

High-speed Rail in Mainland China

When people think about traveling across the vast lands of Mainland China, they tend to think of an exhausting journey that would last days on crowded trains with extremely uncomfortable seats. However, Mainland China is now undergoing a transportation revolution carried mostly by the construction of thousands of miles of high-speed rail.

I had thought Mainland China's massive continent was associated with the waste of time that any traveling would involve. Due to the lack of efficient forms of transportation, lives are confined to a finite zone so that interexchange between different areas is less than active. However, public transportation in Mainland China has made enormous strides in recent years, which greatly influenced today's mobility. High-speed rail construction was commenced in 1999, and with the government's great support for railway development, total miles newly built has reached more than 20 thousand kilometers in such a short decade. Most large cities are now directly connected through high-speed rail; a trip between Shanghai and Beijing takes merely 5 hours. Such a railway revolution enables a high-class executive to go through branches in different locations or a family to visit various sightseeing spots within a day's time. Apparently, mobility is being transformed progressively with the advancement of High-speed rail construction.

Thanks to the efficient mobility granted by such transportation revolution, the economic development has advanced by leaps and bounds, especially inland. Central economic region in Mainland China has the potential of the abundant energy and mineral resources, yet was hindered by the unfavorable transportation for economic intercourse. Nowadays, with the high-speed rail constructions entering the interior locations such as Shanxi or Sichuan, their heavy industries and metal industries have skyrocketed due to the efficient connection to coastal harbors in east Mainland China. Recently Shansi, well-known for its sufficient coals, is going to improve its distribution business by exporting more rapidly through the high-speed rail. As Mainland China earns considerable profits for exports, the high-speed rail truly plays the vital role.

Railway had been regarded as an outdated means of transportation, and also was doomed to be replaced by airplanes. Yet, Mainland China has successfully reversed the trend, developing innovative and convenient high-speed rail system, which really saves plenty of time for moving as well as providing impetus for remarkable economic growth. Now, the historical Silk Road has been revived again. This time, it's not camel caravans but high-speed rail that traverse the vast land of Eurasia.

Comparison of cross-straits students

Since the government of Taiwan lifted the ban and allowed students from Mainland China to study at universities in Taiwan, the comparison between cross-straits students has been discussed by the academia and the media constantly. It is now believed that the competitiveness of youngsters in Taiwan is inferior to that of Mainland Chinese youths: in the early morning, when libraries in Mainland China are ablaze with light and students crowd into the library to study, Taiwan's students are still in deep sleep. It has also been described that "Students of Mainland China are like wolves while Taiwan's students seem to be sheep."

Upon closer examination, we can see this difference in cross-strait students' mindsets and living patterns is mainly due to different social realities. Mainland China is sixty times the population of Taiwan; competition for resources and opportunities is bound to be more fierce than Taiwan. Many children were propelled to finish their studies far away from their native villages because studying is the only way to rise above poverty and change their fates; thus, they put every effort to it. Pressure is the main impetus of growth for them. Compared with Taiwan's students who are in a comfortable condition, Mainland China's students have to be active, energetic, and even aggressive in order not to be sifted out by the competitive society. Besides, as Taiwan's economic growth is now at a standstill, Mainland China is brimming with a positive outlook. The slogan "China dream" has also successfully aroused young people's passion to try hard. With all these working to push the Chinese students forward, no wonder they seem to be more competitive: they have something to look forward to.

In contrast, Taiwan's young people have the tendency to be immersed in "a little happiness in hand," that is, they are content with what they have and feeling secure that life will stay this good; consequently, many young people seem to be quite passive. Fortunately, there is still quite a lot of hard-working students in Taiwan, who are superior in creativity and vigor than Chinese students. They excel not only in academic performance, but also extracurricular activities, such as clubs organization, interpersonal communication, and even art appreciation. Thanks to a variety of activities, their thinking patterns are more flexible, creative and sometimes have the chance to jump out of fixed frames. Flexible education is our superiority and it gives the capacity to embrace a variety of challenges and different cultures.

Different educational and social circumstances have shaped respective ideas and pursuits. According to the above analysis, students of Mainland China who live in the hyper-competitive surroundings will out-perform us in the long run. If we still think pretty highly of ourselves and take a narrow view of things, we just might lose our future competitiveness. We should try to absorb their advantages through increasingly frequent cross-straits academic exchanges. Observing others' strong point and learn it is not a matter we should feel ashamed of. If we maintain a limited look and fail to step out of our comfort zone, our future would really be pitiable instead.

The Future of Chinese Calligraphy and Painting

I've never been to mainland China; however, my mother has been there twice because of Chinese calligraphy and painting exchange activity. Therefore, I've got a rough understanding of the traditional culture and the affected life there through her. In fact, the differences in cultural development between mainland China and Taiwan are thought-provoking.

People have been saying that Taiwan is the last reserve of Chinese culture since the Cultural Revolution in mainland China had brought about a massive destruction of traditional Chinese culture in the 1960s. However, after the economic prosperity of the 1980s, mainland China has laid more emphases on the traditional arts with its superfluous resources. At present, calligraphy and painting institutions have been established in every administrative district by the government. Painters and calligraphers have found steady support through passing the state examination. These artists who receive different payments at different levels are responsible for art exhibitions, overseas art exchange activities, and pictorial publications. With enough governmental funds, the traditional arts have been broadly publicised and conserved. In comparison with mainland China, Taiwan's local art galleries do not support professional artists. Limited funding makes it more difficult to hold activities and publicise the valuable culture. Obviously, the government's power and direction have an important role to play in sustaining traditional culture.

Besides the promotion of the government, the popularity of the traditional culture is also attributed to folk traditions. Almost every family in Mainland China hangs scrolls of calligraphy and painting in the house. In addition, the markets of calligraphy and painting stretch for blocks in every prosperous town in mainland China. Apparently, the atmosphere of the ancient culture has already permeated people's daily lives, making itself indispensable and hard to be destroyed. In Taiwan, on the contrary, the atmosphere of collecting calligraphy and painting isn't as prevalent as that in mainland China. Only some scholarly families will pay attention to the art culture. In a way, the development of more than five thousand years may be strong enough to fight against the Cultural Revolution on Mainland China, but not strong enough to resist negligence and indifference in Taiwan.

By means of my mother's priceless experiences, I've observed the development of Chinese calligraphy and painting in both mainland China and Taiwan. The precious and unique culture is worthy of being conserved by either side of the Taiwan Strait. If it is done so, its brilliant existence and future may add color to the cultural assets of the world.

Economic Differences between Mainland China and Taiwan

Most people on this island have images in their minds that Taiwan is a place of high economic achievements while Mainland China is described in poor countryside scenes such as dirty restrooms with no doors. However, more and more videos are now being uploaded onto the Internet to show that Mainland China is more than what we think.

Since the reform and opening-up policy in 1978, pay raises as high as 9 percent every year is a good indication of economic growth in China. The figure is only an average and does not apply to everyone, still, there has been a lot of improvement in the Chinese way of life. From daily life needs to entertainment and recreation, all forms of consumption have become huge businesses. China's spending power is so strong that a lot of people in Taiwan rely upon tourists from Mainland China for their livelihood, especially in businesses such as hotels, excursion buses, restaurants, souvenir shops, etc. In fact, salaries in Taiwan have stopped growing. College graduates now get only an income of NT\$22,000 and even that is showing a sign of regression, while Mainland China's salary levels are about the same amount and on the rise.

China's economy is not propped up only by consumption, but more importantly by building a strong infrastructure. For instance the high speed rail that connects major cities on the east side of the country is now extending west to recreate the historical Silk Road. The term "Shenzhen speed" describes the incredible speed with which China could build a story of a building in four days. It may seem to be exaggerating yet it is exactly the way how China is catching up fast. The more construction sites are at work, the more workers and materials are needed, and that mobilizes all the human and natural resources of China, which in the end benefits the whole country and creates lots of job opportunities.

Economic growth in China has been criticized for bringing pollution, and the qualities of buildings are questionable due to fast and furious developing. Yet, what industrial country has not gone through the same process? In fact, the great pollution-producers had been the highly industrialized countries, who are now criticizing Third-World countries for pollution and trying to sell eco-friendly products to China. Whatever the case, we need to keep our eyes on China and think hard on what we could do to keep up.

Are All Students in Mainland China Straight-A Students?

Ever since I was very young, people always said that students in mainland China study extremely hard and that if we Taiwanese students do not work harder, we would have less competitive edge and our jobs would be easily snatched away by them. This idea seems so true as many of our teachers and parents take it as a wake-up call to warn us of the harsh situation we are going to face, while the media often report on how aggressive students in mainland China are. However, I have gained a totally different point of view on this issue after I met an exchange student from mainland China in my freshman year.

In my first semester in college, there came a student from mainland China called Peter, whom I could meet in several courses. As time went by, we became more familiar with each other, and sometimes we would talk about the difference between the students in mainland China and those in Taiwan. At first I kept praising how studious students in mainland China were, and told Peter how amazed I was when the media reported that some of them even used intravenous drips to help maintain good energy level when studying. From time to time, Peter would burst into laughter and tell me how naïve I was.

Peter said that what I knew about students in mainland China might just be half-truth, which could represent only some of the students but not all of them. It is true that in mainland China many students go to great lengths to win the tickets into the prestigious schools, but they only account for a tiny part of the hundreds of millions students out there. Actually, just like us Taiwanese students, while some of them work really hard on schoolwork, others might engage in extracurricular activities they are interested in, and some just fool around all day long.

It was at that moment that I came to know how simple my idea of the students in mainland China was, and I started to notice how naïve and unsophisticated we Taiwanese students are that we tend to accept what the media or others say without doubting or pondering, which is definitely one of the drawbacks that make us less competitive than those in mainland China. For me, this experience is the real wake-up call that widens my horizon, and teaches me the importance of independent thinking instead of passively receiving what others say.

Traditional or Simplified

Nowadays, Taiwanese always regard Mainland Chinese as a people without much culture. They deduce this sweeping generalization not only from the sight of noisy tourists from Mainland China, but also from their written language: Simplified Chinese. On the Internet, comments encoded in Simplified Chinese can easily find themselves followed by a steam of abusive statements in Traditional Chinese. Why do some users of traditional characters seem to have such ferocious animosity against simplified characters and their users?

First, some Taiwanese, users of traditional characters, are convinced of the cultural legitimacy and superiority of traditional characters, which also stand for the legitimacy and superiority of Taiwan's way of life over that of the PRC. Lacking international political recognition, Taiwan turns toward the cultural to prove its worth. During Ma Ying-jeou's (馬英九) term as mayor of Taipei, he actively popularized the rectification of the name "Traditional Chinese characters," which is eventually changed to "the correct form of Chinese characters." Yet, historically speaking, Chinese characters can be written in many ways and forms on account of their long history of development. For instance, in ancient China, with low rates of literacy, the lower class created the simplified character "花" on the base on the character "華." These simpler variants of Chinese characters have been widely used by later generations even when writing in traditional characters. While traditional characters are no doubt ancient China's heritage, they also include plenty of informal remade words created by the people to help with their life's needs. If ancient people could accept those variations, why can't modern people embrace simplified characters? Modern people do not seem to understand that holding simplified characters in contempt is no other than looking down upon their proudest tradition.

Second, some people disdain Mainland Chinese due to the latter's habitual use of simplified characters. Most Taiwanese know that the government in Mainland China has promoted simplified characters for use in printing since the 1950s in an attempt to increase literacy. Maybe by this historical event, Mainland Chinese are properly considered not as smart as Taiwanese, and for this reason, their simplified characters lack the qualification to be accepted. However, in fact, in the years following the May Fourth Movement in 1919, many intellectuals were already advocating reforming Traditional Chinese characters to achieve universal education, for they regard the traditional Chinese writing system as an obstacle in modernizing China. Unfortunately, the Taiwanese indiscriminate attack on the government of PRC hides the truth that simplifying characters is actually a way to change and strengthen the Chinese nation and culture. It is historical resentment that makes Taiwanese ignore the basic history of simplifying characters and misconceive its main purpose.

I used to think poorly of simplified characters also, but after understanding the history of Chinese characters, I set out to accept and learn them. From my viewpoint, misunderstanding and political conflict had caused the estrangement between the two cognate writing systems. In order to reconcile traditional and simplified characters, instead of obstinately holding unto the prejudice, Taiwanese should abstain from preconceived ideas and learn to enjoy the richness of our writing systems.

Japanese style but Chinese girl

There have always been some bad impressions about Chinese in my memory, such as their rude behavior in public that had been widely reported in the media. I detest that kind of conduct and swear I will always keep far away from the Chinese—until I met Jingyang in England last year. And she was Chinese.

When I first met Jingyang, I thought she was a Japanese girl. That day, she was dressed in a white dress with brown curly hair, and her eyes shined with color contact lenses. She looked just like the typical Japanese high school girl that came out of the comic books and Japanese TV drama. When she said hello to me in Chinese, I suddenly realized that she was not Japanese. Then she told me that she was an immigrant from Beijing, her family moved to Japan since she was 15 years old. She talked to me in a very soft voice and with a sweet smile. This was totally different from my impression of Beijing girls. How could she change so much? “I thought you were Japanese,” I said. Jingyang laughed heartily and then told me her story.

During the first year she arrived in Japan, she spoke loudly as every girl did in Beijing and her conduct was never elegant as the Japanese girls. Soon she noticed everyone was staying away from her as if she was not good enough to be a friend. Jingyang thought it was a result of racial prejudice, but there were other girls from China who were welcome. She then realized that it was her conduct and her speech that turned people off. So she began to transform herself: she would wear pink laced dresses and put on makeup to go to school. She also learned to lower her voice and speak in a very soft and gentle way. She gradually found herself successfully settling in Japan as she changes into a Japanese style girl.

I had thought the Chinese were too proud to change themselves, but when I learned about Jingyang’s situation, I could totally understand her dilemma. If she didn’t change her lifestyle in new environment, she might be isolated by other people, and would also have difficulty making new friends. When in Rome, do as the Romans do. In order to let ourselves live well in the new environment, we’d better follow the new country’s customs. As long as Jingyang keeps her homeland in mind, she is still loyal to it. As for me, if I go abroad in the future, I would try to compromise with the environment and try hard to blend into the local culture. Even if I were visiting China, I would try to blend into its culture when I visit there.

My TV World

A few years ago, I accidentally saw a TV program titled "Sing my Song/ Song of China" on the Internet. It was a program in which the contestants would sing their own composed songs. At that time, I refused to watch Mainland China's programs because my classmates and teachers said that many audience members were hired to cry or act moved by the program. Yet, after I started to watch "Sing my Song", I was so attracted that I no longer wanted to watch Taiwan's programs.

I think what moved me the most were the ordinary people who went on the show to perform their own songs. "If I need to die, I must need to die in your hands." The contestant who sang this song wrote it to celebrate his encounter with his girlfriend who is from Japan. They had been together for more than seven years. Although the words were ordinary and rough, I can feel the strong emotions in this song. Another contestant who impressed me was a girl with very little hair. "Unbridled crushed, only to find my dreams were hiding in a strong fortress", she sang. "What a powerful voice!" I thought. She was 19 years old and the reason why she was there was to win her parents' approval. All of the contestants had their dreams whether they were poor farmers or minorities, and they all came to the stage to tell their own stories. "Ah blow just blow, my pride and indulgence. Ah, blowing can't ruin my pure garden. Let it blow and let it mess. You can never ruin the expectations in my heart. Ah, blow just blow, I walk barefoot without fear. Ah blow just blow, no matter what disturbs me. You see me smiling bravely. You see, I'm still waving bravely ah-ah." Su Yunying sang this now popular song in the program. This was the first song that made me cry. I was under the huge pressure of College Entrance Examination in Specified Subjects at the time, and I was really depressed then. This song seemed to be the rope that saved me from the abyss, or the light that guided me to the right place. From that moment on, I don't care about the rumor of fake audience anymore.

Apart from talent shows, I also watch "Chinese good poetry" to learn more about Chinese culture. I listen to the speeches on speech making shows to broaden my horizon, and I watch comic dialogues crosstalk to help me relax. More and more Mainland China's original TV programs fill my life as their high-quality and rich content drew me away from crudely made Taiwanese TV programs.

The Perceptions toward Mainland Chinese Students

One afternoon, my classmates all felt dispirited by the scores on the mock examination, lacking much incentive to continue studying for the college entrance examination. In order to cheer us up, our teacher recommended us to watch a documentary. So, I watched this video and hoped that I would find the motivation for studying.

The documentary recorded the life of a senior class in Mainland China for a whole year as they prepared for the college entrance examination. There were two parts of the plot that impressed me. One was when the teacher announced that he was going to resign because of the students' bad grades on the midterm exam. In fact, he was threatening his students to study much harder. He even said, "You should get good grades just to do me a favor." To me, this reason for studying is totally twisted. Obviously, most of the students couldn't figure out their goals for studying. Still, they were pushed to study day and night without any leisure time. A few students even ran away from school because they couldn't stand for the pressure made by the homeroom teacher. I think it's quite important for students to explore their own interests through participating in extracurricular activities. And then, they would find out what they are good at or have fun with. Besides, having leisure time can make them relaxed and have power to battle with examinations.

The second part that impressed me was that the teachers kept emphasizing the senior year would be the hardest time in the students' life because the examination was considered to be the most important thing in life. In a parent meeting, the teacher even demanded the parents to maintain harmony in the family, and told them not to divorce during the last year of their children's high school life. I am quite amazed by the one-track mind of the teachers and parents as they push the students to study only to get into college, as if that would guarantee a good life for the students.

We often hear that students in Taiwan are not competitive. But, after watching this clip, I can't accept this expression any more. We have more freedom and time than Mainland Chinese students to construct our own ideas. The creativity we own is definitely larger than theirs.

China Rising

When it comes to China rising, we often talk about their growing economy and affluence; however, we should really focus on the change of people there. After all, the economy may go up and down, the quality of people is the real strength of a nation. In recent years, there have been many news about the fierce competition in education, tiger parents or helicopter parents in China. We gradually learned that they are enhancing their competitive power, but we continue to say they are outdated, ossified, and they only work hard without ever reaching the soft power and creativity that we have. Yet in fact, this condition is changing.

When I was in senior high school, I lived in Singapore for a short time. In the process, I met a sixteen-year-old boy from mainland China who also attended my senior high school. He carried a simple luggage, including a smart phone, an ipad air 2, a wallet, and simple daily necessities which helped him to explore the whole world. He told me that when he was thirteen years old, his parents already encouraged him to explore the whole world on his own to verify what he had learned before. He told me that he had traveled to several countries already, such as Japan, Singapore, Australia, New Zealand, Germany, Switzerland, and Italy all by himself. At that time, I was very curious and asked him, "What was the most dangerous and difficult thing in your travel?" He said, "Well, when I was in Italy and got lost, I felt very nervous and flustered and had trouble communicating with others in English (they can only speak Italian). However, I tried my best to ask everyone who passed by. I also made use of lively gestures while talking. If others seemed unfriendly, I could defuse the embarrassment with a smile".

The boy was only my age and had already traveled around the world. He has achieved the autonomy and self-reliance that we have always prided ourselves upon for a long time. Although this is just one example, there are more similar cases undoubtedly and it manifests that mainland China is not as inflexible as we think before and that quantitative change has caused a qualitative change. When we are proud of our past achievements, our competitors have caught up with us and are preparing to transcend us. Although mainland China seems to have a long way to go in many areas, we cannot indulge in our comfort zone. I need to work harder because I will have to meet such strong competitors in the globalized world.

Negative impact of Doubly Non-permanent Resident

The “Doubly non-permanent resident” problem refers to babies born in Hong Kong ("double non-baby" or "non-dual") to parents from the Mainland but enjoy Hong Kong permanent residence, and the social resources and welfare in Hong Kong. The increasing number of double non-permanent residents in recent years has aroused strong dissatisfaction among Hong Kong residents who expressed their hostility in calling these Chinese “the locusts,” meaning the latter would use up all of Hong Kong’s resources when they take root there.

Article 24 of the basic law of the HKSAR provides that: Chinese citizens that are born in Hong Kong before or after the establishment of the HKSAR can become a permanent resident of HKSAR. With the implementation of Individual Visit Scheme in 2003, it becomes easier for people in the Mainland to travel to Hong Kong, and for Mainland women to come to Hong Kong to give birth. From 2001 to 2011, “double non-babies” surged to over 170,000 people, creating heavy pressure to Hong Kong's healthcare, education, social welfare, and public resources. There are even agencies in Mainland China that would do special arrangements for Mainland women giving birth in Hong Kong. When these babies grow up, they will need to go to school in Hong Kong, which will cause keener competition for school quotas. All in all, the material problems brought by these babies have sparked Hong Kong citizens’ strong opposition and rage.

After the election of the HKSAR Chief Executive Leung Chun-ying in 2012, “zero-tolerance policy” was promoted. It particularly required that all private hospitals stop accepting birth reservation from doubly non-permanent resident pregnant women after January 1, 2013. Since then, the number of doubly non-permanent resident pregnant women giving birth in Hong Kong declined dramatically, but there are still some doubly non-permanent resident pregnant women entering Hong Kong to give birth every year.

In recent years, more and more non-dual parents regreted their decision to give birth in Hong Kong. Since they have no household register on Mainland China, they hope Mainland China can set up a "return system" so that their children can return and study in public school in Mainland China. They are even willing to give up the identity of Hong Kong citizen. Some scholars worry that these double non-children will have difficulty integrating into Hong Kong and Macao society, and likewise, it would be impossible to restore the identity of the mainlanders, which may cause more social problems in the future.

Images of Mainland China

According to a research released by Election Study Center of National Chengchi University, a great shift has taken place in Taiwan's national identity between 1992 and 2015. In 1992, only 17.6% of Taiwan's population considered themselves to be only Taiwanese, and 25.5% consider themselves to be Chinese only. However, in 2015, the percentage of Taiwan's inhabitants who identify themselves as only Taiwanese has increased to 60.6%, and only 3.3% consider themselves to be Chinese. Obviously, there has been a sharp decline in "Chinese nationalism" in Taiwan. Going through the history of inhabitants in Taiwan's national identity, we could find that this change of national identity took place in the past few decades, in particular, since the rise of Mainland China.

Over the past few decades, there has been a great advancement in Mainland China's social economic environment. In the first place, Mainland China's GDP has grown at a rate of at least 9% per year for more than 25 years, exceeding that of Japan to become the world's second largest economy. In addition to this, previously, people tended to consider that Mainland China will never reach the achievement in space technology that the U.S. did. However, in 2003, Mainland China became the third country to send humans into space on its own, right after the former Soviet Union and the U.S. The whole world was amazed by the rise of Mainland China, especially when this economic miracle is achieved by a communist state.

With the rise of China, people in Taiwan began to change their feelings toward the negative in regard to this neighboring country. There might be three primary reasons:

First, since 1970s, Taiwan has always been proud to be one of the "Four Little Dragons of Asia"--- these four countries or areas were notable for maintaining particularly high growth rates and rapid industrialization from the early 1970s to 1990s. In contrast, at the same time, Mainland China was undergoing the Cultural Revolution. Hence, in some Taiwanese's mind, Mainland China was a symbol of impoverishment, poverty, and backwardness. But now, Mainland China, Taiwan's poor neighbor is becoming extremely wealthy---some Taiwanese can't endure the fact that Mainland China is rising, and begin to insult the latter.

Second, since labor costs in Mainland China around 1990s were much lower than Taiwan, lots of Taiwanese businessman had set up factories in Mainland China to take advantage of that. However, after decades of development, people in Mainland China have built up enough economic power to establish their own factories, they don't rely on funds from Taiwanese businessman anymore. Previously, Taiwanese

businessman regarded Mainland China as a land which will provide them with numerous profits---now, all of their expectations were dashed. Also, Mainland China's pollution control regulation is maturing and heavy penalties for offenders make it necessary for some of the businessman to move their factories to Vietnam or Thailand in disappointment.

Thirdly, the "De-Sinicization" process accelerated after Chen Shui-bian became the president in 2000 has been working to rewrite school history textbooks in order to abolish the "remnants of the Greater Chinese consciousness." The "One country on each side" concept in 2002 further posited that China and Taiwan are two separate countries, and opportunist politicians spread hostility and prejudice toward Mainland China, which all helped fuel a hatred toward Mainland China and a shift toward the Taiwanese national identity.

To sum up, the reason why people in Taiwan now see themselves as "Taiwanese," not "Chinese," was not because of the ideology of anti-communism, but because of the feelings of jealousy and pride that followed the changes in the economic environment. In other words, it was the commercial opportunities afforded by Capitalism that replaced the Chinese identity with the "Taiwanese" identity.

Culture vs. Nation

In recent years, some Taiwanese have been encouraging the government to banish every word that is connected to China, in other words, to desinicize Taiwan. They consider China as an undeveloped, uncivilized, communist country. And while they try to get rid of the connection with China, they are also trying to get rid of the Chinese culture altogether.

However, cultural identity is different from national identity. We can identify ourselves as Taiwanese, and as descendants of the Chinese culture, simultaneously. The two are not contradictory to each other. No matter what our nation is, Chinese is still our native language, and the treasures of Chinese history are still our heritage. Traditional Chinese religions such as Matsu, Guan Gong, Tudi Gong, and Confucianism still make up our spiritual life. The thousands of years of history that made the Chinese culture one of the oldest and greatest civilizations of the world should not be thrown away simply for a political reason. What cultural resources would we draw upon if we decide to desinicize? Instead of cutting us off from the Chinese culture, we should use it more to develop a unique local form of Chinese culture, which actually we already have now.

This new local Chinese culture is made up of the many ethnic groups now living on Taiwan. Besides Hokkienese, which is the largest group, there are indigenous peoples and the Hakka people, not to mention people who came from China long before and new migrants from China since 1949. In recent years, we also have a large group of southeast Asian migrants who came through international marriages. Multiple groups of people now gathered on this island, and abundant cultures converge in this place. We already have a Chinese culture that is quite open and complex. Nevertheless, people who advocate Taiwanization sometimes only focus on the pain they suffered but not notice that their action might develop into another form of political oppression on those who are considered not Taiwanese enough.

Taiwanese can dislike China, yet, they cannot deny the connection of history and the inheritance of culture between the two places. Culture is a custom and belief accumulated and passed on from generation to generation through a long time. It is difficult to categorize sophisticated interwoven national feelings, and people should not shape their own national identity by refuting all the cultural elements that make up this country.

Ask For a Change?

My father used to work under a mainlander from China. His relationship with his boss seemed to be complicated. On one hand, his boss should be regarded as a rescuer, who came to offer my father a job after his long time unemployment, his darkest days with two preschool children and a seriously-ill grandfather in the hospital. While on the other hand, his boss used to be his colleague and subordinate in the original company, and they shared the same fate of being fired. The difference was that the colleague went on to establish his own company and my father went to work for him. For that, my father always had mixed feelings about his boss, feelings that gradually turned into hatred after my father started to work in the new company.

According to my father, he had witnessed all the typical impressions of mainlanders in Taiwan. First, their company was always unscrupulous in producing tainted food or defective products. The company processed circuit boards and his boss would require the workers to drill five boards at the same time in order to save money and time, while the normal process was to do one at a time. My father was often asked to cover up his company's defective products and make explanations and excuses to the clients. Basically, his boss would do anything to save cost, and never cared about the consequences. Second, my father says that the character qualities of the mainlanders are very low. Not only did my father's boss produce faulty goods, he was also very selfish and impolite. For example, he never delivered year-end bonuses or overtime wage. When my father confronted him personally, he would say it's only normal not to. And he often asked my father to go and pick up his family, which was outside of my father's duty, and never once expressed his thankfulness for my father.

I have heard a lot of complaints from my father who often told me to stay away from the mainlanders and that none of them were good men. Whenever he saw news about China, he would immediately frown. Nowadays, with the exaggerated mainlander impressions that were broadcasted on TV, my father thus had more issues with the mainlanders. As for me, though I knew the news and my father's opinion could not be all truth, I am still unconsciously influenced and trapped in some stereotypes. I knew I should not judge a book before seeing its content, but when it came to mainland China, I would still instinctively resist everything connected to it. It was not until I had met some friends from mainland that I realized they are no different from us. For instance, Lin, who came from Fujian, once tricked me with her accent. At first, I had thought she was also from Taiwan, since she did not have the "typical" accent of mainlanders. We met when I accidentally lost my key, and she, a

total stranger, had helped me to find it. I had always thought if she had told me where she came from, I would treat her differently. However, thanks to her, I had already overcome my unreasonable fear. As a result, due to the friendship with Lin, I often got uncomfortable when hearing my father's judgements toward the mainlanders.

I could probably understand my father's thoughts about the mainlanders, especially when the economy of mainland China has taken off while the Taiwanese economy has gradually declined, which seems to reflect my father's relationship with his mainland boss. Taiwanese used to be the boss, while mainlanders had to be our workers. The huge change in fate might be hard for most Taiwanese to accept now. I know that it is difficult to change my father's views because every day the outside world is projecting instigations, rivalries and muddledness. But at least I have learned to see through the stereotypes and prejudices.