



Building Bridges of Democracy

/Pic by NCCU OIC

no.95
2024 MAY-JUN

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Czech Republic & Taiwan :

Success Stories of Democracy

2024 / 06 / 11

10:50 A.M.-11:30 A.M.

NCCU Jen-Wei Lecture Hall

Jiří Drahoš

First Vice President of the Senate



COVER STORY



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Building Bridges of Democracy: Insights from Jiří Drahoš's Speech on Czech Republic & Taiwan

Article by Han Pham

On the morning of June 11, the students and faculty of NCCU were honored to welcome Jiří Drahoš, the 1st Vice President of the Senate of the Czech Republic, for a compelling speech on a topic that resonates deeply in today's global political climate: "Czech Republic & Taiwan: Success Stories of Democracy." This campus lecture was Drahoš's only campus lecture during his visit to Taiwan. This event, held in Jen-Wei Lecture Hall at NCCU, drew a hundred audience of enthusiastic students, teachers, and guests, eager to hear Drahoš's insights into the democratic journeys of these two distinct yet inspiring nations.





WELCOMING REMARKS:

Strengthening Ties Through Education and Innovation

1. Drahoš answered questions from NCCU's students
2. President Tsai-Yen Li highlighted the longstanding and friendly relationship between NCCU and the Czech Republic.

Jiří Drahoš led a delegation to Taiwan for six days from June 10 to 15, consisting of 16 members, including officials from various Czech ministries responsible for science, innovation, and inventions, as well as academic representatives. During the welcoming session for the delegates held before the lecture, representatives from both boards had the opportunity to engage in a cordial conversation, introduce their respective members, and share their mutual trust in shared values. They expressed confidence that these shared values would contribute to strengthening and developing the relationship between the two sides in the future.

NCCU President Tsai-Yen Li highlighted the longstanding and friendly relationship between NCCU and the Czech Republic. “NCCU has maintained a friendly relationship with the Czech Republic for many years. Our university is the only one in Taiwan offering Czech language courses and has organized cultural events like ‘Czech Day at NCCU,’ successfully promoting cultural exchanges between both sides.” He emphasized the recent collaboration between NCCU and Charles University in establishing the Supply Chain Resilience Center (SCRC), showcasing mutual efforts in internationalization and innovation.

“The first group of Charles University students will arrive in Taiwan next week to participate in NCCU’s “2024 Global Semiconductor Supply Chain” summer intensive credit course. Through this cross-national academic cooperation and exchange, we hope to further deepen our cooperation with the Czech Republic in the future.”



In response, Drahoš began by expressing heartfelt gratitude and reflecting on his multiple visits to Taiwan since his initial one in 1995. He highlighted Taiwan's impressive strides in development with each subsequent visit, underscoring a shared commitment to democratic principles and human rights. "This is my fourth visit to Taiwan, and each time I come, I witness Taiwan's continuous progress," he noted. Despite the language barrier between Czech and Mandarin, Drahoš highlighted the strong and ongoing communication between both sides. He concluded his introduction warmly in Mandarin with "Thank you!"—a gesture that resonated deeply with the audience, sparking enthusiastic cheers and applause.

Representatives from the two delegations also continuously emphasized the importance of their partnership, affirming the dedication and efforts of both sides in becoming each other's most reliable and supportive allies. NCCU and Czech institutions also expressed eagerness to strengthen their bonds further through collaborative research initiatives, envisioning a future alliance built on mutual respect and shared aspirations. The atmosphere was charged with excitement as both sides discussed the potential for deepening their relationship, paving the way for enhanced cooperation and friendship between Taiwan and the Czech Republic.

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DRAHOŠ'S SOLE CAMPUS LECTURE IN TAIWAN: Encouraging Students to Engage in National Affairs



4



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Jiří Drahoš's lecture on "Czech Republic & Taiwan: Success Stories of Democracy" was a profound and enlightening experience for all attendees. It underscored the importance of strong civic movements, visionary leadership, institutional reforms, and international support in building and sustaining democracies. The deepening relationship between the Czech Republic and Taiwan, marked by technological, educational, and cultural collaborations, serves as a model for international cooperation.

As the audience settled in, there was an air of anticipation. NCCU invited Jan Fischer, a Czech student enrolled in the English Ph.D. program in Asia-Pacific Studies, to moderate the event. Jiří Drahoš then took the stage to warm applause, exuding a blend of intellectual gravitas and approachable sincerity. He began his speech by expressing gratitude for the invitation and admiration for the school community's engagement in global political issues.

Drahoš shared the transformation of the Czech Republic from communism to democracy and its journey towards global openness. Drahoš delved into the historical transformations that shaped the democratic landscapes of the Czech Republic and Taiwan. He recounted the Czech Republic's journey from the Velvet Revolution in 1989, which peacefully ended communist rule, to its establishment as a stable democracy. This transition, Drahoš emphasized, was driven by the collective will of the people and the leadership of visionaries like Václav Havel.

Drawing parallels with Taiwan, Drahoš detailed the island's shift to a vibrant democracy. He praised Taiwan's achievements in building robust democratic institutions and safeguarding civil liberties, despite facing significant geopolitical challenges. He noted, "Democracy is not an ideal governance system, but we should value equality and human rights."

He also encouraged young students to participate more in national affairs while pursuing democratic freedom. "Youth participation is crucial to a nation's future. Young voices help consolidate democracy and build a resilient society," Drahoš stated. Today's students evaluate their societies with a demand for democratic freedoms and active involvement in shaping their nations' futures. Recognizing that future leaders and thinkers play essential roles in this process, fostering their engagement is crucial for the stability and progress of any nation.

4. Drahoš shared the transformation of the Czech Republic from communism to democracy and its journey towards global openness.

5. Jan Fischer, a Czech student enrolled in the English Ph.D. program in Asia-Pacific Studies, to moderate the event.

“Youth participation is crucial to a nation’s future. Young voices help consolidate democracy and build a resilient society,”

Drahoš stated.



Encouraging critical thinking and skepticism is vital. To achieve this, young people must make their voices heard loudly and clearly, ensuring vibrant and resilient democracies that can withstand significant challenges. Strengthening participation involves comprehensive studies of real-world examples and case studies, promoting transparency, and ensuring power is distributed fairly among institutions

to prevent dominance by any single entity. Countering misinformation and engaging in international cooperation and environmental efforts are also key steps toward building an independent and resilient society, safeguarding cyber safety and security in the process.

7. Huang Weirong, a senior in the Department of Slavic Languages, impressed everyone with his fluent Czech when he inquired about scholarships for Taiwanese students studying in the Czech Republic.

Another significant portion of Drahoš's lecture was dedicated to the flourishing relationship between the Czech Republic and Taiwan. He illustrated how mutual respect and shared democratic values have fostered a strong partnership, serving as a model for international cooperation. Drahoš recounted his visits to Taiwan and the warm receptions he received, highlighting collaborations in areas such as technology, education, and cultural exchange.

During the Q&A session, many NCCU students eagerly asked questions. Among them, Huang Weirong, a senior in the Department of Slavic Languages, impressed everyone with his fluent Czech when he inquired about scholarships for Taiwanese students studying in the Czech Republic. Drahoš responded by acknowledging the importance of providing scholarships for more Taiwanese students to study in the Czech Republic. Although this issue is beyond the Senate's authority, he promised to inform the relevant Czech government departments.



NCCU Launches Semiconductor Supply Chain Course, Welcoming Czech Students to Explore Geopolitics

Furthermore, the “2024 Semiconductor Supply Chain Short-term Intensive Credit Course” will officially commence from June 17 to 28. The first batch of students from Charles University in the Czech Republic will join international and local NCCU students in this course. The program focuses on Taiwan’s semiconductor industry and global competitive strategies, combining lectures from NCCU’s top faculty and industry experts. It aims to provide students with a comprehensive understanding of the global semiconductor supply chain, supply chain management, geopolitics, and the semiconductor industry. The course will also include visits to Meta’s headquarters, TSMC Innovation Museum, and iST Technology.

8. The event not only celebrated the success stories of the Czech Republic and Taiwan but also inspired a new generation of students to contribute to the ongoing journey of democratic development.



CONCLUSION

The visit by Jiří Drahoš and his delegation, consisting of officials from various Czech ministries responsible for science, innovation, and inventions, as well as academic representatives, was a significant event for NCCU and the broader educational community. It highlighted the importance of international cooperation in advancing democratic values and fostering mutual understanding between nations. The lecture provided students and faculty with a deeper appreciation of the democratic journeys of the Czech Republic and Taiwan, inspiring them to engage actively in the preservation and advancement of democracy.



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In the words of Drahoš, “We are in the right time, right place with the right people.” This message resonated deeply with the audience, leaving a lasting impact and a sense of responsibility to uphold and advance the democratic ideals to build a resilient society.

COVER STORY

OIC CONNECT





PEOPLE



/Pic by Luke Witter
on Unsplash

AI and cross cultural understanding in the classroom:

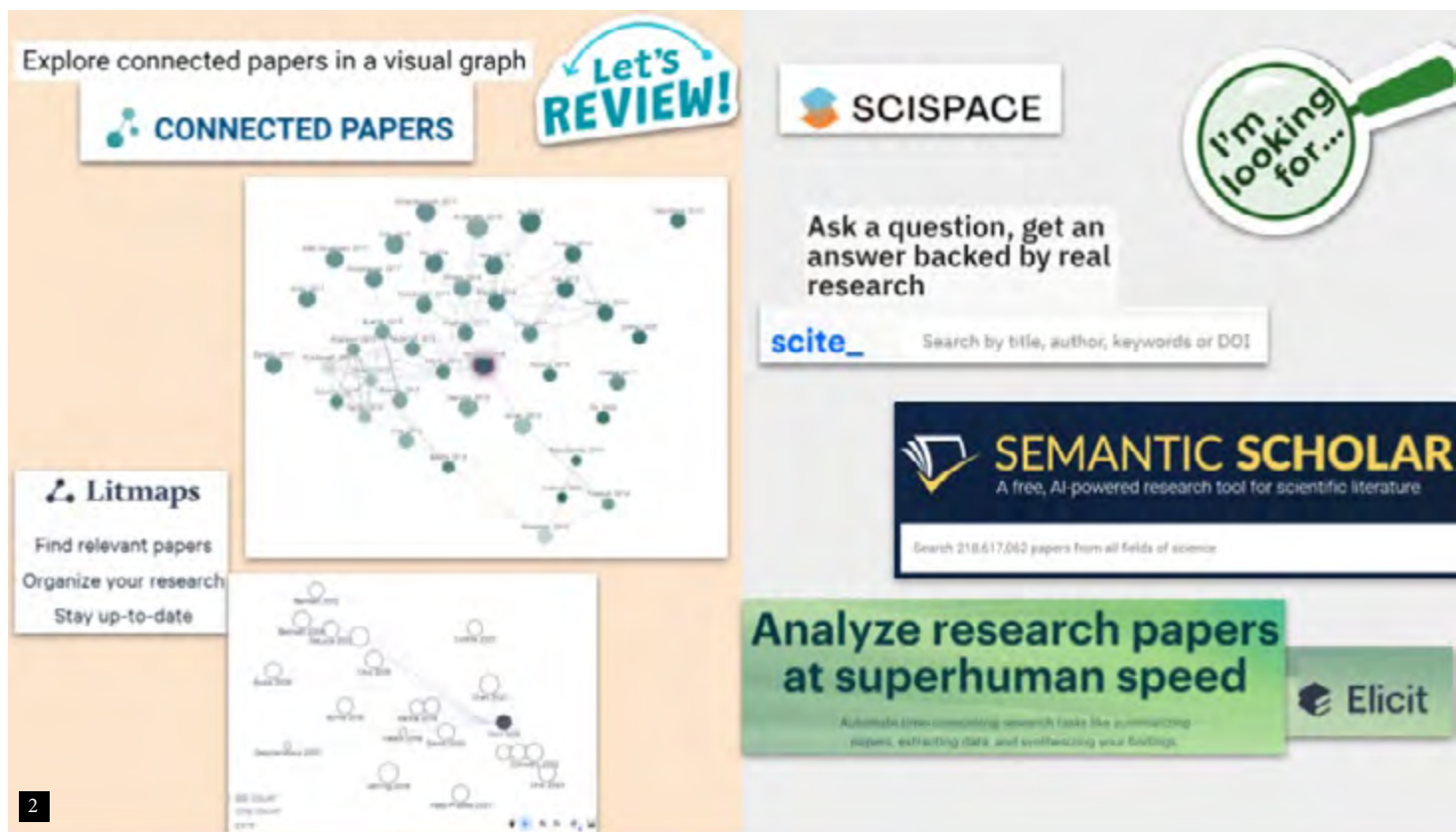
An interview with Professor Krisztina Domjan

Article by by Angela Glowacki

NCCU had the pleasure of hosting Dr. Krisztina Domjan from May 27-31. Dr. Domjan is a professorial Lecturer from American University, specializing in English and Intercultural Communication. Over the course of five days, Dr. Domjan held open talks, training, and presentations sharing her expertise in cultural competency pedagogy and the future of AI in the classroom. On her final day at NCCU, we had the pleasure of speaking with her one on one.

1. Dr. Krisztina Domjan, a professorial Lecturer from American University





2. AI Research tools recommended by Dr. Domjan (credit Krisztina Domjan)

We began our conversation discussing how the development of AI technology has made research, teaching, and learning more convenient for both students and teachers. However, Dr. Domjan shared her thoughts on important considerations for university teachers and students. Most importantly, Prof. Domjan advocated for both teachers and students to gain AI literacy skills. She outlined three main approaches, understanding AI, using AI, and evaluating AI. “It is essential to learn

how to selected the AI tools we need for our tasks,” Prof. Domjan said, “In the case of doing research, you can have a conversation with an AI chatbot and ask it to list a handful of scholars with the most cutting-edge research, or with a specific focus on a certain topic. However, because AI chatbots are limited, they have limited access to online sources. This is when the AI literacy skills are needed.”

Prof. Domjan encouraged university teachers to learn how to build AI tools into their workflow to reduce time spent on certain stages of the process. She shared a finding reporting that 82.4% of scientists found AI peer reviews more useful than some of the human reviews, suggesting that AI is reasonably adept at finding errors. She cautioned against sharing sensitive data with AI chatbots, instead utilizing it to receive feedback on the flow of an article, structure, and organization. Her advice to students was similar, also emphasizing not to rely too heavily on AI tools. A common misconception is that AI chatbots automatically produce quality work, when in reality this is not the case. Prof. Domjan joked about instances in her classroom when she saw the same ideas reproduced across various papers of students who used chatbots to help with their assignments. Students need to be aware that the AI chatbots, while useful for brainstorming, cannot replace the entire writing process entirely. With this, Prof. Domjan highlighted a key question students must ask themselves, “At what stage of the writing process or assignment creation is it ethical to use these

tools?” Prof. Domjan advocated for transparency about AI usage, as well as flexibility from the students as their teachers will each have different expectations and levels of expertise about how much AI they will allow in class.

Advancements in AI technology have been widely incorporated in the hard sciences, however, fields such as the humanities and social sciences can also leverage these tools. Prof. Domjan highlighted how researchers could offload complex tasks like data mining to AI tools, or take part in providing insight towards the creation of new educational tech tools such as virtual tutors. She confesses that this is a largely understudied subject at the moment, but is hopeful about the potential for advancements and increased integration of AI tools in the humanities and social sciences. Above all, Prof. Domjan advocates for the creation of spaces to experiment and understand AI’s benefits and limitation. Hands-on experimentation, she argues, can build communities and inspire more usage.



3. It was a pleasure speaking with Dr. Domjan and hearing her insight on AI technology and multicultural inclusivity on campus.

After discussing AI in the classroom, we switched gears to address the unique cultural diversity at NCCU and ask Prof. Domjan her thoughts on the kind of mindsets administrative staff and teachers should possess in order to sustain an inclusive environment. She cited Dr. Darla Deardorff's argument on how respect, openness, and curiosity/discovery are key attitudes needed to ensure success. Showing interest, Prof. Domjan continued, is incredibly important towards starting conversations. She also listed several skills that are valuable including; perspective-taking, observation, flexibility, interacting, and self-

efficacy. "It is not enough to have good faith and good intentions," Prof. Domjan warned, "an intercultural interaction also has to be successful and effective. Essentially what we need is a growth mindset: developing a more complex self-perception and perception of others. We see the world through our cultural glasses and that can be a barrier, so we have to make sure that our cultural glasses are at least bifocal or multifocal." Prof. Domjan understands that this process takes work and is a life-learning process in which understanding is gained from more frequent and intentional interactions.

We closed our discussion to talk more specifically about NCCU and how the university could promote interaction among students from different backgrounds. Prof. Domjan shared about work that she has done at her university creating co-curricular activities for her students. In a class she teaches called Complex Problems, Prof. Doman has built a digital citizenship global exchange initiative in which students, both domestic and international, team up to discuss relevant questions regarding digital citizenship. Eventually, the teams prepare visuals and stations to support a robust exchange of information. This event has been successful in the many times that she has initiated and Prof. Domjan suggested similar activities be implemented in the classrooms at NCCU.

Additionally, she acknowledged the importance of feedback mechanisms so students can share their experiences and voice concerns, as well as ask for help or support when needed. She brought up an interesting point about how many schools put pressure on international students to blend in and connect with locals, while the domestic students do not often receive the same pressure. Prof. Domjan advocated for more opportunities to learn about how to navigate intercultural communication be made available to domestic students. Lastly, she listed several other events universities can hold to celebrate their student body diversity such as potlucks, story circles, and community projects.

It was a pleasure speaking with Prof. Domjan and hearing her insight on AI technology and multicultural inclusivity on campus. Her suggestions and ideas are extremely valuable to both teachers and students alike. In particular, with the growth of AI technology, students and teachers can feel more encouraged to learn about how to responsibly leverage these tools to succeed in the classroom. Prof. Domjan's resources and advice is extremely valuable in

understanding where to start learning about how to use AI in the classroom. Lastly, her input and experience on fostering inclusive environments also reminds us how lucky we are to be part of such a diverse student body and be excited to continue to celebrate our differences.

PEOPLE

OIC CONNECT





STUDENT LIFE

/Pic by Léa Charette

Savor the Globe: International Cuisine at NCCU's World Festival

Article by Angela Glowacki

From May 14 to May 16, NCCU held its annual World Festival. Students around campus run their own stands and serve food and drink of their countries. This year, over 30 stands were open with many different cuisines represented.

The event kicked off at noon, May 14. After some brief words welcoming students to the event, several dance and music performances followed. The stands were open Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday from 12:00 to 13:30 – perfect for students looking for lunch or a quick bite in between classes.

1. Student representatives give a speech on opening day
2. Student performs on opening day





At every booth, lines of students gathered to try different food. Several booths became so popular that they would often sell out completely well before 13:30. Although it was very busy, the energy of the crowd was positive and lively. Students sat around in the shade by the Administration Building eating their food with friends.

Trần Huỳnh Bảo Khánh is a first year IMAS student who helped run one of the Vietnamese food stalls. Kaitlyn (KC) Crosby is a first year IMICS student who ran her own American food stall with the help from Judithanne Oi Yun Young (Joey) and Jaden Gloden (both first year IMAS students). Both booths experienced great popularity and were completely sold out by the third and final day. They kindly shared their experience participating below.

*Why did you decide to open/help run a booth this year?
How did you and your team decide which food to prepare?*

Trần Huỳnh Bảo Khánh
(First Year IMAS, Vietnam):

I decided to help the Vietnamese Student Association at National Chengchi University (NCCU) to run a booth this year because this is a great chance with many Vietnamese fellows in Taiwan. Since I came here, I spent much more time with foreign students than with my country's fellows. Furthermore, it is a good chance to promote my country's image to Taiwanese and international friends at NCCU.

Kaitlyn (KC) Crosby
(First Year IMICS, USA):

I saw the email from OIC to join to festival shortly after making food from home. I was feeling a bit homesick and craved something my mom had made and when I shared it with my friends and roommates (who had never even heard of shrimp Etouffee or Beignets), I realized I wanted to highlight something that wasn't your typical American food.





How did it make you feel to see so many students interested in trying food from your country?

Trần Huỳnh Bảo Khánh

Honestly, I feel very happy that people pay much attention to our Vietnamese booth and food. It motivates us more to preserve our identity while studying abroad. It is also a good chance to build friendships and extend our network with students at NCCU thanks to the success of this event.

- 3. Food stand hosted by the Vietnamese Student Association
- 4. American food stand

Kaitlyn (KC) Crosby

Seeing people interested in American cuisine, specifically food from New Orleans was incredibly heartwarming. Cooking is something I take pride in, and seeing people come to our booth and to tell us how much they enjoy it meant the world to me. Our goal was to share American culture from my perspective through food, and I'd like to think my team and I achieved that based on the excitement and joy surrounding our booth.

*What was the energy like when you were running your booth?
Was it very busy/slow/stressful? Did you expect it to be as busy as
it was?*

Trần Huỳnh Bảo Khánh

It is really busy. And because my Chinese efficiency is not so good, I am quite struggling to interact with customers during my shift and have to ask my Vietnamese friends to assist. I expect it to be as busy as it was, it is a sign of success. I am really happy that people also took pictures of the food and us (including me of course).

Kaitlyn (KC) Crosby

The first day ran a bit slow due to the rain, but the next two days of the event were hectic in a good way. I expected a lot of planning and prep for the event, but the actual serving of food moved fast once the event began. We were able to be organized on our second and third day; me working on Beignets, Joyy serving shrimp Etouffee, and Jaden greeting customers; but when you're serving food during the lunch hour, it's gonna be a bit overwhelming. However, we still had fun as we had music going and friends popping in and out to chat while we worked, so the overall energy was great.



5. Student prepare food at the Turkish food stand
6. Students gathering on the first day of the festival despite the rain

From a customer's perspective, it was incredibly heartwarming to see so many different cuisines represented in such a small space. It reflected the level of diversity present on NCCU's campus, as well as the appreciation of so many different cultures.

As Miriam Brunner (first year IMAS) shared about her experience, "The diversity of the stands really exceeded my expectations. Not only was Southeast Asian cuisine represented but also European, Eurasian and North and South American specialties. I believe the Paraguay food stand as well as the Filipino, Turkish and Vietnamese booths were among the most popular and I really enjoyed that almost every stand played their country's music. As I am vegetarian,

my options were a little limited but I was able to try new beverages. I tried traditional Thai Tea for the first time and watched them make it, which was very interesting. I also had a violet drink from the Filipino food stand, sadly I forgot the name, but I remember it being delicious. I think I like the purple drink the most and the Bretzel I bought from the European booth as it reminded me of home."

The festival not only provided a unique culinary experience but also fostered a sense of community among the students. Each dish had its own unique story and background, inviting participants to explore the rich histories and traditions behind them.



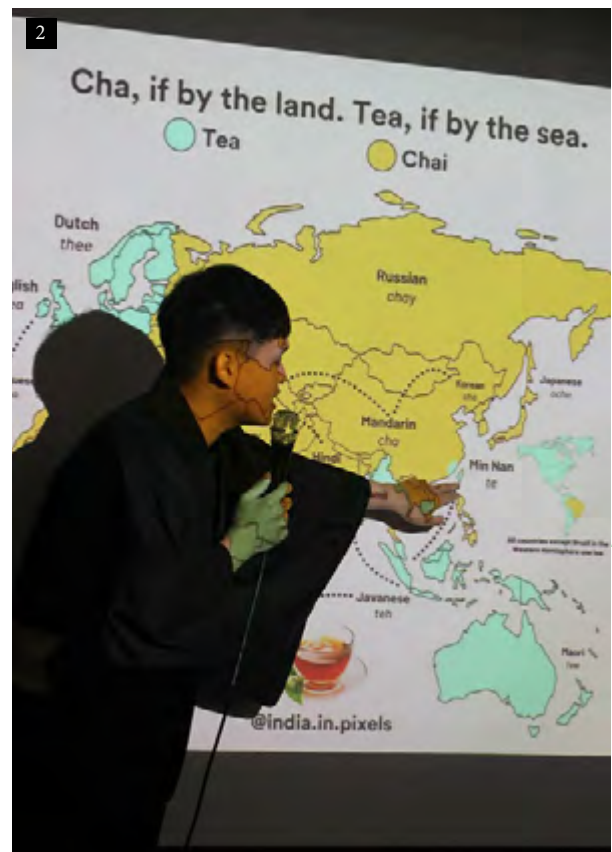
Recap of the Event

“Green Tea, Oolong Tea, or Me” : Why Not All Three?

Article by Léa Charette

Highlight of the Article:

The following article is the recapitulation of the tea tasting event held by the NCCUSA and the NCCU Tea Club on April 24. The event’s schedule included an introductory overview of tea, followed by two traditional Taiwanese tea ceremonies. Kusa mochi(草餅)¹ were kindly provided by the organizers.



1-2. After welcoming everyone, Jannes made an introduction of tea’s history and culture.

Although it is past 7pm, there is a buzz of activity palpable in one of the classes of DaYong Building's (大勇樓) first floor. Inside, the "Green Tea, Oolong Tea, or Me" event held in joint partnership between the NCCU Student Ambassadors and the NCCU Tea Club is just about to begin. The crowd, comprised of tea aficionados and other curious students, is gathered at such a late hour to hear about the culture of tea and participate in traditional Taiwanese ceremonies.

DING DING DING.

The clear ringing of a bell brings everyone's attention to the front of the room. Wearing a traditional kimono, Jannes 羽恩 - the Director of the NCCU Tea Club and today's orchestrator - welcomes all. He invites everyone to close their eyes and focus on their breathing. Slowly, surely, agitation makes way for quietness. This brief meditation period allows the energy in the room to recenter itself and for everyone's mind to (hopefully) quiet down in order to focus on what will come next.



3. The participants were offered some kusa mochi (草餅) to snack on.

Indeed, for a duration of two hours attendees will learn about tea's history, etymology and classification before enjoying tea brewed by the Tea Masters from the NCCU Tea Club while munching on kusa mochi. The following section will relay as much as possible the theoretical content presented in the first half of the event before narrating the two tea ceremonies unfolding in the second half.



PRESENTATION: EVERYTHING YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT TEA

In the introductory part of the event, Jannes first covered the different appellations of what in English we call “tea”. He called on international students to provide the denomination of tea in their language: thé in French, chay in Russian, chá in Chinese, tee in German. A clear distinction appeared. The explanation lies in the dual origin and travel of tea. Originating from the cantonese and traveling by land is cha, while originating from Hokkien and traveling by sea is tê.

Now that its name is known, what about its origin? Prior to the 19th century, people believed that tea originated from China. In the turn of the century, however, they changed their mind and declared it Indian. This change of heart followed the discovery of a tree that was over two thousand years old and that to this day still has firm roots in Indian soil. However, late 20th century discoveries placed tea’s origin back to China, more precisely in Yunnan province.

In regards to tea's consumption, the first uses of tea in Sichuan Province were surprisingly not as a beverage, but as medicine. People consumed the entirety of tea leaves, a practice perpetuated in Taiwan with the consumption of léi chá (擂茶).

Through the expansion of tea tours in the Tang dynasty and the importation of the tea ceremony to Japan in the Song dynasty, Chinese citizens still refused to drink the residual liquid from the brewed tea leaves. It is only in the Ming dynasty that people started to drink and not eat tea.

Very well, tea is now drunk, but what kind of tea? The presentation limited itself to the six traditional types of tea: green, yellow, white, oolong, black, and post-fermented (pu-erh). The British love their Earl Grey, while the Japanese are famous for their matcha. Why such a dichotomy in preference for black versus green tea? As the story goes, green tea travels far worse than black tea leaves do. The bitterness of aged green tea was not kind to the sensible British taste buds, who much rather preferred the richness of matured black tea. Ironically, black tea's import is rumored to only be due to its unpopularity as a 17th century new creation in the Chinese market, whose customers only drank green tea.





4. The powerpoint presentation included a pictorial explanation of the traditional Taiwanese tea ceremony performed at the event.

THE CEREMONY OF YELLOW AND HIGH MOUNTAIN TEA

For this event, it is the Taiwanese tradition of tea ceremony (茶席) that was followed. Jannes introduced it as “more colorful” (see picture 4) than the more well-known Japanese ceremony. While listing the strict rules (detailed below) of the first ceremonial brewing of yellow tea, he adds that for the second brewing “everyone will be happy”, i.e. freer of motion and expression.

First however, everyone - including myself as a photographer and the NCCUSA members - must remain silent and unmoving. Only the Tea Masters’ motions are permitted. The rest of the assembly has to keep their thoughts and comments to themselves. Everyone’s phone must remain silent. The goal of such guidelines is for attendees to enjoy the tea “with their five senses”, unperturbed by external interference.



While I sat in as much a controlled position as I could while occasionally taking pictures, a sense of lethargy came over me. I believe other people also felt their limbs and eyelids grow heavy. It was deeply calming to hear the Tea Master's movements as the not quite sole source of sound, along with Jannes' soothing voice. His instructions relayed the meditative quality of this "once in a lifetime" (一期一会) experience.

5-6. A Tea Master is about to offer the brewed tea to the members of his group, while another offers the teapot for his members to smell its content.



One must wonder: what happens during the actual ceremony? During the second ceremony - centered on High Mountain tea -, I was able to analyze the Tea Master's movements. The ground leaves are first taken from the cylindrical container (see picture 5) and layed on a wooden plate. The plate is passed around on the table for everyone in the group to smell the tea's unique scent. The leaves are then dumped in the clay teapot by scraping the wooden plate with a wooden spoon. Hot water is - quite obviously - poured into the teapot. The leaves are left to brew for a moment, which opens a window for conversation.

The Tea Master carefully offers the teapot to the attendees so that they can inhale the tea's vapors. Once the brewing period is deemed adequate, the Tea Master transfers the tea from the clay teapot to a glass container with a beak. Said container is passed around members of the group so that they can pour tea themselves into their small ceramic cup and then pass the glass along. Almost in unison, all members raise their cups to smell the tea's aroma and savor its taste. If they wish for a refill, the Tea Master gently scrapes the leaves at the bottom of the teapot with the wooden spoon before adding water, so that the leaves will still give the tea its flavor.

CONCLUSION: ONCE IN A LIFETIME

I would like to borrow Jannes' words to summarize my experience: it was a "once in a lifetime experience; if we gathered for the tea again, it would be different. People change, surroundings change, we change. Let us try to cherish every encounter in our lifetime." To be present and able to participate in such an event was a blessing. It felt like an oasis of calmness and knowledge in an usually fast-paced and frenetic academic environment. I will deeply cherish the connections - both with new faces and already established friendships - I made on that night.





7. Taking a second to inhale the tea's aroma before taking a sip.

8. To wrap up the event, I took a group picture of the wonderful attendees, helpful NCCUSA members, and inspiring NCCU Tea Club members.

¹ Mochi (sweet rice cake) made of wormwood (Japanese mugwort) and stuffed with red beans. It is traditionally consumed during remembrance (弔辞) days, as the green skin and red beans are considered auspicious blessings.

STUDENT LIFE

OIC CONNECT

Smell, Sounds And Color: A Field Trip to Taoyuan

Article by Léa Charette

Highlight of the Article:

This article is a narration of a school field trip to Taoyuan. The article's content consists of both my personal experience embellished by other participants' personal accounts. The trip as a whole was a remarkable example of cultural learning and intercultural dialogue.



1. Charge Soldier statue at Longgang Roundabout

I was surprised to see that the tour bus was full. What I had thought would be a field trip with our 8-students Tibetan Anthropology class, plus our teacher turned out to be of much larger scale. Everyone seemed excited and eager to arrive in Taoyuan. It was an auspicious start to our field trip.

Even though the rainy season had already started, the weather that Saturday was warm and sunny, with just enough wind to make walking around bearable. Upon arriving in the area we would be exploring today, we were split into two groups. In order to clearly hear the tour guide, we were offered earphones that were connected to his microphone.

WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT THE AREA

As we waited, I hid from the sun at the entrance to the junior high school whose parking lot our bus was using. I later learned that behind this school is the R.O.C. Army Academy, the reason why so many ex-military families reside in the Longgang (龍岡) region. This fact, among many others, was provided by my classmate, whose family is from the area, and who kindly offered to translate or clarify information should we find ourselves confused by what the tour guide would say.

Another classmate of mine later confessed to feeling confused by the guide's explanations. As she is Japanese and in the process of learning Chinese, she thought his "explanations were difficult, because sometimes he explained specific topics such as history and religion". In the hopes that this article will help her and anyone who wishes to know more about the area, I will briefly expand on its history and religious background.

When the KMT (Kuomintang 國民黨), i.e. the Chinese Nationalist Party “retreated” to Taiwan following its defeat in the Civil War, soldiers - barring those still fighting in the “Golden Triangle” (see third section) - were forced to uproot their lives. They are relocated throughout Taiwan, in different areas now referred to as *juàn cūn* (眷村), family villages. Longgang, as a prime example of this cluster of villages, is largely inhabited by retired military officers and their families.

The area is a hub of multicultural activity. To further emphasize the religious diversity of the area, our guide indicated a Baptist church just behind the Longgang Mosque, which we would soon visit, as well as a catholic church. Our unofficial translator also mentioned that there also was a Taoist temp behind the market’s back exit. He stated that “the peace atmosphere between all of [the religious institutions] can be regarded as a sign of inclusion and reconciliation”. He added that, since most residents are relatively recent immigrants to Taiwan, “there’s no reason for them to argue [about each others’ religion]”.

WHAT IS GOING ON IN ZHONGZHEN (忠貞市場) MARKET

The streets of Zhongzhen market are even narrower than that of multiple night markets. We walked single-file, some of the members of the group occasionally stopping to purchase traditional snacks or observe the live seafood in one of the stalls. It was hard to navigate, because, after all, markets are where people gather.

For the uprooted military families I mentioned previously who were no doubt missing their homeland, it was also a way to connect and share their cultural roots. Cuisine from Yunnan province is the most prominent; people come to Longgang to eat *mǐ gān* (米干), which is similar to Vietnamese *phở*.

2. A colorful example of Taiwanese patriotism, “The House of the National Flag” (國旗屋) diner, was first opened by a retired army officer

3. Walking around Zhongzhen market. Come here for good *mǐ gān* (米干) and sweet, sour, and spicy dishes!



Two of the most popular spots in Zhongzhen market are “The House of the National Flag” diner (guó cí wu 國旗屋) - with its banners full of Taiwanese flags - and any restaurant under the 7 Yunnan (七彩雲南) chain. Among them, my classmate’s favorite is the 版納傣味 (Xishuangbanna, pronounced Banh Na Dai Wei) diner. Its green signboard is situated on the right-hand side, a few steps after entering Zhongzhen market. It serves stone hot pot with a tomato soup base, mǐ gan, tofu, pork, fried pork skin, vegetables and tasty Thai-style side dishes.



WHAT WE ATE AND SAW: LONGGANG MOSQUE

If the above description made you hungry, then so will the description and pictures of our field trip meal. At noon, our two groups gathered in Longgang Mosque's courtyard to celebrate muslim traditions and food.

After washing our hands, we sat down to listen to President Ma's charismatic speech followed by a brief Arabic lesson. Then, we all dug in - literally, as we were encouraged to use our hands after putting on plastic gloves. My Japanese classmate said it was the "first time for [her] to eat something without using chopsticks or cutlery, so it was so interesting!"



The food was delicious: spicy peas, rice, fish, braised meat, noodles and other dishes I forgot but that were just as excellent. We were deeply grateful for the lovely people who had taken the time to cook all this food for us. On top of that, they offered us traditional snacks and nuts. For dessert, we had fresh watermelon, coconut jelly and a type of radish-like fruit that divided our group into those who liked it and disliked it (like me).

4-5. The amazing food we ate at Longgang Mosque.



As we ate, we got to know more about other participants and shared our nationality, culture and life experiences. Some of us were kindly invited to try on muslim clothing. My classmates and I agreed that they all looked amazing! It was heartwarming to be included and welcomed by the community. After lunch, we removed our shoes to enter the mosque.

President Ma sat and talked with us. The carpeted floors and vast space lended an intimate atmosphere to our gathering.

6-7. Longgang Mosque's interior, which we were lucky enough to visit.



WHAT (OR RATHER WHO) IS THE “LOST ARMY”?: A PHYSICAL TRIBUTE

Not far from the mosque, we walked to a cluster of houses around an open space where multiple stalls all had attractive products: welcome to Zhongzhen New Village Cultural Park (忠貞新村文化園區)! In the center of it lies a museum in remembrance to the “Lost Army”. As we entered, our group was given a movie ticket to watch a documentary covering the very interesting history of the “Lost Army” loyal to the Nationalists.

As a Canadian, I had never heard of these soldiers who had stayed behind after the KMT retreat to Taiwan. Forgotten by Kuomintang officials, they had moved due to military offensives from Yunnan province to the “Golden Triangle”, a mountainous region at the junction of Laos, Thailand and Myanmar where the Ruak and Mekong rivers converge.

In the jungle, they continued to fight for the KMT until their eventual repatriation to Taiwan or Mainland China in 1953-54. Those who came to Taiwan were placed in “忠貞”, the Zhongzhen New Villages. The



8. The entrance to Zhongzhen New Village Cultural Park (忠貞新村文化園區).

Chinese characters, taken individually, each mean “Loyalty”, a tribute to the neverending efforts of the forgotten troops. As my classmate said, the “Lost Army Story House” museum was erected “in the hope that people nowadays will realize how cruel and tough the war was compared to how patriotic they [the soldiers]” remained.



FIELD TRIP WRAP-UP: AN HISTORICAL AND CULTURAL EXPERIENCE

As we tiredly made our way to the waiting bus under the soft rays of the sunset, I could not help but feel that this was a day well spent. When I asked my fellow Canadian classmate for his impressions, he told me that he “thought that the places we went to were really neat”. Plus, he “found

it most interesting to learn about the historical origins of the area”. As for my Japanese classmate, she said to have “enjoyed the food and place of Taoyuan” and “also felt [that] all people [she had] met during the trip were so friendly!”.



In keeping with my classmate's positive feedback, I wholeheartedly agreed that we all became more knowledgeable as well as lucky to have encountered amazing people from a diversity of backgrounds. This had truly been an amazing opportunity for learning more about different cultures and exchanging interesting information, all the while eating good food!

9. A mandatory group picture in front of the all-green facade of the Longgang Mosque, holding the banners commemorating our trip. What a day!

STUDENT LIFE

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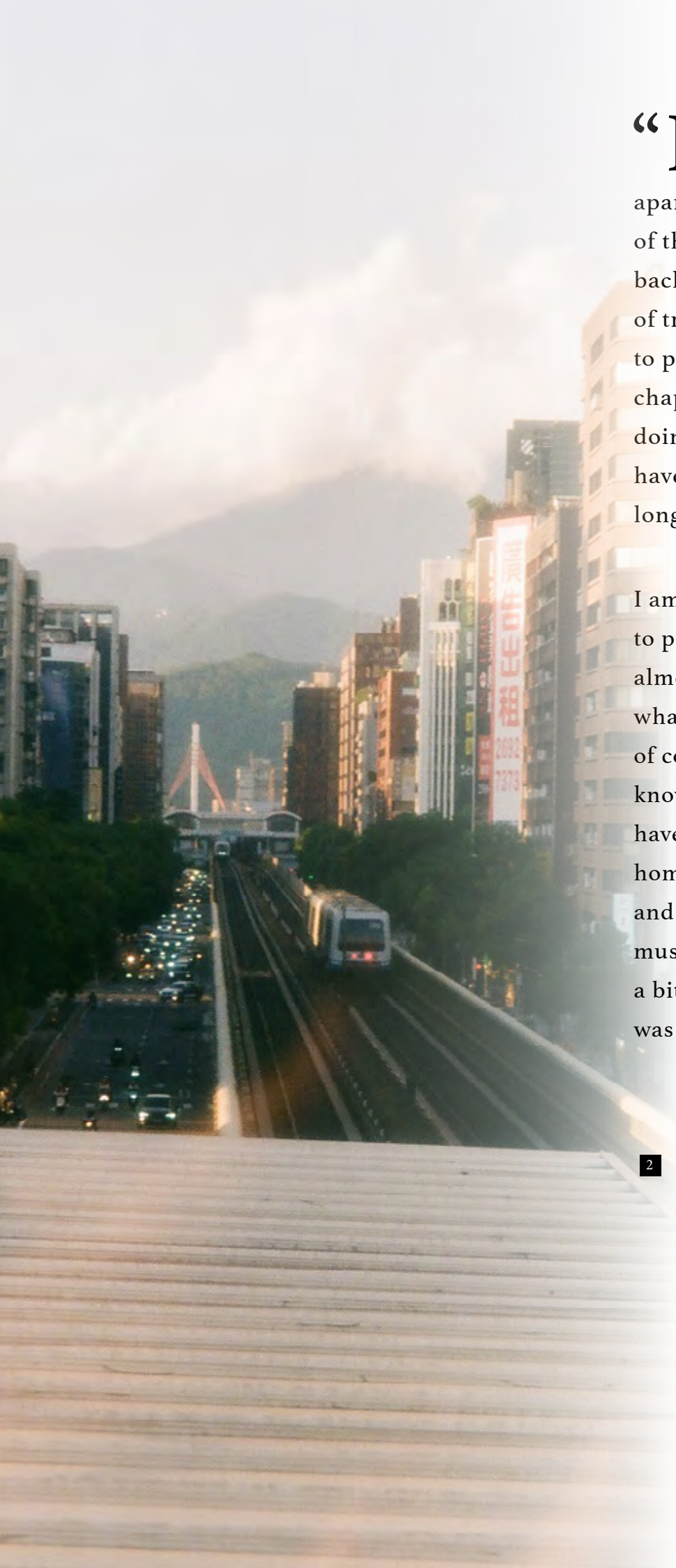
Everything is Bittersweet: Reflecting on this Past Year in Taiwan

Article by Léa Charette

Highlight of the Article:

This article is both a love letter and a farewell (for now) to Taiwan. I hope that it will resonate with fellow international students who are departing soon. I also hope to inspire local students to take that big jump and go on an exchange!





“I’m leaving soon, very soon”, I think as I begin to clear out my apartment. I am traveling at the end of the month and then flying straight back to Canada. The effervescence of travel will probably not allow me to properly reflect on this closing chapter of my life, which is why I am doing it now. These past few weeks, I have been looking back on my year-long exchange with mixed feelings.

I am deeply grateful to have chosen to pursue this dream. Now that it is almost complete, I do not quite know what to think. I want to go home, of course, as I miss it dearly, but I know that I will mourn the time I have spent in what is now my second home. Fellow international graduates and exchange students undoubtedly must experience similar feelings. It is a bittersweet ending, but I believe it was all worth it.

- 2 1. Snapshot of my Taiwanese friend, who is also a photographer.
2. This picture truly showcases how I will remember my time in Taiwan: hazy, like it was all a dream.



HOW A YEAR ABROAD CHANGES YOU

As cliché as it sounds, uprooting yourself from your routine and comfort zone really changes your perspective. As I have told many people, I believe that leaving when I did was the perfect break from my boredom and sluggishness. I was stuck in a miasma of negative feelings, every day looking the same. I did not feel fulfilled. Rebuilding a life in Taiwan was a welcome change of perspective that led to me now cherishing more what I have back home.

¹Yes, *Bridgerton* reference.

Even more cliché: I am not remotely the same person I was ten months ago. There is a lot more panicking I could have done that I surprisingly did not do. There are multiple friends I made because I uncharacteristically talked to them first. There are environments I would not have tolerated back home that I can sometimes withstand now. All of this to say: this past year was life-changing. As such, I would like to highlight the main events who left an imprint on my memory.

MAKING FRIENDS WITH LOCALS

There are no other Quebecers in Taiwan (that I know of), so in a way I was forced to make new connections with people who did not share my cultural background. I was met with warmth, acceptance and reassurance. I jokingly tie my comfortable experience to the fact that in my opinion Taiwanese are the “Canadians of East Asia²”. We appear to share a tendency to be apologetic, polite and mindful of other people. My impression might be based on stereotypes, but it does connect to what I have experienced since I came here.

²As I mentioned in a previous article.

The lovely people I met not only helped smoothing over the integration process, they also made my daily life colorful and full of laughter. I find it amazing and a bit surreal that I now have friends living so far apart, whom I will come back to visit. My world is suddenly bigger and brighter, all thanks to the connections I fostered here.

JOINING A CLUB FOR A UNIQUE COMMUNITY EXPERIENCE

When I first joined the muaythai (泰拳) club, I did not know anybody. I had not thought to ask a friend to go with me, as many people do. I was well and truly alone. Safe to say, I am the furthest thing from alone now. From repeatedly skipping class last semester, I became a club executive this semester in order to motivate me to attend more often. This allowed me to connect with all club members. I am now of the mind that joining was one of the best decisions I have made during my exchange.

Of course, everything did not always go smoothly. We had some bumps along the way, but I have to remind myself that things cannot always go according to plan. I am not very good at knocking people out yet, but I am better at navigating overlapping conversations in Chenglish and helping organize club events. Newfound skills can be found by joining any club, and as a bonus you get to meet a bunch of lovely people. Muaythai family, thank you! 我會想大家 (I will miss everyone).

3-4. Group pictures of the NCCU Muaythai club



SOLO TRAVELING WISELY

It almost comes at a given: most people who study abroad consider it an opportunity to travel as much as possible. I might have traveled less often than fellow exchange students, but each carefully chosen destination led to a unique experience. As hilariously dramatic or predictably underwhelming as those trips sometimes were, I now cherish all past experiences equally.

Starting from the move to Taiwan, in the past year I attempted my first overseas solo travels. I met up with people in Japan and Hong-Kong, but even there I spent a large portion of my time on my own. Solo travel taught me that going outside your comfort zone when the people who might judge you will disappear from your life in an instant is very freeing. You can do anything!

Whether you prefer traveling with friends or are intimidated by the prospect of traveling on your own, now might be the time to give it a shot :)



5-6. Souvenirs of my trips: walking with a friend in Japan and solo traveling in Korea.



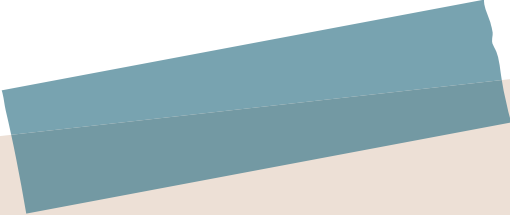


WHY ABOUT WORKING PART-TIME?

Many people have asked me: “why do you work if you are an exchange student?”. I didn’t really have an answer to give them. I usually responded with: “it looks good on a CV, it pays enough money to buy concert tickets, etc.” Now, I think I have an answer that transcends my previous explanations. Working as a journalist has pushed me to attend events and interview people I would have been shy or reluctant to otherwise.



I do not do crowds very well. As an introvert, I hesitate before joining any social event where it is unclear if I know anybody. Additionally, I am not confident in my Mandarin speaking abilities, therefore interviewing native speakers generated a great deal of anxiety. However, I pushed through because I had to work! Very often, I was pleasantly surprised to find my work praised or noticed, or to see a few familiar faces in the crowd. I could confidently say that I would have missed a lot of wonderful opportunities had I not chosen to apply for this journalist position. Thank you for hiring me!

IT'S A WRAP!

I hope my ramblings were clear or convincing enough to touch those who, like me, are currently packing their bags to go home or those who dream about leaving their homes. I believe that we are all strong and capable of pursuing our dreams. Let's do this!

Thanks to this exchange, I now have more experience and growth to start a new chapter. Speaking of thanks, I am deeply thankful for everyone whom I did not get to mention in this article but who nevertheless changed my experience for the better. I will hold all of you close to my heart.
台灣非常感謝 (thank you very much Taiwan)!



7. Image from one of the events I covered as an OIC exchange student journalist.

STUDENT LIFE

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Publisher		Ching-Ping Tang
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