

Guanglu Di

In 1900, several provinces in North China experienced famine, with the Yellow River bursting and flooding. The Qing court recalled Zhang Bishi from overseas and appointed him to oversee the direct and direct relief donations, as well as to handle the work relief of Nanzheng in Henan. Zhang Bishi raised more than one million taels of silver in Nanyang to rescue the suffering compatriots. The Qing government specially granted the memorial archway of "public emergency and charity" to stand in his hometown, Tai Po. The former residence of Zhang Bishi, Guanglu Di, was built in the 34th year of the Guangxu reign of the Qing Dynasty (1908 AD) in Chelong Village, Xihe Town, Dapu County, Guangdong Province. The plaque of "Guanglu Di" on the main entrance was given the name by Emperor Guangxu, and it was handwritten by Li Hongzhang, the Minister of Beiyang. This is the south without cold winter, with clear river water, hanging walls on both sides, and lush flowers and plants. The huge peonies grow naturally and are incredibly beautiful under the blue sky and white clouds. The former residence "Guanglu Di" consists of three halls, four horizontal walls, and a surrounding area, and is a type of Hakka dragon house. There are 99 rooms, 18 halls, 13 courtyards, front and back courtyards, and a backyard garden inside the house, covering an area of tens of acres. It is backed by mountains and facing water, with a wide floor in front, and European style iron branch railings added to the outer wall. The backyard, planted with tall olive trees, is also seen as a paradise in the eyes of the Zhang family.

It took a whole of 5 years to build a embankment by filling soil on the riverbank, and all the materials were transported in by water. A doctor was also specially hired to treat the construction workers. At most, more than 100 people lived in this house. The entire building is exquisitely crafted, intricately carved and painted, exuding a luxurious atmosphere.

There is also a custom of "eating big families" in the countryside of Tai Po. On New Year's Day, the spacious front yard of the old house will be filled with large round tables with food and wine, and dozens of vats full of Babao Congee on both sides of the wall will be served to guests, enough for people from all over the country to eat. The most spectacular moment was when the villagers returned home drunk and full of food, and they lit rosin torches. As they lined up along the winding mountain path, they stood at the entrance of Guangludi to gaze. The torch light, against the backdrop of the moonlight and the dark undulating mountain shadows, slowly swam in all directions like fire dragons. Now, Guangludi is a cultural relic protection unit in Guangdong Province.