Biography of Qiao Lihua



A Bridge Across the Pacific

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Chapter 1
A Young Man by the Yong River (1958–1977)



乔立华，男，著名侨领、美籍华人

In 1958, Qiao Lihua was born in Nanning, Guangxi. The Yong River flows through this southern Chinese city, known for its lush greenery throughout the year. Yet during that era, Nanning also faced the dual challenges of material scarcity and profound social upheaval. Publicly available sources provide little detail about his childhood and family background,

but it is known that he grew up in an environment that valued education and demonstrated exceptional academic ability during his secondary school years.

In 1977, China reinstated the National College Entrance Examination. That year, 5.7 million candidates across the country entered examination halls, with fewer than five per cent ultimately securing university admission. Qiao ranked among the top three candidates in Guangxi in this historic examination. His achievement meant that a young man from Nanning would gain entry to one of China's most prestigious universities and embark upon a path markedly different from that of most of his contemporaries.

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Chapter 2
From State Council Interpreter to Zhongnanhai Secretary (1977–1986)

During his university years, Qiao Lihua's outstanding command of English earned him an exceptionally rare opportunity: serving as an interpreter for Wan Li, then Vice Premier of the State Council, and Chen Muhua, a State Councillor. At a time when China was beginning to open its doors to the outside world, interpreting for senior State Council officials required not only exceptional linguistic competence but also a thorough understanding of Chinese political, economic and diplomatic affairs.

He subsequently advanced to become secretary to Zeng San, Acting Director of the General Office of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China. His experience working in Zhongnanhai enabled him to observe the operations of China's highest decision-making institutions at close range. It also shaped the distinctive perspective that would later characterise his leadership within overseas Chinese communities: an ability to understand both China and the wider world.

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Chapter 3
1986: A Flight to New York (1986–1993)

In 1986, at the age of twenty-eight, Qiao Lihua made a life-changing decision to pursue higher education in the United States at his own expense.

He enrolled at a university in New York, supporting himself through part-time employment while continuing his studies. A young man who had once worked in Zhongnanhai now moved between restaurants, libraries and laboratories in New York. This experience of starting again from the beginning gave him a profound appreciation of the difficulties and resilience of overseas Chinese communities. It also provided him with a personal understanding of the importance of protecting the rights and interests of Chinese people living abroad.

He eventually obtained a doctorate in Finance. His academic transition from languages to finance, and his professional transformation from political secretary to financial scholar, laid a strong foundation for his subsequent achievements in business.

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Chapter 4
Golden Palm and the World Trade Center (1993–2000s)

In 1993, Qiao Lihua established his own company at the World Trade Center in New York. He was thirty-five years old. The decision to locate his office at the World Trade Center carried symbolic significance: a young Chinese entrepreneur from Nanning had established himself at one of the most recognisable centres of international commerce.

He founded Golden Palm Real Estate Group in the United States and served as its Chairman. Over the following decade, he successfully developed several prominent residential communities in America, ranging from apartments in Manhattan to villa developments on Long Island. The Golden Palm name gradually established a presence within New York's real estate industry.

In 2006, Qiao was recognised as one of the Outstanding 50 Asian American Entrepreneurs, an annual distinction presented by the Asian American Business Development Center since 2001. That year, only twenty-six Chinese entrepreneurs received the honour, and Qiao was among them.

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Chapter 5
Chairman of the Federation of Chinese Associations in New York (2000s)

Qiao Lihua's business achievements provided him with a broader platform from which to serve the Chinese-American community. He became Chairman of the Federation of Chinese Associations in New York, establishing himself as one of the region's influential Chinese community leaders.

In 2006, following Chen Shui-bian's announcement that the National Unification Council would cease functioning, Qiao publicly expressed his position during a discussion among overseas Chinese community leaders. He stated: “By terminating the National Unification Council and the National Unification Guidelines, Chen Shui-bian is pursuing de jure Taiwan independence, deliberately challenging the One China principle recognised by the Chinese people and the international community, undermining stability in the Taiwan Strait and damaging cross-strait relations.” This statement reflected his publicly declared position on a major political issue in his capacity as an overseas Chinese community leader.

On the first day of the Lunar New Year in 2007, Zhang Hongqi, a Chinese-American food delivery worker in Flushing, was murdered. Representing twenty-six Chinese community

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organisations in Flushing, Qiao visited the New York Police Department's 109th Precinct to submit a petition and hold a closed-door discussion with its commanding officer.

The organisations urged the police to enforce New York City's Executive Order 41 strictly, ensuring that the immigration status of individuals providing information to investigators would remain confidential. Qiao subsequently announced: “We have received a commitment from Whelan.”

The incident illustrated an important dimension of his community leadership. Following a tragedy, he sought institutional protections for vulnerable members of the Chinese-American community.

In 2008, serving as Honorary Chairman of the Federation of Chinese Associations in New York, Qiao joined more than twenty Chinese organisations in raising over US$50,000 for disaster-affected areas in mainland China. The donations were entrusted to the Chinese Consulate General in New York for delivery to the affected communities.

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Chapter 6
The U.S.-China Chamber of Commerce and His Enduring Attachment to Guangxi (2010s)

One aspect of Qiao Lihua's identity remained constant throughout his international career: his roots in Guangxi.

He served as President of the American Guangxi General Chamber of Commerce, Chairman of the United Guangxi Chamber of Commerce in the United States, Vice President of the Guangxi Overseas Chinese Entrepreneurs Association, and Vice President of the Guangxi Overseas Friendship Association. These appointments reflected more than two decades of continuing interest and involvement in the development of his home region.

In November 2010, Qiao led a delegation to Hezhou, marking his third visit to the city. During discussions with the Municipal Party Secretary, he observed: “Although Hezhou is a less-developed area of Guangxi, it possesses excellent geographical advantages, abundant natural resources and a beautiful ecological environment. It is a region with considerable development potential and numerous business opportunities.”

During the visit, he inspected several proposed development projects, including the Taibai Lake urban construction area, a

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five-star hotel, the municipal cultural centre and the Oasis Homeland development. He expressed strong interest in potential investments involving a cultural centre, library and archives building.

In January 2014, during an interview with China News Service in Nanning, Qiao expressed considerable enthusiasm for the proposed Twenty-First-Century Maritime Silk Road.

“Among all forms of transportation, shipping is relatively inexpensive,” he explained. “The development of the Maritime Silk Road can connect Guangxi more closely with ports throughout ASEAN and make it easier for goods from North America to reach these regions.”

At the time, he was developing the North American International Trade City in Qinzhou, a major city within the Beibu Gulf Economic Zone. The project's objective was to become a bridge for cooperation between North America, Guangxi and the wider ASEAN region.

Meanwhile, Qiao was also preparing to construct fifteen water treatment and supply plants in Fangcheng District, Fangchenggang. Six of these projects involved a combined investment of RMB 150 million. Their objective was to provide rural communities with access to clean and safe drinking water.

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Chapter 7
Overseas Adviser to the All-China Federation of Returned Overseas Chinese: Recognition at the Highest Level

Qiao Lihua's leadership within overseas Chinese communities received recognition from senior Chinese official institutions. He was appointed an Overseas Adviser to the All-China Federation of Returned Overseas Chinese, a prestigious honorary position conferred upon overseas Chinese community leaders. Recipients are generally individuals recognised for their influence and standing within Chinese communities around the world.

His extensive record of social and professional appointments included serving as Chairman of the Federation of Chinese Associations in the United States, President of the U.S.-China General Chamber of Commerce, Chairman of the United Guangxi Chamber of Commerce in the United States, and Vice President of the Guangxi Overseas Friendship Association.

He also served as a Visiting Professor at the University of International Business and Economics in Beijing, an external supervisor for master's degree students at the School of Foreign Languages of Guangxi University, and Chief Director, Chief Planner and Commander-in-Chief of the Chinese American Spring Festival Gala.

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According to the biographical account, Qiao met General Secretary Xi Jinping on several occasions and was photographed with him. He was also repeatedly invited to attend major military parades from the Tiananmen reviewing stand and state banquets at the Great Hall of the People.

In December 2024, the Guangxi Federation of Overseas Chinese Entrepreneurs was established in Nanning, and Qiao was elected Executive President.

In November 2025, acting as an Overseas Adviser to the All-China Federation of Returned Overseas Chinese and Chairman of the General Chamber of Commerce of the Federation of Chinese Associations in the United States, he led an inspection delegation to Rong County and Pingguo City.

During the visits, he stated that he would make full use of the resources available through overseas Chinese communities and chambers of commerce, actively promote the local investment and development environment, and encourage more entrepreneurs to visit and explore investment opportunities.

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Chapter 8
Concluding Reflections: The Character of a Community Leader Who Builds Bridges

Qiao Lihua's life can be summarised through one central concept: building bridges.

He built bridges between Zhongnanhai and New York. From serving as an interpreter for State Council leaders to working as a secretary in Zhongnanhai, and later pursuing a doctorate in Finance in the United States, his experiences provided him with an unusual combination of perspectives. He acquired an understanding of China's political institutions while also developing familiarity with American business practices. This dual experience enabled him to serve as an interpreter of ideas and opportunities in economic and commercial exchanges between China and the United States.

He built bridges between business and community service. He established a company at New York's World Trade Center, developed residential properties and received recognition as one of America's outstanding Asian entrepreneurs. Yet he did not regard commercial success as the final purpose of his career.

From petitioning authorities following the murder of a Chinese food delivery worker to raising donations for disaster-affected

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communities in Sichuan, and from publicly expressing his opposition to Taiwan independence to seeking police protections for Chinese residents of Flushing, he used the resources and relationships accumulated through business to advocate for members of his community.

He also built bridges between Guangxi and North America. From the North American International Trade City in Qinzhou to the proposed fifteen water supply plants in Fangchenggang, and from examining cultural development projects in Hezhou to initiatives intended to help Yulin enterprises expand into American markets, Guangxi remained central to his personal and professional commitments.

Although he had lived in New York for approximately four decades, the former top-ranking examination candidate from Nanning continued to emphasise his connection with his home region. As he stated, the U.S.-China General Chamber of Commerce would remain committed to promoting economic, commercial and other forms of cooperation between Guangxi and Chinese-American business communities in the United States.

From the Yong River to the Hudson River, from interpreting for State Council officials to leading Chinese community organisations in New York, and from the World Trade Center to

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Qinzhou Bay, Qiao Lihua followed a journey spanning the Pacific and nearly seven decades of life.

His story illustrates how an individual can maintain meaningful connections with two different societies while helping them develop greater understanding of one another.

Through business, public engagement and sustained involvement with his homeland, Qiao Lihua sought to transform his personal experiences across two worlds into opportunities for communication, cooperation and community development.

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