

# Patriotism Swells From the Idle Houses

In April, the couple of Cai Jinshan and Huang Lingling living in Hongkong, went back to their hometown -Wulin they left 3 years ago. Walking on the slates, looking Wulin like a newborn, they two were filled with emotion. Wulin was once a lonely and remote village with many houses out of repair. However, places where they played with friends in the childhood like the five storied mansion, Chaodong building, Qiang building and Qiaopi building have become famous online celebrities.

## Sounds of Home come through the Mountains and Sea

The high Dovetail ridges of the red brick houses rise and fall and western-style buildings are well-distributed in Wulin village.

Standing on the balcony in the second floor of Qiaopi building, they all clearly came into view. "It used to be an old school, and I studied here", Cai Jinshan recalled, very saddened.

Qiaopi building, once called Shunyi building, established in 1935. When Qiaopi building was under construction, the Anti-Japanese War broke out. Its owner, Cai Shunyi, who long lived in the Philippines, donated all the money budgeted for housing decoration to support the war. After the founding of People's Republic of China, the building had been used as a school. Qiaopi building didn't become idle until 1984 when a new school was built in the village.

"To memorize this patriotism, people in the village friendly call it 'idle house'", Zhuang Xiaofang, the Secretary of Party Working Committee of Xintang street and director of Wulin project.

And Qiaopi building is not alone. Chaodong building, located at the entrance of the village is another one to support the Anti-Japanese War.

It was the first building in the village constructed of reinforced concrete in 1930, by Cai Xianxie, the overseas Chinese in the Philippines. It was named after Chaodong, Cai Xianxie's another name. Chaodong building covers an area of 700 square meters, drafted by a Philippine designer. The steel and concrete were almost transported from Europe. The house had erected the lift shafts and electric wires in a time when people only used candles at night.

Built beside the old house, it was supposed to be the residence to live in when returning to the hometown. The major construction was just finished when the Anti-Japanese War was in its toughest time. Cai Xianxie and his son suspended the project and gave away the money to support the war.

The 5 storied Minnan official mansion, built in 1936, was owned by Cai Delong, the overseas Chinese in the Philippines. The old Roman style building is the most spectacular in Wulin village, covering an area of 400 square meters. It is also an idle house, whose owner donated all the decoration fund to support the war.

They all have stood for more than 80 years in Wulin ancient village.



## Homesickness being preserved with greatest respect

Nowadays, Wulin, Minnan Overseas Chinese Village, has undergone tremendous changes and become a famous online travelling place.

In addition to some idlehouses, Wulin Village has 11 foreign style buildings, 12 Fanzi buildings and 58 Minnan style houses with red bricks and so on. These nearly 100 ancient foreign style buildings have not been valued for a long time, and even in 2016, due to Jinjiang Intelligent Manufacturing Industrial Project, they were faced with expropriation and demolition. Huang Shao-wei, member of the Standing Committee of the Jinjiang Municipal Party Committee and Minister of Propaganda, was then the Deputy Commander in the Project Headquarter. He introduced that after learning about stories of overseas Chinese and historical culture of these unique buildings, the Jinjiang Municipal Party Committee and Government decided to protect the entire village and develop it well.

At that time, Wulin was like a "hollow village", and its development could not keep up with the surrounding villages. It was said that Wulin village would be protected and developed, but many villagers had doubts and objections that there was Wudian scenic spot in Jinjiang, and it was unnecessary to develop another Wulin traditional village.

There are much difference in historical values and cultural meanings between Wudian and Wulin. One is urban neighborhoods, while the other is traditional villages; one is without indigenous people, while the other is indigenous and ecological countryside; one is Minnan commercial culture, while the other is overseas Chinese culture. After various research and argumentation, the integrity, artistry, diversity and storytelling of Wulin have already been recognized by experts.

On

March 21, 2017, Wulin Traditional Village Project Headquarters was officially established. The transformation of this ancient village has begun.

Cai Jinshan, enthusiastic about public welfare in his hometown, agreed to the expropriation plan immediately when he heard that Wulin would be protected. In fact, many years ago, he lent his old house to the village clinic for more than 50 years without compensation.

In order to protect special homesickness, the development of Wulin strictly adheres to the principles of intact protection, active inheritance, and environmental upgrading, and the concept of remaining green, remaining culture, remaining style, and remaining soul, highlights the national sentiment and regional characteristics, and preserves the original texture of the village.

Nowadays, Chaodong Building has become the famous Overseas Chinese History Museum, and Shunyi Building has become the Overseas Chinese Approval Museum. Wu Jinpeng said, the director of Jinjiang Cultural Relics Protection Center, at that time, Cai Shunyi constructed this building to serve as an overseas Chinese approval hall. At present, the hall not only fulfills his original intention, but also better promotes Minnan culture.



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Sycamore trees in Wulin Village branch out in spring and expects the returning of its residents abroad

In his first visit to Wulin Traditional Village, Yang Xueshan, President of Qingpu Culture and Tourism Corporation, was greatly impressed by the stories of its residents abroad and their hometown complex, patriotism and family values and bonds.

Qingpu Culture and Tourism Corp. has been the service provider of Wulin Traditional Village since 3 years ago, while the old village has been telling new stories ever since.

"Our monthly projects and weekly activities all center around the cultural themes of Amazing Minnan (Southern part of Fujian), Charming Nanyang (Southeast Asia), and Uncompromising Patriotism and Hometown Complex. Focusing on the tourists' experience and the construction of Cultural Intellectual Property (IP) i.e. Nanyang Cultural Festival, we aim to make the most of the objective architectures and revive the ancient village," said Yang Xueshan.

The conservation and exploitation of the village does not only accelerate its own development but also change the future of its young generation.

Among those young men who came back home earliest to start their own business, Cai Chanyi, the runner of a Nanyang style Cafe, has witnessed the booming popularity of the village. As a part-time tour guide, he also works on the free introduction of historical stories behind each architecture. Now, being exceedingly confident about the future, Cai has expanded his business by starting a new Hongkong style Cafe.

In Cafe Under the Banyan Tree, The couple of Cai Jinshan and Huang Lingling tried the office named "Homesickness", and tied the blessing ribbon onto the banyan tree for the happiness and well-being of the family. "What incredible changes!" exclaimed Huang.

The couple has ever made a short stay back to the village with their young kids in 1980s. Without electricity supply then, they lightened the house with candles while others kerosene lamps. They decided to donate an office building for the village committee when they heard that the committee worked in a makeshift office - a borrowed house from villagers.

Later, with CNY130,000 donated by the couple of Cai Jinshan and Huang Lingling, a two-story-and-a-half office building was set up in the central part of the village, covering a collective land of 100 square meters.

Nowadays, the old office building has been converted into a Nanyang style restaurant, named Wangyue. Likewise, many old houses in their memories, with delicate conservation and renovation, have been revived in forms of exhibition hall, cafe, Chinese tea house and hotel.

