that "the organs of self-government of ethnic autonomous areas guarantee the freedom of all ethnic groups in the area to use and develop their own spoken and written languages." The coexistence of multiple languages and written languages has become an important feature of the Chinese nation. In accordance with relevant state laws and documents, ethnic minority autonomous areas may use both ethnic minority languages and Chinese. In this sense, earnestly implementing the Party's policy on the spoken and written ethnic languages and actively carrying out the work on the spoken and written ethnic languages are also important matters related to economic development, social progress and ethnic unity.

All kinds of state organs, people's organizations, enterprises and institutions in the ethnic

autonomous areas of China can use the local ethnic characters and Chinese, such as Xinjiang, Xizang, Inner Mongolia and Jilin Yanbian and other places. With the development of economy, the translation of street plaques in ethnic areas has become more and more important. Street plaque is an important part of social language, and its social function is self-evident. It has the intention to convey warnings, requests, exhortations and propaganda to people, and therefore has a very obvious social function.

## 2. Research status of ethnic characters

All ethnic minority areas in China attach great importance to the work of ethnic languages: In Inner Mongolia, Huang Jingang et al., taking Keerqin District of Tongliao City, Inner Mongolia as an example, published a book on the Problems and Countermeasures in the Translation of Street plaques into Mongolian and Chinese in 2013 <sup>[1]</sup>. In 2019, Ma Feng took Xilin Gol League as an example and published articles such as "On the Importance of Protecting and Inheriting Minority Languages" <sup>[2]</sup>. In Xizang, Manlatai published How to Solve the Standardization of Transliteration in 2020 <sup>[3]</sup>; Daoji Cairang published Several Problems in Translation <sup>[4]</sup>. In 2015, Pei Leimin took Yanji as an example and published Examples and Analysis of Problems in the Translation of plaques into Chinese and Chinese <sup>[5]</sup>. Park Junzhe published "Analysis of the Current Situation of Plaque Translation in Yanbian Area and Research on Countermeasures" <sup>[6]</sup>. In 1990, Jiang Hongbo published a Study on the Status Quo of Hezhe Language and Its Development Strategies <sup>[7]</sup>.

However, the academic field has not yet touched the use and norms of Manchu plaques in Yitong area, which can be described as a hundred things to do. In the Qing Dynasty, many talents came out in Yitong Prefecture, which played an important historical role. Today, there are many shops and novel signs, which is the performance of social progress, economic development and commercial prosperity in Yitong, and also the concentrated embodiment of the positive role played by the Manchu language in the economic field. Through investigation and research, it is found that most of the manchu characters on the plaques in Yitong County are wrong. Such widespread mistakes have had a negative impact on the image and national unity work of Yitong and even Jilin Province. Therefore, the author puts forward specific and specific normative opinions on various errors in the Manchu characters of the plaque, in order to promote the development of Manchu culture, characteristic economic construction and national unity in Yitong area.

## 3. Wording of Manchu plaques

### 3.1 Types of plaques

Through the careful investigation of the characters of the plaques in Yitong County, it is found that there are about 2,000 various types of plaques with Manchu on both sides of the streets in the county, which are mainly divided into the following three categories:

#### 3.1.1 Government agencies

The government organs at all levels in Yitong County hang up plaques in both Manchu and Chinese characters. The Manchu spelling on these plaques is more standardized and eye-catching, the Manchu writing direction is correct, and the font and meaning usage are basically accurate. However, some words have translation errors, such as the Dagushan Town Government.

#### 3.1.2 Banks, schools, stations

In addition to the Manchu and Han plaques of Yitong County government agencies, the plaques

of banks, schools, stations and other service departments in the county also mostly use Manchu. The Manchu spelling of these plaques is relatively standardized and the Manchu writing direction is correct, but there are some cases of mixed font and word meaning, and there are errors in translation methods, such as Heyuan Town Central Primary School. There are also individual institutions that do not hang Manchu plaques as required, such as rural credit cooperatives in Jilin Province;

### 3.1.3 Street signs

Yitong County, as an important position for the dissemination of Manchu culture, uses both Manchu and Chinese styles on the street signs. The investigation found that the Manchu fonts on the street signs are more eye-catching and the spelling is more standardized, but there are many errors in the writing direction, many mixed characters and meanings, and many errors in translation, such as Zhonghua Road.

### 3.1.4 Shops along the street

The shops along the streets of Yitong County have been transformed through unified planning and design, and both Manchu and Chinese characters are used, which highlights the unique historical and cultural heritage of Yitong. After investigation and research, it was found that none of the manchu characters in more than 1,000 plaques of shops along the streets of Yitong were correct. There are errors in the translation method, the spelling of Manchu, the font and the usage, which are not listed here because of the excessive number.

In general, there are a large number of Manchu tablets in Yitong County, but there are more or less non-standard characters.

## 3.2 Non-standard performance

Due to historical reasons, Manchu is now on the brink of extinction, especially in the northeast, where few people can use and recognize Manchu proficiently. Therefore, some enterprises and institutions and small business operators who do not understand the Manchu ethnic language do not pay attention to the standardized use of Manchu ethnic characters in the window unit plaques and commercial signboards to attract customers, resulting in irregular and incorrect character use.

### 3.2.1 Inconsistent translation standards

The existing plaques in Yitong are free to translate Manchu characters, and the transliteration and free translation of the same words are chaotic, with no unified standards.

For example, the plaque of "Yitong Manchu Autonomous County Civil Affairs Bureau" (Figure 1) "Manchu" uses the free translation of "manju", but the "m" is less written, and the plaque of "Manchu Flavor restaurant" (Figure 2) "Manzu" uses the transliteration of "man zu". For this kind of inherent Manchu nouns, we should use the existing Qing Dynasty words "manju" in a unified standard, and should not use transliteration.



Figure 1: The Civil Affairs Bureau of Yitong Manchu Autonomous County



Figure 2: Manchu style Restaurant

Another example is "Red Sun Restaurant" (see Fig.3) and "Fuxingyuan Style Restaurant" (see Fig.4), the two plaques of "restaurant", the former uses the transliteration "jiu lou", the latter uses the free translation "boohalara taktu" (food, building). Words such as restaurants, restaurants, hotels, pubs, restaurants and so on, transliteration and free translation are not appropriate, but the Manchu word "nure uncara puseli" (restaurant, hotel, wine shop) is more appropriate and accurate.



Figure 3: Red Sun Restaurant



Figure 4: Fuxing Garden Style restaurant

In the existing Manchu characters of Yitong plaque, there are some examples of such transliteration and free translation confusion, which are not listed here.

### 3.2.2 Manchu spelling errors

The spelling of Manchu characters in the existing plaques in Yitong is extremely inaccurate, and the phenomenon of missing and wrong pen is serious.

For example, in the "Table full of salted vegetables and cooked food" plaque (Figure 5), first of all, the Manchu and Chinese are completely inconsistent; Secondly, the Manchu spelling error, "manju" (Manchu) missing a "point", became "manjo"; The "circle" to the right of "honin" (sheep) is written as "dot" and becomes "gonin", while the Manchu language has no spellings such as "manjo" and "gonin", and "honin" (sheep) has nothing to do with the plaque content.

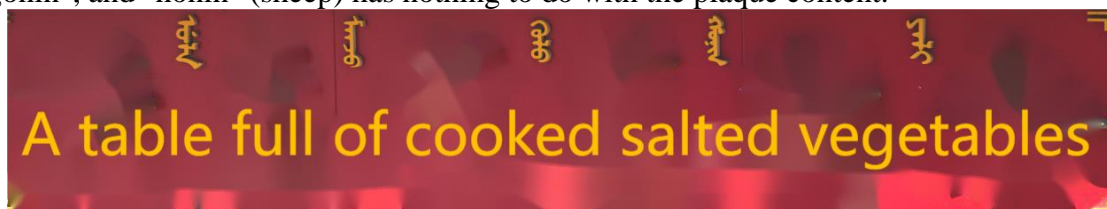


Figure 5: A table full of cooked salted vegetables

### 3.2.3 The Manchu characters are not obvious

In addition to the plaques of government agencies, most of the other Manchu characters are placed above the Chinese characters, and this design is also seen in the plaques of other Manchu towns. However, the problem is that most of the plaques have the Chinese characters enlarged and placed in a prominent place, while the Manchu characters are reduced to a very small size and placed in an inconspicuous border (see Figure 6). It is almost impossible to see that there is full text on the plaque, and what is more, there is no Manchu on the plaque.

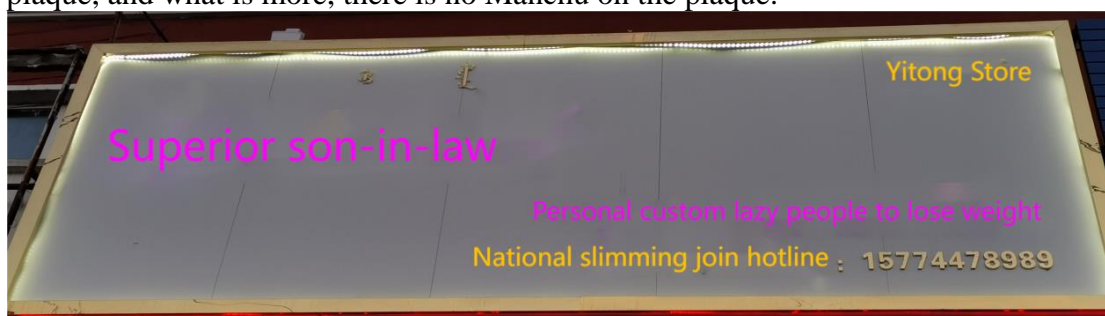


Figure 6: Superior son-in-law

## 4. Manchu characters are not standardized

Ethnic work is no small matter, documents, street signs and plaques in ethnic minority areas and other things closely related to the daily life of the public, according to the provisions of the use of local ethnic minority characters, not only is the basic embodiment of the equality of all ethnic groups, but also the rights and obligations granted by our Constitution and relevant laws. The use of ethnic minority languages, first of all, is to ensure that the words used are correct, multiple languages coexist, the size of the various characters should be appropriate, which is a direct expression of respect for the local ethnic minority culture. In recent years, Yitong County strives to develop Manchu culture and shape the image of civilized Yitong, and actively organizes several Manchu culture forums, with good results and increasing influence.

The standardization of the manchu characters on the Yitong plaque seems to be a surface phenomenon, but its hidden deep impact is worth our deep thought. The characters used in Manchu plaques are directly related to the national feelings of Manchu compatriots, and then affect the construction of cultural atmosphere and business environment in Siping and even the whole Jilin region.

First of all, the non-standard manchu characters on the plaque hinder the civilized image of the city, is not conducive to the spread and development of national culture, and is not conducive to establishing national cultural confidence. The Manchu plaque is the external window of Yitong to show the construction of social spiritual civilization and economic development, and is the comprehensive performance of the city's cultural management level and social text standard consciousness. However, the irregular use of Manchu characters on the plaque is serious and full of mistakes, which often gives outsiders the impression of "not serious, not meticulous, and not responsible", and then reflects the attitude and principle of Yitong and even the superior authorities, reflecting the level of local management and civilization, and will certainly damage the credibility of the Yitong government.

Secondly, the misuse of Manchu plaques is not the embodiment of beauty, but a kind of word pollution, which seriously affects the degree of civilization of society. If we face the wrong information on the plaque every day, local residents, especially local Manchu compatriots, will identify the wrong words as correct, which will also greatly hinder the healthy growth of the next



generation, not only conducive to the creation of the Manchu cultural atmosphere in Yitong, but also conducive to the development of ethnic unity in the long run. It will also have a negative impact on the sustainable development potential of Yitong's economy.

Thirdly, the non-standard characters used in Manchu plaques hinder the improvement of the overall cultural quality of the public. Writing is an important communication tool for human beings, and it is also an indispensable aspect of the overall cultural quality of the public. Whether the writing system is scientific and reasonable, standardized and pure will directly affect the improvement of the public's civilized quality. At present, the confusion in the characters of Manchu tablets in Yitong area has seriously affected people's learning, understanding and mastering of national characters, and affected the efficiency of people's communication and information acquisition, so it has seriously affected the improvement of people's overall cultural quality.

Therefore, it is imperative to correct the Manchu typos on the plaque of Yitong and highlight the proportion of Manchu fonts.

## **5. Standardize the Manchu characters on the plaque**

Looking at the situation of manchu characters in Yitong plaque, the reasons for the errors are mainly in two aspects: First, the government does not have a unified standard for the translation of the content of Manchu plaque; Second, translation production and process lack of expert guidance, no centralized proofreading. In view of these two sticking points, this paper intends to propose a rectification plan for the manchu characters on the Yitong plaque, the specific contents are as follows:

### **5.1 Raise awareness and improve the standardized management methods of social characters**

The relevant departments should improve the relevant laws and regulations, improve the work organization, and cooperate with each other to form a joint management situation. Article 23 of the State Language Law stipulates that "the administrative departments for industry and commerce of the people's governments at or above the county level shall, in accordance with law, administer and supervise the names of enterprises, the names of commodities and the words used in advertisements." Therefore, the national autonomous areas should organize and perfect the management provisions of national characters as soon as possible, and earnestly realize that there are laws to be followed and violations of laws will be prosecuted. At the same time, the standardization of writing is a big project of the whole people. It depends on the whole society, but also returns to the whole society. Therefore, it is necessary to strengthen the linkages and cooperation between all sectors of society. Government leaders attach great importance to the United front department is mainly responsible for the cooperation of various departments such as publicity, education, industry and commerce, and transportation, and actively cooperate, which is an effective measure to achieve the standardization of the characters used in Manchu plaques at present. Industry and commerce, as well as urban regulatory departments, should strengthen the awareness of social character standards, effectively control every step of trademark registration, plaque writing, commodity description and publicity text printing and writing, and force them to standardize characters.

### **5.2 Strengthen the training of employees of plaque making agencies and advertising design companies**

The government can hold Manchu cultural training courses, invite experts and scholars to teach, and conduct necessary training for plaque vendors and advertising companies on Manchu

standardization policies and popularization of Manchu knowledge, so as to master certain Manchu writing methods and improve the level of Manchu.

### **5.3 Strengthen the publicity of the national ethnic language policy**

Through various media such as radio, television and the Internet, the government has publicized the Law on Standard Spoken and Written Chinese and the Law on Regional Ethnic Autonomy of the People's Republic of China to the public, intensified the publicity on the standardization of social languages, and made people realize the harm of non-standard characters. The education department should strengthen education in all kinds of schools at all levels, especially in the primary school stage, so that students can lay a good foundation for Manchu from an early age, and gradually change and eliminate the phenomenon of confusion in Manchu characters.

### **5.4 Cooperate with universities and unify translation standards for centralized proofreading**

The government takes the lead in seeking cooperation from colleges and universities to conduct in-depth and detailed research on the actual problems in the use of Manchu plaques, combine expert opinions, and propose practical solutions to the problems, and adapt to local conditions, so as to accelerate the standardization and civilization process of the use of Manchu plaques.

#### **5.4.1 Unify translation standards**

In view of the fact that most modern plaques are named with "name + industry attribute", the Manchu translation correspondingly adopts the principle of "transliteration + free translation", transliteration of the plaque Chinese character "name" part, free translation of the plaque Chinese character "industry attribute" part. In the case of special plaques, you need to be flexible. The traditional Manchu words, which have been stable in industry and use in Qing Dynasty, should be fully affirmed and adopted. The names of shops and street signs in the plaque should be transliterated into Manchu according to Chinese characters, but should strictly obey the rules of Manchu character formation, obey the habits and ways of expression of Manchu words, and avoid literal translation.

Modern emerging industries or words, unable to use Qing Dynasty words translation, should first learn from modern Qapqal Xibe neologism terms. Due to the special historical origin of Manchu and Qapqal Xibe, and the fact that the neologism terms of modern Xibe have been enriched and developed under the new historical conditions, the Manchu translation of modern emerging industries or words should use the Xibe words after modern norms.

#### **5.4.2 Centralized translation, proofreading and production**

Manchu has its unique translation rules and writing characteristics, only after professional learning and training, can we basically master the translation and writing of Manchu. Therefore, you should never randomly find someone or use translation software to translate and write Manchu. You need to work as a team, and you need to iterate on the words you translate, and you need to double-check the writing to make sure there are no missing pens, wrong pens, or improper translation.

## **6. Conclusion**

The structure of Manchu is special, with the two kinds of auxiliary strokes of "circle" and "point", coupled with the top-down, left-to-right writing order, it is easy to make mistakes in the process of

plaque production, such as the circle point is not divided or lost, the word is lost, the order is reversed. In particular, plaque makers who do not have a Manchu foundation simply cannot find errors in the production process. Therefore, the translation, proofreading and production of the Manchu plaque is best completed by a team, or at least to ensure the smooth communication of all links, so as to ensure the smooth connection and cooperation of all links, so as to ensure the correctness and art of the Manchu font finally presented on the plaque, and add color to the construction of the business environment, national unity and cultural atmosphere in Yitong.

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