

WHEN FOREIGN STUDENTS MEET THE INDIGENOUS

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Imagine the shock when the indigenous people of Taiwan first encountered foreigners on their soil some hundred years ago. Well, many things have changed ever since not only for the social status of the indigenous in Taiwan, but also the purposes of those foreigners visiting Taiwan. Today, for sure, when these two groups of people meet, there is only pleasure to speak about.

That was exactly what happened on 23rd of last month when the Malaysia Students Association (MSA) of TKU ran into the university's Taiwan Indigenous Students Association (TISA) serendipitously on the Tamkang Farm while hosting their freshmen welcoming party there respectively. Mutual respect and solidarity were in plain view immediately.

The “foreigners” belonging to the Malaysia Students Association are not overseas Chinese students, but of Malaysian origin. As the Association is a subsidiary of the Overseas Chinese Students Association, traditionally there have been mostly overseas Chinese students from Malaysia eligible for its membership, at least, until this year. Since the considerable increase of the number of non-overseas Chinese students from Malaysia at TKU in recent years, the Association has started to recruit and admit those students starting this year. Both sides feel happy about such a “merge”, so that they can connect better and extend help easily, despite belonging to different ethnic groups in their home country.

The Taiwan Indigenous Students Association, on the other hand, received a new breath of life this semester as they were allowed to re-establish after a one and half years' of break due to a lack of members and other issues. Its former chair, You Sheng-wen of Rukai Tribe, is particularly happy with the revival and sees the crucial role the association plays in preserving

the indigenous cultures of Taiwan.

Perhaps it was because of the unusual history of both associations, when they met on the farm, there was an instant bond. The current chair of the TISA, Mona of the Taroko Tribe, took out their home made rice wine to share with the MSA, a ritual symbolizing brotherhood. (~ Ying-hsueh Hu)