

# Intergenerational Habitat and Memory Transition of Home Town of Overseas Chinese in Southeast China Coastal Region: An Ethnographic Study

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## Abstract

At the beginning of the last century, many people in Fujian, Guangdong and other Southeast China Coastal Region left their hometown and worked hard to make a living in Indonesia, Singapore, Malaysia and other countries. Houhuang village, located in Putian City, is a famous hometown of overseas Chinese in Fujian Province of China. It is known as the “Nanyang style village” of Putian because of its unique architectural style and cultural landscape. Overseas Chinese play an important role in the construction of Houhuang village, and the precipitated overseas Chinese culture has become one of the most unique and distinctive cultural marks. However, in this village, the memory of overseas Chinese is facing the crisis of “being forgotten”, and the fresh memory of overseas Chinese in personal experience is being eliminated from overseas Chinese culture. By ethnographic research methods and discourse paradigms such as oral history and

field investigation, this study explores the reasons, and comes to the conclusion that the “forgetting” of overseas Chinese’s memory in the post period is mainly attributed to four aspects: return obstruction, blood dilution, cultural immersion and no way to give back. At the same time, the weakening of overseas Chinese memory has led to three phenomena: the “otherness” of overseas Chinese groups, the “empty generalization” of identity and the “flattening” of overseas Chinese culture. In this regard, the article puts forward reflection and prospect, hoping to record the memory of overseas Chinese through network media and oral history, change the concept of villagers, and let the historical memory of overseas Chinese continue to live in Southeast China Coastal Region.

## Keywords

Intergenerational Habitat, Memory Transition, Overseas Chinese, Marine Culture, Ethnography

## 1. Introduction

The history of the development of overseas Chinese can be traced back to the Qin and Han Dynasties more than 2,000 years ago. Today, the traces of overseas Chinese have spread all over the world (Yang Z., Xu H., Su Y., Wu Z., 2021. A study on the living conditions of left-behind women in overseas Chinese hometowns in southern Zhejiang based on geography - taking Li’ao Street in Wenzhou as an example. *Journal of Overseas Chinese Literature*, 1:191–204). The places of origin of overseas Chinese in China are mostly concentrated in Guangdong and Fujian (Chen F., 2017. Overseas Chinese Village Officials and the Transnational Mobilization of Social Governance Resources in Overseas Chinese Hometowns - Taking Mingxi County, Fujian Province as an Example. *Overseas Chinese History Research*, 1:19–28).

Among them, Putian City, located in central Fujian, is a famous hometown of overseas Chinese in Fujian Province. The number of overseas Chinese in the city is equivalent to about 45% of the city’s total household registration population, overseas Chinese-funded enterprises can be found everywhere, and the influence of overseas Chinese can be seen everywhere in this seaside town. In Putian, Houhuang Village is also famous for its “overseas Chinese Village”. At the same time, it is also known as the “Nanyang Style Village” of Putian for its unique architectural style and cultural landscape.

At the beginning of the 20th century, some Houhuang villagers went to Nanyang to make a living. After years of hard work, they found a place to live in Nanyang, and then took root in a foreign land with their relatives. They transplanted some buildings, memories and rituals from Houhuang to other places, and while changing customs and gradually changing traditions, they maintained a certain connection with their native land. As a result, an “exotic Houhuang” network has been gradually woven over the past few decades. The first generation of overseas Chinese in Houhuang finally made some achievements after hard struggle abroad, but they did not forget their hometown and resolutely returned to their hometown to participate in their hometown construction, leaving many unique and distinct local memories of overseas Chinese from Houhuang.

However, with the passage of time, the iteration of personnel, the aging and even the departure of the first generation of overseas Chinese and their Houhuang peers, as well as a number of other factors, the close ties between overseas Chinese and their hometowns are gradually weakening. Therefore, the new generation of overseas Chinese and Houhuang Village have lost the actual local connection and emotional connection, and even regard the Houhuang Village of the family mother as a “foreign country”. With the deepening of the research, it is obvious that the memory of

overseas Chinese in Houhuang Village is also diluted. Local young people know very little about the past of overseas Chinese and overseas Chinese, the deeds and contributions of local overseas Chinese have been reduced to a flat written history, and local tourism development has always dabbled in the protection and excavation of overseas Chinese culture. The collective memory of overseas Chinese is losing, the cracks are widening, and the two “Houhuang” seem to be moving farther and farther away has become an irreversible trend.

The habitat change and memory transition of overseas Chinese in Houhuang Village are worth thinking and exploring. In order to further explore the memory interaction and evolution between the two “Houhuang Village” at home and abroad, an investigation group was formed to carry out fieldwork, description and research with ethnographic research methods and discourse paradigm. The survey members went to Houhuang to conduct field interviews based on ethnographic methods, and used oral history and field diaries to record in detail the feelings and memories of two families and three generations about the culture and ethnic groups of overseas Chinese in Houhuang from three aspects: childhood memories, overseas Chinese impressions and interactions with overseas Chinese. The three stages of memory changes of overseas Chinese are sorted out: the hardship of life leads them to make a living overseas, the families of overseas Chinese get rich and feed their hometown, and the memory of the loss of hometown is gradually broken. This helps to analyze the four restrictive factors in the interaction between overseas Chinese and Houhuang Village: return obstruction, blood dilution, cultural immersion and no way to give back. On this basis, the three problems faced by the overseas Chinese attribute of Houhuang Village are summarized: the “otherness” of overseas Chinese groups, the “empty generalization” of identity and the “flattening” of overseas Chinese culture. This reflects the grim situation of the elimination of interaction between overseas Chinese and the mainland in Houhuang Village and the dating of overseas Chinese memory. Based on this situation, a series of ideas and measures to resist the passage of time, personnel alienation, protect nostalgia and survive the fire in the hometown of overseas Chinese in Houhuang have been summarized, hoping to provide reference for Houhuang Village and other similar villages.

## 2. Local information of the case site

The key speaker, M1A, is now over 70 and is still very talkative. *“I am an out-and-out native of Houhuang village. I have been in Houhuang since I was a child.”* In response to a question from the research group, he said, *“Houhuang Village used to be very poor, after the founding of the People’s Republic of China in 1949, in the early days of that time, it was really poor. It has changed a lot now.”*

Under the account of M1A, Houhuang Village, a small and exquisite ancient village in Xitianwei Town, Putian City, Fujian Province, has gradually unveiled its mystery.

### 2.1 Nanyang style, originating from Houhuang

Houhuang Village (Community) is located at the southern foot of three Shandong provinces at the junction of West Tianwei Town and Wutang Town in Putian City, northwest of Xihua Plain, with a total area of about 1.5 square kilometers. According to its geographical location, it is divided into two natural villages: Qianzhi and Houpai. Recalling the origin of his own surname in the village, M1A said: *“There would be fights between the surnamed Xu and the surnamed Wu, and a lot of people died at that time.”* M1A took out the *《Houhuang Village Ethnography》* that he participated in writing, which records the family changes of Houhuang Village over the centuries. During the Song and Yuan Dynasties, two surnames Huang and Wu entered the village successively. In the middle of the Qing Dynasty, Xu surnamed moved in. After

generations of reproduction, the population surpassed that of Huang and Wu, and became a prosperous family in the village.

As of 2018, there are six village groups in the village, with 276 households and a total population of 1016. The population surnamed Xu accounts for more than 60% of the total population of the village, and nearly 40% of the population is surnamed Huang. The unique architectural form and natural and cultural environment of the village constitute the spatial layout of “ancient house, beautiful scenery, nature and homesickness”, which reflects the unique pastoral scenery and beautiful nostalgia of the hometown of overseas Chinese (Song Q., 2020. Geographical Name Development, Migration Change and Nostalgia Memory Inheritance - An Empirical Analysis Based on the Natural Village Geographical Name Census Data in Shandong Province. (*Journal of Shandong Normal University (Social Science Edition)*). 4:143–156).

## 2.2 Ocean-going temperament, chasing the waves of overseas Chinese

When it comes to the overseas Chinese in Houhuang Village, M1A's whole person is in high spirits: *“There are many overseas Chinese in Houhuang Village! Many villagers in Houhuang Village are forced to leave their hometowns in order to survive due to poverty, and travel to Southeast Asia, Indonesia and Malaysia.”* This is the starting point for Houhuang Village to become an overseas Chinese village. *“At the beginning, it was all about repairing bicycles, setting up stalls and working part-time, but it was all a bit of petty fuss and manual labor. Later, after more than ten years of hard work, after the efforts of a generation or two, we finally started a business, and many people opened shops, ran businesses, and became rich. After getting rich, overseas Chinese do not forget to take care of their relatives in their hometown, do not forget to serve their hometown, and fully support various public welfare undertakings in their hometown. Over the past few decades, they have paved our canals, built schools and local hospitals, and donated generously. This is obvious to all.”* While saying this, M1A expressed his gratitude to his overseas Chinese compatriots.

According to incomplete statistics, the number of overseas Chinese who emigrated overseas is twice as large as that in the village. Influenced by the trend of overseas Chinese valuing good merchants and getting rich through hard work (Chu L., 2015. Definition, Integration and Evaluation of the Role of “Overseas Chinese Village Officials”: Taking Qingtian, the Hometown of Overseas Chinese in Zhejiang as an Example. *Journal of Lishui University*. 6:1–6), the Houhuang people are particularly advanced in their awareness of doing business and developing the rural commodity economy. The textile industry and family poultry industry which have been developed successively have made important contributions to the economic development of Houhuang.

## 2.3 Chunmei human feelings, leave enough nostalgia

In 2013, Houhuang Village was named as the first batch of happy home pilot villages in Putian City, supported by government funding for the construction of infrastructure, focusing on the inheritance of folk culture, the beautification of living environment and the increase of residents' income. As the first overseas Chinese village in Licheng District, Houhuang Village is known as “Nanyang style and hometown in Dream”. In 2018, Houhuang Village was included in the fifth batch of Chinese traditional villages list.

Today, Houhuang Village has seized the development opportunity and tried to create the core of tourism culture in terms of overseas Chinese cultural perception, folk culture perception, and rural life. Through the development of characteristic suburban agriculture, ouhuang Village cooperates with surrounding attractions such as Guansheng Temple and Jiumu Ancestral Hall to seek a characteristic path to build a comprehensive cultural tourism area. Houhuang people carry on

the past and forge the future, and the spirit of hard work is also an important spiritual driving force for the future development of Houhuang Village.

## 2.4 Sending love across the sea, where is the hometown of overseas Chinese

Referring to the current situation of overseas Chinese in Houhuang, M1A said: *"Tell them about the changes in our hometown of Houhuang, and ask them to bring the children home and get to know them. Although they say this, they rarely come back. After all, there are not many families who bring their children home. There are only a few households. Because even if you take them home, they don't know anything, you understand? They cannot communicate with the elders in the village and cannot understand the language of the village."* M1A hopes that the descendants of overseas Chinese can go back to their hometown to have a look at the current Houhuang and look at the changes over the years, but he is full of emotion, knowing that such a wish can no longer be realized. *"There's nothing we can do about it, and we really want them to come back, but it can't be realized."* he sighed.

The development of Houhuang is inseparable from the support of overseas Chinese, whether it is the village landscape or local customs, are deeply branded with the imprint of the hometown of overseas Chinese. However, the estrangement in blood relationship between Houhuang Village and overseas "isomorphic" overseas Chinese settlements cannot be reversed. The vivid thoughts of overseas Chinese at that time are bound to fade into history (Liu Z., 2018. Inheritance and Protection of Rural Culture. *People's Forum*. 21:130–131). Today, the overseas Chinese imprint of Houhuang Village still exists in material form, but is the memory of overseas Chinese generation after generation still alive? How will the "same root" settlements at both ends of the sea continue to be maintained? The relationship between Houhuang Village overseas Chinese and local people is worth discussing and studying.

## 3. Research object and process

### 3.1 Research objects

#### 3.1.1. Basic situation and feature description

Focusing on the above problems and aiming at the memory of overseas Chinese in Houhuang Village, this field research conducted an in-depth ethnographic history interview with 6 Houhuang people who grew up in Houhuang Village by combining online and offline methods. Among them, the subjects were all related to overseas Chinese, covering the experience and memory of three generations in two families. In this survey, each interview text is numbered according to the interviewee's gender, intergenerational attribute and family. M1A represents the grandfather (first generation) male (M) of the A family, M2B represents the parent (second generation) male of the B family, FM3A represents the female (FM) of the third generation of the A family, and FM3A (2) represents the second interviewee of the third generation female of the A family. The following is the basic information of the respondents and the intergenerational relationship map (Figure 1).

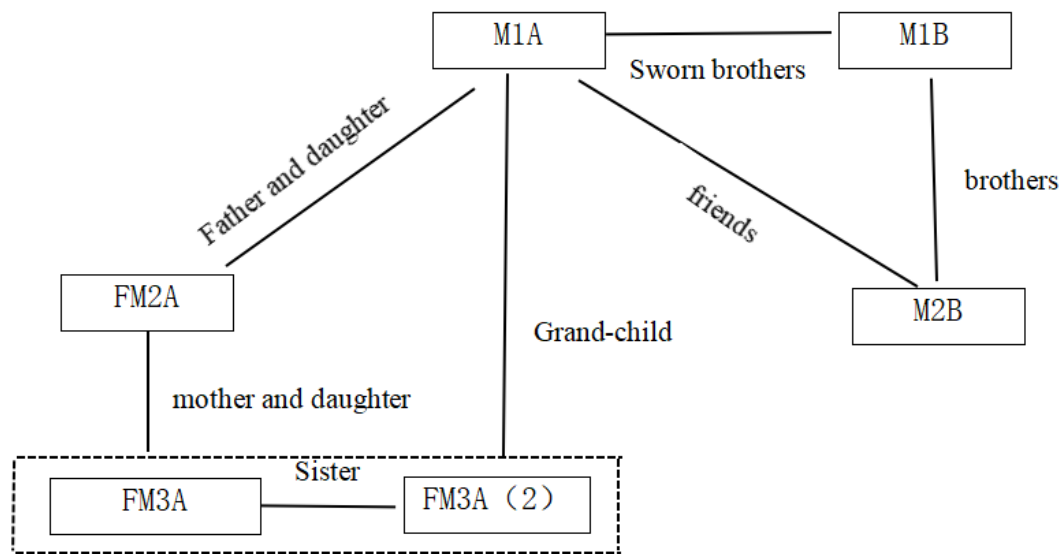


Fig 1. Respondents' basic information and intergenerational relationship pedigree

### 3.1.2. Respondent Details

**M1A:** born in 1951, male, the research team interviewed him online and offline twice. His Mandarin is clear, with a little local accent, and the interview is mixed with a small amount of local dialect. He used to be a village cadre in Houhuang Village and is now the president of the Houhuang Village Association for the elderly. He has lived in Houhuang for a long time and is still living in the village. He is one of the core figures in this oral history interview and one of the key reporters in the offline research process. Born in 1951 in the Xu family of Houhuang Village Houpai Jingcuo Zaili, he witnessed the development of Houhuang Village in recent decades and personally experienced several major turning points in the development of Houhuang Village. There are six brothers and two sisters in his family. He studied in Houhuang Primary School when he was young, entered junior high school in 1964, and then dropped out of school after the Cultural Revolution. In 1972, after the “criticizing Lin Biao and Confucius” campaign began, he was transferred to the propaganda department to help organize study materials and became a temporary part-time worker. In 1975, he returned to his hometown to marry and have children and worked as a farmer in Houhuang Village. After the burden on his family was reduced, he began to assist in the work of village affairs. In 2016, he was rated as the excellent president of the grass-roots geriatric association in Putian City and Licheng District. In 2016 and 2017, he was awarded the excellent president of Ping an Community in Putian City and Licheng District for two consecutive years. He inherited the excellent family style of Houhuang Xu Family, and worked hard to promote the construction of civilization in his hometown and create a beautiful national village, so as to repay the feelings of his hometown.

**FM2A:** Born in 1977, female, migrant worker. Since she herself does not live in Houhuang Village, the research team conducted an online interview with her. Her Mandarin is clear and mixed with a small amount of local dialect. Before getting married, she lived in Houhuang Village for 21 years and then moved out of town.

**FM3A:** Born in 1998, female, fashion designer. The research team conducted an online interview with her. Her Mandarin is clear. She lived in Houhuang Village before junior high school and has not lived in Houhuang since then.

**FM3A (2):** Born in 2001, female, nurse. The research team conducted an online interview with her, who speaks clear Mandarin and has lived in Houhuang Village for a long time and now lives in her place of work.

**M1B:** Born in 1964, male, a residential operator in Houhuang Village. The research team conducted both online and offline interviews with him. His Mandarin is clear and he lives in Houhuang Village for the rest of his time except for a few years out.

**M2B:** Born in 1968, male, engaged in financial industry. The research team conducted offline interviews with him, who has lived in Houhuang for 46 years. His uncle and his family developed in Indonesia and are a group of overseas Chinese with a successful career. M2B has rich life experience, has personally visited relatives in Indonesia, has a personal experience and understanding of the situation of overseas Chinese, and has a profound grasp of the historical origin of overseas Chinese in Houhuang Village. As parents, M2B has stronger feelings for overseas Chinese than their peers in the village, no less than M1A and other grandparents. His experience sharing and personal views provide a lot of valuable information for this study, and like M1A, he is the core figure of the interview and the key reporter of offline fieldwork.

## 3.2 Research process

### 3.2.1. Research methods

The fieldwork based on ethnography is mainly divided into three stages, which aims to effectively promote the research work and overcome the difficulties brought by the epidemic through the combination of online and offline complementary methods. The first stage is mainly online research, the research team entered the field as the gatekeeper through the curator of the Houhuang Village Museum of the past of China, came into contact with other samples by snowballing, and identified the main subjects of the oral history interview with the family as the unit. With the help of the sample materials and interview texts obtained at this stage, the research group discussed and determined the theme and main line of the research, which laid the foundation for the second stage of offline research. The second stage focuses on offline field research, field work and oral history interviews. The research team went deep into Houhuang Village to conduct a three-day ethnographic fieldwork, carried out field data analysis of the history and culture of the survey area, carried out portraits and information coding of the interviewees, obtained real and comprehensive first-hand qualitative research materials, and collated and summarized the work. In the third stage, we return to the online interview, interview the remaining interviewees, supplement the data gap in the offline interview, and carry out the inspection and proofreading of the text data.

### 3.2.2. Research time and organization

The first stage of work is from June 9, 2020 to June 13, 2020. The specific situation is: the director of the museum, director Zeng (gatekeeper): June 9, 2020 Online, Tencent conference; M1B: June 10, 2020, online interview, Tencent conference; M1A and FM2C: June 13, 2020, online interview, Tencent conference.

The second phase of work will be from August 7 to August 9, 2020. The specific situation is: M1A: offline on August 7, 2020; M2B: offline on August 8, 2020. During the period, field research, ethnographic investigation, fieldwork completed, field data analysis of the history and culture of the research site, portraits and information coding of the interviewees, and the collection and sorting of first-hand text data.



The working time of the third stage is from August 10, 2020 to August 13, 2020. The details are: FM3A (2): Online interview on August 10, 2020, Tencent conference; FM3A: Online interview on August 12, 2020, WeChat video; FM2A: Online interview, August 13, 2020, Tencent conference.

### 3.2.3. Investigation and implementation process

Based on ethnographic fieldwork and research paradigm, the research selects field data collection and oral history interviews as the main methods of text data collection, supplemented by comprehensive fieldwork methods such as observation, literature, ethnographic work, etc. In the processing and analysis of qualitative research data, the research group first concentrated on oral history and ethnographic methods. Among them, because of its particularity, the oral history materials of the interviewees take the analytical orientation under the two paradigms of “*memory theory paradigm*” and “*narrative theory paradigm*” as the mainstream (Wang K., 2021. Oral History - A Research Method of Village Cultural Changes from the Perspective of Collective Memory. *Journal of Northwest University for Nationalities (Philosophy and Social Sciences)*. 3:78–85). The materials of oral history of ethnography are highly narrative, and complete story texts can be collected along the historical context through interviews. Therefore, after the acquisition of the data, the research team first reported the interview data according to the time context to form a complete ethnographic oral history data. On this basis, the time context of the data is analyzed and sorted out, and the main line of the interactive relationship between overseas Chinese and rural areas is sorted out, that is, the two intertwined development lines of “overseas Chinese-township”. After that, it makes a narrative study of the contents of the materials, and extracts the important concepts involved in the narrative process, so as to clarify the changes in the interactive relationship between the two “overseas Chinese-townships” and its influencing factors. This survey is divided into three stages in data collection. Based on the field diary and field work, the detailed process of the research implementation is as follows:

#### The first round of online interviews, looking for a breakthrough

In June, 2020, the team members selected the traditional villages in China through the network data, and finally identified Houhuang Village as the field for this survey. After consulting, the team members got the information of Houhuang Village Museum of the Republic of China, and found the contact information of the museum founder Zeng curator on Xiaohongshu, adding the curator's Wechat. As a result, with curator Zeng as the gatekeeper, the research team successfully entered the field. During the interview with curator Zeng, the team members learned some basic information about Houhuang Village, and through curator Zeng contacted M1B, a local Houhuang resident who was the owner of the hostel, the progress of the interview was advanced. In the second interview, the group gained a lot, and the team members had a preliminary understanding of the current situation of overseas Chinese in Houhuang Village. Out of enthusiasm, M1B pushed to us the contact information of M1A muri, the president of the Houhuang Village Association for the elderly, which is the core figure of this interview. As a result, the progress of the online interview was advanced. In the third interview, M1A also warmly invited the village secretary to participate in the interview, so the research team gained more valuable information, which laid the material foundation for the follow-up offline research interview program.

All in all, the group gained a lot in the first stage of online interviews, which provided a reference for the follow-up research. At the end of the interview, M1A also presented his participation in the 《*Houhuang Village Ethnography*》 for our research reference.



## Go deep into the field and realize the real “Houhuang”

From August 6 to August 9, 2020, team members went to Houhuang Village to conduct field research.

On the morning of August 7th, M1A led the team members to visit the famous scenic spots of Houhuang Village and conducted an in-depth interview at their home for two hours. In the afternoon, M1A once again led the team members to visit the Museum of the past of the Republic of China, Taoyuan Society and other buildings, thus ending the first day of research.

On August 8th, the team members were warmly invited to the home to taste authentic Putian food with M1B. On the afternoon of the 8th, M1A led the team members to visit Houhuang Village overseas Chinese Museum, Longhua Hall, etc. So far, the group has visited all the memorial halls and ancestral halls in Houhuang Village, and has a more intuitive and in-depth understanding of Houhuang Village. In the evening, through M1A contact, the team members conducted an interview with M2B who had visited relatives and friends of overseas Chinese in Indonesia for more than three hours, and got a lot of unexpected gains, which enriched the gap in the interview data and added a new content dimension.

On the afternoon of August 9, the team members left Houhuang Village after saying goodbye to M1A and returned with a full load. During the three days of fieldwork, the team members personally experienced the enthusiasm and kindness of the Houhuang Village people, which provided more enthusiasm and motivation for the following research.

## Online interview again, supplementary data gap

Since the second and third generations of the M1A family are not on Houhuang Village, team members are unable to communicate offline with them. However, through the recommendation of M1A, the team members got the contact information of M1A granddaughter FM3A (2) and added their Wechat to contact her online. On August 10, the team conducted an online interview with FM3A (2), and then obtained the contact information of M1A's granddaughter FM3A through FM3A (2).

On August 12, the team conducted an online interview with FM3A to supplement the gap of the third generation in the interview materials. On Aug. 13, recommended by FM3A, the team members contacted her mother, the daughter of M1A, FM2A, and conducted an online interview with her, thus perfecting the oral history of three generations of the A family and further filling the gap in the information. This is the end of the three-stage interview.

During the research period, the team members collected and enriched the fieldwork data by means of recording, shooting videos and photos, and combined with the literature during the interview, they had a more in-depth understanding and grasp of the author's oral materials. to ensure the authenticity and validity of the data. The snowball interview method was adopted. We take Houhuang Village's interpersonal network as a clue to make the theme of oral history interview appear and deepen along with the rolling and passing of the interviewees.

After a full field interview, the research team carried out a division of labor, listened back to the recording and screenshot content, and truthfully transformed the interview content into text, ensuring the authenticity of the material as much as possible in the writing process. On the other hand, by comparing the literature and consulting the Houhuang Village village chronicles, the research team compared and verified the oral history data of the three generations, which ensured the authenticity and validity of this study.

In the course of the study, the interviewees were very enthusiastic and talkative, and they cooperated very well with the research design and planning of the research team, so that the field work was carried out smoothly. M1A, in particular, has a strong supportive attitude to the research work, actively participates in oral history interviews, field research and text collection, and warmly welcomes team members. He believes that this research work can better publicize his hometown, hoping that the “hometown love” of Houhuang Village can be better continued, so it provides a lot of support and help to the research. In addition, several other respondents showed enthusiasm for building a Houhuang community and promoting Houhuang culture. The researchers were deeply affected by the strong nostalgia of the host.

#### 4. Intergenerational habitat and memory transition of overseas Chinese villages under the influence of marine culture

Based on the perspective and method of oral history of Ethnography, this paper makes an interview survey on three generations (grandparents, fathers and your generation). The research takes diachrony as the clue and “intergenerational habitat” and “memory change” as the narrative contents. The respondents narrated their life based on their personal life history in three short periods of time, namely: Endure great hardships in pioneer work, and ventured into Nanyang; Feeding back the hometown and giving back care; Returning home is hindered, nostalgia gradually disappears. And forming a map of the relationship between the respondents and the research ideas (Figure 2). The numbers of the three generations of respondents and their respective interview contents will be presented in the following ethnographic field research.

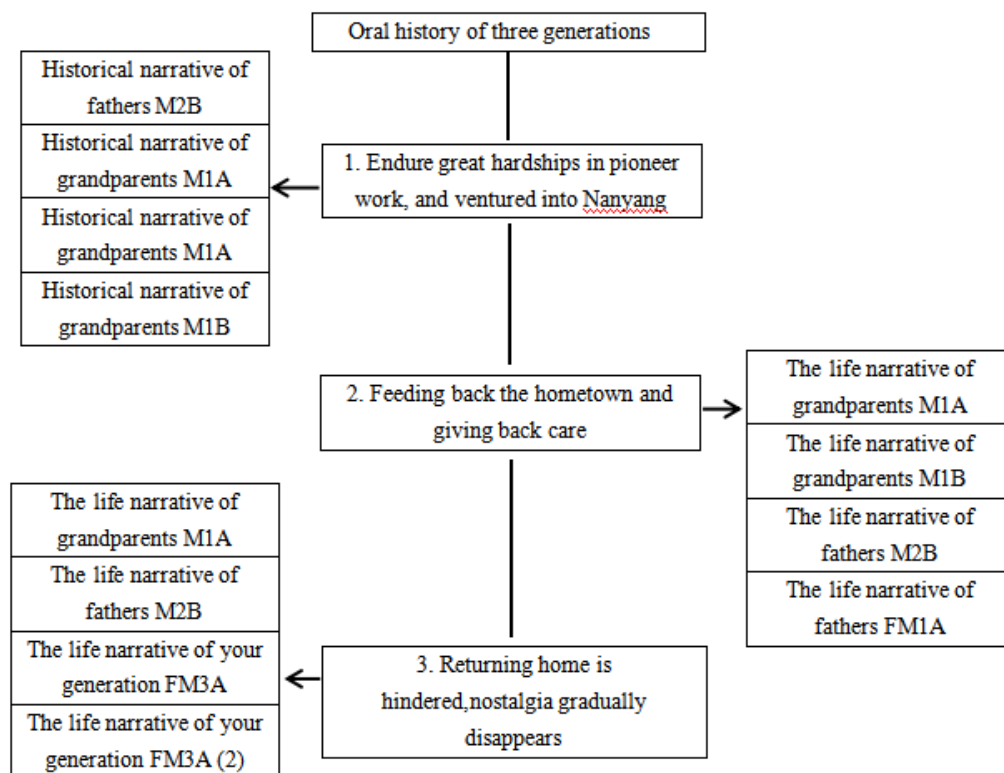


Fig 2. Map of the relationship between respondents and research ideas based on oral history of Ethnography

## 4.1 Endure great hardships in pioneer work, and ventured into Nanyang

Putian is a famous hometown of overseas Chinese in China, with about 1.5 million overseas Chinese. For those who live in Fujian, which is located in the ancient southern wilderness, “80% of the mountains, 10% of the water and 10% of the fields”, the south of the mountains and the coast of the Straits, “going out to sea for a living” has become a good choice, because Fujian itself can make use of the scarcity of arable land, the soil that is not suitable for crops, the lack of resources and the geographical location adjacent to the sea. “Nanyang” is a Chinese concept of human geography, generally referring to Southeast Asia (Luo L., 2010. *Nation Building and Ethnic Identity: Changes in Chinese Identity in the Construction of Nation-States in Southeast Asia after World War II. Southeast Asian Studies*. 4:75–80+96). The story of the second “Houhuang Village” in a foreign land is also written in such a geographical environment.

### 4.1.1. Starting from Yangfan “Houhuang”

Putian has been deeply influenced by marine culture since ancient times, and the gene of marine culture has been engraved into the flesh and blood of Putian people and turned into the historical origin of “going far”. For this, M2B says:

*“in coastal areas, we have a concept called marine culture – that is, to go out and fight.”*

*“at this time, most of our Putian went out to Nanyang (Southeast Asia) to make a living. The point is that in this place, marine culture has created an inevitable trend for these people to go out.”*

M2B mentioned the word “make a living”. In fact, the spiritual and cultural formation of going out is affected not only by the local geographical location, but also by the economic situation of Houhuang families, and the two factors show a coupling relationship. The economic factor is an important factor for the Houhuang people to go to Nanyang. Referring to the reasons for overseas Chinese going out at that time, M1A blurted out:

*“before liberation, our Houhuang, like the whole country, was very (poor).”*

During the period from the beginning of the 19th century to the 1960s, at the beginning of the century, the regime changed and everything was waiting for prosperity, the national economy was still in a faltering start (Zhang K., 2017. *A Review of the Changes in the Relationship between Diaspora Chinese Ethnic Groups and Their Ancestral (Nation) Country. History of Overseas Chinese and Overseas Chinese*. 2:10–18). However, due to the lack of resources and the inefficient agricultural productivity left over from the old relations of production, the overall economic level of Houhuang Village is very backward, and basically every household is more embarrassed. The living environment was very bad at that time, and things didn’t get much better until M1A was young, he recalls:

*“I had to wear old clothes. The big brother’s clothes will be worn by me, and finally my little brother will wear them. It’s all like that, and it’s like that in every household.”*

M2B is the second generation, and he admits that he is much happier than his peers under the influence of family factors and has not suffered too much. However, when he recalled the days of his father’s childhood, he could not help sighing:

*“the key is not having enough to eat. Edematous disease was common at that time, and you had no nutrition. It is a kind of malnutrition, which is bound to die, in fact, it is to starve to death.”*

*“it’s very hard, the kind of hardship you can’t imagine.”*

Even so, the family financial situation of the first generation is often more tense than that of other residents of the same village. With no way to make a living in their hometown, they looked around and finally anchored their eyes to another country.

*“those who go abroad are poorer than those in the original village. Yes, he won’t leave if he’s not poor.”*

Therefore, in the early years of the Republic of China, the Japanese aggressors invaded China and suffered banditry in successive years, and the Houhuang Village people lived in a hot aquatic life. Under the background of economic depression and poor people’s livelihood, in 1913, Xu Wenliang, a villager of Houhuang, left home and traveled to Indonesia to make a living, becoming the first entrepreneur of Houhuang Village to go to Nanyang, which led to the first wave of the village going to Nanyang. At that time, people went to Nanyang to “make a living”, and the hardship was self-evident. M1A says:

*“those who first went there were very hard. According to the old man, when those people went by boat, they took a bag of sweet potatoes, a bag of cooked sweet potatoes and a bag of baked ones. At that time, the families of the people who first went to Indonesia were so miserable that they had nothing to eat.”*

*“It’s hard to make a living in Indonesia. Like the one next door to us, this is the first one to go to Indonesia. When he came back, he taught the next generation that the side dish is not shrimp, but soy sauce. A small dried shrimp or salted fish has to be eaten twice.”*

The barrier in space can not separate the spiritual maintenance, these villagers who work abroad often have a strong feeling of going to the country and nostalgia. As the native Houhuang, he was born and raised here, and his relatives are all here, and they have deep feelings for it. However, the desire to return home is always there, but the economic conditions do not allow it. In those days, returning to my hometown meant high round-trip fares. M1A says:

*“Do you know how much it costs to come back? They worked hard for a year, but the fare was not enough, especially when they first got there. ”*

At that time, “Xia Nanyang” was not only a high-spirited word symbolizing going abroad for development, but also an one-way ticket to burn one’s bridges. Once you went out, you could not easily return to your hometown, that is to say, you could not return to your hometown without achievement. On the one hand, it is that it is difficult to afford the fare, and on the other hand, it is the saying that “there is no face to see the elders of Jiangdong”. When it comes to the difficult beginning of the first generation of overseas Chinese drifting abroad, M1A sighed with emotion:

*“When he went to Indonesia at that time, he didn’t come back every year. He only came back once in many years.”*

However, hard work has also laid the foundation for the development and growth of overseas “Houhuang Village”, and foreign “Houhuang Village” has gradually developed.

#### 4.1.2. The bumpy history of making a family in a foreign land

In that era of social unrest, there was only a leaf boat, a bag of dry food and a body of courage. The southbound ship was crowded with these scribbled people (Zhuang G., 2000. From Nationalism to Patriotism: Changes in the Identity of Overseas Chinese in Nanyang to China from 1911 to 1941. *Journal of Sun Yat-Sen University (Social Science Edition)*. 4:110–116). They may simply be unable to live in their hometown, or they may have big dreams of changing the fate of

their individual or family. In short, a hundred years ago, in the wet and dark dilapidated cabins, groups of people from different backgrounds had their own thoughts, but they had no idea what the future would be, and it was impossible to predict that they had joined the famous tide of “going to Nanyang” in the history of China’s population movement.

With the diligent and painstaking drive of the Chinese nation, these tourists who set foot on the New World wrote a vast Nanyang entrepreneurial epic in the following nearly a century. This not only created the prosperity of the Malay Peninsula in the last century, but also many people completely rewrote their own destiny. But if you want to make a fortune in a foreign land, the right time, place and people are indispensable, and the road is long. Obviously, this is not a smooth road.

### The fertile land of Indonesia and other countries

Among several countries in Southeast Asia, Indonesian overseas Chinese are the majority of Houhuang. As the largest archipelago country in the world, Indonesia has unique geographical advantages. The multi-volcanic eruption left Indonesia fertile soil, the typical tropical rain forest climate provided abundant precipitation, and its rich natural resources, coupled with the hard-working temperament of the Chinese, soon occupied the right place at the right time. M2B, who has visited relatives in Indonesia several times, has some views on the history of overseas Chinese’s development in Southeast Asia:

*“Indonesia also has a large population, nearly 200 million. But why are we in Indonesia? as I just said, the land is fertile and rice can grow three or four seasons one year.”*

*“Indonesia believes in Islam, and they have a characteristic-they worship three times a day. The structure of the whole Indonesia is: they have a lot of land, good houses, fertile land, no need to kill insects and water, the natural conditions are very good, and there is food to eat there, so they worship three times a day. Then we Chinese will take advantage of this opportunity to get out.”*

At the same time, the development of Indonesia’s scientific and technological level lags behind, and a large part of the overall economy depends on foreign imports:

*“When you walk on the streets of Indonesia, 80% of the things are imported. In addition to tropical fruits, fish, daily necessities, motorcycle, etc., what you can name are basically imported. Therefore, the level of technological and scientific development of the whole country is very poor, but the whole environment is very good.”*

These conditions provide an entrepreneurial window for villagers who travel to Nanyang, and the history of overseas Chinese families getting rich begins.

### The foothold process of the first generation of overseas Chinese

The history of the first generation of overseas Chinese getting rich in Nanyang is full of ups and downs. They will successively go through three stages: the primitive accumulation of personal assets, the foothold stage and the southward migration of the whole family. In the first stage, they do not have enough food and clothing, and there is a language barrier. They are often engaged in cheap labor with lower social status, and their life is extremely difficult (Wang L., 2021. An Ethnographic Investigation of the Changes in the Livelihood of Tanmen Fishermen and the Human-Sea Relationship. *Journal of Minzu University of China (Philosophy and Social Sciences Edition)*. 48(5):107–115). In the second stage, they have accumulated a certain amount of personal wealth and experience, their business scope has

been gradually expanded, and their living conditions have gradually improved. In the third stage, most of them were able to gain a foothold in Indonesia, so they returned home to take their families to Indonesia, and the group grew. M1A briefly outlines this timeline:

*"At that time, those people who went to the opposite side (across the sea) to start a business because they had just arrived there and were strangers. When they first went, they were working there, and then, as in our Putian, they began to engage in activities such as repairing bicycles. After seven or eight years of hard work, their financial situation improved, so they bought a house and opened a shop there. After they gained a foothold over there, they came back and brought their own family to there, then the relative, and then other people. So they went there in batches."*

## Diffusion of overseas Chinese groups

At first, the industry distribution of overseas Chinese was relatively concentrated. M2B says:

*"We overseas Chinese always have to work in two industries : one is the weaving and the cotton spinning industry , the other is the ice-making industry. Because it is tropical and mainly engaged in fishing, which requires ice factories to freeze seafood."*

With the passage of time, population mobility and capital expansion, with the quality of "diligence" and "dare to work hard" and the contacts and assets that have been slowly accumulated over the past few decades (Wang L., 2018. The South China Sea as a Network - A Historical Investigation of the Cross-sea Movement of Fishermen in the South China Sea. *Journal of Yunnan Normal University (Philosophy and Social Sciences Edition)*. 50(4):36–46). Over the past few decades, the power and influence of the first generation of overseas Chinese settling in Nanyang began to spread quietly in Nanyang, entering various fields of production and consumption. M1A says:

*"my uncle gradually began to specialize in making freezers, because over there is a tropical place, where everything has to be frozen. In addition, one of my cousins has set up a monopoly on paper somewhere over there, that is, papermaking. He seems to have a joint venture with two people from a family of Xiamen , China."*

*"since then, they have started working in freezers, motorcycles, while others focus on mining and catering."*

The range of distribution is also beginning to have the characteristics of diversity, and the regional distribution is no longer limited to Indonesia itself, and even some return to the country:

*"some of them even come to set up enterprises and catering industries in Shanghai and other places. There are still people who contract mines in other places."*

Among them, some overseas Chinese have embarked on the road of getting rich. When the news came back to Houhuang's hometown, the identity code of "overseas Chinese" once became a symbol of wealth.

## 4.2 Feeding back the hometown and giving back care

### 4.2.1. Maintenance of material memory

M1A took us down the country road, talking about the situation of overseas Chinese leaving home at that time, he mentioned a very ceremonial behavior, that is, some overseas Chinese would go to a foreign land with their cooking land

at home. The above mentioned the hard way for overseas Chinese to survive. They never forget their hometown, never forget the real existence of Houhuang. However, how should this memory and this homesickness survive?

### Take the house as the matchmaker

For overseas Chinese, the strong clan concept makes them expand their business outside the family as a unit and take root locally, at the same time, they do not forget to return to their hometown for construction (Zhao X., 2011. The cyclical development of closedness and openness: A theoretical framework for understanding rural China and its transformation. *Open Times*. 12:99–112). Home is the foundation and the foundation. The first thing most successful overseas Chinese give back to their hometown is to build their own houses. As a material memory, the hometown house contains deep nostalgia. M2B stated: *"This is the traditional concept of the Chinese people. This gene has been around for thousands of years and has been available since birth. Generation after generation of blood tradition, our gene is in it, and it's hard to change it. Well, this rises to the cultural heritage we just mentioned. Cultural inheritance includes all aspects of our thinking, including nostalgia. These are all cultures."*

M1A stated: *"Well, it's actually pretty good. This is true of many overseas Chinese in our village. They all get their money back and build houses for their relatives to live in."*

Independent villas, Western European style and local traditional Puxian style blend, which is the performance of overseas Chinese for the compatibility of overseas culture and local customs, is the epitome of the unique Nanyang overseas Chinese culture. When introducing the house view of Houhuang, M2B said: *"the main residential houses in Houhuang village are four-rooms and five-rooms style, so how was this building built? It was not built by our own money in Houhuang village, it was built by overseas Chinese."*

### Feedback construction and overseas Chinese imprint

In addition to their own houses, there are even more successful people who have generously donated money to build highways and education for their hometown. The catalogue on the foundation stone of "Tianbao Primary School" all shows the great contribution of overseas Chinese to the construction of their hometown. The behavior of back-feeding comes from the behavior of memory maintenance, which is based on local memory and strengthens local memory and local complex. The commemoration of such contributions is a real material memory for both overseas Chinese and Houhuang residents. The inheritance of this material memory is practical and long-term, and has a profound impact on the memory of several generations of Houhuang. FM2A recalled: *"Some of the contributions may be a little bigger, but I don't know. For example, for those middle-aged people who belong to our next generation, they come back with money to build roads or engage in other careers. In fact, not only that, when we went to the new school we built in the back village, it was far away from our home, and that school was donated by an overseas Chinese from our village. At least, at that time, compared with other schools in the nearby villages, there were all aspects on our side, such as desks and chairs. The classroom is also better than them. I sometimes think they are selfless."*

#### 4.2.2. Two emotions: gratitude and hope

The back-feeding contribution of overseas Chinese creates more possibilities for the connection between the two "Houhuang". From material memory to cultural memory, it contains not only the strong nostalgia of overseas Chinese, but also the gratitude of Houhuang local residents to overseas Chinese and their concern for their response. These emotions are profound because of the richness of material memory, and long because of the origin of cultural memory.



FM2A said: *“There is less communication between us now. I used to come back often. In the past, those of our relatives, for example, those who were outside, all came back. At that time, when I was in junior high school, they all came back, and then we would all hold banquets for them at home.”*

Referring to the education that M1A taught her in her childhood, FM2A said: *“he will teach us to be grateful. If my uncle hadn’t funded us to build a house, you can’t imagine the house we live in now. In fact, we all thank him, and my father was involved in building the house.”*

For overseas Chinese returning home, FM2A still has an impression of one scene:

*“I tell you, when my overseas Chinese relatives came to my house, the first person of them to see the picture was from the previous generation. Their first reaction is to shed tears, because those people in the picture are their relatives, their elders.”*

As the material carrier of existence, photos not only prove the roots of overseas Chinese, but also enable their inner memories of hometown to rely on material reproduction.

However, the vivid memory of personal experience will eventually be diluted over time. The overseas Chinese community has made all kinds of efforts to remember the root and to maintain this memory. But times have changed, and the two “Houhuang” are still getting farther and farther away.

### 4.3 Returning home is hindered, nostalgia gradually disappears

Although the nostalgia of the first and second generation of overseas Chinese is very strong, the change of times has gradually reduced the connection between overseas Chinese and villages after the third generation. The relationship between material life and spiritual life of overseas Chinese and Houhuang Village has been diluted and diluted in the changes of the times. Many contradictions and inevitable problems in reality make it difficult for overseas Chinese to return home, and the memories and feelings of the new generation of overseas Chinese and Houhuang Village for each other are gradually diluted. The fresh and warm personal memories in the overseas Chinese culture of Houhuang Village gradually disappeared and changed to the cold “history” mentioned by Mr. and Mrs. Asman.

M1A stated: *“We are relatively young in this way. Like our father and grandfather passed away a long time ago, and the grandparents of those who were outside (overseas) also died a long time ago. Those of our peers (overseas Chinese relatives) also do not want to come back, because their descendants are also outside and do not want to come back. They do better outside.”*

The relationship between the two “Houhuang Village” has moved irreversibly to a new stage, in which the overseas Chinese gene of Houhuang Village is facing more and more memory crises.

#### 4.3.1. Obstacles to the return of overseas Chinese

##### Economic and Mental Pressure Caused by “Sophistication”

With the development of domestic economy, Houhuang Village has been greatly developed with the support of national policy, and the living standard of villagers has been greatly improved. On the one hand, the living standard of many overseas Chinese is not as good as that of their relatives and friends at home. M1A said: *“Now, we have nice conditions,*

*and their life is not as good as ours. The living conditions on our side will be much better than theirs. It's convenient to go there now, but I'm not used to it there."*

On the other hand, as a traditional village, Houhuang Village still has profound cultural soil, such as the custom of giving money and the custom of hand-to-hand ceremony. Due to the intergenerational change, the residents who stay in Houhuang have no understanding of the kinship of the overseas Chinese community. Under the joint construction of survivor bias and social stereotype, many Houhuang aborigines have labeled overseas Chinese as "rich" and "achievement". M2B said: *"Why? Because they (overseas Chinese) are afraid to come back. We used to live very hard, so they always thought they were living well outside."*

This imagination of the self-implementer replaces the kinship imagination in which blood is thicker than water and is mixed into the interactive relationship between Houhuang residents and overseas Chinese. Contradictions breed in such relationships, reinforcing Houhuang's local demand-based custom. This contradiction is reflected by the fact that overseas Chinese do not adapt to the "hidden rules" caused by the culture of "worldly sophistication" after returning home (He X., 2000. Village Elites and Community Memory: A Two-Dimensional Framework for Understanding the Nature of Villages. *Social Science Journal*. 04:34–40). M2B specifically pointed out that these "hidden rules" that need to be observed have brought economic and mental pressure that can not be ignored to overseas Chinese: *"People's old concept is that overseas Chinese are rich, but they have to give red envelopes when they come back. This is a basic action. After they (overseas Chinese) come back, they will give red envelopes to various relatives, but there are actually very few overseas Chinese who can support these relatives."*

*"Our life at that time was very difficult. Once an overseas Chinese came back, we would ask them for money; if they had no money, we would ridicule him, saying that they were useless and unpromising."*

*"Trouble, what do you mean by trouble? If they come back, they will have a lot of trouble. We have to act according to the customs and habits of our hometown. In this way, these overseas Chinese will not be able to eat well, sleep well, and rest well."*

These pressures not only prevent the relatively unrelated young overseas Chinese from returning to their hometown, but also stop some of the older generation of overseas Chinese who are not well-off even if they are concerned about their hometown. M2B says: *"What I know very deeply is that they are also very patriotic and really patriotic. The dilemma of some overseas Chinese who are economically backward cannot be solved because they are not understood by their relatives and friends in their hometown, which leads to the gradual fading of their ties with their hometown. This, coupled with the lack of economic support for their return journey, makes it even more difficult for overseas Chinese to return home."*

### Cultural divide caused by language barriers

Previous generations of overseas Chinese once worked hard abroad, feeding their homeland with no regrets and worrying about each other with their relatives who stayed in their hometown (Sun Q., 2005. Local China Studies of Overseas Anthropology. *Social Sciences*, 9: 122–128). With the advance of the times, generation after generation of overseas Chinese have shown an obvious intergenerational decline in their feelings for their hometown and their own sense of belonging.

M2B said: *"People of your age don't have that idea of hometown at all. All they have left is the impression that I am still Chinese, not a hometown people or Houhuang people, just Chinese. So language is very important, very important."*

With the increase in the number of generations, the youngest generation of overseas Chinese do not speak Mandarin and cannot speak the native dialect. The language barrier directly leads to the inability of overseas Chinese to communicate with their relatives and friends in their native land.

M1A stated: *"The other is that we can't understand the language at all. We can't understand them at all. They speak Indonesian, and they can't speak our language. Some people of the same age as us will listen to one or two sentences of Putian dialect, but they can't speak it, so they can't communicate. If there is no communication between us, it will be useless for those overseas Chinese to come back."*

The language barrier also further aggravates the lack of culture and education in the hometown of the younger generation of overseas Chinese, so it is difficult for them to have a sense of belonging. The indifference of hometown feelings has become an important reason why the younger generation of overseas Chinese have no desire to return home, and the cultural gap is widening.

M1A said: *"The second generation is very serious in educating the third generation about hometown, but the third generation simply can't accept it. The third generations doesn't understand, because they were born overseas, and their ideas have all been watered down."*

M2B also said: *"It doesn't matter if you don't understand the language. We can speak Chinese and Putian dialect with the previous generation. But at present, we can't communicate with most people, and most middle-aged and young people don't speak Chinese... They were born overseas, and their concept of hometown only stays in that they know that their roots are still here, but they don't know anyone in our place."*

He sighed helplessly: *"The youngest generation, as well as the third and fourth generations, have basically forgotten their hometown."*

The memory carrier cannot be rebuilt, and the overseas Chinese have nowhere to go

It is mentioned above that architecture plays an important role in the process of memory maintenance. At the same time, the houses and ancestral halls invested by overseas Chinese are also important carriers for the presentation of overseas Chinese culture.

M1A said: *"The most important thing is to build a house in their hometown, which is the most important thing in their mind. Then it's about the land. Then they build bridges, build roads, raise funds, worship God, etc. But they won't tear down all the original buildings for reconstruction, because it's hard for them to make more money. But he will contact their friends outside. Surprisingly, several people quickly donated tens of thousands of yuan to build a house."*

A large part of the feedback of overseas Chinese to their hometown is to pave the way for the construction of Houhuang Village houses, but now the planning and development of Houhuang Village is restricted by government policies and Kanghui Tourism Company, which means that overseas Chinese cannot build houses and build ancestral halls in Houhuang Village as in the past, and cannot continue to create material memories for the Houhuang Village people.

M1A stated: *"No matter what you do, you must follow the policies of land acquisition, house building and factory building. In Houhuang village, it is absolutely not allowed to build casually. The government does not allow to build (houses) casually. Once the government plans, nothing else will be allowed to happen. Therefore, the new houses are built according to the original standards and plans."*

He added: *"Nowadays, everyone has gone to buy a suite, so it is impossible for overseas Chinese to come back to build a house."*

The opportunity to maintain memory has been lost, which makes it difficult for overseas Chinese who are already on the verge of forgetting to regain contact with their hometown (Qu P., Luo Y., 2019. Remember Nostalgia: Reflections on the Protection and Utilization of Traditional Ancient Villages from the Perspective of Nostalgic Memory. *Regional Governance*. 42:57–59). The hometown, which was once deeply missed by the first and second generations of overseas Chinese, has gradually become an abstract and cold concept in the minds of the new generation of overseas Chinese, and the ardent expectations of their relatives at home and abroad in the past have also become a vague epitome of history.

#### 4.3.2. "Amnesia" of the impression of overseas Chinese

The feelings of the younger generation of overseas Chinese have become indifferent to their hometown, while the feelings of overseas Chinese in Houhuang Village are also facing the crisis of "amnesia" because they have not been passed on. The emotion towards overseas Chinese also shows an obvious intergenerational decreasing trend. The younger generation of Houhuang Village people lack the education and memory of overseas Chinese culture inculcated by the previous generation, so they know almost nothing about the deeds of overseas Chinese. This, coupled with the fact that most young people do not live in Houhuang Village, makes them unable to be infected and influenced by the material memories left behind by overseas Chinese. When asked if he had been to the Overseas Chinese Museum in Houhuang Village, FM3A said: *"Where is this?"*

*"I don't know. If you didn't tell me, I didn't even know there were Overseas Chinese Museum here."*

When talking about whether the elders have told her the story of overseas Chinese,

FM3A said: *"I don't know. I don't know about this. He hasn't told me about this."*

FM3A(2) also stated this: *"I don't have the impression. They never talked about it."*

Overseas Chinese who once occupied an important position in Houhuang Village have almost faded out of the sight of young people, and their memory and perception of overseas Chinese are basically a blank. Houhuang Village, which is famous for its hometown of overseas Chinese, no longer has vivid memories and emotions with the gradual departure of the older generation, and gradually loses the essence of the culture of the hometown of overseas Chinese as the village moves towards modernization. The understanding and feelings of Houhuang Village people at home and abroad are on the verge of being forgotten by the times. The ostensibly developed Houhuang Village has become an old village where it is difficult to inherit the overseas Chinese culture.

#### 4.3.3. “Supplements” of Overseas Chinese’s Memory: A Book of *Houhuang Village Ethnography*, a sincerity for the continuation of memory

Even if the younger generation of Houhuang Village people at home and abroad have lost the feelings of the hometown of overseas Chinese, the older generation who have vivid memories of overseas Chinese still hope to lead this line of connection between relatives and friends at home and abroad through their own strength. They are always full of respect for their ancestors and overseas Chinese, and they are always thinking about their descendants who have bred overseas (Fan K., 2012. Immigration and “Dispersion”: The Politics of Migration. *J. Ideological Front.* 38(1):14–20). They are getting old, but with their affection for their hometown, they try their best to put it into action.

M1A said: “So, I wrote a village chronicle (《Houhuang Village Ethnography》) and left dozens of them as gifts. They all forgot that Houhuang village was their root.”

“People often come back. I specially send (《Houhuang Village Ethnography》) to them, otherwise they will forget their roots.”

M2B, who has personally visited overseas Chinese in Indonesia, said: “I think the overseas Chinese are respectable because I have been there and I know them. Therefore, I admire them. But those people didn’t come to me, they don’t have some cultural foundation.”

M2B hopes that more people in Houhuang Village can understand the hardships of overseas Chinese, he said: “We’re going to get rid of that attitude of taking. We’re going to get their relatives to ask them to come back and visit, instead of the attitude of reaching out and taking.”

In Houhuang Village, there is still the expectation of overseas Chinese returning home, but with this small number of old people curled up in the corner of the times, not perceived by others, it is difficult for future generations to continue. The loss of memories and feelings in the hometown of overseas Chinese makes Houhuang Village face the crisis of becoming a “virtual” tourist attraction. Reviving the culture of the hometown of overseas Chinese requires the continuation of memory and the need to fill the gap of the new generation of hometown feelings. Only the hometown of overseas Chinese with memories and feelings can not be forgotten by the times.

## 5. Conclusion and discussion

### 5.1 Conclusion

Through the collation and analysis of the oral data of three generations, this paper focuses on the relationship between overseas Chinese and local “overseas Chinese” based on the memory interaction of “Two Houhuang” at home and abroad, and combs out the three stages in the development of “overseas Chinese-hometown” relationship along the context of time: the hardship of life leads them to make a living overseas, the families of overseas Chinese get rich and feed their hometown, and the memory of the loss of hometown is gradually broken.

In the course of investigation, it was found that the memory characteristics of overseas Chinese in “Houhuang Village”, a typical traditional village along the southeast coast of China, influenced by marine culture, are constantly changing in the balance between the two forces of “maintenance” and “forgetting”.

### 5.1.1. The power of memory “forgetting” is homeopathic and powerful

Among them, the “forgetting” power of memory is composed of four important factors: return obstruction, blood dilution, cultural immersion and no way to give back.

#### Return obstruction

Return obstruction means that the motivation of overseas Chinese returning home is hindered by different factors in different periods (Chen C., Wu R., 2015. *The Study of Return in International Migration Theory - Review and Analysis. Northwest Population*, 6:18–22). Grandparents' generation is mainly affected by the lack of funds needed for the journey, and then to their parents and “your generation”. The influencing factors of Return obstruction involve not only objective economic pressure, but also internal economic pressure, not only in the lack of mother tongue environment and cultural and educational environment of overseas Chinese, but also in the cognitive bias caused by the “labeling” of overseas Chinese by Houhuang residents.

#### Blood dilution

Blood dilution refers to the irreversible trend of weakening the blood connection between overseas Chinese and local residents with the change of generations. This trend has greatly weakened the motives of overseas Chinese returning home, especially their descendants.

#### Cultural immersion

Due to the separation from the native language environment and cultural and educational environment, the overseas Chinese who returned to their hometowns encountered difficulties in communication and acclimatization. This has affected the enthusiasm of overseas Chinese to return home to a certain extent, and it has also made it difficult to rebuild the connection between the descendants of overseas Chinese and the homeland.

#### No way to give back

The overseas Chinese gave back to Houhuang and their families who stayed in Houhuang by building houses and subsidizing the construction of their hometown, and thus maintained the local memory. In the changing times, this method was restrained by subjective factors such as blood ties and objective factors such as policies, and finally ended up with no way to give back to the status quo.

### 5.1.2. Memory “maintains” power resists but declines

Under this irreversible trend of “forgetting”, overseas Chinese also resist by various means, that is, to strengthen the power of memory “maintenance”. In the process of maintaining memory, physical landscape reconstruction activities such as building houses and roads play an important role (Chen D., 2012. *The formation of the “New Hometown of Overseas Chinese in Haixi” in Mingxi and its influence on the construction of the hometown of overseas Chinese. Journal of Sanming University*, 1:38–44). On the other hand, family education has become an important means to maintain intergenerational memory.

However, the research team found that the above methods eventually declined under the erosion of the force of “forgetting”. The activity of material landscape reconstruction is restrained by the policy of tourism development and

planning, and the role of family education is also weakening in the intergenerational change.

### 5.1.3. The phenomenon of memory “crisis” is prominent and externalized

M1A hopes to contribute to the reconstruction of the relationship between overseas Chinese and local people through *Houhuang Village Ethnography*. However, in the face of the surging waves of “forgetting”, whether this kind of material memory carrier can play its role remains to be verified. To sum up, based on oral history data, the research team summarized the memory crisis faced by Houhuang Village into the following three prominent problems:

#### The “otherness” of the overseas Chinese community

The “demand” treatment of overseas Chinese by Houhuang residents makes the overseas Chinese become the “other” of Houhuang. The habitual thinking in the era of material scarcity precipitated into a customary atmosphere, which eventually marginalized the overseas Chinese group and placed them on the side of the object of demand. The exposure of interests makes it difficult for overseas Chinese to feel the warmth and sense of belonging brought about by local ties. Houhuang residents’ “otherness” discipline to overseas Chinese groups finally changed into “otherness” discipline to themselves by overseas Chinese groups, thus taking the initiative to alienate the native land of Houhuang.

#### The “empty generalization” of identity

The strengthening of the loss of material carriers, the change of generations and the lack of language and cultural environment make it difficult for overseas Chinese to maintain specific and vivid local impressions (Zhuang K., Xu J., Du J., Shi F., 2006. Anthropological Research in Rural China. *Journal of Guangxi University for Nationalities (Philosophy and Social Sciences Edition)*. 1:38–47). Its own uniqueness makes the new generation of overseas Chinese replace it with vague identity in the identity myth. From Houhuang to Chinese, the “generalization” of local impression leads to the “empty generalization” of identity, which makes the reconstruction of local connection even more difficult.

#### The “flattening” of overseas Chinese culture

Overseas Chinese culture has become an important cultural resource for the development and utilization of Houhuang scenic spots. However, the “forgetting” of memory makes the presentation of overseas Chinese culture in Houhuang “flat”. The vivid memory loss of overseas Chinese coupled with the weak understanding of the hometown of overseas Chinese of the “you generation” generation of Houhuang Village. The production of overseas Chinese culture does not have its soil, and the subsequent design and development is more likely to distort the genes of the hometown of overseas Chinese in the local memory.

The current situation of the gradual loss of overseas Chinese memory and culture without Houhuang Village reflects the common dilemma faced by Houhuang Village and other traditional villages with similar cultural composition in China. It can be seen that it is urgent to protect the culture of overseas Chinese in traditional villages and inherit the memory of the hometown of overseas Chinese (Xu X., 2001. The Changes of Chinese Rural Community Memory in the Transition Period. *Social Science*. 12:48–52), which requires not only the efforts of Houhuang Village villagers, but also the support from the government and relevant tourism enterprises. It is urgent to protect the memory of the hometown of overseas Chinese and retain the nostalgia of the village.



## 5.2 Discussion

The research is based on ethnographic oral history and fieldwork methods and paradigms. The research work itself is a continuous trial process, and relationship processing, task output and method application all need to be solved in field practice (Wang M., 2015. *Ethnography: A Definition of Generalized Human Relations. Academic Monthly*. 47(3):129–140). Every breakthrough in the research process is a driving force to inspire researchers to invest enthusiastically. The reflexivity of human exchanges, perceived subject presence and objective objects experienced in ethnographic research is a perspective and method.

### 5.2.1. Case application of research methods such as ethnographic oral history

The research work has gained a more in-depth understanding of fieldwork, interviews, especially the case study methods of oral history. The basic judgment that needs to be discussed continuously in the process of research work is that oral history interviews pay more attention to the development and evolution of things in the context of time than other ways of data collection. As Donald Ritchie, an expert in oral history of ethnography, said, oral history is a research method that collects memories and historically meaningful personal views in the form of interviews. Memory and history are the characteristics of this method, and with the in-depth work and application of research, the method of oral history of ethnography can provide a new observation perspective for the study of culture, local land, tourism, etc. “The real impact of the oral history movement may not be fully apparent for a long time in the future.” Ritchie said.

### 5.2.2. Real perception of the local culture of the coastal overseas Chinese hometown of Houhuang Village

In the process of fieldwork, the team members really felt the charm of oral history. The “people-oriented” method of oral history research and ethnographic research are not cold tools, but the best medium for us to feel the soul of overseas Chinese and the feelings of our hometown (Guo J., Gao L., 2016. “Inquiry” and “Questioning” - The difference between “asking” between anthropologists and journalists. *Journalists*. 11:23–34). Communicating with the interviewees is more like reading a history that is not well known but meticulous and full of emotion, which contains real memories that we have to be moved by. For us, Houhuang Village is not only a simple “research village”, but also a “flesh and blood” carrying the culture of overseas Chinese and the strong feelings of the older generation.

At the same time, after a series of investigations and studies, the urgency of Houhuang Village as a famous hometown of overseas Chinese makes us have a sense of crisis. People with vivid memories and deep hometown feelings are getting old, and the two contemporary “Houhuang” have almost lost their sense of each other. Overseas Chinese almost no longer cherish the feeling of hometown, and the descendants of Houhuang Village lack of understanding and attention to overseas Chinese. Therefore, for Houhuang Village, the top priority is to reshape the local connection and continue the memory of the hometown of overseas Chinese. Otherwise, when the older generation with the most feeling of hometown no longer has the ability to continue the memory, this memory will be lost, and the hometown of overseas Chinese will become an empty shell of the lost soul. This is the last thing the old people who miss their hometown want to see. M1A, who is in his twenties, said to the group members many times: “*I just hope I can give my spare heat.*” This “spare heat” will dissipate eventually, but its significance and value make it have the power to rekindle the spark of memory. As the “bystander” of the traditional village, we also hope that the ardent expectations of the elderly can be realized, and the hometown feelings of the village can be continued and inherited.

### 5.3 Reflection and Outlook

The field study of “Houhuang Village”, the traditional hometown of overseas Chinese, has led to a reflection on the common problems of modernity faced by the culture of overseas Chinese in the southeast coast, represented by it. In the self-and external consultation and dialogue of the internal mechanisms of Houhuang Village “tradition and modernity”, “vernacular and ocean” and “memory and ethics”, this paper combs and sums up its development direction and approach.

#### 5.3.1. Abandoning the claiming gesture

If we want to reshape the local connection, we must “warm up” for Houhuang, so that overseas Chinese have the heart to return to their hometown to “warm up” and avoid becoming an “other”. The key to “warming up” is to enhance the “human touch” of the villagers, that is, to change the outdated concept, reshape the thinking of overseas Chinese, and fill in the memory gap.

The traditional idea of returning home to give money and the labeling concept that Houhuang Village people think that overseas Chinese are rich make Houhuang overseas Chinese feel “timid” before they get close to their hometown. Members of the group believe that publicity and education can be carried out among contemporary Houhuang people, so that they can fundamentally abandon their previous concept of taking, and realize that overseas Chinese have no obligation to give back to their hometown or help the villagers. at the same time, they remind the Houhuang people that maintaining the posture of taking will only drive the two “Houhuang” apart. In this way, the people of Houhuang Village realize that they should be grateful for overseas Chinese and remember history in order to keep the cultural hometown from losing their souls, to dispel the worries of overseas “Houhuang”, to let this feeling of hometown cross the sea, to give overseas Chinese a sense of belonging, and to reconnect the two “Houhuang”, so that Houhuang can become a veritable hometown of overseas Chinese, rather than losing the shell of overseas Chinese.

#### 5.3.2. Attach importance to the status of overseas Chinese in rural construction

In view of the obstruction of the means of maintaining material memory, we think that from the point of view of the stakeholders with villagers, tourism enterprises, government and overseas Chinese as the main body, we can find out the countermeasures to maximize the interests of the four subjects through game analysis. In order to avoid the marginalization of the status of overseas Chinese, they should highlight their important position in rural construction so that they can participate in rural construction and benefit from rural construction, which will contribute to re-giving overseas Chinese a sense of belonging, making them feel that fallen leaves have roots and return home (Lu Y., 2015. Rural Social Governance Innovation: Realistic Basis, Main Problems and Realization Paths. *Journal of the Party School of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China*. 5:101–108).

#### 5.3.3. Record the memory of overseas Chinese elderly in the form of oral history

Houhuang as far away as Indonesia is also old, and the memories of overseas Chinese who have deep feelings for their hometown but are unable to return to their hometown are of great value in reshaping local ties. In this respect, the two “Houhuang” are very similar, they also have “affectionate” grandparents and “ruthless” descendants, so it can be seen that overseas “Houhuang” is also facing a crisis in which the grandparents are old and the most vivid memories cannot be sustained. The method of oral history research can restore the memories and feelings of our ancestors to the greatest extent (Zheng J., Ma C. 2020. The polyphonic value of oral history and its realization. *Journal of Yunnan*

*University*.19(5):72–79). Therefore, it is also urgent to record their oral history. Record the oral history of the overseas “Houhuang” elderly, and use the “waste heat” to ignite the flames of homesickness. When the memories of the elderly overseas Chinese are presented in the most direct form, the culture of the hometown of overseas Chinese will not only float on the surface, but will be endowed with real emotion and temperature.

#### 5.3.4. Using the Internet as a medium to convey the memories of overseas Chinese Online museum

At present, it is difficult to solve the problem that it is difficult for overseas Chinese to return to their hometown and the memory loss of “your generation”, so we can record and spread the stories of overseas Chinese hometown with the help of the Internet. The online museum of Houhuang will be one of the most intuitive and contagious forms. The museum can Houhuang Village various folk museums, museums and famous scenic spots for “cloud display”. At the same time, it can vividly present the stories of overseas Chinese in Houhuang Village and the memories of overseas Chinese by the old people in the village. In addition, online commentators can also be set up to provide explanation services to “your generation” visiting online museums in the form of live or recorded broadcasts, so as to fill the memory gaps of this generation about overseas Chinese as far as possible; at the same time, they can be equipped with subtitles in Indonesian language, so that hometown culture can cross the sea and infect overseas Chinese.

#### Overseas Chinese Documentary

Based on Houhuang Village’s unique memory of the hometown of overseas Chinese, coupled with the introduction of Houhuang’s local conditions and customs, cultural landscape, etc., it will be filmed into a documentary. This method can not only arouse the “empathy” of future generations towards the village in a vivid and intuitive form, and has important educational significance, but also can be used as a “propaganda film” of Houhuang Village, so that more eyes can focus on the hometown of overseas Chinese and promote the protection and development of Houhuang.

#### 5.3.5. Development should pay attention to excavating the connotation of overseas Chinese hometown

In the course of the interview, the research team found that the development of Houhuang tourism was not satisfactory. For the development of Houhuang artificial lake, M2B has said:

*“According to my point of view, Kanghui Tourism Company may have played some deceptive games. Our natural environment is very good. The artificial cards and decorative paper umbrellas for tourism industries they made have failed.”*

M1A has expressed a similar view. The enterprises in charge of Houhuang Village tourism development pay too much attention to “superficial kung fu” while neglecting the protection of the culture of the hometown of overseas Chinese, and blindly add “stiff” artificial scenic spots and scenery in order to seek benefits. This move seems to be with the help of tourism to promote the protection and development of Houhuang Village, but in fact it pays too much attention to profit while neglecting the protection of human feelings.

Therefore, the follow-up tourism development of Houhuang should focus on the “culture of hometown of overseas Chinese” as the main attraction, pay more attention to the excavation of the connotation of the hometown of overseas Chinese, and make Houhuang become the hometown of overseas Chinese with “soul”. This move can also enable contemporary Houhuang people to stay in a strong cultural atmosphere of the hometown of overseas Chinese, which is

conducive to strengthening the memory of the hometown of overseas Chinese of the “your generation”, and only by clearly protecting the culture can we continue to develop tourism.

## 6. Summary

With the method and discourse paradigm of ethnographic research, we have carried out research work and made field reflection, prospect and summary. Taking the opportunity of the research, we are fortunate to get to know the traditional hometown of overseas Chinese, “Houhuang Village”, which is located on the southeast coast of China, and explore the reasons for the “amnesia” of the hometown of overseas Chinese and the social changes of the habitat and intergenerational memory of the two “Houhuang”. A cultural anthropological sense of orthodoxy and replacement. What we have achieved in the end is not only limited to the contents and patterns of this study, but also the feeling of touching the memories and collections of the hometown of overseas Chinese. Memory is alive, and when the veil of Houhuang is lifted, the old days are unsealed, and the “feelings” at the bottom of our hearts are unconsciously infected and drawn by this small village hidden in the mountains and forests. This makes us feel more close to this hometown of overseas Chinese, which is full of goodwill and precious memories, when we work on ethnography and oral history with the purpose and curiosity of field cognition.

We still remember that evening when we left Houhuang Village, we went to M1A’s house to say goodbye, filled with reluctance, gratitude and deep admiration. The setting sun puts a thin layer of red on the Houhuang Village cage, standing in the wind for the old man we practice, but like a hot sun. Old grandparents, but still insist on sending out residual heat for the hometown, as the “you generation”, how can we not try our best to keep watch for this hometown?

The story is old, but the era is new, but we do not want to see the fresh memory of Houhuang, accompanied by the death of the older generation, locked in a beautifully decorated box and become a cold text recorded in history books. We sincerely hope that more people can see the “amnesia” crisis of the hometown of overseas Chinese, and at the same time, more people can participate in this guardian of the hometown, so that even if the “Houhuang Village” culture of the hometown of overseas Chinese by the sea goes through the vicissitudes of life, it will not sink into the riverbed of time, as the song sings—

*“Blessing forever and passing on fragrance from generation to generation.”*

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