

The humanities aroma unique to the basement  
Treasure trove of literature, history and philosophy  
— Tonsan Bookstore, Chen Long-hao



# 走台步

TAIWAN STEP  
NO.13

**Independent Publishers, *Get in place !*  
Set to fight !**

## Editor's Words

Long time no see! Taiwan Step is back again after a half-year break! We are so touched to have received numerous readers inquiring the resumption of the publication. This time, as usual, we have prepared for you wonderful subjects for sharing! Independent bookstores are unique feature in Taiwan. Scads of overseas readers enjoy collecting independent publications that are unavailable in major bookstores in Taiwan. The vigor in independent bookstores reflects the diverse voices in the Taiwan society, which is why their publications are indeed the best souvenirs during visits to Taiwan. In this edition, we have especially invited the publishers of the independent bookstores to share their visions behind the industry in person, and their personally favored workplaces where they "set to fight" and rack their brains for masterpieces. Readers are not only welcome to collect their works from bookstores but also to visit those workplaces. You might come across seeing them working away at editing or writing!

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## The humanities aroma unique to the basement Treasure trove of literature, history and philosophy — Tonsan Bookstore Chen Long-hao

Text/ Tang Chengwei Picture/ Huang Boxuan

Opposite the National Taiwan University, the down flight of staircases in an alley leads to the entrance of Tonsan Bookstore. For a period of time, as the myriad treasure of knowledge was concealed in the underground of Taipei City, so the rarely accessible books were obtainable in many hidden basement independent bookstores. Today, these kinds of bookstores are diminishing, whereas the chain bookstores are getting bigger in size, often taller and take up the whole building. Tonsan Bookstore however, still preserves its unique underground aroma in style and in selections of books.

### Pirated books to bring in foreign knowledge, opt for humanities and social science books

"Tonsan has been specialized in books on humanities and social sciences for 30 years" Chen Long-hao, the owner of Tonsan Bookstore did not evade the fact that he started up his business from pirating books thirty years ago, when Taiwan craved for knowledge from abroad and had not yet signed any copyright agreement with European and American publishing companies. Having given the booklist by university professors, Chen would find those foreign language textbooks and reproduce them by photogravure, "saving even the typesetting !". Coupled with the steady demand for books from various departments in the universities, Chen described it as the prime

of the publishing industry. In addition to his piracy business of foreign language textbooks, Chen remembered that books were easy to sell regardless if they were for adults or kids. Fiction-lovers were especially large in number nearby school areas, "Er-ya, Jiu-ge, Hong-fang were the few publishing companies for fictions. Their books were practically snapped up once delivered to the bookshop."

With Taiwan being identified on the "Priority Watch List" set by the Special 301 Intellectual Property Rights Protection, the pirated books were banned from sale, and Chen also had to bear the cost incurred, helplessly losing the money he had earned in the past. This had also forced Chen to "transform his business" and made him start to really get to know about publishing, editing, typesetting and the paying of royalties. However, the preferences for the long-time reader base of Tonsan Bookstore did not follow the change, and that rather had become the unique feature of this basement bookstore.

"We don't have any books on science, computer studies (or) and medical studies, but we have relatively more complete sets of books on social sciences and philosophy," Chen is proud of his direction, "To the people interested in literature, history and philosophy, Tonsan cannot be so assertive in claiming itself as the first of choice but it can absolutely can be one of the best choices."

### The platform of voices for the minority and independent publishers; myriad,



### exceptionally great books in the underground treasure trove

Whether a professional academic researcher, a lover of unpopular publications, or even a used-books-aficionado collector, all can find surprises in this moderate-sized basement bookstore. Available here are the independent publications by individuals or small publishing companies, overseas Chinese books from Hong Kong and Malaysia, some rare, outdated, out of print academic journals, humanities magazines, and countless, scarcely purchasable poetry collections in regular bookstores that draw a considerable number of academics and poets to hunt for their treasures here.

The selections of books are not merely the taste of Chen but also his business strategy. Much as he laughed saying that he publishes out of not knowing how to refuse others, he knows he can never compete with the ever burgeoning chain bookstores if he sells all genres of books as the general bookstores do. Finding his own path is the only way out, which is a point he had realized deeply much earlier before the appearance of the term "Blue Ocean Strategy" as which was published. "I took a slightly different path from the majority of bookstores." Although friends asked of how much he could earn from selling these kinds of books, Chen has known well that with his bookstore size, capital and manpower, he can never parallel with other publishers in competing for neither authors nor copyrights. But he has the flexibility that doesn't exist in those

publishers or bookstores. He will instantly accept the publications shunned by the other outlets, and that's the reason why you can always find the great books in Tonsan, but unavailable in other bookstores.

### Closely linked with school education, keep tracking of student movements and reading needs

Another advantage of Tonsan is its close connection with universities, a point not found in the same trade of business. As a bachelor of the Department of Anthropology and Archaeology (now the Department of Anthropology), NTU, and a master of the Institute of China Border Area Studies (now Department of Ethnology), NCU, with his years of engagement in the textbook reproduction business, Chen not only possesses the relative sophistication but is also able to keep pace with the campus' trend of thinking through conversations with the university students and professors that visit the store, supplying them with the most needed readings. Whether it was Wild Lily Movement or Sunflower Student Movement, Tonsan has kept updated with student movements and reading requirements. "Business during the Wild Lily period thrived, I have to thank Lee Teng-hui, who showed up to meet the student representative 5 or 6 days after the start of the movement, so my business just dropped for 5 to 6 days," Chen recalls.

The Sunflower Movement this time has also





prompted many customers to take to the street. But participants were not so intensively involved as what they did during the Wild Lily Movement, Tonsan only took a break for one night in response to the request of the staff participating the street protest at the time when the movement was most heated up. Chen smiled saying in thought, at that time "I couldn't refuse the request. What if others say online that the host of Tonsan was unsupportive of the student movement and is a fake anti-authoritarian. What should I do, I had no choice but closed the store..."

#### **The Internet era, Impact on the sales of new form of books and publishing model**

Yet even keeping in pace with the campus, Tonsan can't resist the transformation brought by the new technology. To Tonsan and the myriad of publishers and bookstores, the advent of the Internet is another watershed after the appearance

of Special 301 Intellectual Property Rights Protection. The information once printed on paper can be easily assessed online. To make it worse, the emerging online bookstores have obliterated the traditional, brick and mortar bookstores. "We used to be really hectic when school days began," Chen recalls, "Class representatives would come to order books every time after the teacher had announced the required textbooks or books to be printed. Now they all go to the convenience store." Students today mostly rely on the internet to purchase their daily needs, "They are free from the hassle and bargain with Tonsan. Rather, it is those online bookstores that order books from us."

Chen sees clearly in his life how strenuous it is to resist the overwhelming Internet. "Even for my child, when I saw him buy books online one day, I offered, 'Let me buy it for you, and you can even enjoy 30% off.' He turned me down saying he can enjoy 21% off and receive the book the next day when he buys on books.com.tw. But he



won't know when he can get the book if he orders through me." Chen couldn't help but smile bitterly, "I guess I couldn't even do business with my own son, a straw shows which way the wind blows."

In spite of this, Chen doesn't totally hold the thriving online bookstores adversely. "You earn a bit less, but it sounds good to have someone serving you and save you from delivering books or collecting the payment." Besides, he sees the digital trend as irresistible, "Just as what he had experienced before, the LD companies released CDs without delay when they had realized that the high production cost in LDs and the trouble in their preservations." Admittedly, Chen has come to a bottleneck in the management of his bookstore. But flexibility is the edge of independent bookstores at this time, making any shift in management strategy less difficult. Chen, as a publisher and seller of academic publications goes for limited issues, bears the least risk in releasing e-books, should spearhead in taking up the challenges from the digitization of books. "Take part in it if you can't fend it off, I especially need to beef up the know-how." Even though he believes the business model for digitized publishing has yet to develop, people surely will find the solutions to tackle the problems involved.

#### **The reappearance of literature, history and philosophy, The spread of literary fragrance in Taipei Wen-Ruo-Ding**

Tonsan has never forgone its preference for humanities and social science in the past 30 years, and has come to see its fruition in this area. Rows of books were used to be put on shelves in sections of gender studies, same-sex studies and Taiwan studies has indirectly contributed to the rise of professional bookstores such as fembooks, Gingin Bookstore and Nantian Bookstore, in an area known as "Wen-Ruo-Ding" referring to the Wenzhou Street, Roosevelt Road, and Tingzhou Road. The bookstores that rose later has inevitably taken over Tonsan's once leading role. Yet, Chen still earnestly plans and select varied classics on literature, history and philosophy to be put into brand new section in Tonsan.

From reprinting foreign language books to self-produced academic publications, and the possible future digitized release, Tonsan seems to stay in the basement era, still strives to lead the readers to crave for knowledge and safeguards the nostalgic, unique underground tinge of humanities attached only to the basement.





## Independent Publishers, Get in place ! Set to fight !



Taiwan publisher is very active. You can find many interesting publications both online or in all kinds of bookstores. In addition to the all-embracing magazines and books, the most special is the independent publications. On account of the maturity in various processes in Taiwan publishing industry (editing, design, printing, distribution, outlet), it is never a hard task to create a book. This has encouraged the proliferation of a great number of independent publications.

There is a great deal of differences among books released by independent and big scale or mainstream publishers. Besides their unique subjects, distinctive characteristics, and neat designs, the independent publications sometimes released limited editions. Owing to the quality improvement in recent years, independent publications have gained lots of traction among fans. Many store names rise on the mainstream book market and are deeply favored by many



big scale outlets. Over the past two years, there has been a boom in the opening up of Taiwan's independent bookstores, making many limited editions of independent publications possible. This has even boosted young people to engage in publishing.

The active independent publishers indicate the gradual formation of a new generation of cultural strength, and through publications to speak up the diverse options and values in a society. To all publishers, books are not merely books but a channel to take the world. Each publication

maybe is the exhausting "warfare".

This edition of Taiwan Step has especially invited the independent publisher all over Taiwan to share about their "fighting corner," allowing readers to take a peek of where they get their inspirations when they are away from the editing desk.

Maybe you can copy and experience it personally. You can rest assured of a fruitful returns ! Perhaps you will also become an independent publisher !



## Looks of the independent publishers

### 【紅桌】Undertable Press

May all the publications by Undertable Press bring readers more inspiration, courage and practices in life of what they have thought.

Web : <http://undertable.tumblr.com/>

Facebook : <https://www.facebook.com/undertablepress>



### 【櫻桃園文化】VSPress

Specializes in re-interpretation of Russian literary classics. New translators translate directly from the original text. Re-interpret each work by adding in contemporary values. Anticipate the formation of epitomic new lives.

Blog : <http://vs-press.blogspot.tw/>

Facebook : <https://www.facebook.com/vspress>

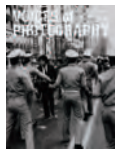


### 【攝影之聲】Voices of Photography

We publish an independent magazine on photography.

Web : <http://www.vopmagazine.com/>

Facebook : <https://www.facebook.com/vopmagazine>



### 【蜃樓出版】Shenlou Press

Being cyborg, being chimera.

Blog : <http://shenloupress.blogspot.tw>

Facebook : <https://www.facebook.com/pages/蜃樓出版社/118662391514130>



### 【基本】G Books

Each edition is gay and thrilling.

Blog : <http://gbookstaiwan.blogspot.tw/>

Facebook : <https://www.facebook.com/gbookstw>



### 【大真】BigTrue Publishing Company

Exist because of the readers.

Web : <http://bigtrue888.wix.com/bigtrue888>

Facebook : <http://www.facebook.com/bigtrue888>



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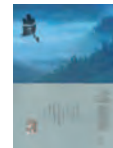


### 【透南風】Tou South Wind Studio

A magazine that developed deep-rooted in local culture. It's a sharing by a group of people who feel the urge to write what they have seen. Do the right thing together and finally have good things happened.

Facebook : <https://www.facebook.com/pages/透南風工作室/276007525768617>

Address: No. 75 Jingliao Village, Houbi District, Tainan



### 【叁捌旅居】3080s Apartment

Connect the new and the old by a live project, convey the wonderful life in Yancheng

Web : [www.3080s.com](http://www.3080s.com)

Address: No. 266 WuFu 4th Road, Yancheng District, Kaohsiung



### 【鐵道青年】Rail Youths

See in person, experience in person, explore in field studies. Feel the wind of land, the beauty of settlement and the smile of people.

Facebook : <https://www.facebook.com/railyouths>

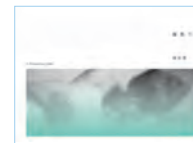
### 【花蓮 O'RIP 旅人】O'rip Traveler Studio Limited Company, Hualien

"Stories", "Courteous", "Wandering", o'rip in Hualien

Blog : <http://orip.wordpress.com/>

Facebook : <https://www.facebook.com/orip.Hualien>

Address: No. 27, Jieyue Street, Hualien City



### Chen Zhaoyuan

Take it upon himself in writing, design and publishing. A three-in-one creative modal.

Facebook : <https://www.facebook.com/chaoyuan>

## Wandering in fine day The beauty of campus architecture — Shih Chien University, Kooka Coffee, Taipei

Text & Picture/ Liu Xuilun (Chairman of Undertable Press)

### Q1: The inspirational corner and locations for Reading/Working/ (Creative) Writing/ Editing

The campus landscape has especially shown fast changes in recent years. Besides more good-looking modernized buildings were built, the originally narrow space there has been given a new face after the wise planning to it. The air on the campus is especially refreshing as the campus is by some hills. You may tour the campus or walk to the rear of the hills. If you are a fast walker, you can even go all the way to the vicinity of The Grand Hotel and have a visit to Shilin night market !

### Q2: What would you like to do when you are in your favored place for inspiration? What do you feel like and think about?

I live nearby the campus. The community there brims with vibrant and youthful atmosphere during school days. Campus is a good place to visit during holidays. It is quiet, in where you can enjoy the unfinished works by students in the public area. It's also very comfortable to sit on the lawn and bask in the sun. You may also have a cup of coffee in the nearby café. Catering at Kooka Coffee is very healthy. I think its boiled water is particularly tasty, and must be sure to get a glass of it.

### Q3: The transport /address for reaching the place of inspiration.

Shih Chien University: No.70, Dazhi St., Zhongshan Dist., Taipei City. Take the Wenhu (Wenshan-Neihu) Line to Dazhi MRT station. Get out of Exit 1 and walk in the direction of the

mountain.

Kooka Coffee®: No. 5, Lane 57, Dazhi St., Zhongshan Dist., Taipei City. Take the lane next to the Mos Burger on Dazhi St. You can find it when you walk about 50 meters and see a bird perching on a round green sign.



## Blocking off the hustle and bustle with a time-tunnel like meandering river bank — Wandering by Taipei Jingmei Stream

Text & Picture/ Qiu Guang (Chairman of VSPress)

### Q1: The inspirational corner and locations for Reading/Working/ (Creative) Writing/ Editing

The right hand side of Jingmei River on the south side of Taipei Basin is the place where I mill about the most frequently as I enter the city from Muzha. It's just like a time tunnel that separate Muzha in the suburb from the cosmopolitan Taipei. The boundary of these two worlds of realities lies nearby JIngmeing. You can see the blending of mountain and city residents at the bus station, sparkling with an illusion of an interwoven space of time.

### Q2: What would you like to do when you are in your favored place for inspiration? What do you feel like and think about?

It forms a few curves from the east to the west at 4 to 5 km at the rear downstream of Jingmei River. It looks it hesitates a while before merging into the Xindian River. I like to stroll or cycle nearby the river bank. I particularly enjoy the stroll along the river bank, look at how the river water erodes some irregular down-going water path. Walking as I thought, why a lot of time in life when a straight path seems possible but we detour to somewhere in reality? Will we lose

something when we rush to take the straight path? Probably the most extreme case will be like Faust...

Here you can see how different the numerous scenes and objects. As you stop and observe, it seems that everything is magnified several times, even a sparrow's face patterns has hidden some unprecedented charming lines (it's really freaking at that moment you realize it ) .....What do these forgotten scenes of everyday life reminded us? or just nothing ? Has the era of civilization brought people to the boundary of feeling the satiety with just a bit of simple food and clothing ? Who taught us to be complacent half-willingly about this small luck?

Compared to the straight road in the downtown of the embankment area, here it seems if there is a curved path leading to the other reality. There can be so many aspects and levels in reality! And people tend to go for the aspect that they like, is readily available and sweet





## Receives the mysterious brain wave emitted by books — Milling about in the cluster of bookstore in Taipei Wen-Ruo-Ding

Text & Picture/Li Wei-yi , (Editor-in-chief, Voices of Photography)

### Q1: The inspirational corner and locations for Reading/Working/ (Creative) Writing/ Editing

I hang out in bookstores, especially in love with the cluster of bookstores nearby the Gongguan in Taipei where a multitude of bookstores run there, replenishing energy and providing supplement for the brain. Basic route : Past and Present Used Books Gallery → Zonesuki (Thrift or Consignment Store) → Tonsan Bookstore → SMC Publishing → Taiwan-e-tiam. If there is sufficient time, follow the same path and head for other bookstores.

### Q2: What would you like to do when you are in your favored place for inspiration? What do you feel like and think about?

Unless going to the countryside, I feel ill at ease anywhere in the city. Bookstores however has given me a sense of security nowhere to be found. Wandering in bookstores doesn't mean looking for some specific books. Even just mooch about without reading in details, a look of the book titles, fonts, printing and binding or even an observation of how the books curated and classified is fun. Once stepping into the bookstore, the mysterious brain wave emitted by those books can be detected, boosting blood circulation in brain exercise and giving varied kinds of fun.

### Q3: The transport /address for reaching the place of inspiration.

Take MRT to Gongguan MRT station in Taipei. Inquire pedestrians after exit from the MRT.



## Professionals' exchanges in a narrow space — Rufous Coffee, Taipei

Text & Picture/ Lao Zhou, Editor-in-Chief, Shenlou Press

### Q1: The inspirational corner and locations for Reading/Working/ (Creative) Writing/ Editing

Rufous Coffee, a small café situated in Taipei.

### Q2: What do you like to do when you are in your favored place for inspiration? What do you feel like and think about?

As an editor that lives on freelance cases, expediting my work is crucial. Whether it's for writing or meeting with the author or translator, Rufous is a good place to visit. As the seats are limited, usually we can only sit at the bar table. The slightly high bar table effectively separates the interior and exterior area of the bar table, allowing a big enough space to hold only one person, forming the best workplace where my stagnant writing can slowly advance – a delightful moment that occurs often yet not easily in my editing life. Yet an even bigger elation is reading a writing that moves me to publish it right away.

Rufous has a unique tranquility. The distance between people is very close in this small café, and eloquent neighbors and hubbub are unavoidable. But maybe both the small size of Rufous and the coffee there have illuminated a sort of professional style that is transformed to create an inexpressible focus that makes people want to settle down in that kind of narrow corner. When you come back to yourself, you'll find that you have Tom Waits, Leonard Cohen or other familiar and favored songs. It feels like coming across a good friend at the street corner that encourages each other and turns around to continue the next journey.

### Q3: The transport /address for reaching the place of inspiration.

Get off at Technology Building MRT station, walk along Fuxing South Rd in the direction of Xinhai Rd for about 7 minutes. Address of Rufous Coffee: No.339, Sec. 2, Fuxing South Rd., Da'an District, Taipei City



## Magical feast of Southeast Asian daily life and snacks in an alley — Old Far Eastern Building in the outdated Taoyuan downtown area

Text & Picture/ Guo Zhengwei (Chief Editor, G Books )

### Q1: The inspirational corner and locations for Reading/Working/ (Creative) Writing/ Editing

This small booth of Vietnamese rice noodles is nearby the suite that I rent. People living in Taoyuan call this place "Old Far Eastern." The past hectic department store has transformed into diverse kinds of shops where foreign workers gather. Even though the shops are small, there isn't just rice noodles that are available. As far as I can remember, I have seen people eating balut, duck congee, Vietnamese spring rolls, fried spring rolls, cold chitterlings. I guess they are there because foreign workers gather in some nearby night clubs. Anyway, many bizarre foods await there.

### Q2: What do you like to do when you are in your favored place for inspiration? What do you feel like and think about?

When my mind can't cool off, or is overwhelmed with tons of writing, I will go and stay there for a while, have a bowl of rice noodles with a mixture of herbs while eavesdropping on other people's conversations quietly. This place is really wonderful. Foreign workers from various places converge on here. Gangs of bright colors gather together. Sometimes I was mistaken for Filipinos, Indonesians and Thais for Vietnamese and will be treated with warm-hearted chatting. Sometimes young guys from Thailand will speak in Chinese in a high-rising ending tone to strike a conversation with pretty girls from Vietnam. I like to stay there, where it feels like leaving my own life to fly into some strange yet friendly country. After having a meal, I especially like to wander

in the nearby grocery shops for foreign workers. Once while selecting the Filipino shampoo or Indonesian herbal toothpaste, the vanity as being an international person in this globalization era surged in me. This is my way of letting loose in face of rushing jobs.

### Q3: The transport /address for reaching the place of inspiration.

Walk along Zhongzheng Road after leaving Taoyuan train station. Pass by TongLing Movie Theater, turns right and walk till the end of the lane. That place is on the left hand side of the end-lane. (Lane. 48, Zhongzheng Rd.). (10 to 15 minutes' walk )



## Writing in the accompaniment of autumn wind and green shade, a leisure break at ecological park — Chung Yuan Christian University, Zhongli

Text & Picture/ Zhu Wenjun, Chief Editor, BigTrue Publishing Company

### Q1: The inspirational corner and locations for Reading/Working/ (Creative) Writing/ Editing

Fortunately, the company stations in the Executive Operation Center for Industry-Academia Cooperation of the Chung Yuan Christian University, so every day when going to work or leaving my office, I can take a stroll on the campus with exuberant greenery, following the seasonal rhythm and enjoy the different gifts of nature. Blooming flowers that cover both sides of the campus paths in the spring, the cool shade of trees in the summer, the rustling sound of falling leaves when stepped on in the autumn, and a walk in the hail of wind in the winter, as well as the knotted trees forming the shady broad ways under green shade on the campus, allowing oneself to be swaddled in this environment and be fully energized.

My favorite thing to do in the autumn afternoons is to bring my laptop and studying material, and look for a seat in the shade. Accompanied by the gentle wind and warm daylight, I can enjoy my favored writing heartily and comfortably. Sunlight casts through the gaps between the tree leaves and onto the writing paper as the tip of pen moves back and forth between the words and the loose patches of the sunrays, as I hold a cup of black tea from Alishan in hand. Squirrels occasionally climb down the trees to look for food and have fun while birds chirp resonated in the air. The eyes, ears, nose, body and mind are all greatly feasted for. This naturally brings about a smooth and happy feeling for work.

### Q2: What do you like to do when you are in your favored place for

### inspiration? What do you feel like and think about?

There is a fish pool on the first floor of the Executive Operation Center for Industry-Academia Cooperation, in which there are beautiful carps, tilapia and three turtles in big, medium and small sizes. When I get stuck in my work, I would bring two to three pieces of toast to feed the carp in the pool. An interesting find that I discover when I feed the fish is that the beautiful carp is very slow in fighting for the food, so the tilapia will snap it up once the bread crumbs are thrown in, while the turtles are even slower and I can't help but cheer on them. However do the turtles survive? This kind of interesting observation gives my mind a short break. After getting sufficient rest, I pat the crumbs off hands and continue my job, fully boosted.

### Q3: The transport /address for reaching the place of inspiration.

Address: Chung Yuan Christian University: No.200, Zhongbei Rd., Zhongli City, Taoyuan County



## Captured flashes of creative inspiration in the hubbub — campus of National Taichung University of Science and Technology, Jian Guo market, Taichung

Text/Lin Dingyuan, Picture/Lin Dingguo (Sandynotion Design Workshop)

We are the sandynotion design workshop. Graphic design by Dingguo (hereinafter referred to as K), text by Dingyuan (hereinafter referred to as Y)

### Q1: The inspirational corner and locations for Reading/Working/(Creative) Writing/Editing

K: Taichung is a city with a very comfortable city beat and climate and contains a retro and profuse humanities aroma. I always take a walk in the university campus or the art museum. It's probably because I like the environment that I'd always have some special feelings about this place.

I will head for places bursting with people, like the neighborhood of busy areas or markets, as people there won't bother over manners or speak in high-pitched voices. Getting close to people's lives in this way is most interesting to me.

### Q2: What do you like to do when you are in your favored place for inspiration? What do you feel like and think about?

I like observing people and listening to them. I view each common event from a foreigner's perspective, take note of some unnoticed parts in our accustomed life, and break down the impression in place. In fact, there are quite a lot of interesting ideas in our life. The conversations between people, the unintentional habits and unexpected incidents all hide interesting ideas. These kinds of interesting ideas can't necessarily invoke instant inspiration. Rather, I will record them for future reading.

K: The thing that I am different from him is that I like to record with images and share the daily

life photos on Instagram, interpreting what I have seen in my own way.

### Q3: The transport /address for reaching the place of inspiration.

Address of National Taichung University of Science and Technology: No.129, Sec. 3, Sanmin Rd., North District, Taichung City

Address of Jianguo market: Jianguo Rd., East District, Taichung City. Nearby Taichung Train station



## The countryside field under southerly wind meet the rustic humanistic landscape — Jingliao Village, Houbi District , Tainan

Text & Picture/ Liao Yuwei (Tou South Wind Studio)

### Q1: The inspirational corner and locations for Reading/Working/(Creative) Writing/Editing

What does an independent magazine bring to the readers through text and photography? To share the spirit of Tou South Wind, we always describe it like this: "We earnestly and sincerely wish to let you know the interesting and fascinating stories that are happening in southern Taiwan. It's just like sharing with friends about solar terms, labor works, cultures, crafts and skills, industries and people." Therefore the writing inspiration comes from the Taiwan countryside where the southerly blows. As required by the job, members of the Tou South Wind Studio always have to be around in the Jingliao Village whose name refers to Xiao Jing, a blue-dyeing plant. Jingliao Village is located in Hobi District in Tainan. It was the courier station on the old official road in Qing Dynasty. In the period of the Japanese occupation, due to the construction of Chianan Canal, rice production significantly increased and agricultural livelihood-related shops, farm tools shop, seed stores, Chinese herbal medicine shops, furniture stores, quilt shops and other stores were set up everywhere. People living here still preserve the early agricultural life style. As we follow the farmers to learn from them in the field, taste the cooking by the mothers living in the countryside or study how the farming tools are made in some of the old shops, Tou South Wind Studio has enriched its understanding about the land and is able to continue to care for the wonderful stories about farming villages.

### Q2: What do you like to do when you are in your favored place for inspiration? What do you feel like and

### think about?

Bloom in the spring, grow in the summer, harvest in the autumn, and store away in the winter. There are people who still lead these kinds of traditional lives, making good use of the creations from the land, modestly and diligently spending their everyday life. Therefore we love to live a life this way, sitting at the foot of a covered area by the old house and chatting with the elders to explore life stories worthy to be observed and recorded in Jingliao Village.

### Q3: The transport /address for reaching the place of inspiration.

Address: No. 75 Jingliao Village, Houbi District , Tainan City, use google map to search "Jingliao old street"





Independent Publishers, Get in place ! Set to fight

## Connect the new and the old by daily-life plan, deliver the wonderful life in Yancheng — 3080s Apartment, Kaohsiung

Text & Picture/ Qiu Cheng-han (Manager of 3080s Apartment)

### Q1: The inspirational corner and locations for Reading/Working/(Creative) Writing/ Editing

Owing to the local magazine Shi-huo(grocery) life published in Yancheng, Kaohsiung, the hang-out naturally is 3080s Apartment in the Yancheng District. This forty year old house has a captivating story behind. It once housed the prominent Zhengmei Bridal Clothing in the southern Taiwan, witnessing the prosperity and fall of Yancheng. The third generation rebuilt it into 3080s Apartment and earned the ADA Award for the Emerging Architect. The building conveys the history and features of Yancheng. Interestingly, just like the housing and shops are set into sectors in Yancheng, this five-story architecture is also divided into numerous maze-like small spaces, enabling each and every person to find his own, and befitting small corner as they come here.

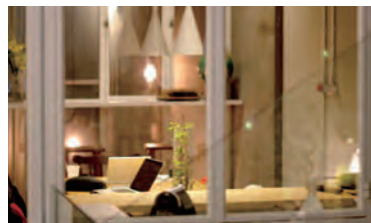
### Q2: What would you like to do when you are in your favored place for inspiration? What do you feel like and think about?

Sometimes I select the living room with a huge table on the second floor to hold a meeting for discussion over a beer party that come with fried salted chicken. When I am alone, I am used to bunker down in the semi-outdoor study on the third floor or write in the garden with veranda quietly while be able to smell the delicious waft from neighbors' stir-frying food. In fact, wherever you are in 3080s Apartment, you can slightly sense Yancheng, the old city that depicts the past olden days of Kaohsiung which greatly help the writing of the local magazine. When I really run out of idea, I will step out of the gate, turn and walk into the deep alleys or lanes in Yancheng, chat with the men and women in the old shops. Inspiration will sparks instantly. Afterall, "Life is

the best feeding source for creative writing."

### Q3: The transport /address for reaching the place of inspiration.

Take the Orange Line of Kaohsiung MRT, follow the smell of the sea and head for the direction to the Xiziwan. Alight at the Yanchengpu MRT station and follow Wufu 4th Road, a road that carries the old withering age of Kaohsiung. You may reach there as you move on in the direction where the sunsets. Address: No 266, Wufu 4th Road, Yancheng, Kaohsiung.



## The enchanting book smells and delicious snacks in the Old house

### — TaKaoBooks (Sanyu bookstore), Kaohsiung

Text & Picture/ Tu Jun-Qing, (Editor-in-chief, Rail Youths)

### Q1: The inspirational corner and locations for Reading/Working/(Creative) Writing/ Editing

TaKaoBooks TaKaoBooks has run for more than one year, is an independent bookstore featuring in humanities reading, creative lifestyle and performing arts. Different from the general bookstores, its choice of books are the unpopular, non-mainstream, less noted books such as poetry collection and independent publications. Some cultural books and less accessible magazines on the market are also available here. The architecture of TakaoBooks belongs to the first batch of houses built on Zhongzheng Road. Irregular exhibitions such as painting, photography and conceptual art are held in the basement. The first floor is the bookstore outfitted with vintage furniture and a huge wooden desk. The second floor is for catering, the third floor is for holding activities where different speeches are held nearly daily. Sometimes poetry reading gatherings are held there.

### Q2: What would you like to do when you are in your favored place for inspiration? What do you feel like and think about?

I always hang out in bookstores, TakaoBooks is my favourite choice. I usually wander the whole bookstore when I wander in bookstores. I will stop to read if there get some books interest me. After finish reading, I will go to the literary section to pick the interested books, sit down and read some of the quietly. Sometimes, I will purposely pick one book that I would never thought of reading so as to appreciate the reading style divergent from my usual one. Broadening horizon is also a kind of fun. I will usually put aside my busy works

when I wander in a bookstore, enjoying the hours in the bookstore, and the world of books.

### Q3: The transport /address for reaching the place of inspiration.

TaKaoBooks(Sanyu bookstore) is located at the No.214, Zhongzheng 2nd Rd., Lingya Dist., Kaohsiung City. You can take the Orange Line of Kaohsiung MRT to Cultural Center (O7). After exiting exit 1, head straight ahead or walk along Zhongzheng 2nd Rd. till reach the bookstore, very noticeable and right beside the road.



## Serene old house filled with creative energy East coastal cultural trip

### — O'rip Traveler Studio, Hualien

Text & Picture/Huang Qirui (Chief editor, magazine "o'rip")

Thinking of relating the wonderful life in Hualien, a few close friends establish o'rip in 2006, a magazine issue regularly that introduces life in Hualien with a bi-monthly theme. o'rip is a Aimee expression, meaning life or culture. The magazine has in-depth sharing of experiences and therefore able to lead the readers to stroll along with them. Creative workers and craftsmen are introduced and exhibitions are held, and slowly the shop, "O'rip you-li (O'rip with gifts)" has come into being.

#### Q1: The inspirational corner and locations for Reading/Working/ (Creative) Writing/ Editing

The two-story wooden house located on Jieyue Street in Hualien is the stopover for visitors to o'rip Traveler Studio and also the place where o'rip partners think up the magazine's theme and have exchanges. Visitors can select works by Hualien creative workers and artists as souvenirs during their visits to Hualien. A regular tour departs from here for a group of few to visit the small cities there, led in turns by friends who are familiar with the streets. It's a 2-hour walk serving as beginning understanding about the history, humanities and culture in Hualien streets.

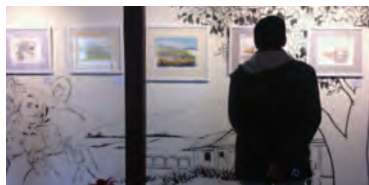
#### Q2: What do you like to do when you are in your favored place for inspiration? What do you feel like and think about?

Shoes must be taken off on the second floor of this old house. The wooden floor squeaks as our bare feet sense the traces of passed time in the floor. Wishing to free from the hassle of taking off the shoes, some travelers stayed at the top landing of the flight of stairs, some simply turned around

and rushed on to continue their journey. But most often, lone travelers were seen up there, savoring the space, the water-color exhibition: "Lonely train station", or works by ceramists, the weaving art by the Taroko women...

#### Q3: The transport /address for reaching the place of inspiration.

After leaving the Hualien train station, ask people for the direction, and may go there on foot (about 20 mins) or by taxi. Take the same path when Eileen Chang visited Taiwan. There are specialty stores nearby, Jade Cafe (Pu Shi coffee), LittleLife shop (smaller Matheson), Hualien Daily, Uma workshop, Wata (Art shop), Time bookstore, and even Hualien Cultural and Creative Industries Park, all are also worthy of visiting. Address of o'rip: No.27, Jieyue St., Hualien City



## Unwind, meditate profusely in the world of water

### — Qiangang Park, Shihlin, Taipei

Text & Picture/ Chen Zhaoyuan

#### Q1: The inspirational corner and locations for Reading/Working/ (Creative) Writing/ Editing

Parks and swimming pools.

If I feel edgy from working, I will go exercise in the nearby swimming pool or idle and bob in the water.

#### Q2: What do you like to do when you are in your favored place for inspiration? What do you feel like and think about?

My own home is my workplace. In addition to the computer, this small room is filled with files, drawing materials, collections. As I work for long hours, I usually wish to go to places with less people and slower life tempo. Swimming and working are two states differ tremendously in which I can shift and relax. When I swim, I don't have to stare at the screen, my body can flex freely and I can also keep a clear head, this can help me ponder over lots of issues and screen my thinking. I will reschedule the sequence of the

upcoming jobs or their contents and think about the past and the future pictorially. Inspiration often pops up in this kind of gap. Besides, the hot water in the shower stand at the swimming pool is just too comfortable, unlike the one at home that turns cold and hot suddenly. After swimming, I also take a walk in the park by the pool, it's really healing to see the changing sunray in the tree leaves.

#### Q3: The transport /address for reaching the place of inspiration.

Walk or cycle to reach there. Address of Qiangang Park: No.45, Qiangang St., Shilin District, Taipei City



## Personally favored Therapy Trip- Pingxi Sub-line,Taiwan Railway

Text & Picture/ Guo Zhengwei

When I am going to say goodbye, I like to take the train of TRA Pingxi Line. Before the university graduation, at the point a romance was just over and a few days before the year ended. I went through this rough journey alone as if I had gone through an awkward and solemn ceremony. Maybe it was just like a time capsule, the time and memory in the past was all scattered along the old tattered mountain city. It became the moment that solely belonged to me, it's an emotions-filled hours that needs not to be shared with one's lover, colleagues, or family. It's like a secret, solitary graduation trip.

### From Sandiaoling to Jingtong

The TRA Pingxi subline starts from Sandiaoling and ends at Jingtong. Get on the train at Ruifang Station. Any trains bound for Taiwan east (eg. Suao, Yilan) will pass by this station. After transferring at Ruifang station, the train will pass by Houtong station which is known for its cats and enter Pingxi subline: Sandiaoling, Dahua, Shifen, Wanggu, Lingjiao, Pingxi and Jingtong as the last station. Many people will buy cheap and economical "one day pass for Pingxi Line and Shen'ao Line" and enjoy an unlimited travel on the same day.

Geographically, Pingxi is a gentle watershed in the upstream region of the Keelung River. In the early twentieth century, coal mines were found

in this region and had temporarily attracted a large number of pioneers and miners. The serene natural mountain area opened its arms selflessly to embrace each person's urge of dream for fortune. Suddenly, there were commotion of man, spring of shops, and whistle of trains shuttled on the railway to deliver coal.

With the end of decades of coal mining, people left resolutely as the way they moved in back in the day, migrating to the next place of hope. Things restored to quietness respectively but were not the same any more. Speaking of it figuratively, doesn't it sound too much like a life fable? I don't mean that life comes a full circle of "running away when things are done." After all, if you take a trip of the Pinxi line today, nobody will describe Pingxi of today as a "mining town in decline."

### Release of a sky lantern in pursuit of dreams

The Pingxi coal area was once the "promised land" to gold diggers. Today, the sky lanterns continue the "endless possibilities" in people's dream.

Sky lantern was said to be invented by Zhuge Liang for passing military intelligence and disrupting enemy's observation of stars. With its hat-like shape, sky lanterns are also given another name, "Kong-ming (Zhuge Liang) lantern". The custom of releasing sky lanterns in Pingxi



has a history of one to two hundred years. The wonder of lanterns rising into the sky has been transformed into the hopes of people, and making Pingxi "a city of dream" again.

The thing that most attracts me when I tour in Pingxi is the diverse accents among the teeming crowds, just like in the United Nation. Then again, if you expect a quiet leisurely trip, I am afraid Pingxi is far from what one could have expected. After being converted to take a tourist-oriented development, Pingxi with its elegant and natural landscape in the mysterious old days often makes a great attraction to Taiwanese or foreign friends in their 1-day tour plan.

Regardless of weekdays or holidays, swarming crowds can be felt once stepping on the departing platform, let alone the hustling atmosphere in the squeezey train compartments. For a moment you may confuse if you are commuting on a peak-hour MRT train with the crowd sharing an untold excitement. Surrounded by a multiple language environment, there was a lady on the right reading a Korean tour guide to practice Chinese while the Japanese boys just cracked their jokes calmly among the people. Especially during the "Pingxi Sky Lantern Festival", thousands and millions of visitors flooded there, just to participate the grand occasion of lanterns covering the skies, not caring at all about the crowdedness.

### Between memory and everyday

There are three well-known old streets in Pingxi, namely Jingtong Old Street, Pingxi Old Street and Shifen Old Street. These few places have somehow preserved the landscape and architecture of the coal mining period. Jingtong Old Street are stone-slab paths. The old photos kept in the Taiwan Railway Company (Storyland) guide the visitors back to the original point of time to get to the origin of this mountain city. The nine-meter-high sky-lantern-shaped Pingxi Police Station attracts people with its LED lighting technology, and it's just like a merging of the past memories with daily life in reality. There are always winding queues outside the famous chicken roll. The "miners' lunchbox" are always richly nostalgic, making people unwilling to miss them.

Built along the hillside, Pingxi old streets have retained many traditional houses in oblong shapes. The rail bridge "San Keng Stream Ironbridge" runs through the old streets. I was enjoying an old-style fried flour mush when I first saw a train rumbling by and in a spin I tried to capture that moment. After taking some tofu pudding in mountain spring water, one can walk a short distance; take a deep breath at Lingjiao station to temporarily free oneself from the crowd.

Shi-fen Station is the must pass by station on





the Pingxi Line. Shi-fen old streets are always teeming with people whether on holidays or weekdays. The railway runs through the old streets. The shops on both sides of the railway run their businesses closely by it, making it quite an interesting feature. Another special feature there is that many people will buy sky lantern for release. Groups of people are often seen being around the sky lanterns writing their wishes. Shop owners will instruct in person how to release the lanterns after they have finished the writing. "Jingan Suspension Bridge" spans across the Keelung River. Buy a bag of fruit, or taste the adorable "Grandma's Japanese popsicle" while milling about to take in Shifen Waterfall, Taiwan's largest cascading waterfall and that is just relishing.

It's fascinating to travel alone in Pingxi. The bustling mountain city seems to have nothing to do with the mountain itself. It lies there quietly to let the time move on, letting people gush in excitement and leave in satisfaction. At that time,

I am alone either not moving or moving with the crowds. It's different from the tedious city crowdedness. After being put through a collective projection for a better outlook, the setback and discouragement in modern life seems to converge and shine with a bright healing light here. That is also why after each bidding of farewell to Pingxi, there rise in me a reflexive habit of returning there again. Of course, this is a purely my personal addiction. The magical sense of a trip always lies in the point of setting according to one's plan, whether solitarily, in a group of a few people or with a strike of a conversation.

### Tricks for Pingxi Line Tour

#### Tour plan

- 1."One day pass for Pingxi Line and Shen'ao Line"  
Adult ticket: NT64  
Children ticket: NT32 Ticketing offices: Banqiao, Taipei, Songshan, Keelung, Badu, Ruifang, Houtong, Yilan, Luodong, Shifen, Pingxi,



- Jingtong
- 2.To avoid schedules getting affected by the swarms of people, an in-depth 1-day tour of 2-3 stations is recommended. Confirm the schedule of the next upcoming train before leaving the station. Plan your tour based on the schedule of next train.
  - 3.For detailed sightseeing tour or a free manual, inquire the service personnel at each station, or the Shifen Visitor Center nearby the Shifen station.

#### Travel Activities:

- 4.2015 Pingxi Sky Lantern Festival: 31 Jan -14 Feb. For detailed schedule and program activities, search online the website of New Taipei City Government Tourism Bureau.
- 5."One day pass for Pingxi Line and Shen'ao Line"  
can be in use for Pingxi Line and also for transferring to Shen'ao Line to visit to National Museum of Marine Science and Technology.
- 6.Pingxi Subline passes by the once famous "Houtong" mining area. Partially preserving the feature of mining industry, this place is also known for its huge number of cats. Cats have their natural survival way, visitors are advised to enjoy there without feeding or stroking of the cats.





I remember the satiety after taking the breakfast in Tainan. The meticulously calculated calories in the cold mixed grains and yogurt tonic soup differ from others. The body gets warm up as if the skin pores are open, it definitely free you from the worries of not having a satisfying breakfast.

Get up at 7 or 8 am, just wander around, and take a look into the alleys, arcade, temples and markets. Wherever there are people gathering, foods are usually available, there is no need to ask about where one can have breakfast. The most common menu is veggie rice dumpling go with miso soup, or steamed glutinous rice cake with thick milkfish soup. There are always shops selling these kinds of menu anyway in the down town within 10 or 15 mins of walking distance.

**Tainan breakfast Experience the sensations from taste — Veggie rice dumpling with miso soup, steamed glutinous rice cake with thick milkfish soup.**

Smelling of the shell flower leaf, veggie rice

dumplings come in all sizes and usually with peanut powder. Unless requests not to have it added, only a small number of dumplings have it skipped. Sometimes meat rice dumplings are also available. Meat or vegetarian miso soup. At a price of NT10, you can get a bowl of veggie rice dumpling broth made of lots of small dried fish and Kezuribushi (shaved thin dried fish) and kapok tofu that can stand cooking for long hours.

There are great variations to the glutinous rice cake which is mostly made from indica rice, only some is from brown rice. There is a saying that indica rice tastes better if being stored for a while. From simple to overflowing ingredients that are similar to the meat rice dumplings, eggs, mushroom, minced meat and a whole piece of marinated meat are all used. The basic sauce, chili sauce and garlic sauce are three kinds of available sauces. Basic one is either sweet or salty. The yellowish creamy chili sauce and garlic sauce can be sweet or salty. Thick milkfish soup is also called "thick floating fish soup". The popular Fusheng Hao on Guohua street, the branched out



shop, Yi Wei Ping on the opposite street and the XiaoNan that moved from the roundabout of East Gate to Fu Qian Road all sell thick fish soup. Additionally, LaoGushi on Xingyi Street, bowl-shaped glutinous rice cake from LaoGushi on the northern part of Guohua street come with thick meat soup and light meat ball soup. It's a good chance to enjoy on spot the freshly pinched meat shred thrown into the thick soup.

**Traditional Fish ball soup from three generational Recipe**

Fish ball soup shops focus on preserving the freshness of ingredients. The more picky ones are the ones that inherited the cooking skills from Liu Qing-quan, seen in shops: "Di San Dai," "Tiangong Temple," "A chuan," and "Yong Ji." It all depends on the ingredients for making fish ball soup and beef soup. The skillful shop just focuses on preserving the freshness of fish well with the sweetness of beef, nothing fancy in it. Take the fish ball soup by the Tiangong Temple

as an example: the crispy ball, steamed fish ball, fish skin, fish belly and crispy intestines are all the ingredients for the day. Broth is cooked from fish bones. The people who shrink at the fishy smell and the far too soft food, will stick to the thin fish skin and belly cooked by this shop.

**The stomach-warming early breakfast in Tainan - beef soup, milkfish soup, salted congee with assorted ingredients.**

If you still find not satisfied, you may still try to ask a chef where you can eat. Li Jiandou, the chef-de-cusine at the Lao Pu Beef Soup on night-shift grew up in Tainan since young. As Li heard the visitors from outside say that the price for shrimp with rice has up to NT45 a bowl. He immediately picked up his knife and continued cutting perfectly, saying that he ate it when the shrimp with rice was 5 dollars. Shrimps topped the bowl at that time but now can't make it as shrimp is less but price is higher.

LI's shop is located on a double-lane Kangle

Street, named simply "Kangle Street Beef Soup". Asked about his favored breakfast shops, he answered: veggie rice dumpling, milkfish salted congee and buffet. Tainan people are all critical about food and that may even hurt others. He refers not only to the customers but also himself.

He never mentions the name of the food store but just the street where the store sells. Sha Tao Gong is located in the lane of inter-section of Ximen Road and Zhongzheng Road. Early at 5 am, in the open area in front of the temple, veggie rice dumpling will be starting on sale. "My dad brought me to buy veggie rice dumpling when I was young, now I eat the ones made by his son." Li smiled saying, "that is the most expensive one in Tainan, because I take at least three each time." He is good at choosing peanuts. My stomach feel bad if I take from other store. Peanuts tend to grow aflatoxin. It smells great when sprinkled as powder on the veggie rice dumplings but that can be skipped for the ones sold at Sha Tao Gong. And

give way to the smell of plain leaf that seeps into the rice.

The Kangle Street beef soup was started by Mr. Lin Mingliang and his wife in 1993. They are considered the seniors in the beef soup industry. Cattle must be butchered before beef soup is made available. Cattle are slaughtered at Shanghai Cattle-Market every day. Once delivered to the city area, beef was poured over with boiled soup to get it done and be consumed when it was still tender. In the past, many people who woke up in early morning to work must have a big breakfast in order to have enough energy to work till lunch. The booths that sold beef soup would also prepare a big pot of rice, and the even more picky customers want some marinated minced beef in boiled gravy. It was just great to have meat with rice and soup. The beef that was not frozen on the day they were butchered was very popular, so more and more beef soup stalls opened up. It was said that there were more than 200 shops

in Tainan city. When there is a demand, there is supply, so the cattle-market work the extra afternoon hours and deliver the meat to shops to catch up the dinner business.

Around 5pm as the beef arrives at the shop, Lin Mingliang the brother-in-law will bring Li Jian-du along to take over the night time business. Started a career in catering with zero experience, till now known about the beef and tendons, Li said, "This business is easy to work, beef is tasty as long as it is fresh."

"There are many customers coming over during the day. There are businessmen, a clinic doctor with his son at the entrance to the lane as well as people from morning exercise." From one shop in Kangle Street, we can see that beef soup has a history of 30 years in Tainan, the beef price has risen from NT200 to NT400 per catty and the customer base has also shifted as time changes. "The more natural and fresh the beef is, the better is its taste. Only the piece of meat with grease can

be stir-fired the next day. You usually get 5 catties of low quality meat if you purchase 30 catties from the slaughterer. The low quality meat left from the morning will be used to make minced beef. The night shift usually will perk up the price and ask the slaughterer to bring in all the good quality beef. We used to put MSG in our soup, but not anymore. Some customers even skip putting salt in the soup," It's good to chat with the owner of the beef soup shop at night. Business was not that busy as in the morning time, Li gobbled mouthfuls of self-prepared lemonade and had more time to say a few words.

Li also takes breakfast in Taiwanese cafeteria. The basic dishes for breakfast are freshly stir-fried seasonal veggies, fried egg and marinated foods.

"Let me tell you the fish from this shop is very fresh." Sure enough, one dares to speak aloud when he is real great. There is a different scene at the alley of Ximen Road where Sakaliba (meaning bustling place in Japanese) is located.







The shop starts at 7 am. Depending on the catches of the day, it prepares steamed fish, fried fish or marinated fish. The customers are mostly middle-aged or older who will not forget to ask for more soup. It's very common to enjoy free plain soup offered by Tainan snack booths. Pork spare rib soup is the commonest. Chicken sellers offer chicken soup, duck sellers offer duck soup, and this Taiwanese cafeteria offers free fish soup.

There is another shop that offers fish for breakfast. My father employed by an enterprise in Tainan, stations overseas for years and returns to the headquarters only to join in the Lunar New Year Worship in the Chinese New Year. The hotel where the whole family stays offer breakfast. Chinese congee and western egg rolls are all offered. I ate a few times but couldn't remember well the taste. My father didn't want to eat. He would get up early, departed from the hotel and went through a few lanes till he reached the small booth that sells milkfish congee in front of a temple. Early in the morning at 6 or 7am, the

open area was almost filled with foldable tables in sparse shade of tree, light and smoke. The grain of rice was still noticeable in the huge boiling pot. Pieces of fish, oyster formed the basis of the soup while some fried bread stick were set aside. Talking about salted congee, it usually refers to congee cooked with these kinds of ingredients. The hot congee was scooped into bowls for serving at the table, but it depends on one's choice to have it with the fried bread stick or not.

To take the congee and fish, people ordered fish belly congee and the whole milkfish with head and tail cut off. There were so many tiny bones in milkfish and it took good skill to eat the fish. In front of the temple, people all looked down as they spat out the fish bones. People at the same desk didn't need to know each other but just consumed their own bowl of fish. Some younger ones' had their mouth got scalded by the first intake of congee or had gum pricked by the fish bone if they were careless but the seniors, with decades of experience, were good at dealing with the fish. I



would say milkfish congee does not fit for people of all ages as breakfast.

But that kind of congee is no longer available. Maybe the business was so good that they all moved into shops. I miss the sun and wind at the time I took congee. If I prepare a China bowl and find a temple to have that kind of congee, I may have it again. There are lots of temples in Tainan, and this can be done easily. The hard part is finding the old taste that can't be restored. Now milkfish fillet is popular. I don't know with what method did they use to remove the fish bones that even children can also wolf the fish down. Things have comes to full circle that people who are skillful at eating fish find it upsetting to see this new way of eating fish. The congee is still tasty but it lacks a certain kind of flavor.

At that time, those who got up early could have breakfast but now you can eat at anytime. Brining convenience to customers mean bringing more businesses. Roads with heavy traffic have the brightest signs on. The most common ones are

the "milkfish soup" signs that are on for 24 hours a day and bright signs of veggie and meat rice dumplings. Fortunately, in this social networking era, there is another unchangeable business rule: the sold up foods are the best-tasting food, as you feel only the value when you can't have it. There is a rumor on the internet saying that it is best to arrive at 5 am in order to be able to eat the pink beef soup. Hunger marketing works only when you are hungry. You never lose when you come to Tainan for breakfast, ingredients are good and your stomach will just be in time for the next meal.



## A drag-out Farewell — Big Brother Mi-fen's Rice Noodles Soup

Text & Picture/ Huang Boxuan



On a moonless night, again, I came to the small, nameless booth on the familiar Shuanglian Street.

"Big brother, Si-shen (the 4-god gang) is having a negotiation tonight, you'd better be careful, would you just buy and return home to eat?" the flunky asked caringly.

The rich smell of fried scallion and pork fat wafted in the light. In the iron wok the white, half-translucent rice noodle is boiling. The owner can be seen swinging his long ladle, scooping up a bowl of rice noodle, adding in celery, fried scallion and white pepper. Hot and good-smelling rice noodles soup was ready to serve at the table.

My flunky asked again but I just waved him to come and sit down. Tonight I was going to honor one person.

Ten years ago, Big brother A-Chang and I beated two nameless guys, Gong-wan (meat ball)

and Zhu-Xue (Pig's blood), and we sat tiringly in the dark lane by the Wen Chang Temple. Big brother A-Chang pressed on his injured belly, kept panting and told me, "I want so much to have a bowl of rice noodle in soup..."

When I finally found a small, nameless shop, I carried two bowls of hot rice noodles soup and returned to Big brother A-Chang. But I was given a bad scold.

"Dumb head, isn't this rice noodles soup?"

"Right, any difference?"

"Rice noodles soup, rice noodle in soup and Tommy Lee Jones are totally different," (Soup in Chinese but rhymed with Tom of Tommy.)

"Big brother A-Chang, I am sorry I was wrong. Please tell me whether rice noodles soup means

the rice noodle or the soup?"

"There are two kinds of rice noodles known as 'shui fen (rice noodle boiled in boiling water)' and 'chui fen (steamed rice noodle)'. What we usually eat today is actually the slender rice noodle called "chui fen" which is compressed into slender strips, steam cooked, wind dried for storage convenience."

"Big brother A-Chang, are you ok to talk so much when you are so heavily injured?"

"...but 'shui fen' which is the shorter and fatter rice noodle is in fact the original form of rice noodle. Its most common way of cooking is having it cooked in pork bone broth. Besides this, you have also made a serious mistake."

"What is the mistake?"

"Can't you see that ? "Rice noodles soup, soup is only a pretense. It's no big deal to make some good soup among the Taiwan snacks, so it makes little difference where you take the rice noodles soup. How can this kind of featureless and cheap stuff survive till now? One day, I finally found out the main reason lies in the side dishes, which is the "Hei-bai-qie"(quickly prepared dishes with any ingredients).

The rich options of ingredients are mainly consisted of the pork innards. From the process of selection to cleaning of the innards is a test of the shop's real skill. The liver and meat must be tender and the pork cheek meat must be chewy. There are various kinds of choices such as the large intestine, the beginning sector of the large intestine must be chewy, pig heart, pig heart vessel, pig stomach, pigskin, tripe, smoked shark,



blanching squid, to deep fried tofu, blanching vegetables, not to mention the most delicious food like stewed meat, chicken roll and cold dishes.

"I got it, I got it..."

I rushed back to the original booth right away, bought all the side dishes and returned to the place I had been. But Big brother A-Chang had disappeared.

Then I realized, Big brother A-Chang must have found someone chasing behind. By asking me to buy the side dishes, he had sacrificed himself.

Since that day, I renamed myself as Mifen (rice noodle). I built my career while trying all kinds of rice noodles soup everywhere. Sure enough, there was devil hidden in the details. The key point for long distance driving is on the co-driver, and in manga series of YuYu Hakusho, to win the final battle in the "Demon World" also lies in the combat power of the assistant. Many long-history shops don't raise their rice noodles soup that sold at NT20 for decades, it's all the credit of the high-price side dishes.

I have finally become the "Big Brother Mi-fen"

Every year on this day, I will come over to remind myself about Shuanglian Street, and order





a bowl of rice noodles soup.

When I was about to take the first sip of soup, I suddenly realized the familiar look of the guy at the next table.

"A, Big brother A-Chang!" Tears streaked down my face right away.

"It's you, Yu-wan!"

"Big brother A-Chang, I am now called "Mi-fen" (rice noodle).

"A...is due to the event on that night. I am so sorry to have left you.....," Big brother A-Chang smiled. I stared at him. It felt like a dream. I took some soup in tears, feeling being hit on the brain, and my throat is burning hot that I couldn't even say anything.

It's the chili oil. He had put some chili oil in my rice noodles soup. The mixed fragrance in the spiciness conquered my well experienced taste

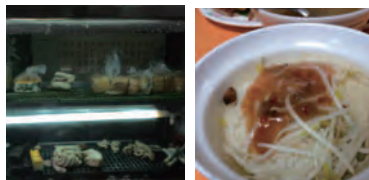
buds and put my body to numbness.

"I have also changed my name, call me Si-shen (4-god)." The past Big brother said it lightly.

Wow, big brother is not showing all you have.

With this chili oil in my soup, I am a complete surrender.

Note: Si-shen (4-god) soup, rice noodles soup, fish ball soup, meat ball soup, pig's blood soup are all the famous Taiwan snacks.



## Name list of rice noodles soup shops' leaders

### 【台北】Taipei

Nameless Shop of rice noodles soup  
Shuanglian Street, Zhongshan District, Taipei City  
The most delicious foods: the unity of body and soul --- bone offcuts broth, heart attack -- chili sauce

### MaiMianYanzai (Yanzai noodles shop): rice noodle in soup

No.106, Anxi St., Datong District., Taipei City 103

The most delicious food: the only high class dish in the world----stewed pork with soy sauce.

### Gongguan rice noodles soup

No.92, Sec. 4, Roosevelt Rd., Zhongzheng Dist., Taipei City (inside ShuiYuan Market)

The most delicious foods: old style minced pork rice, braised silver carp with spring onion

### 【桃園】Taoyuan

30 years nameless shop -- rice noodles soup

No.38, Zhenfu St., Taoyuan City

The most delicious food: stewed fatty pork (that makes you to regret not having met earlier).

### 【台南】Tainan

Chiu's family's cuttlefish & rice noodle

No.5, Sec. 3, Guohua St., West Central Dist., Tainan City 700

The most delicious foods: cuttlefish & unlimited supply of soup with rice noodle



## A lady born in the late 80s takes "San-Shu-Gong (Third Great Grand Uncle)" to sell toys

Text & Picture/ Kathy

In Taiwan, the term "San-Shu-Gong (Third Great Grand Uncle)" stands for the flavor from countryside and the brand of a glutinous cake. Who would expect that Sharon, a late 80's lady and her husband Alex start their business in Taipei. The retro shop named "San-Shu-Gong (Third Great Grand Uncle's) Grocery Store" specializes in selling vintage dolls, nostalgic toys and hand-made objects.

### The link with Taiwan since the university time

Sharon worked in different media industries and was trained to be very skillful in interpersonal relations. Alex is in the marketing industry. The couple seems to have a merry life and career. However, a year ago, feeling the limitation in job prospects in Hong Kong and increasing life pressure, they started to think of developing career overseas and finally decided to come to Taiwan for the start-up of their own business.

In mid-2014, Sharon resigned and had time to take a trip to Taipei as a break, incidentally absorbed some inspiration for the startup. Unexpectedly, we finally decided to start our new life in here. "In fact Alex and I knew each other in the Tamkang University. He majored in Business Administration while I majored in mass communications. We both lived in Taipei for 4 years and have made many friends, so we have long been familiar with Taipei."

### A couple separated in pursuit of business dream

Venture business needs capital, courage and thorough planning. After the discussion, Alex

and Sharon decided to have the wife come to Taipei to pioneer and the husband stays behind in Hong Kong to continue working hard as back up. Business dream has separated the couple to live temporarily in Hong Kong and Taipei. Fortunately, their "San-Shu-Gong (Third Great Grand Uncle's) Grocery Store" opened in the MAJI square, Taipei Expo Park in Yuanshan has been on track half an year after the start of the business and much embraced by customers.

MAJI square, Taipei Expo Park in Yuanshan is the lifestyle fair that has the most exotic ambience in recent years in Taipei. There are many shops selling things such as hand-made creative accessories, clothing and furniture. Crowds of people are found there on weekends. "San-Shu-gong (Third Great Grand Uncle's) Grocery Store" specializes in selling vintage dolls, nostalgic toys and hand-made objects from the States, South Korea, Shanghai and Hong Kong. It has built its unique style among the myriad of shops there.

### Feeling the warmth of Taiwan, a foreign land

Sharon ventured alone in Taipei. She can't help feeling lonely and helpless when she comes across difficulties. Fortunately, she has known many staff from other shops in the MAJI square. Ordinarily, they help each other when they manage their own shops. When there is free time, they will have meals together to exchange their life stories.

"Compared to people in Hong Kong, Taiwanese are purer, simple in character, making me easier to open up to make friends." Sharon says. Some mothers of my Taiwanese friend know that I live alone, have no soup to drink, and would



sometimes even bring some food to the fair for me. This kind of thing can hardly happen in Hong Kong. Talking about the future goals, Sharon wishes her business can keep growing, and she can start a brick and mortar shop in another place in Taipei. Alex will then be able to come to live in Taipei and work together for the business.



Ⓐ Address of "San-Shu-gong (Third Great Grand Uncle's) Grocery Store": Shop M2-4, No 1, Yumen Street, Zhongshan District, Taipei City inside the MAJI square, Taipei Expo Park, Yuanshan).



## Chic guys creates "Inexpensive, good-looking, and quality" brands in Taiwan

Text & Picture/ Kathy

Three years ago, 23-year-old Taker came alone from Hong Kong to Taipei and opened Natkiel jewelers, a shop less than 33 square meters in the Eastern area. The brand concept focuses on "Inexpensive, good-looking, and quality". After much painstaking efforts, his business has expanded to Taipei and Taichung with three shops in all, and widely reported by the Taiwan media and liked by stars and performing artists.

### Spot the lack of brand in "Instant Jewelry"

Taker born with a flair for trend and fashion and worked in a renowned quintessential brand shop in Hong Kong at 19 years old. After the outbreak of financial crisis in 2008, the global economy went downcast. He observed that many foreign brands that had stationed in Taiwan just failed. In the years after, Taker often came to tour in Taiwan. He noticed shops that focuses on "instant" trendy culture such as ZARA and UNIQLO have returned to Taiwan market and are doing great business.

In 2011, Taker settled the overseas agency right of Natkiel, a new British jewelry brand and came to start his first shop in the eastern district of Taipei. "Natkiel jewelry is designed by British designers, out of good material, sold at an approachable price in rapidly changing styles. There was scanty peer competitor at that time, which made me see the optimistic business opportunities and potential."

### Set up Taichung Branch in Feng Chia Night Market to draw young people

After three years efforts in building the brand,

marketing and promotion, Taker has successfully had Natkiel reported by Taiwan media and also attracted many stars and performing artists to bring the jewelry for their programs, bringing an ever higher exposure of the brand. Last year end, Natkiel officially opened its Taichung branch. To attract more young customers, it chose to open the shop in the Feng Chia Prague Square which is nearby the Feng Chia University.

"I chose Taichung for another branch because one of my partners is from Taichung. Knowing the local market very well, he pointed out that there is a lack of similar competitors and the Taichung people had quite good purchasing power. We happened to be able find the location nearby Feng Chia Night Market, with good atmosphere and foot traffic and numerous target customers." Taker continued saying, after the opening, the business performance of the Taichung branch has been beyond anticipation and had verified the right decision in expanding the market in Taichung.

### Taiwanese business environment is far better than Hong Kong's

Talking about the success of his start-up business, Taker analyzed the business environments in Hong Kong and Taiwan. "Hong Kong has high property prices and rental, the monthly salary of a salesperson in a shop starts from HKD13000. Taiwan also has high property prices but rental is low, I can hire a salesperson at about HKD6000 to HKD7000. Therefore, with 1 million Taiwan dollars as venture capital in Taiwan, the pressure in cost and cash flow are much smaller than the ones in Hong Kong."



Taker also believes that service industry is the work that means good communication between people. He thinks Hong Kong people are more practical, protective and think of the salesperson as people who just want to make money when they introduce their products. Taiwanese are purer, generally polite. Both buyers and sellers tend to be not snobbish, sales persons will sincerely follow the customers' need to introduce items, and absolutely not selling things blindly.



① Address of Natkiel:  
1F., No.38, Ln. 190, Sec. 1, Dunhua S. Rd., Da'an District, Taipei City  
1F., No.1, Ln. 3, Chifeng St., Datong District, Taipei City  
N10, 1F., No.77-5, Wenhua Rd., Xitun District, Taichung City (Feng Chia Prague Square)

## **Messenger**

From Cheer Chen, Sodagreen, then Crowd Lu, many overseas fans know about Taiwan due to its independent music. Whatever is the charm in independent music? What make the people willing to make all the troubles to cross the sea to come to Taiwan? Is there only rock and roll in independent music? In the next edition of Taiwan Step, we will have interviews with independent professionals in the music circle and introduction on some potential music makers. Through our wonderful coverage, the brand new face of Taiwan original local music will be unfolded! Stay tuned. Don't miss it, music lovers!