

# RECENT DEVELOPMENTS IN EQUIPMENT, FACILITIES, AND FINISHING MATERIALS OF KOREAN ETHNIC FARMHOUSES IN LUNCHING, CHINA

Do Yim Koh, Hyungseon Choi, and Nam Hee Park, Catholic University  
Bokcha Yoon, Yonsei University

There has been extensive research concerning traditional houses and farmhouses of South Korea. Due to the divided nature of Korea, it has been impossible to conduct similar research in North Korea. However, since there is a community of descendants of Koreans who emigrated from North Korea to China, we decided to investigate the question of traditional Korean houses in Lungching, China.

In 1992, South Korea and China re-established diplomatic relations. This opened many opportunities, including pursuing the question of traditional Korean housing in Lungching, China. Of particular interest to Korean housing researchers was the community of Korean descendants who had emigrated to Lungching, some over a hundred years ago. The farmhouses of these people, especially in the rural areas, are similar to those built in Ham-Kyung-Do, a province in North Korea. The houses in Lungching are rectangular in shape and are divided into four to five sections. There are two middle areas -- one is the ondol area which is used for living/sleeping, and one is used as a cooking area. The section at each end of the house is further divided into two side-by-side rooms<sup>1</sup>. Many of the houses still have straw thatched roofs.

While it is not easy to alter the physical structure of houses once they are built, thanks to science and technology, people can enjoy conveniences of water and electrical appliances, as well as better quality building materials both for the structure and for the interior. As the economic situation of a family improves, the quality of life, type of equipment, appliances, and building materials and size of the structure they live in will also improve.

The purpose of this study was to investigate the nature of physical changes in homes, equipment, and building materials that were used in building traditional farmhouses located in Lungching, China.

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<sup>1</sup> Koreans refer to this type of housing as "double file." The ondol floor is located in one of the two middle areas of the house. The rooms at one end are for sleeping and the rooms at the other end are for storage and animals. This type of home maximizes

The methodology included a review of literature and a field study. The survey was divided into five categories: socio-economic background, housing situation and changes, furniture, activities in the home, and festivals, ceremonies and parties that took place in the home; a total of 45 items. Although the research team visited approximately 200 households, the sample population for the study included 124 households in four farm villages in Lungching, China. The following criteria were established concerning the participants in the study: 1) families had to have lived in a traditional farmhouse for ten years; 2) the house had to have been built ten years prior to the study, and 3) the head of the household had to be over forty years of age and knowledgeable about the physical changes that had taken place. A team of six core members plus several assistants made four trips<sup>2</sup> to Lungching to conduct a field survey and face-to-face interviews with the households. In addition to the data of the questionnaire, photographs were taken, drawings were made, and the size of the houses were measured. While conducting the study, the research team received hospitality --"home stay"-- in three different farmhouses.

Major findings of the study include:

1. The average size house was 51.1 square meters and the physical structure was made of wood and mud.
2. Within the last five years, a few financially able families were using bricks to build their homes. The physical structure is "single-file" (four to five areas not divided into two rooms at the end of the house). However, this type seems to lack the privacy of the older model "double-file" structure.
3. All of the houses use the Korean ondol underfloor heating system. Wood, straw and a chaff made of corn and beans are used for fuel. The households continue to cook with three large iron pots. The pots are placed in something like a clay oven, with a separate fire under each one. Since the two middle areas, the ondol area and the kitchen area, are within one large space, the heat from the cooking area also serves as heat for the ondol living area, allowing the wife/mother to talk with her husband and family. Some homes still house animals in one of the end rooms near the kitchen, so that heat from the kitchen also provides warmth for the animals.
4. The lighting system of the homes has improved over the last thirty years. Prior to that, all of the homes used special dried sticks and Korean oil lamps. Around 1962,

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heating efficiency.

<sup>2</sup> Pre-survey-Summer, 1995; Winter-1996; Spring-1997; Summer-1997.

many of the homes began to use incandescent lamps, and since 1982, fluorescent lights. However, because of the high cost of the electricity most of the homes only use one or two lamps.

5. Due to an improved economic situation in Lungching, many households have purchased different electrical appliances. All homes have a black and white TV and a few have a colored TV. Many homes have a radio and an electric cooker, and a few have an electric rice cooker and an electric washing machine.
6. It was not until 1965 that manual water pumps were installed<sup>3</sup>. Before that, people went to the river and a common well to draw water. In 1989, some people bought and installed electric pumps in their houses. At present, 43 households (34.7%) in the sample have electric pumps, 42 households (33.9%) have manual pumps and 37 households (29 %) have running water systems, but only 46 households (37.1%) have sewers. The remainder of the households dispose of dirty water in nearby fields and around the house.
7. None of the households has a bathroom. Everyone in the family washes their face and hands near the pump or faucet, and bathe in a designated place in the house or at the public bath. In the summer, people bathe in the river. The toilets are placed outside the house and are built about one foot above the ground.
8. Vinyl is now used as the finishing material for the ondol floor. It is durable and easy to clean. The inside walls and ceiling of the house used to be a muddy gray but are now plastered with white lime, which is less expensive than other materials and makes the house brighter. Other materials are less durable and economical. Both wallpaper and paint peel off easily because of the moisture from cooking and heating. Windows are made of glass and wood. The cooking area where the iron pots are placed are now cemented with mortar (87.1%) or are tiled (8.9%). The floor of the entrance consists of cement mortar (81.5%), clay (13.7%), bricks (3.2%), or tiles (1.6%)

## Conclusions

1. Farmhouses of Lungching and Korean ethnic farmhouses share the ondol floor heating system.

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<sup>3</sup> The government provided farmhouses with manual pumps.

2. Living conditions, size, and materials used in building farmhouses, reflect the economic situation of the family.
3. All in all, very few changes have taken place with regard to the size of the house and the cooking area. These things will remain unchanged until people have an increase in income and become aware of other ways to improve their homes. As for now these houses have served them well in the past and continue to adequately serve their needs<sup>4</sup>.

#### Further Research

1. There is a need for further study concerning the recent choice of "single-file" homes.

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