



學大明陽立國

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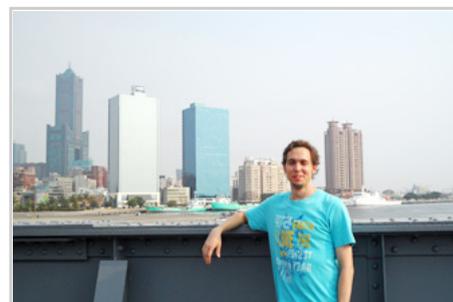
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校園點滴

A Taiwanese Experience (I)

by Pascal Geschwill

My initial intention upon arriving at National Yang-Ming University in Taiwan was to come here with an open mind as well as an open heart so that I could be able to experience the lovely madness of this country and its people to the fullest. After three months of desperately trying to figure out how to order food with only limited knowledge of the Chinese characters and getting used to the omnipresent swarms of motorcycles that will not allow any peaceful sleep until late at night, I have to admit that this country and especially its capital city have found a very special place in my memory. In this report I would like to share the rich experiences that I have gathered at National Yang-Ming University as well as Taipei and a few other Taiwanese cities that I was lucky enough to visit.



I arrived in Taiwan as an exchange student from the Ruprecht-Karls-University of Heidelberg in Germany at the end of January 2013. Dr. Cheng Chang Lien invited me to join his lab for a three month internship at the Institute of Neuroscience because he wanted to create an international atmosphere in his group so that his students got the opportunity to experience what it is like to communicate science in a foreign language. Since I already visited Singapore three years ago and wanted to refresh my Asian memories, I agreed to join his lab to learn more about one of the hottest fields currently in neuroscience: optogenetics. However, not only did I advance my professional knowledge but I got to know a group of people that have left a permanent mark in my experiences.



My stay was financed by a scholarship provided by NYMU and covered the basic life expenses. The University further provided a room in an international dormitory very close to the campus which is very well equipped with air conditioning (irreplaceable during the summer!) and several washing machines and dryers as well as a ridiculously fast internet connection. NYMU is situated at the northern end of Taipei in the Beitou district, right between Qilian and Shipai MRT station. It was built into a mountainside, so be prepared to walk a lot of steps and slopes (unless you want to take the campus shuttle bus, of course)! Fortunately though, I was already used to that circumstance because my first University in Zweibrücken is similarly built on top of a mountain. You'll find that a lot of NYMU students use the on-campus sports areas such as tennis or basketball courts even until late after sunset. I was very impressed by that because it shows that the local students are hard workers and even find time to

exercise after a long day of lectures or lab business. To underline the importance of sports at NYMU, an annual competition is held in various disciplines like volleyball and soccer where students can compete with each other for prizes but most of all for fun and getting together. My lab colleagues and I also participated in the volleyball tournament and I had a lot of fun especially playing against the international team. NYMU may not have the largest campus and not the highest amount of students but it is definitely a very nice and comfortable place for studying and working and its environment is becoming more and more international. Overall, I had a very pleasant and fruitful stay at NYMU and I would not hesitate to come back.



Although I spent a lot of time in the lab and on campus, I was also able to spend some time to explore Taipei and other major cities of Taiwan. Taipei itself is basically like a country of its own and really has a lot to offer. You will not only find some of the finest food on the island but also experience the entertainment craziness of Ximending or jump right into the adjacent jungle area for a quick hike. Probably one of the most impressive features of the capital is the night markets which can be found in every part of the city and generally open after sunset. I was astonished by the sheer masses of people crammed into the Shilin night market area. Since I am from Speyer, a relatively small town in the southwest of Germany, there are only few occasions when so many people gather in one place and to think that this happens every night in Taipei makes it even more unbelievable.

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