

國立臺灣大學工學院建築與城鄉研究所



碩士論文

Graduate Institute of Building and Planning

College of Engineering

National Taiwan University

Master's Thesis

心之所在就是家：在荷蘭的臺灣被收養者的身份認同

Home is where the heart is:

identity amongst Taiwanese adoptees in the Netherlands

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中華民國 113 年 1 月

January 2024



國立臺灣大學碩士學位論文
口試委員會審定書

MASTER'S THESIS ACCEPTANCE CERTIFICATE
NATIONAL TAIWAN UNIVERSITY

(心之所在就是家：在荷蘭的台灣被收養者的民族認同)

Home is where the heart is: Ethnic identity amongst Taiwanese adoptees in the
Netherlands (English title of Master's Thesis)

本論文係Yaora Huang van Wijland 黃堯(姓名) R11544032 (學號) 在
國立臺灣大學建築與城鄉研究所完成之碩士學位論文，於民國112年
12月6日承下列考試委員審查通過及口試及格，特此證明。

The undersigned, appointed by the Department / Graduate Institute of Building and
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Acknowledgements



After nearly eight months of collecting information and writing, my thesis is finally finished. There may be some room for improvement, but looking back at all the hard work I put into it and seeing the results, everything is worth it!

Thank you to my beloved parents for giving me the opportunity to enjoy all the joys, angers, sorrows, stress, truth, goodness and beauty of life, and for giving me the opportunity to challenge everything at my own pace. I am grateful that I have the opportunity to study in both China and Taiwan to explore my own identity. Now I hope I can help others by sharing my experience.

I also want to thank my classmates Yingpeng, Rinske, Amelia and Florence. Yingpeng and Rinske have helped me tremendously by assisting me in submitting the thesis and handling the matters of graduating! Amelia and Florence have helped me to be critical of my own work and supported me through the writing process with their advice and lovely presence.

Of course, another important contributor is my thesis professor, Shenglin Elijah Chang and the oral teaching committee members Elena Paskaleva and Huang Shu-Mei. Shenglin, your academic expertise is admirable, and your reminders, corrections, and teachings have enriched my thesis and life. I enjoyed working together with you and your carefree spirit reminded me to relax and not take everything so serious in life.

Finally, I want to thank all the adoptees that were willing to share their experiences with me. Without their help, I could not have finished this wonderful thesis.

Thank you for reading.



摘要

我的研究探討不同形式的台灣收養孩童如何解釋他們的歸屬感，分析歸屬感如何影響當事人的台灣人認同還是荷蘭人認同之意義與解釋。我希望幫助認同困惑的（成年）台灣收養孩童以及（有志成為）收養父母，進一步理解被收養者的歷程與觀點。我的研究同時能夠協助有一般人理解“收養”如何影響大多數被收養孩童，特別是這些孩童從年幼開始就不太被周遭人們理解。我希望這個研究能夠對於在荷蘭長大的台灣收養孩童的文化認同意識有所貢獻。

我的研究採用建構主義方法，分析了一組在荷蘭的台灣跨國收養孩童的敘事訪談，這些孩童的年齡從早成年到中年不等。身份理論、遺產概念和想像社群的概念被用來框架有關微觀、中觀和宏觀影響對身份發展和歸屬感的主題性發現。我發現，在荷蘭長大的台灣-荷蘭混血收養孩童對文化身份的感受是多樣化的，並且隨著時間的推移可能會有所改變。在荷蘭長大的台灣收養孩童表現出四種文化身份：台灣人、荷蘭人、台灣-荷蘭混血或者兩者皆非。大多數受訪者認同為台灣人或台灣-荷蘭混血。本研究呈現了一些可能影響收養孩童文化身份的參數，例如父母的影響、歧視和刻板印象、返回出生國、尋找生母和/或家人，以及對出生文化的了解和知識。

關鍵詞：文化遺產，收養，歸屬感，身份，想像社群



Abstract



This research contributes to the awareness of cultural identity among Taiwanese adoptees who grew up in the Netherlands. Different forms of belonging and different interpretations of being Taiwanese or Dutch are discussed in order to understand how Taiwanese adoptees explain their feelings of belonging. This can be helpful to (adult) Taiwanese adoptees who struggle with their identity and (aspirant) adoptive parents. Furthermore, my research might also be useful to non-adopted people who are interested about adoption and would like to gain a better understanding of the identity aspect around adoption and the challenges which the majority of adoptees face from a young age onwards. This study uses a constructivist approach to analyse narrative interviews with a sample of Taiwanese intercountry adoptees in the Netherlands ranging in age from early adulthood to middle adulthood. Identity theory, the concept of heritage and imagined communities are used to frame thematic findings about the impact of micro, meso, and macro influences on identity development and belonging. The study finds that Taiwanese-Dutch adoptees' feelings about cultural identity are heterogeneous and can change over time. Taiwanese adoptees who grew up in the Netherlands exhibit four types of cultural identity: Taiwanese, Dutch, Taiwanese-Dutch or neither group. Most respondents identified as Taiwanese or Taiwanese-Dutch. This study exhibits several parameters which potentially influence adoptees' cultural identity, such as parental influence, discrimination and stereotyping, returning to the birth country, finding the biological mother and/or family, and access to and knowledge of the birth culture.

Keywords: cultural heritage, adoption, sense of belonging, identity, imagined communities



Table of contents



Introduction	1
Thesis structure	5
Chapter 1: Theoretical framework	7
1.1 Identity	7
1.2 Heritage	12
1.3 Imagined communities	14
Chapter 2: Literature review	16
2.1 Adoption.....	16
2.2 Taiwanese heritage.....	26
Chapter 3: Methodology	35
3.1 Participants and data collection.....	35
3.2 Interviews.....	38
3.3 Positionality.....	40
Chapter 4: Findings	41
4.1 Growing up in the Netherlands	41
4.2 Trip to Taiwan.....	49
4.3 Identity and feelings of belonging.....	57
Conclusion.....	72
Bibliography.....	75
Appendix I: Interview questions	86



List of Figures

Figure 1. Number of adoptions to the Netherlands, top origin countries 2002-2020.....24

Figure 2. Number of Taiwanese adoptions in the Netherlands from 1989-2023.....25





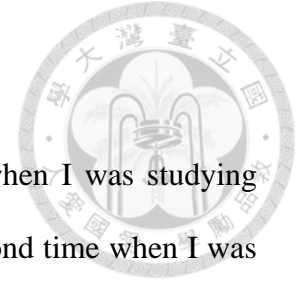
List of Tables



Table 1. Cultural adaptation patterns.....	9
Table 2. List of Taiwanese legal adoption matchmaking service institutions	20
Table 3. Number of Taiwanese adoptions to the Netherlands every year according to the legal entities of the Netherlands and Taiwan	25
Table 4. Identity in Taiwan, 1992-2022.....	32
Table 5. Demographic characteristics of sample	36



Introduction



I have visited Taiwan¹ twice in my life. The first time in 2018 when I was studying Mandarin Chinese at the Normal University of Taiwan and the second time when I was pursuing my master degree of Building and Planning at the National University of Taiwan. Both times, I felt that studying in Taiwan was somehow similar to when I was studying in China but I also felt it had its distinct differences. I did not have much knowledge of Taiwan before I visited as I had never learnt much about Taiwan in the Netherlands besides it being in a difficult relationship with China. As my courses in Taiwan were mainly focused on Taiwanese heritage studies, I discovered that the Taiwanese identity is very complex. When we talk about Taiwan in the West, we often debate whether Taiwan belongs to China or not and whether there will be a war between China and Taiwan, like what happened between Russia and Ukraine (2022-present) (Houthuijs 2021; van der Hauw 2022; Chin 2023; Brown 2023). However, in this debate we forget that Taiwan has been colonized by other regimes than the “Chinese”. I use “Chinese” between double quotation marks as the Chinese reigns have also been very different in every era. After being colonized by the Dutch and Spanish in the 17th century, Taiwan became part of the rule of a Chinese Ming loyalist Zheng Chenggong (1624-1662). This regime was soon overruled by the Qing dynasty (1644-1912), however, they gave up the island to Japan in 1895 after losing the first Sino Japanese war (1894-1895). China took over Taiwan again in 1945 after Japan lost World War II (1939-1945). After the Chinese Civil War (1927-1949), the Communist Party, led by Mao Zedong (1893-1976), took control in Beijing while the nationalists, led by Chiang Kai-shek (1887-1975), fled to Taiwan. Due to this background, China argues that Taiwan was originally a Chinese province. Yet,

¹ In this thesis, the Republic of China (ROC) is referred to as Taiwan. The People’s Republic of China (PRC) is referred to as China.

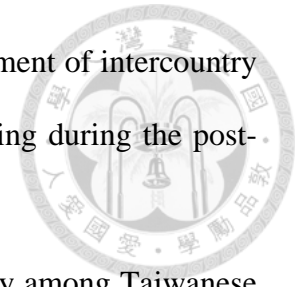
the Taiwanese argue that the original inhabitants of Taiwan were not ethnically Chinese and point to the same history to argue that they were never part of the modern Chinese state in the first place. Consequently, it can be very confusing to argue whether Taiwan is part of China or not and it becomes even more complex to talk about identity in Taiwan.

During my studies, I recalled an interview with a Taiwanese² adoptee in the Netherlands who firmly stated that he was a Taiwanese adoptee and not Chinese. This was interesting to me because I am a Chinese adoptee adopted from Jiangxi and would refer to myself as a Chinese adoptee. I never doubted the term “Chinese adoptee” because it sounded natural for me to refer myself as Chinese adopted as I came from China. Nevertheless, when the Taiwanese adoptee identified himself as Taiwanese adopted, I became interested in this thought process. According to China, Taiwan is a nominal administrative division of the PRC and therefore adoptees from there would be “Chinese”. Even though I was adopted from Jiangxi, I would still identify myself as a Chinese adoptee and not necessarily the province or place where you were born. This sparked my interest into the differences between Chinese adoptees and Taiwanese adoptees and how Taiwanese adoptees navigate with this complex identity aside from being adopted.³ Furthermore, what does a Taiwanese identity even mean? Intercountry adoptees face many challenges in developing their identity and achieving a sense of belonging in post-assimilation in the adoption country. Even though there have been memoirs and online articles about the experiences of Taiwanese adoptees (see f.e. Beam 2021, 2023; Hopgood 2009), little academic research has been done on this topic. Therefore, I believe it is

² In this thesis, Taiwanese adoptees are people that are adopted from Taiwan. The writer did not distinguish between Han-Taiwanese, aboriginal Taiwanese or mixed identities.

³ Even though China advocates a One China Policy, the adoption system in China and Taiwan are separated and the adoption data in the Netherlands is also divided. The reasons why the adoptees were abandoned were also significantly different and the process of finding back the birth parents is also entirely different. In China, adoptees have little information about their birth and birth family and have no support from the Chinese government. Taiwanese adoptees, on the other hand, usually can come into contact with their birth family through the adoption center financed by the Taiwanese government.

important to further explore this in order to understand the development of intercountry adoptees identity and how adoptees can achieve a sense of belonging during the post-assimilation in the adoption country.



This research contributes to the awareness of cultural identity among Taiwanese adoptees who grew up in the Netherlands. Taiwanese orphans receive Dutch citizenship after their adoption to the Netherlands, therefore Taiwanese adoptees in the Netherlands are Dutch according to the law. However, it is possible for Taiwanese adoptees to regain citizenship in Taiwan. Taiwanese adoptees in the Netherlands are Dutch in terms of nationality. Nevertheless, they are Taiwanese in the sense that they were born in Taiwan. Still, it is up to the adoptee to decide where they belong to / he or she belongs to. This thesis seeks to give a voice to a sample of Dutch adult adoptees who were born in Taiwan in order to record their personal narratives and shed light on how Taiwanese-born adoptees living in the Netherlands identify themselves. I also assess the different interpretations of Taiwanese heritage and how they are shaped amongst Taiwanese adoptees. I hope to provide information that may be helpful to (adult) Taiwanese adoptees who struggle with their identity and (aspirant) adoptive parents. Furthermore, my research might also be useful to non-adopted people who are interested about adoption and would like to gain a better understanding of the identity aspect around adoption and the challenges which the majority of adoptees face from a young age onwards.

This study uses a constructivist approach to analyse narrative interviews with a sample of Taiwanese intercountry adoptees in the Netherlands ranging in age from early adulthood to middle adulthood. Identity theory, the concept of heritage and imagined communities are used to frame thematic findings about the impact of micro, meso, and macro influences on identity development and belonging. A discussion of the importance

of a broader societal discourse in social work practice when working within the adoption sector concludes this research. And in doing so fills the research gap.



Thesis structure



This thesis starts with a theoretical framework on identity, the concept of heritage and imaginative communities. Thereafter, I contribute to the academic field by presenting a literature review on adoption relating to the Netherlands and Taiwan. First and foremost, it was necessary to answer the questions: why are Taiwanese children adopted and what is the adoption process like? What is the adoption situation in the Netherlands and what is known about Taiwanese adoption to the Netherlands? I first provide the reader with a chronological background on Taiwan's policy regarding adoption and information on the circumstances under which Taiwanese children were adopted to foreign countries such as the Netherlands. The covered time frame encompasses the period from the 1980s until the present day. In addition, when someone is adopted internationally, the child loses its cultural heritage and one of the questions in search of identity is trying to take back this heritage. Still, how do / can adoptees know what their heritage of origin is like when they never grew up in their birth country? In this case, how would Taiwanese adoptees know what Taiwanese heritage is when they did not grow up in Taiwan? In the second part of the literature review, I discuss the heritage discourse, the complexity of identity in Taiwan and how it connects to identity belonging amongst Taiwanese adoptees. Before discussing my findings, I explain my methodology. This research is mostly based on text analysis and qualitative research, in-depth interviews in particular. I discuss the sample group and my positionality in this research. In the fourth chapter, I examine Dutch adoptees' understanding of Taiwanese heritage and identity through an analysis of interviews conducted in 2023 with Chinese adoptees living in the Netherlands adopted from 1996 to 2003. In the last chapter, I share my conclusion and give suggestions for further research.



Chapter 1: Theoretical framework



In this thesis, identity theory, heritage, and the concept of imagined communities are used to frame thematic findings about the impact of micro, meso and macro influences on identity development and belonging.

1.1 Identity

Identity defines a person's sense of self or self-image which is bound to social categories and is used to differentiate themselves from or identify themselves with others (Akerlof and Kranton 2000). It answers the question "who am I?". Identity then can be divided into other categories, such as cultural identity, national identity, racial identity, and ethnic identity. Cultural identity is the sense of belongingness to a particular social community or group in terms of cultural or subcultural categories (including ethnicity, nationality, language, religion, and gender). This sense of belongingness is a process that can be changed by different social, cultural, and historical experiences (see Stuart Hall). National identity encompasses the sense of belonging to one or more states or nations, regardless of one's legal citizenship status. Racial identity describes the identification of someone based on one's race, which is a social fabrication on the arbitrary basis of skin colour and other physical features. According to the International Encyclopaedia of the Social & Behavioral Sciences (2015), ethnic identity is "a sense of belonging based on one's lineage, cultural heritage, values, customs, rituals, and frequently language and religion". It is stated that because it represents perceptions of oneself and in relation to a certain ethnic group, it is a multidimensional construct product that is attained rather than merely given (Phinney, 1992). Umaña-Taylor et al. (2014) argue that it entails having a clear grasp of what it means to belong to an ethnic community and having respect for it. All of these identities are defined differently but are similar in the sense that they are essentially

socially constructed. Because of the fluid process of identity, there is no universal definition of someone's identity.

For people growing up in a monocultural society that is in line with their cultural background, cultural and ethnic identity often does not present a problem since they identify as the dominant culture without having to explain their identity. They can question themselves who they are as a person but feel confident about the culture they grew up in. For example, Dutch people who grow up in the Netherlands generally do not have to wonder about being Dutch as they grow up in their birth country and are surrounded by people that look the same and share the same culture and values. Yet, people with a cultural background other than the dominant culture have to navigate through the identification with their birth culture(s) or with the dominant culture. Ethnic identity can change after arrival, as opposed to ethnicity which remains a permanent characteristic of the supply country (Epstein & Heizler 2015). Therefore, it is possible that one may feel a part of only one, both cultures or neither. One might never find the urge of exploring its roots whereas others might question who they are from an early age. It is important to note that this feeling is dynamic as it can change over time.

In this thesis, I highlight cultural identity because transnational and interracial adoptees can be perceived as a special type of migrants who grow up in a culture that is not theirs originally. They often migrate at a young age to a country that is usually wealthier than the supply country and they have to adapt to a culture that is different from their birth culture, in which they are usually seen as a minority. There have been many studies about the adaptation of internationally and interracially adopted children and the results show that the outcomes widely vary from fast adaptation to arising problems during childhood and adolescence (see e.g. Baden et al 2012; Chen 2012; Chen 2016; Feigelman & Silverman 1984). Some adoptees show no signs of problems caused by

adoption and seem to enjoy living in the adoptive country whereas others feel like they do not belong in the adoptive country. This is what Epstein and Heizler (2015) refer to as ‘assimilation’ and ‘separation’. It is also possible that adoptees may not have a feeling of belonging to both their adoptive and natal countries (marginalization). As a result, individuals may feel as though they are in between cultures or their feeling of belonging may become unclear. Baden et al. (2012) introduced a new identity construct for cultural adaptation, named ‘reculturation’. This is the process of searching by international and interracial adoptees, all to varying degree, to reclaim their birth culture that they lost during their adoption. In this thesis, my theory is that most adoptees will show any of these patterns but some not all to the same degree (for a summary of these patterns see table 1). I will use these patterns in order to examine how Taiwanese adoptees construct their cultural identity.

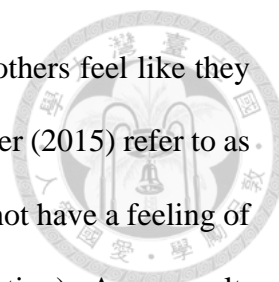
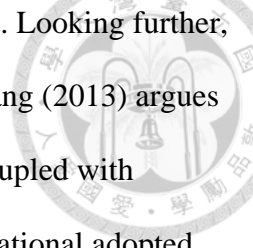


Table 1. Cultural adaptation patterns.

Hybrid / integration	Identification with both the host culture and the culture of origin.
Assimilation	Strong identification with the host culture and society but weak identification with the culture of origin
Separation	Strong identification with the culture of origin but weak identification with the host culture.
Marginalization In betweenness	Weak identification with either the host culture or the culture of origin. Not feeling part of anything and therefore feeling stuck ‘in between’.
Reculturation	The process of searching to reclaim the culture of origin lost during adoption.

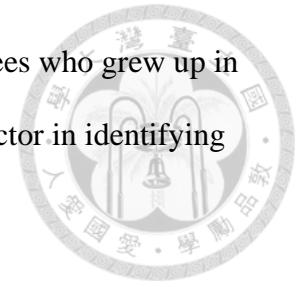
Source: Baden et al. (2012); Epstein and Heizler (2015).



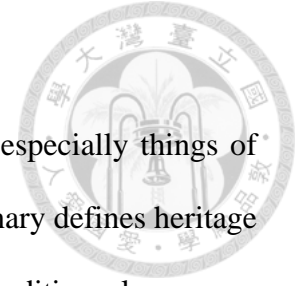
We now have a clearer view of the patterns for identity constructions. Looking further, what are some of the factors that influence an adoptee's identity? Wang (2013) argues that the confusion of self-identification of many adopted children, coupled with microaggression and racism in society puts many pressures on international adopted children to adapt. In some studies, it was found that up to 80% of the participants experienced racism, such as making fun of their appearance (Lee & Quintana, 2005; Freundlich & Lieberthal, 2000). According to Juffer (2006), the appearance of adoptees and the description of racial characteristics are strongly associated with the difficulty of adjusting to the host country. Meanwhile, positive self-identification of interracial adopted people is related to the cultural literacy of adoptive parents and whether the adoptee is encouraged to explore the culture of their birth country (Lee, et al., 2006; Mohanty & Newhill, 2006). Still, it can be challenging for adoptive families to connect intercountry and interracial adoptees with the culture of their country of origin, as most adoptive families do not know how to assist them in understanding the birth culture (Mohanty et al., 2006). After all, they have not been brought up in their child's country of origin. Furthermore, living amongst different ethnic cultures and being encouraged to interact with people of different ethnic cultures can be helpful in identifying with ethnic cultures (Yoon, 2001; Feigelman, 2000).

In short, the adaptation and identity of international and interracial adoptees are related to many aspects, for example adoptive family's attitudes, sibling relationships (e.g. adoption of children from the same country), communication about adoption, cultural literacy and racial issues (Brodzinsky, 2006; Reuter & Koerner, 2008). Moreover, if you live in a community with different ethnic cultures and have positive interactions and multicultural experience with others, it can also reduce the racial culture shock for international and interracial adopted children (Huh & Reid, 2000). In

this thesis, I will be looking how this plays out for Taiwanese adoptees who grew up in the Netherlands. Since culture and one's roots is a very important factor in identifying oneself, I examine heritage in the following paragraph.



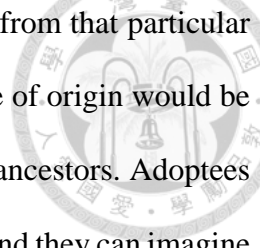
1.2 Heritage



Heritage can be defined as ‘that which is left over from the past, especially things of historical or cultural value’ (Van Dale, n.d.). The Cambridge Dictionary defines heritage as ‘features belonging to the culture of a particular society, such as traditions, languages, or buildings, that were created in the past and still have historical importance’ (Cambridge Dictionary, n.d.). According to these dictionaries, heritage consists of the culture, tradition and languages that people grew up with and are valuable to them. Nevertheless, this is not self-evident to intercountry and interracial adoptees as they grew up in a country that is not the same as their birth country and does not per definition have a shared history and cultural values. Intercountry and interracial adoptees grow up in a country that has a different heritage and historical background. Some people might want to understand more about the culture of their birth country in order to understand themselves and some people do not. Still, how can adoptees know what they have “lost” when they grow up in another culture? In other words, in what way can they understand the culture, traditions and languages of the society in which they did not grow up?

The discrepancy between the dictionary definition of heritage and an adoptees’ understanding of heritage could be explained by the concept of heritage as a process. Harrison (2013) argues that the word ‘heritage’ is extremely ambiguous since it ‘has been used to describe everything from buildings to cooking styles, songs to personal belongings, ethnicity to religion’ (Harrison, 2013). Additionally, heritage refers to a set of attitudes toward the past and having relationship with it rather than being a tangible object or movement (Smith, 2006). Thus, heritage can be viewed as an ongoing cultural and social process in which the term "heritage" lacks a unifying definition.

Understanding one’s heritage is tricky but several ways of knowing more about the culture of origin would be by learning about the particular society from sources such



as books, films or documentaries, as well as interacting with people from that particular society. Still, for first-hand experience, travelling back to one's place of origin would be one of the best ways to find out about the culture of their biological ancestors. Adoptees go on heritage tours to see for themselves where their life had started and they can imagine how their lives would have been if they stayed. Before it would have just been a 'misty faraway land' (Kim, 2007: 115) but when adoptees travel to their birth country and birth place they are able to visualize their previous 'home' for themselves. Consequently, the trip can be a rather emotional journey as the attachments to the place can still be very strong. For instance, there is the invisible bond with the birth place and / or biological parents, whether an adoptee still cares for them or not. These trips can satisfy adoptees' questions about 'where do I come from or how would it look like if I grew up in my birth country'. On the other hand, the heritage trip can also trigger new questions or lead to frustration if questions do not get answered. In addition, there can also be a discrepancy between the adoptees' imagination of the country of origin and the reality that can result in culture shock and stress.

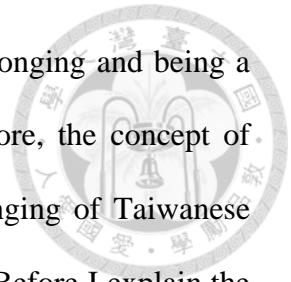
An intercountry and interracial adoptee grows up in a country that has a different culture than the country of origin. Therefore, it is unfair to expect an adopted person to know about his/her/their heritage. Yet, it is possible to learn about the heritage of origin through language courses, heritage journeys and culture workshops for instance. As everyone's experiences are different, the understanding of heritage of one's origin differ per individual. Still, it can be beneficial to discuss these feelings and experiences with others in order to gain a better understanding of how adoptees reclaim or integrate this culture of origin that was lost during adoption. In the next paragraph, I will examine how this is made easier by the rise of online communities.

1.3 Imagined communities

Imagined communities is a concept coined by Benedict Anderson (1983) that was used to analyse nationalism. He describes that the nation is a socially-constructed community that is imagined by the people who perceive themselves to be part of the group. It is imagined because nations are simply too large for all of the members to actually know each other and their relationship is imagined across time and space. Take the Dutch nationality for example, even though it is a relatively small country, it is impossible for Dutch people to know every Dutch person. Yet, it does not take away the feeling of being part of the same commonality, namely being 'Dutch'. In his original book, Anderson focuses on the way media creates communities as they are built to target mass audiences in the public sphere.

Today, the concept of imagined communities can be utilised in relation to all forms of collective identity, such as identification with ethnic groups, feminists, classes and other communities. In the Digital Age, it is easier to connect with others due to the technological developments. Therefore, it is also easier to relate with people that have encountered similar experiences but not necessarily know each other in real life. Forums can be created to talk to other people who are like-minded or in a similar situation to exchange opinions, knowledge or experiences. Adoptees might live in places where they do not easily encounter other adoptees and these platforms give them the opportunity to get into contact with other adoptees. Therefore, adoptees are able to form this sort of imagined community as they can create communities online and talk about their lives as an adoptee. They might live totally different lives but are linked through the shared experience of adoption. In this thesis, I use this concept to explain the intricate relationship of adoptees' identities, in particular the Dutch and Taiwanese identity amongst Taiwanese adoptees that grew up in the Netherlands.

Previously, I talked about cultural identity as a sense of belonging and being a multidimensional construct that is attained and not innate. Therefore, the concept of imaginative community is employed to analyse the sense of belonging of Taiwanese adoptees. One might ask, where do Taiwanese adoptees belong to? Before I explain the research findings, I first discuss the literature in order to gain a better understanding of the situation of Taiwanese Dutch adoptees and their heritage of origin, Taiwanese heritage.



Chapter 2: Literature review

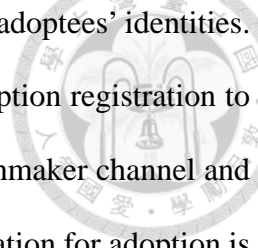


In the literature review, I give an overview of adoption and Taiwanese heritage. I start with a short description of what adoption entails. Then I provide a historical overview of adoption in Taiwan and I examine the adoption system in the Netherlands. In the second part, I will explore Taiwanese heritage and display Taiwan's connection with the Netherlands in order to get a better understanding of Taiwanese adoptees' positions in the Dutch society.

2.1 Adoption

The International Declaration of the Rights of the Child (1959) states that every child has the right to grow up in a family. Adoption can be a possibility to offer a family to a child who cannot grow up with his birth parents. Adoption is a legal relationship created between people who originally have no parent-child relationship. The people adopting are the adoptive parents and the people adopted are adoptees.

There are different types of adoption, depending on factors such as the background of the adoptive parent(s), the family bond of the adopter, the openness of the background information and how the adoptee is matched to the adopter. Domestic adoption means that the adoptee is adopted in the country of origin, whereas adoptees of intercountry adoption are sent to a foreign country. Intercountry adoption only becomes an option when it is clear that there is no opportunity for domestic adoption. The extent of one's family bond also matters in adoption. Adoption without consanguinity is adoption between people that are not blood-related. Adoption by close relatives and adoption by step relatives are all to a certain degree blood related to the adoptee. Regarding the openness of the adoption, there is open and closed adoption. Open adoption allows the adoptee to learn about their adoption background, whereas closed adoption seals all



identifying information of the adoptive parents, biological family and adoptees' identities. In institutional adoption, parents that want to adopt submit their adoption registration to an agency and the agency acts as an intermediary to screen the matchmaker channel and assists in matching children. If the trial is successful, a formal application for adoption is submitted to the court, and the court makes the final decision. Private adoption refers to the adopter privately matching the child and applying to the court (Bai & He, 2014).

Adoption in Taiwan

Early documentation of adoption in Taiwan only goes as far as the 17th century. Tung (2014), for example, examines the concept of kinship behind adoption practices during the Japanese era in Taiwan. In the early days, as long as there was an agreement between the two families, the adoption procedure was completed by registering with the household administration office, without considering the interests of the child. Cases of infant trafficking have happened as well (Zheng, 1998). Prior to the 1980s, the adoption system and birth notification were not enshrined in the law, and there was no mandatory notification of information on children after birth to the household administration or health authorities. In the absence of judicial oversight, it is easy to misrepresent birth information or traffic children.

Therefore, Taiwan revised its civil law in 1985 to require a written contract from both parents and an approval from the court (Lin, 1996). Still, at that time, judges often only considered the adopter's economic conditions, family environment, and consent of the biological parents, rather than looking at the interests of the child. (Wang, 2007; Lai, 2008). In the 1990s, the Child Welfare Law was amended in 1993 to clarify the birth notification system, enforce the requirement of investigation and visits in adoption cases, and social workers began to intervene in adoption services (He, 2012). In 2007, the Civil Law on adoption was significantly amended. The revision mainly featured the relaxation

of the requirements for adoption and termination of adoption, the emphasis on adoption in the best interests of the child, and the distinction between the requirements and effects of adult adoption and minor adoption, so as to make adoption more flexible (Deng, 2007). Consequently, it can be determined that adoption in Taiwan has gradually shifted towards the goal of adoption "for the benefit of the child".

The most recent revision was article 16 of the 2011 Law on the Welfare and Protection of Rights and Interests of Children and Adolescents in order to counter the many problems arising from private adoption, such as child trafficking and illegal mediation. The new law stipulates that all foreign adoption should be handled through adoption matchmaking agencies licensed by the Children's bureau, county or city government. The other major change is the principle of giving priority to domestic adopters. This is based on the fact that children who are adopted by foreign parents need to face issues such as language learning, identity, and adaptation to living or cultural habits (Qiu, 2015).

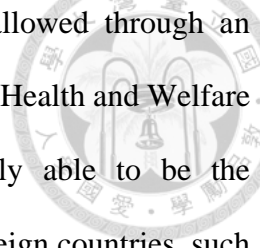
Reasons for adoption in Taiwan

The Child and Juvenile Adoption Information Center (2014) mentions that the reasons for birth parents to relinquish their child for adoption are mainly underage pregnancy, unmarried pregnancy, involuntary pregnancy, financial difficulties, poor caring conditions, lack of ability or lack of family support. One of the biggest factors is that Taiwanese people are conservative towards adoption and believe that it is the family's task to take care of the children. Due to this belief, single parents, teen parents and underprivileged families can be forced to give up their child for adoption as the resources provided by the social welfare system are limited. Although Taiwan has a national health insurance system, many examinations for children with special needs are not covered. The high medical expenses and the belief that children are the family's responsibility can

leave parents with special needs children no choice but to turn to adoption. According to the statistics of the adoption matchmaking service of the Social Affairs Department of the Ministry of Health and Welfare (2023), there are many reasons for adoption. Among them, the main factors are poor economic situation, the inability of families to provide care or upbringing, and single parenthood.

Foreign and domestic adoption in Taiwan

Since the Civil law was revised in 2011, social workers thought it would help promote domestic adoption (Ma et al. 2021). Yet, except in 2018, 2020 and 2021, intercountry adoption still exceeded the numbers of domestic adoptions from 2012 to 2022 (Ministry of Health and Welfare, 2021). Why is that so? Zhu (2012) points out that children with disabilities (physical and mental) are classified as special needs, and few Taiwanese families are willing to adopt them. According to the statistics of the Catholic Good Shepherd Foundation (2014), from 2007 to 2014, in international adoption 30% of the adoptees suffer from illness, developmental delay, physical or mental disability; 40% of them have an indigenous background, spores of drug use, alcoholism, intellectual disability or mental disorder; The other 30% are adopted internationally because they are older. Furthermore, only 10% of domestic parents are willing to care for children in need, compared to 22% of parents who cross the border to Taiwan for adoption (Ministry of Health and Welfare, 2021). Also Taiwanese adoption services voice that parents from foreign countries are more likely to adopt older children as Taiwanese people prefer to raise children from infancy (Ho & Madjar, 2022; The Child and Juvenile Adoption Information Center, 2014). These statistics shows that it is often the stigma on special needs children that makes it difficult for children with special needs to find adoptive families within the country. Children with special needs will often be adopted by foreign countries. However, this is not to say that every child adopted from Taiwan is a



child with special needs. Taiwan intercountry adoption is only allowed through an adoption service organization that has a certificate of the Ministry of Health and Welfare (Central Government). In Taiwan, nine organizations are legally able to be the intermediary in adoption and about half of them cooperated with foreign countries, such as the United States, Sweden, Australia, the Netherlands, Norway, Italy, England and Canada. Table 2 compiles a list of Taiwanese legal adoption matchmaking service institutions. In the past, it was possible to adopt from the Child Welfare League Foundation, Cathwel Service and Christian Salvation Service. Since 2020, The Christian Salvation Service (CSS) decided to halt intercountry adoption service and instead Chung Yi Social Welfare Foundation started with international adoption to the Netherlands in 2022.

Table 2. List of Taiwanese legal adoption matchmaking service institutions

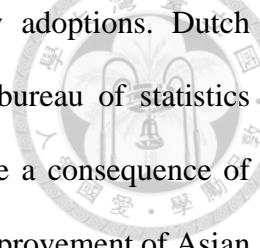
	Institution name	Scope of adoption
1	Child Welfare League Foundation 財團法人中華民國兒童福利聯盟文教基金會	Domestic adoption Intercountry adoption (US, Australia, Sweden, the Netherlands , Norway)
2	Cathwel Service 財團法人天主教福利會	Domestic adoption Intercountry adoption (US, Sweden, the Netherlands , Canada, Italy, Germany, England)
3	Christian Salvation Service (CSS) 財團法人台北市基督徒救世會社會福利事業基金會	Domestic adoption Intercountry adoption (The Netherlands)
4	Chung Yi Social Welfare Foundation 財團法人忠義社會福利事業基金會	Domestic adoption Intercountry adoption (US, Australia, Sweden, Canada, Denmark, The Netherlands)

5	Good Shepherd Social Welfare Foundation 財團法人天主教善牧基金會	Domestic adoption Intercountry adoption (US, Sweden)
6	The Garden of Hope Foundation 財團法人勵馨社會福利事業基金會	Domestic adoption Intercountry adoption (US)
7	Grace adoption Services center 財團法人一粒麥子社會福利慈善事業基金會	Domestic adoption
8	House of the Little Angels Kaohsiung 財團法人高雄市私立小天使家園	Domestic adoption
9	The Home of God's Love 宜蘭縣立神愛兒童之家	Domestic adoption

Source: Wang 2019 & Child and Juvenile Adoption Information Center (n.d.)

Adoption in the Netherlands

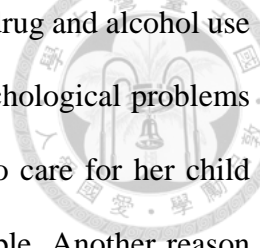
About 60 thousand children have been adopted in the Netherlands since the Dutch adoption law was introduced in 1956 (CBS 2014; Nederlands Jeugdinstituut 2022). Up until the 1970s, adoptees almost exclusively came from the Netherlands. After the 1970s, the vast majority come from developing countries. In the mid-1990s, Colombia was the most important country of origin for adopted children, but China took over this position at the end of the last century. At the same time, the Netherlands joined the *Convention on Protection of Children and Co-operation in respect of Intercountry Adoption* in 1993 (also called the *Hague Adoption Convention*). In the last two decades, foreign adoptions consisted mostly of Chinese adoptions. In 2004, nearly 60 percent of foreign adopted children were of Chinese descent. There was a strong global demand for these children because it was announced that it was possible to adopt very young babies there (Ministry of Justice and Security, 2012). The Netherlands was the fourth largest country receiving the most adopted children from China from 1992 until 2017 (Selman 2017: 2).



Currently, there is a trend of a decrease in intercountry adoptions. Dutch newspapers (Nu.nl 2019; Vollebregt 2019) and the CBS, Dutch bureau of statistics (Vissers & Sprangers, 2011) mentioned that this decrease might be a consequence of better alternatives for adoption like IVF-treatments and due to the improvement of Asian economies, domestic adoption became more important in Asian countries such as South-Korea and China. Additionally, in 2021, the Dutch government decided to put an indefinite halt to international adoption. The reason for the adoption stop was a research report by the Joustra Committee on the role of the Dutch government in adoptions from the 1960s to 1990s. The report points out that forgery of documents, fraud, corruption, child theft and child trafficking were present during those times while the Dutch government has done little to prevent it and even maintained this adoption system. Moreover, according to the committee, these abuses are still an issue, although an international treaty was signed in 1998 with stricter rules for adoption. In 2022, the adoption ban has been lifted, but the Dutch government decided to currently only allow child adoption from the Philippines, Hungary, Lesotho, Taiwan, Thailand or South Africa (Rijksoverheid 2022).

Taiwanese adoption to the Netherlands

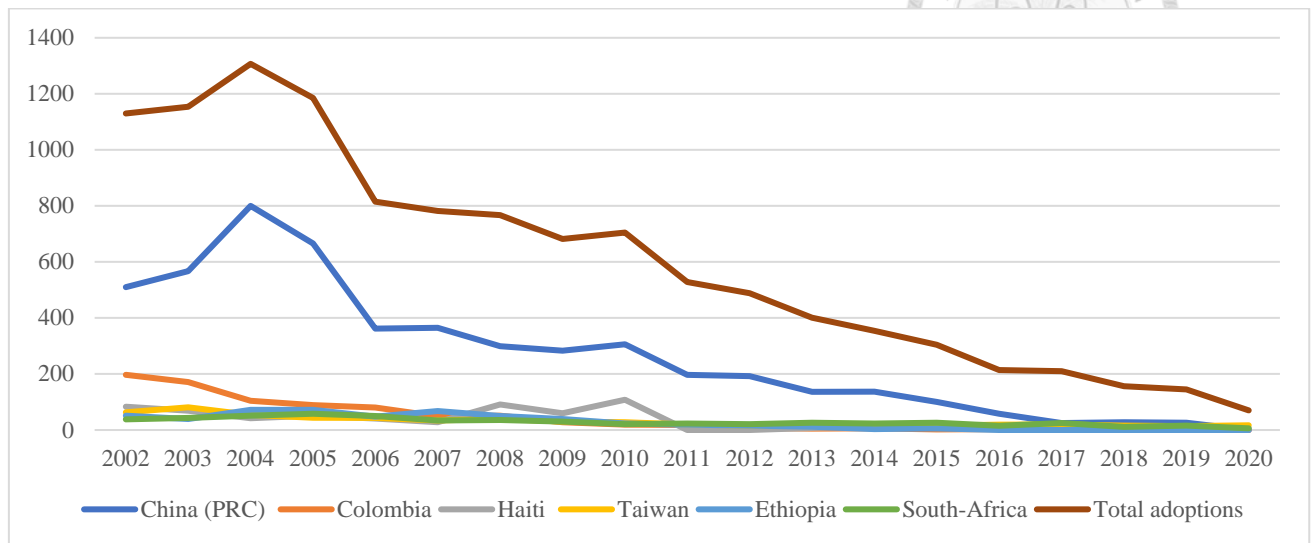
In the Netherlands, Taiwanese adoption became officially possible from 1989. Meiling is the only licenced adoption service in the Netherlands that manages Taiwanese adoption. Meiling reported that the children adopted from Taiwan are usually between 0 to 6 years old. These children are often given up for adoption due to social problems, such as unwanted pregnancy by young girls or women over the age of forty. There is still a great taboo on unmarried motherhood in Taiwan. For young girls who are still in secondary school or college, there is often no choice but to give their child up for adoption. Older mothers (over the age of forty) also often have a very difficult time in Taiwan, which can



also be a reason to give up the child. The social problems caused by drug and alcohol use have increased in recent years. The same applies to psychiatric/psychological problems diagnosed in the birth mother. This can lead to her being unable to care for her child herself as well. In addition, there is often no social network available. Another reason may be that the child was born with a visible abnormality (e.g. a cleft palate). This is still a very sensitive topic in Taiwan.

At the time of adoption, there is usually information about the birth mother's background available and sometimes also about the father. This is a lot compared to adoption from countries like China and Sri Lanka in which adoptees have zero to little information about the biological parents. Furthermore, In Taiwan, it is sometimes possible that birth mothers themselves can choose to which social facility or country their child ends up. A social worker makes a pre-selection based on the special needs list that the adoptive parents filled in at the time of the special needs intake. The birth mothers usually do not like to choose families where there is already a (biological own) child, because in Taiwan the first child counts as the most important. If there is an adopted child in the family, mediation is easier than with a biological child of your own. The birth mothers/relatives usually maintain some degree of contact with the children's home in question. Adoptive parents are required to regularly send photos and a follow-up report to Taiwan (Employee The Child and Juvenile Adoption Information Center, 2023). In figure 1, the number of adoptions to the Netherlands are displayed. Adoption to the Netherlands was mostly led by Chinese adoption, whereas other country adoption numbers were quite similar to each other. According to the data of Meiling, more than 1.000 adoptees were adopted from Taiwan. Nevertheless, in reality, this number can be higher because future adoptive parents were able to adopt privately from Taiwan before 2011. I contacted the Taiwanese adoption services that stated that they worked on

Figure 1. Number of adoptions to the Netherlands, top origin countries 2002-2020.

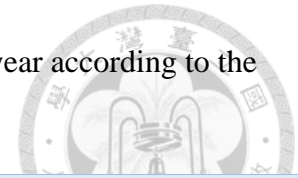


Source: Constructed by the author by compiling adoption reports of the Dutch Ministry of Justice and Security. Note that China and Taiwan are named as separate entities.

intercountry adoption that included the Netherlands. However, representatives replied that the adoption services did not keep track of the details of where the children were adopted to. The Taiwanese government did document the deliver countries but they are inconsistent with the numbers of Meiling (Table 3). Therefore, it is not so difficult to imagine that more children from Taiwan have been adopted abroad than the numbers show on the statistics. The Taiwanese adoption peak was around 2003-2005 and then gradually decreased (Figure 2). Initially most children were adopted from Christian Salvation Service and Cathwel service. In recent years, Meiling started to work together with the Child Welfare League Foundation and Chung Yi Social Welfare Foundation as well.

In this subchapter, I explained the adoption system of Taiwan and the adoption of Taiwanese children to the Netherlands. These children lost their heritage of origin when they left their birth country, but what did they leave exactly? This is what I discuss in the next subchapter.

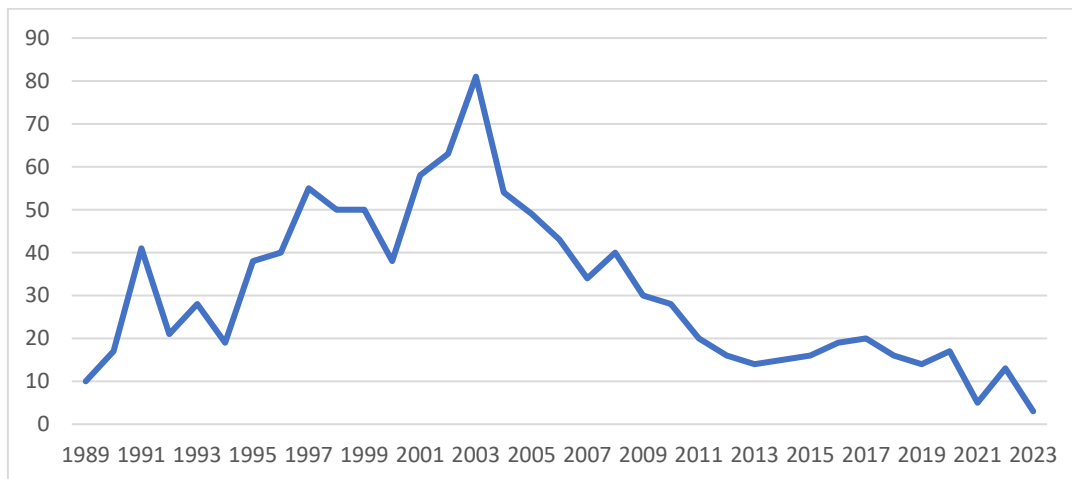
Table 3. Number of Taiwanese adoptions to the Netherlands every year according to the legal entities of the Netherlands and Taiwan.⁴



Year	Meiling / Ministry of Justice and Security (the Netherlands)	Social and Family Affairs Administration Ministry of Health and Welfare (Taiwan)
2012	16	17
2013	14	15
2014	15	16
2015	16	16
2016	19	18
2017	20	21
2018	16	16
2019	14	15
2020	17	15
2021	5	10
2022	13	10

Source: Ministry of Justice and Security; Social and Family Affairs Administration Ministry of Health and Welfare

Figure 2. Number of Taiwanese adoptions in the Netherlands from 1989-2023.

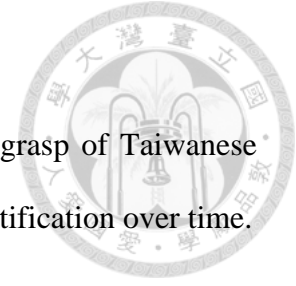


Source: Meiling

⁴ The year 2012 is chosen as starting point as there is no data before 2012 from Taiwan as officially registering adoption was only mandatory since 2012.

2.2 Taiwanese heritage

Before, I can discuss Taiwanese heritage, it is necessary to get a grasp of Taiwanese history as it has known many colonizers, shaping Taiwan's self-identification over time.



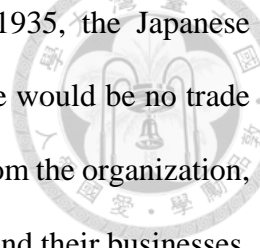
Historical background of Taiwan

Taiwan has known 6 periods of colonization: the Dutch, the Spanish, the Japanese and three Chinese reigns, but different every time (Jacobs, 2013). These different regimes make it challenging for Taiwan to have a unified identity and since the 90s, people in Taiwan have been developing a new Taiwanese identity, resulting in the so-called 'Taiwanization'. Before, we can consider identity amongst Taiwanese adoptees, it is important to understand the identity development in Taiwan. In this section, I will provide a historical overview of the Taiwanese colonization to understand the why there are so many complex identities in Taiwan.

Dutch rule in Taiwan (1624-1662)

Taiwan is an island located below the south coast of China. The connection between China and Taiwan seems to date back a long time ago (Price 2019; Wills 1998). Nevertheless, there has been no record of Chinese political authority on Taiwan until after the Dutch colonization in Taiwan. Before the Dutch arrived, the Chinese sailed to Tamsui and Keelung to trade with Japan which made Taiwan an important market for export. The Dutch saw business opportunities by trading with China and Japan. Initially, the Dutch landed on Penghu, but in the end, they were convinced to settle in Taiwan by Chinese officials. The Dutch colonization of Taiwan did not happen because the Dutch were all-powerful, but because of a lucky streak that eliminated most threats. These threats mainly consisted of powers surrounding Taiwan at that time: China, Japan, Spain and pirates.

China was focused on land expansion instead of establishing sea colonies, and the



Ming dynasty (1368-1644) followed a Maritime Prohibition. In 1935, the Japanese shogun forbade the Japanese people to go abroad and therefore there would be no trade competition. According to Wills (1998), European states benefited from the organization, cohesion and corporate organizations that backed overseas colonies and their businesses, but most of all thrived due to the absence of Asian overseas colonialism. The Dutch had other European rivals in Asia, such as Spain, but the Spanish colony was not able to profit from the island and was weak compared to their Philippine conquest. In 1642, they lost from the Dutch as their army was smaller and could not receive backup from Manila.

Aside from the issue of securing a spot in the Asian seas, there was another big problem. The locals in Taiwan were not interested in the Dutch business plans and transporting workers from the Netherlands was too costly so there was a huge lack of labour. For this problem, the Dutch encouraged Chinese migrants to farm in return for farming land and tools. The Dutch were so successful during their colonization period due to a Sino-Dutch hybrid colony, a so-called “co-colonization” that emerged out of the economic and administrative cooperation between the Dutch and Chinese (Andrade, 2010). Before this period, Chinese migration to Taiwan had been small in scope, but boomed during and after the Dutch colonization. The Dutch provided stability and security for poor Chinese farmers and there were also concrete incentives, such as free land, freedom from taxes, the use of oxen, and so forth. The Dutch also needed the Chinese however, because without the Chinese labour and organization, the Dutch would not have been able to create a prosperous land colony. Nevertheless, this did not mean that the Dutch and Chinese were on equal levels. It was more like what Andrade (2006: 430) calls ‘a Chinese colony under the Dutch rule’.

Zheng Chenggong rule (1661–1683)



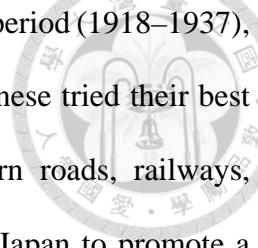
In the end, the Dutch lost Taiwan to a Chinese general, Koxinga or Zheng Chenggong, who wished to reinstate the Ming Dynasty. Before, Taiwan was thought to be difficult to live in due to the aboriginal villages. However, the island grew to be quite profitable for the Dutch and thus became interesting for Zheng's state conquest. In the 17th century, the Ming dynasty was in war with the Manchu's and Zheng chose to set up a base in Taiwan in case the Manchus would win the war, which they did eventually (Andrade, 2006). Zheng's army was not better equipped but it far outnumbered the Dutch fleet and the soldiers were quite experienced warriors (Andrade, 2010). Zheng Chenggong's ambitions, however, were cut short by his premature death in 1662. His son used fought the Qing dynasty for another 20 years from Taiwan. However, after his death in 1681, the Zheng rule was defeated by a Qing invasion fleet in 1683.

Qing dynasty (1684–1895)

In 1684, Taiwan was formally incorporated into the Fujian Province as a prefecture administrative organization of the Manchu Empire. During this time, almost no contact with the outside world was possible in China and Taiwan. The rise of modern imperialism in the 19th century put an end to this. Through the so-called Opium Wars, Western imperialist powers force the Chinese court to sign a series of "unequal treaties". In this treaties, China must open ports to foreign trade and allow far-reaching interference on their own territory. In 1885, the Qing raised Taiwan's administrative status to that of a province in an effort to strengthen its grip on the island.

Japanese colonization (1895-1945)

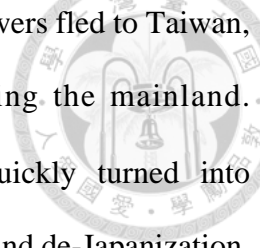
After the Treaty of Shimonoseki in 1895, China relinquished sovereignty over Taiwan, the Pescadores and the Liaodong Peninsula. The colonization of Taiwan by the Japanese



is divided in three eras: the early years (1895–1918), the assimilation period (1918–1937), and the imperialization period (1937–1945) (Price, 2019). The Japanese tried their best to develop Taiwan into a modern colony by constructing modern roads, railways, telephone networks, schools and hospitals. It was fundamental for Japan to promote a Japanese national identity to legitimize the new state. Consequently, the Japanese used language as a unifying component in order to improve the vertical communications between the state and its citizens and it helped form common national identity by facilitating bonding between citizens (see for a more detailed history of Japanese colonization (Tsurumi, 1979; Price, 2019).

Nationalist Taiwan and Martial law (1945-1987)

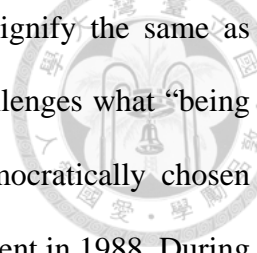
After the second Sino-Japanese war (1937–1945), Japan agreed to cede control of Taiwan. However, it was a complex era of international relations and it was not clear to which entity control was ceded. During the Japanese colonization of Taiwan, a revolution took place on the Chinese mainland. This was led by the nationalist leader of the Kuomintang (KMT), Sun Yat-sen, which resulted in the founding of the Republic of China (ROC) on January 1, 1912. Almost a decade later, the Communist Party of China (CCP) was founded in 1921 and a civil war started between the CCP and KMT. During the second Sino-Japanese war, the civil war was suspended but resumed when the Sino-Japanese war ended. The KMT took control on behalf of the then-ruling ROC, but this control was not specified in the ceding instruments (Price, 2019). Still, the PRC was founded in 1949 so they could not have been the controlling power at the time of ceding. Therefore, this undermines claims by the PRC that Taiwan is a “rebellious province”. Consequently, it has always been unclear whether Taiwan was ceded to the nationalists or the communists. Nevertheless, the KMT then ruled Taiwan under martial law for almost 40 years and the state emphasized that Taiwan was being rightfully returned to the motherland. After the



Civil war ended in 1949, KMT leader Chiang Kai-shek and his followers fled to Taiwan, reinstating it as the ROC, with the idea of eventually retaking the mainland. The arrival of the nationalists was welcomed initially, but quickly turned into disappointment due to the KMT's brutality in enforcing Sinification and de-Japanization. From the start, communication was difficult since most Taiwanese did not understand Mandarin and most people fleeing from the mainland did not understand the languages commonly used on Taiwan: Hoklo, Hakka or Japanese (Philips, 1999). In order to emphasize a common Chinese identity, the KMT pursued such an aggressive language policy that Mandarin was spoken or understood by the majority of the Taiwanese people within a generation or two (Wu 2009; Scott & Tiun, 2007). The Japanization of Taiwan was fairly successful under the Taiwanese elites as they were mostly loyal to the Japanese worldview and saw the mainlanders as “chaotic and backward” (Hsiau 2000; Phillips 1999). In turn, the KMT perceived the people on Taiwan to be a degraded people (Kerr 2017). In 1946, Japanese was banned completely in order to eliminate the Japanese influence in Taiwan. Under Chiang Kai-shek, mainlanders and the local people became separated and mainlanders took over positions of power in society while discriminating against the languages and cultures of local people. The people living in Taiwan were left disappointed after the mainlanders arrived and even harboured anti-mainlander sentiment which eventually set the stage for an independent Taiwanese identity.

Towards democratization and Taiwanization (1987-present)

In 1987, the martial law was lifted and from then on, Taiwan has started a democratization process that impacted many aspects like politics, education and society. A year before the martial law was lifted, the first opposition party, the Democratic Progress Party (DPP) was established. Many researchers also argue that the democratization led to a period of bentuhua (本土化), translated as “Taiwanization” or “indigenization (Chen, 2006; Jacobs,



2005; Scott & Tiun, 2007; Wei, 2006). Taiwanization does not signify the same as democratization but emphasizes identification with Taiwan and challenges what “being Taiwanese” means. For instance, Lee Teng-hui was the first democratically chosen president in Taiwan and also became the first Taiwanese-born president in 1988. During his reign, Lee replaced the designation of ancestral origins in China to the place of birth for a person’s identity. This suggests that Taiwanese identity can be defined by one’s identification and relationship with Taiwan rather than ethnic background, therefore erasing the divide between the local people and the mainlanders who arrived with the KMT troops. In addition, Mandarin Chinese is the lingua franca in Taiwan despite not being the language that the early inhabitants originally spoke. Therefore, ethnic communities began to push for more language rights. Hakka people, for example, created a movement in 1988 to demand more mother tongue education and more coverage in mass media. The Minister of the Interior acknowledged in 1993 that the past language policy was repressive and local languages began to be part of the education system at the elementary level. In 2000, the DPP managed to become the ruling party and granted national status to Hoklo, Hakka and other Austronesian languages. Three years later, the Ministry of Education proposed the “Language Equality Law”.

Jacobs (2013) argues that with democratization, Taiwanese people have increasingly identified themselves as Taiwanese. On top of that, being Taiwanese increasingly means not being Chinese. Currently, mainland China considers Taiwan to be an integral part of China, but they lack historical proof (China Yearbook, 1970; Wachman, 2007). The National Chengchi University in Taiwan began studying identity in Taiwan in 1992 and found out that Taiwanese people increasingly identify themselves more as Taiwanese than Chinese. In surveys, people can answer that they are ‘both Taiwanese and Chinese’, ‘Taiwanese’, or ‘Chinese’. There is a consistent trend in the survey that shows that those

replying choose 'Chinese' become less and less, but 'Taiwanese' has increased to 60%. Even though there is a percentage of people that did not respond, the respondents that identify as being 'Taiwanese' still overtop the people that identify as being 'Chinese' with the non-respondents combined (table 4).

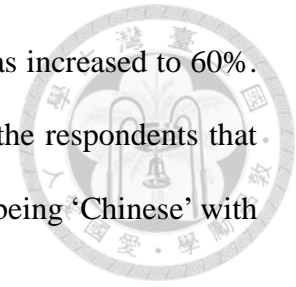


Table 4. Identity in Taiwan, 1992-2022.

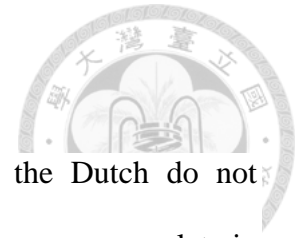
Identity	1992	2022
Both Taiwanese and Chinese	46.4	32.7
Taiwanese	17.6	60.8
Chinese	25.5	2.7
Non-response	10.5	3.6
Total	100.0	100.0

Source: <https://www.instagram.com/p/Ctv4ubaPoHQ/>

In conclusion, the people of Taiwan originally were separated from China until the Dutch brought them together to benefit from the Taiwanese colony. Afterwards, Taiwan has been going back and forth between Chinese reigns and Japan. At present, the question whether Taiwan belongs to China still remains and the news of Taiwan is full of reports of China's hostile behaviour against Taiwan. The identity of the people in Taiwan is also changing and a new Taiwanese identity becomes apparent.

When we look at the understanding of Taiwanese heritage by Taiwanese Dutch adoptees, it is important to explain the intricate identity of the people in Taiwan but we also need to consider what image of Taiwan Taiwanese adoptees see in the Netherlands. Adoptees can look things up themselves by watching the news or looking at documentaries. Still, it is important to examine how Taiwan is presented in the media and its international status. This can be influenced by international power relations, in particular the relation between the Netherlands, Taiwan and China.

Taiwan in the Netherlands



Even though Dutch-Taiwanese relations go far back into time, the Dutch do not completely show their support for Taiwan as there is no Dutch embassy or consulate in Taiwan. On the one hand, there is the Netherlands Office Taipei (NLOT). The NLOT is a governmental instrument that promotes and supports cooperation between Taiwanese and Dutch institutions and companies in the fields of commerce, science, technology, agriculture, and culture. It functions like an embassy as the NLOT handles visa applications and consular matters for foreigners and Dutch nationals, yet it clearly states that the Netherlands and Taiwan have no diplomatic relations. One of the reasons why the Netherlands does not officially recognize Taiwan, is because the Netherlands has adopted a “One-China Policy,” “under which it recognizes the government of the People’s Republic of China (in Beijing) as China’s only legitimate government.” (Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs 2019: 16). From the report of the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs, it seems like the Netherlands is trying to balance relations with both China and Taiwan but is prioritising China as maintaining good relations with Taiwan would harm Dutch economic and other interests.

Politics and economy play a huge role in relationship between the Dutch and Taiwanese. On the one hand, the Dutch place a great importance on freedom and democracy, which is notable from the new motion supporting Taiwan’s participation in international organizations (Teng 2019). In addition, there has even been visit from the Taiwanese parliamentary delegation to the Dutch parliament where they discussed Dutch-Taiwan relations (Heerema 2023). On the other hand, China is the largest trading partner of the Netherlands in Asia and the Dutch government has invested significant diplomatic capital to strengthen its economic ties (Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs 2019). This can be noted from the fact that the Netherlands’ biggest diplomatic mission is in China and is

consisting of the Dutch embassy in Beijing, four consulates-general and six business support offices (BSO).

In short, Dutch-Taiwan relations go back to the 17th century when the VOC set up a colony in Taiwan. In contemporary times, there is a high degree of foreign direct investment and long-lasting economic partnerships between Dutch and Taiwanese companies. However, these relations are limited due to the strained relations between China and Taiwan. Even though the Dutch government is taking cautions against Chinese companies spies and further Chinese interference, China's market has such economical value that it is difficult to find a balance. Taiwan is just 160 km off the coast of China, the majority of the population is of Chinese descent, the official language is Mandarin, and Taiwan is not recognized by the Dutch government. It is not surprising that people in the Netherlands who do not really look into the intricate history and political background cannot really distinguish between Taiwan and China. This will be reconfirmed in the findings, but I first explain how I conducted my research.

Chapter 3: Methodology

3.1 Participants and data collection

I combined my background in Critical Heritage Studies and Building and Planning from a sociological perspective with an analysis of semi-structured interviews. This research is based on primary sources on Taiwanese adoption policies and stories of adoptees. My literature review is comprised of secondary resources, such as articles and books to explain and connect concepts. I also use primary sources of adoption reports of Taiwanese and Dutch ministries to present an overview of how many Taiwanese adoptees have been adopted to the Netherlands. Furthermore, I made a qualitative analysis of semi-structured interviews to assess identity development among Taiwanese adoptees. Topics during the interviews included the adoptees' understanding of Taiwanese heritage and their identity. A more detailed overview of the interview questions can be found in Appendix I. The data for this research draws from 9 individual semi-structured interviews with Taiwanese adult adoptees who grew up in the Netherlands. Originally, I invited 11 adoptees, but two male participants decided not to continue with the interview due to personal situations. Demographic information of the participants has been summarized in Table 5. The names are changed in order to protect the adoptees' anonymity and the analysis is written so that it is impossible to trace back information to the adoptees' identities. I did not differentiate between gender because Taiwan's adoption was not significantly affected by policies, such as the influence of the One-Child policy on Chinese adoption and thus, it did not result in an unbalanced male to female ratio as in mainland China. I ended up with a group of 5 females, 2 males and 2 non-binary people. The interviews were conducted between June and September of 2023. At the time, the participants were between 20 and 27 years old. Their age of adoption ranged from a few weeks old to 2 years old and they were all adopted to a Dutch family. As mentioned before,



most children that were adopted to the Netherlands came from CSS and Cathwell Service. This also was the case in my research as the majority of the adoptees came from Cathwell and the rest from CSS. The Dutch adoption service was in all cases Meiling. The participants grew up all over the Netherlands, usually in a white neighbourhood. There was no clear pattern of adoptees living more in villages or big cities. Out of this sample group, 6 out of 9 adoptees found their biological parents. The remaining three are in different situations: one of them is in contact with their biological mother but has not met her in real life, one of them is now commencing the search for their biological family and one is not particularly interested in finding their biological family. Participants returned to Taiwan between 2003 and 2023 with a break between 2020 and 2022 due to the Covid-19 pandemic that discontinued flights to and from Taiwan. Only two adoptees have not gone back to Taiwan after their adoption.

Table 5. Demographic characteristics of sample.

Name*	Gender	Birthyear	Age of adoption	Childhood living place	Occupation
Hanna	Female	2000	2 years old	Gelderland	Student
Debby	Non-binary	1998	3 months old	Noord-Holland	Working
Tim	Man	2003	7 months old	Zuid-Holland	Working
Iris	Female	1996	2 months old	Utrecht	Working
Julia	Female	2002	9 months old	Limburg	Student
Denise	Non-binary	1997	4 months old	Zeeland	Working
Linda	Female	1997	6 weeks old	Overijssel	Working
Rachel	Female	1997	3 months old	Zuid-Holland	Working
Raffael	Male	2000	9 months old	Zuid-Holland	Student

*The names in this research are anonymous

No specific region in the Netherlands was chosen to do the interviews because there is no official report that documents the demographics of Chinese adoptees in the Netherlands. Besides, there is no official list in the Netherlands that classifies who is adopted or not and even if there was one, it would probably be strictly confidential. Having conducted

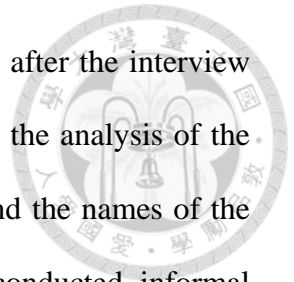


interviews of Chinese adoptees in the past, I was cognizant of the challenges of finding other adoptees willing to do an interview. This time however, finding Taiwanese adoptees that were interested in doing an interview seemed more difficult compared to Chinese adoptees. This could be due to the fact that Chinese adoptees far outnumber the Taiwanese adoptees (almost 6.000 against about 1.000 adoptees). In order to acquire participants, I decided to use the method of snowball sampling for conducting qualitative research. This meant that the first participants were requested to refer this research to other Taiwanese adoptees who might be willing to participate in an interview. This particular population is difficult to locate as adoptees are scattered across the Netherlands and some barely come into contact with other adoptees. Still, some adoptees enjoy meeting other adoptees and finding recognition for their feelings surrounding adoption from other adoptees. Therefore, I decided to promote this research on social media platforms such as Whatsapp and the Instagram and Facebook of Stichting Adoptiepedia (Foundation Adoptionpedia), the largest Dutch foundation for Chinese and Taiwanese adoptees operated by Chinese and Taiwanese adoptees. Being in this community circle was very useful because on the first day of posting, I found 6 adoptees willing to hold an interview. The other participants were found through advice of my peers who knew other Taiwanese adoptees personally or through social media.

3.2 Interviews

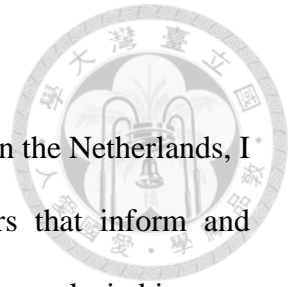
Every adoptee was presented the option to do the interview in either English or Dutch, but everyone chose to do the interview in Dutch because most of them felt that they could express themselves better in their native language. The interviews were conducted through video calls (7 out of 9) or in public establishments (2 out of 9). I offered participants to do the interview while meeting face-to-face because adoption is for some adoptees a very private subject, and therefore may think it is uncomfortable to hold an interview through video calling. Nevertheless, participants also had the option to do the interviews through video calling as it is a faster and easier method for the participants than meeting face-to-face as it is a more cost-effective method. The duration of the interviews ranged from 22 minutes to 127 minutes, and on average an interview was about 57 minutes. On average, the face-to-face interviews took longer than the interviews through video calling. The interview guide was developed based on the literature review on identity. The questions included the following sections: background, travel to Taiwan, and identity. Questions about their background were asked to get a better idea of the demographics of the interviewees and how they felt growing up in the Netherlands. Questions about their travel to Taiwan and identity were asked in order to answer the research questions and included questions like: do you feel at home in Taiwan? Do you feel at home in the Netherlands? Do you feel a stronger connection with Taiwan than the Netherlands, and why? What do you identify as? All interviews were semi-structured, starting with a common schedule of questions but open to pursuing additional topics relevant to each interviewee. Interviewees were free to answer in Dutch or English. Before the interviews, I sent all the willing participants a letter to inform them about their rights and to ask permission to record the interview. With permission from all the participants, all interviews were recorded, transcribed and translated afterwards. In the

event that the interviewee wanted to provide additional information after the interview was completed, all of the comments and feedback were included in the analysis of the data. The transcriptions of the interviews are strictly confidential and the names of the adoptees mentioned in this thesis are fictional. Finally, I also conducted informal interviews with members of the adoption service center in Taiwan in order to gain some more information on Taiwanese adoption procedures and trends.



3.3 Positionality

As I myself am an adult adoptee who was born in China, but raised in the Netherlands, I used autoethnographic techniques to better understand the factors that inform and influence the cultural identity of each participant. Far from being an analysis bias, my personal background as a fellow interracial and international adoptee provided me an exceptional standpoint to understand the emic perspective of participants, created a relationship of trust and gave me access to the intimate network. My identity allowed me to push my research findings further and to be more engaged with my participants. During the interviews, many participants even mentioned that they believe that it is more comfortable to discuss adoption with a fellow adoptee than a non-adoptee since they feel that non-adoptees will never truly know how it is to be adopted. Moreover, the majority of the interviewees expressed great interest in the topic of this research and requested if I could send them the summary of the finished research. I believe that this was one of the leading factors why I was able to finish my fieldwork in a timely manner as the participants were very open, cooperative and willing to share their relevant experiences during an interview.



Chapter 4: Findings

4.1 Growing up in the Netherlands



The first category I discussed with the interviewees was their childhood in the Netherlands. We talked about how the adoptive parents introduced adoption and their heritage culture, where the interest or disinterest in Taiwan came from and what it was like growing up as a Taiwanese adoptee in the Netherlands.

Adoptive family

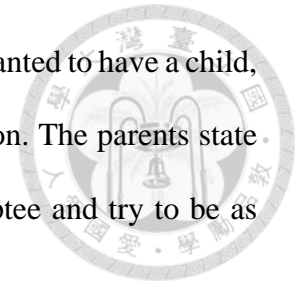
The adoptive parents play a big role in the upbringing of the adoptee. Every adoptee mentioned that their adoptive parents were quite open to talk about adoption. Many also stated that they knew from the beginning that they were adopted and that their parents tried to explain what adoption meant from a very young age by reading children's books and watching documentaries and movies about Taiwan.

I did not think it was forced. I knew from the beginning that I was adopted. For example, I had children's book about a koala that has lost its mom and in the end comes to live with a kangaroo. (Hanna)

I heard many adoptees tell with great detail how their parents told their children stories about their adoption and show them pictures of when they were adopted.

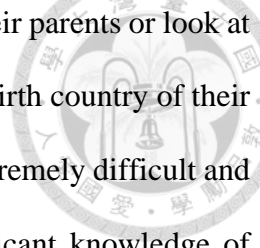
My mom would sit together with me on the couch and she had this binder with all the information about my adoption. We would look through this binder and look at all kinds of pictures of me: from when I arrived in the Netherlands, the adoption center and then she would tell me stories about what happened or she heard from others when I was a baby. (Tim)

Often, the adoption story would tell that the adoptive parents really wanted to have a child, but they could not conceive by themselves so they turned to adoption. The parents state that they are very lucky that they had the chance to adopt the adoptee and try to be as open-minded and transparent as possible.



When it came to learning about Taiwan, adoptees expressed that the desire to know more about Taiwan usually came from them instead of the parents, although the parents did seem supportive of their child wanting to know more about Taiwan. Some interviews mentioned that their parents tried their best to help their child keep in contact with other Taiwanese adoptees. For instance, they would go to a reunion that used to be organised by adoptive parents or the church. In addition, Meiling, the agency that mediates between Taiwanese adoption centers and (aspirant) adoptive parents, organises a Meiling day almost every year for adoptive families to connect with each other and meet other adoptees.

Nevertheless, interviewees argued that their parents usually were not really knowledgeable about Taiwan. Some parents would have things in their house that they related to Taiwan or Chinese culture, such as newspaper articles, pictures and small figurines. They would mention activities they did with their parents that were sort of related to Taiwan but the adoptees often knew were not really Taiwanese, such as eating Dutch Chinese food, which is different from authentic Chinese food, celebrating Chinese New Year and lighting fireworks. In addition, some parents did not really differentiate between China and Taiwan or have never even been in Taiwan before. The last part is possible due to the fact that adoptive parents were not required to travel to Taiwan to pick up their baby. Usually there were supervisors from the orphanage and Meiling present that travelled with the baby and the adoptive parents would see their child at the airport in the Netherlands. When growing up Taiwanese adoptees might want to know more



about their birth country. Non-adopted children simply learn from their parents or look at their surroundings. Still, when parents have little knowledge of the birth country of their child, how are they supposed to teach them that? In reality, this is extremely difficult and in my research, there was not a single adoptee that gained significant knowledge of Taiwan from his/her/their adoptive parents.

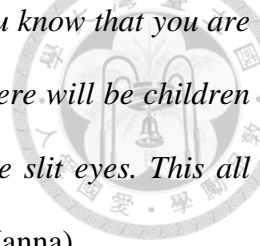
On top of that, it can be difficult for the adoptive parents to put themselves in their adopted child's shoes. When I talked to adoptees about that, they all defended their parents by saying that they simply do not understand it because they are not adopted and never had to experience what they had to experience.

I was quite angry about racism but my parents could not understand it. They would tell me that it is a joke and that it was not meant like that. I should not take it by heart. They can never understand it because they are not in the same position like us. But the best they can do is acknowledge our feelings. (Julia)

What did help was having a sibling. Every participant had one or more siblings in their adoptive family. They were either also adopted from Taiwan, from another country, such as China, or were biological children of the adoptive parents. Adoptees who had a sibling who was also adopted voiced that it was soothing to have an adopted sibling since they felt like they were not alone in that regard.

Interest in Taiwan and adoption

Some adoptees become interested in Taiwan at a young age whereas others might only start to become interested when they grow older. In my sample, this was also noticeable. The adoptees that became interested in Taiwan early in life mostly were searching for their own identity, such as:



It is a piece that you do not know but also do know in some way. You know that you are adopted and that is also noticeable to the outer world. Of course there will be children that say that you do not look like your mother or why do you have slit eyes. This all contributes to your thoughts and whispers where do I come from? (Hanna)

Furthermore, adoptees mentioned feeling different from the rest because of their appearance. For example, Dutch people are perceived to be blond, tall and have blue eyes. As a transnational and transracial adoptee, the physical appearance is different than that from your parents and peers. However, every adoptee deals with it differently. Whilst some did not care as much, others grew up being very self-aware of their appearance.

It [being adopted] was not weird or something. I knew that I was adopted and I knew that I looked different but the point is, you are not really occupied with that as a child. I thought everyone looked different. However, when I realised that I looked different and some people react differently to that, I was a bit taken aback. (Tim)

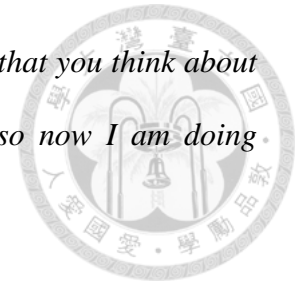
Others might not be so interested in Taiwan during their childhood and simply focused on growing up in general.

I grew up quite ‘white’ and my life is here [the Netherlands] now. My parents would have nothing against me if I want to know more about my roots but it is not something they proposed to me. (Julia)

Participants often mentioned the corona pandemic and the escalation between China and Taiwan to be a reason to look more into their background.

Due to stereotyping and negative influences of being Asian in my neighbourhood, I tried to be as less Asian as possible. Actually since three years ago, around corona, the micro-aggression started to bubble up and I was more or less forced to think more about my

identity. In addition, I think that the more you grow older the more that you think about it. My parents also never really mentioned adoption or Taiwan so now I am doing research on my own. (Linda)



Tim, who was hesitant about contacting his biological mother, said:

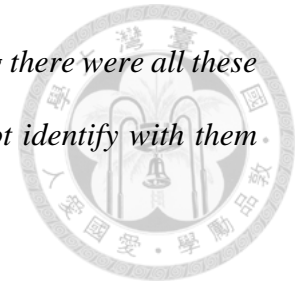
I have always been interested in new things, but I think that I was just not that interested in cultures because the Netherlands does not have a culture. (...) The reason why I started to search [my biological mother] was because of the escalation between China and Taiwan. I thought everything [in Taiwan] would soon be bombed to the ground, so I thought I better start now.

Tim did not have the urge to search his roots while growing up in the Netherlands. However, because of the Taiwan-China conflict that might cut off the connection with his birth mother, he decided to get in contact with his birth mother. From these examples, it is clear that there are different kinds of reasons that spark interest into looking into one's roots.

White neighbourhood and the lack of diversity

Growing up in a white neighbourhood without diversity also contributed to the feeling of otherness. Most of the adoptees mentioned growing up in a white neighbourhood and not relating to the people surrounding them. Being around white Dutch people is the norm for them as children so they grew up thinking that being white is the standard. Yet, when other people point out the differences, such as in physical appearance, it enlarges the idea of Dutch people as the dominant group and the adoptee as the minor group, the other.

I grew up in a very white neighbourhood with white schools, meaning there were all these Roderikjes and Gert Jans (typical Dutch names). I totally could not identify with them and the teachers were a bit problematic. (Hanna).

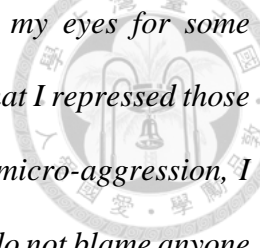


As a child I just did not understand why people treated me like this. Why am I different because I learned the same things as my white friends. That was confusing to me because no one really explained this to me. My mother also said thing like: 'yeah you are simply Dutch'. Well, obviously not Dutch enough! (Rachel).

I attended a Christian primary school. The school was fine but I soon realised that I looked different from the others. This was also the case in the church and I stood out so I was very conscious about my appearance. It was hard to deal with when I was little but as you grow older it starts to become less important and eventually I am even proud now of my [Asian/Taiwanese] appearance.

Micro aggression

Another thing that was often mentioned was the term micro aggression. Micro aggression is 'a statement, action, or incident regarded as an instance of indirect, subtle, or unintentional discrimination against members of a marginalized group such as a racial or ethnic minority' (Oxford Languages). In this case, the adoptees did not feel like they were bullied in a very direct way, but experienced awkward moments and felt that they did not have anything to retort with. This is especially the case for intercountry adoptees as they seem to grow up in a white neighbourhood where they are not entirely seen as the dominant group since their appearance is that of a minority group. Therefore, adoptees could not entirely pinpoint what this awkward feeling was as it seemed like what the dominant group was doing and saying was the norm.



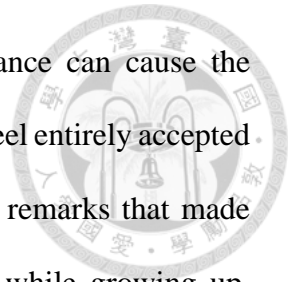
I have had a pretty carefree childhood because I kind of closed my eyes for some situations. I have had awkward moments but I was not really aware that I repressed those feelings and kind of shove them away. (...) Now that I know about micro-aggression, I know why I did not feel comfortable in these situations and I actually do not blame anyone for that. (Linda).

My parents were like at some point you need to be able to take a punch and they cannot really imagine that certain things can be hurtful to me because we have irreconcilable differences and I think they lack experience. They never mean it in a negative way but I think that some situations are inevitable in cross racial adoption. (Julia)

Conclusion

Adoptive parents play a big part in the upbringing of an adoptee. Like for biological children, parents are the first frame of reference when they grow up and babies will learn about the norms and values of a society from their parents. Nevertheless, the culture adoptive parents can teach to adoptees is different from the culture of the birth place. It is not surprising then that adoptive parents cannot entirely explain the heritage of their adopted child. In this sample, we can see that adoptive parents did not know much about the country of their adopted child and the problems the difference in race can bring to the child. Consequently, it is shown that there can be a dissonance between the experience of an adoptive parents and adoptees and this can lead to the adoptee not feeling understood. Still, having adopted siblings can be comforting. While Taiwanese adoptees grow up, the interest in Taiwan can go up and down. There is no certain factor that determines this interest but it can involve elements, such as the support of the parents, friends and peers, self-awareness of one's appearance or simply certain happenings in their lives. While Taiwanese adoptees grow up in a generally white neighbourhood, they might not

necessarily be fully accepted there and the differences in appearance can cause the adoptee to feel excluded from the others. As to why adoptees did not feel entirely accepted, can be tied back to micro aggressions in which some people made remarks that made them feel left out and ended in awkward conversations. In short, while growing up, adoptees, to varying degrees can feel like they do not belong to the Netherlands when they realise that people treat them differently due to their background. However, this can be difficult to comprehend because they grew up with people from the dominant group, Dutch people, and therefore expected to receive a similar treatment as their peers.



4.2 Trip to Taiwan

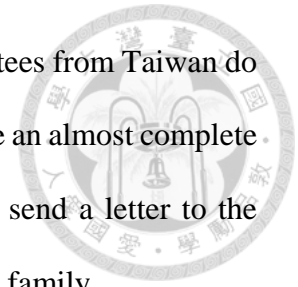
In the second part, adoptees talk about their return to the birth country and what kind of impact it had on them. I highlight this part because it is an important part in an adoptees' journey as they can learn more about themselves and their heritage culture during this trip. It is also important to discuss why adoptees have not gone back to their birth country and what the difficulties adoptees might encounter during that trip are.

Why do adoptees return to their birth country?

Going back to the country of birth can be very empowering and eye opening to intercountry adoptees as they can experience their cultural heritage and see how the people live where they were born. On the other hand, the trip can also be confronting as cultures might clash and cultural shock may occur. Furthermore, it can be very emotional for the adoptee as the trip might evoke memories that trigger the adoptive past. Some adoptees might understand themselves more, but it is possible as well to become more confused about your identity. Both feelings are totally valid, but it should be up to the adoptee to decide whether they/he/she wants to return to their birth country.

In my sample group, most adoptees have been to Taiwan at least once. This was usually to meet their birth mother and/or birth family. Taiwan's adoption system is one of the more open adoption systems as most of the adoptees are able to find back their biological mother and/or family. This is due to the fact that the adoption centres in Taiwan are required to save the information about the biological mother and make sure that some form of contact is kept after adoption, at least in the cases of my sample group. The interviewees told me that every Taiwanese child that is adopted from their adoption centre is treated the same way. Furthermore, they also stated that their adoptive parents would keep information about their biological parents until they were at an age that the child

wanted to know more about their Taiwanese background. Most adoptees from Taiwan do not have to go through an intense process of searching since they have an almost complete birth dossier. Consequently, many Taiwanese adoptees can simply send a letter to the adoption service to ask for contact with the biological mother and/or family.



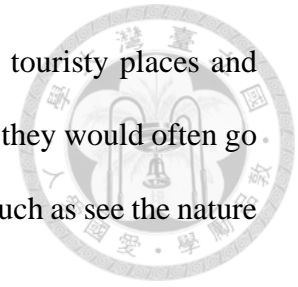
How do adoptees return to Taiwan and what do they see?

The first trip to Taiwan that the six adoptees made were all part of a ‘rootsreis’ (roots journey/trip). A ‘rootsreis’ is a journey to the country of birth, in which the country, the culture and the adoptee’s origins are central (Fiom, 2015). In general, the rootsreis is a journey in which an adoptee will get to see and experience the country of origin and may or may not visit their biological family. There is no consensus of a suitable time or age as it depends on how ready each person is. According to Fiom, there has been a shift in the roots journey trend in the Netherlands. Before, root journeys were mostly done by adolescents and adult adoptees, but nowadays, more and more families with young adopted children are going on a roots trip.

Various Dutch organizations (such as Lotus Tours, Pangea Travel, Giggling Bamboo Travel) also offer organized tailor-made roots trips. This is usually paid by the adoptee and/or adoptive family themselves. In Taiwan, the adoption centre in most cases offers a roots trip and can arrange a meeting with the birth family if they are able to track them down. The remaining time can be used by the adoptee to visit other places in Taiwan. Some adoptees travel with other Taiwanese adoptees and others travel with their adoptive family. Many of the participants went to Taiwan multiple times. When asked what places they visited during the first trip they usually replied: ‘the touristic places’. This includes Kenting beach, Sun Moon Lake, Taipei 101 and the Taroko Gorge.

Other trips were described as holidays to simply get to know the birth country better, family reunions, and a few adoptees also came to Taiwan to study and/or volunteer.

During the holiday type of trips, adoptees tended to visit the more touristy places and when traveling alone, with family or people they knew from Taiwan they would often go out for more activities that the average Taiwanese person would do, such as see the nature or visit family members.



Taiwanese adoptees' experience in Taiwan

'I felt like that as soon as those wheels [of the airplane] touched the ground, it was very hot but, I had gotten a kind of warm hug literally and figuratively. It really felt like coming back home.' (...) *At first I wanted to know where do I come from and I had the urge to know more. Now this has turned into a kind of homesickness for Taiwan. It is difficult to explain. For example, I know I could never live and work in Taiwan. Or it is possible. Maybe, but that is not my goal. But it is that sometimes, for example, I now have the urge to go back.'* (Hanna)

During the interviews, adoptees generally expressed that they had very positive experience in Taiwan and they encountered little culture shock. Most of them argued that it was due to them coming to Taiwan open-minded and were prepared to be conscious that Taiwanese live in another culture that they grew up in and might have another kind of perspective of what is polite and respectful. Moreover, they usually went without any expectations in order to minimize disappointments.

Still, it is possible that adoptees encounter negative experiences regarding their adoption. One adoptee for example, met their biological mother but the meeting was not like what they had expected and got mental problems because they put the blame on themselves. Furthermore, in the Netherlands, they felt they were being treated differently because of their appearance but this was also the case in Taiwan. This was not necessarily due to the behaviour of strangers but their biological family. They felt that their biological

family led their own life that they could not really take part in that due to issues like the language barriers and cultural differences.

Coming to Taiwan and seeing their biological parents had a big impact on adoptees. They felt like it was the beginning of the contact with their biological family and many continued to return in order to get to know them better and to search for their identity.

I am building something but I do not know what. That is why I keep coming back [to Taiwan]. (Rachel).

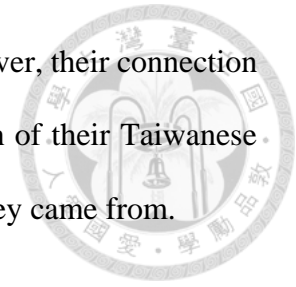
Almost no one really talked to the local people in Taiwan. Most expressed that they were not able to speak Chinese at the time or was still learning the language. They could often converse with others in English if that was possible or used a translator. However, many shared the bitter feeling of not being able to talk with other Taiwanese people, especially their biological family.

Why go to Taiwan according to Taiwanese adoptees?

Even though many interviewees had positive experiences in Taiwan, they seemed to be very careful when I asked them whether they would recommend other adoptees to visit Taiwan. Some advised other adoptees to go to Taiwan despite what they will see and who they will visit. The first time, it would be helpful if you do not go alone and be open-minded. Still, everyone in my sample group was in agreement that every adoptee must decide for themselves whether they are ready to go back because they can also imagine how emotional, exhausting and painful this journey can be for someone.

The six adoptees that have returned to Taiwan all conveyed that they were satisfied about their trip(s) and hope to go to Taiwan again in the future or even already made plans to visit Taiwan in the near future. They mentioned that they would go on

holiday, spend time on a language course or work in Taiwan. Moreover, their connection with Taiwan grew stronger and sometimes made them more certain of their Taiwanese identity as they were able to gain a better understanding of where they came from.



Of course I knew that I was adopted and sometimes I would say I am just Taiwanese or I am just Dutch. Because I was not really interested in my adoption before that anyway, I mainly call myself Dutch, but in some cases I did say, yes, I am also from Taiwan. It was not a secret or something I was ashamed of, but I do think that due to travelling to Taiwan I came to identify more as both Dutch and Taiwanese. (Debby)

For some, the journey actually became the start of confusion of belonging. Some adoptees can yearn for their birth country when they feel like they do not belong in their adoptive country. However, this can turn into an identity crisis when the expectations of the birth country does not comply with reality. One adoptee in the sample group argued that she actually felt more confused when she visited Taiwan because she had always hoped to feel accepted in Taiwan, but because of her being mixed, Taiwanese people also did not perceive her as being Taiwanese. This made her question even more where she belonged to. These situations thus create a form of in-betweenness: not fully belonging to either worlds. Still, participants were positive and hopeful that they would feel more Taiwanese the more they visit Taiwan.

One third of the interviewees have never been back to Taiwan although they do express that they want to go once. Two adoptees have said that were not that interested before to go to Taiwan but are now starting on their roots journey and are gradually more interested to see where they come from and hope to find their biological family. Another voiced that she was not particular set on searching her birth family but simply wishes to experience and to learn about the country that she was born in.

Tim, who is now in contact with his birth mother, wants to go to Taiwan but first hopes to have a relationship with his mom as he hopes to visit her in Taiwan.

If I would go to Taiwan and I know she [biological mother] is alive but not where, I do not think I would feel at home there or at least it will be very strange. It is different if you were born there [Taiwan], you grew up there and you move to America for 10 years and you go back again. For me, there is this thought that I could have lived here. I could have done my shopping here every day, you know. There are just a lot of thoughts and stuff and I just think that I would really like to know that if I am going to Taiwan that my mom is also there. (Tim)

Apart from the searching part, adoptees also want to go to Taiwan because it seems very fun, the people are extremely polite and they enjoy the food. Even the adoptees that have not returned to Taiwan yet have collected impressions from other adoptees and friends about Taiwan that seem to be very positive. Furthermore, they want to explore the island, experience the culture and eat the delicious Taiwanese food.

However, the main obstacle is the financial funds according to the adoptees. They voice that the costs of going on a journey to Taiwan is simply very high and this is not something everyone can do every year. Furthermore, it is difficult to return because they also have their own responsibilities in the Netherlands, like work, school or relationships.

Language barrier

One of the things adoptees spoke most about was the Chinese language. In Taiwan, the official language is Chinese, while the older generation might also speak Japanese, Taiwanese or another language native to Taiwan. Nonetheless, most adoptees do not speak any of them. Even though the Taiwanese government is working hard to make English become the second language by 2030, adoptees admitted that most of their

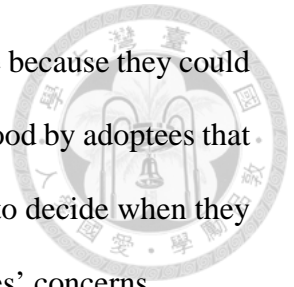
biological family members speak little English (Everington, 2020). Some adoptees have tried learning Chinese but they are not on a level to communicate with their biological family or discuss their emotions. Consequently, even when an adoptee finds their biological family it might be difficult to keep in contact or understand each other because of this language barrier. One adoptee also voiced that she felt like she missed a part of their culture because this type of knowledge is difficult to transfer when they talk in different languages.

'They [birth family] take me out to see things but I have no idea where I am. I am amazed and I think everything is fun and beautiful, but it does not really tell me things and it is difficult to talk about because I do not understand the language.' (Hanna).

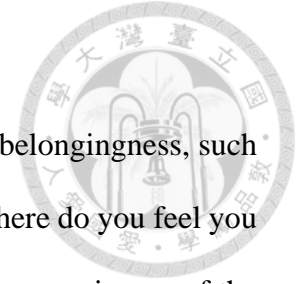
Conclusion

Adoptees seem to return to Taiwan due to several reasons. Sometimes, their parents hope to give them an impression of their birth country and culture. Other times, the adoptee is interested in Taiwan and wants to know more about it by visiting the island. The trip to Taiwan can be very helpful to adoptees as they are able to see their country of origin for themselves, but it can also be very painful and confusing if it triggers certain trauma's. For adoptees it is important that they should decide by themselves whether they are ready to return. The majority of Taiwanese adoptees returns to Taiwan on a 'rootsreis'. These trips are usually arranged by the adoptive parents or the adoption centre and can but not always include a reunion with the birth mother and/or family. Adoptees express that they had very positive experiences in Taiwan, but some things left them a bit confused. This is usually the first time where they are exposed to a situation in which they do not look like part of the minority group and can blend in with the crowd. However, cultural differences and the language barrier can create feelings of exclusion and confusion. Still,

according to the interviewees, visiting Taiwan can still be worthwhile because they could gain a better understanding of where they came from. This is understood by adoptees that even have not even been there before. Nevertheless, it is up to them to decide when they are ready for this. Besides, the financial costs are also part of adoptees' concerns.



4.3 Identity and feelings of belonging



In the last section, I asked adoptees about their feeling of home and belongingness, such as what does home mean to you and where do you feel at home or where do you feel you belong. I tried to tie the other two parts together and analyse how the experiences of the adoptees influence their identity and feelings of belonging. There was no universal answer to this question and adoptees had various ways to define themselves and where they felt they belonged to.

What is ‘home’?

When I asked participants the question ‘what does home mean to you?’, the answers were very diverse. Still, there were some elements that were deemed necessary for adoptees to feel at home, such as the feeling of belonging and acceptance, and a place where you feel safe at. Most importantly, it is the people at that place that make you feel like you belong and where you can be yourself not the physical place itself.

Home is...

people who I care about and where I feel safe at, not a specific physical place. (Debby)

a sort of safe heaven I feel home at any place, but I need to feel safe and accepted. It is more emotional than physical. I am home [parents’ home] but it does not feel like home because I cannot find the structure I need. (Tim)

a place where you can be yourself and you can do whatever you want. (Irma)

a place where people accept you as you are and are loving and support you. I think it is more about the people instead of the physical place. (Julia)

the feeling of belonging somewhere. (Denise)

where I am building my life. A place where I can be myself without a mask and where people accept me for who I am regardless of my cultural background. (Rachel)

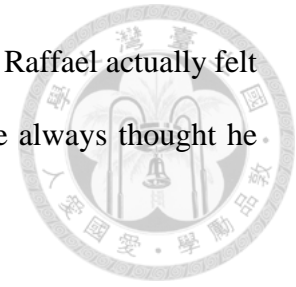
the home where I now live and the people who I have got to know here. I think Taiwan can also feel home to me but not at this moment. However, I do not think that I can feel home in just any country. (Robin)

Feeling at home in the Netherlands

When asked about what contributed to feeling at home in the Netherlands adoptees mostly talked about being able to function in the Dutch society, such as speaking the Dutch language or one of its dialects, knowing about Dutch traditions and Dutch culture, and simply the fact that most of their friends and family live in the Netherlands. Furthermore, many argued that they have learned a lot about the Dutch due to the fact that they grew up in a Dutch family. They know about the ‘kring’ (circle) birthdays with the ‘borrelplankjes’ (snack boards) this refers to the Dutch way of celebrating birthdays while sitting with friends or family members in a circle in the house and eating snacks on a snack board. This knowledge of some ‘typical’ Dutch traditions are ingrained in the adoptee as they have been exposed to them while growing up and one adoptee even said that they simply do not have a choice than to have some form of attachment to that. Moreover, most adoptees have built their life in the Netherlands or are thinking of building their life in the Netherlands with their partner.

On the other hand, there is the thought that people in the Netherlands are not as open-minded and tolerant as they think. Furthermore, people are not very aware of the possibility that someone is adopted. They understand that foreigners can marry Dutch people or immigrate to the Netherlands and grew up there, but a lot of strangers assume that adoptees are foreigners based on their physical appearance. Furthermore, they feel

like they stand out from the crowd which can be an isolating feeling. Raffael actually felt relief he saw that he blended into the crowd in Taiwan. He said he always thought he stood out in the Netherlands because of his appearance.




My whole life, I felt like I looked different. I went to a very strict, white Christian secondary school so I just stood out. (Raffael)

Hanna mostly felt left out when she was alone on the streets as it felt more negative. She believes that in the Netherlands people stare at her because she looks different than the rest. However, when she is in a group that is more diverse, she felt more empowered because she was different together with her group. Consequently, it is clear that having a place where you can feel accepted and have similarities is important for belonging.

Another problem Taiwanese adoptees face is the fact that Taiwan is not well-known in the Netherlands. Asia in general is kind of unfamiliar for Dutch people but they generally know of China, Japan and Korea. When Taiwanese adoptees tell where they were born, they may hear: 'oh I know about Thailand!'. Moreover, adoptees also feel they are sometimes pitied because of their adoption and that they should be grateful to live in the Netherlands because their birth country is so 'poor'. Although they understand this behaviour through encountering it many times, it is frustrating and it can make them feel less at home in the Netherlands.

Feeling at home in Taiwan

Whilst adoptees were quite in sync about their feelings of home in the Netherlands, there were different views when it came to Taiwan. Denise and Rachel both have strong affection for Taiwan. Coincidentally, they also have been in Taiwan the most among the sample group. After the roots journey, Denise wanted to be in Taiwan even though they were not viewed as Taiwanese but they liked the atmosphere in Taiwan. Every time they

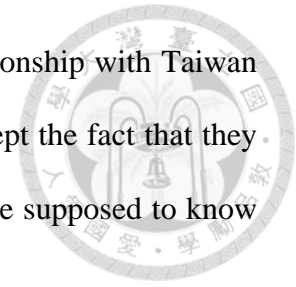


returned from Taiwan, they immediately became homesick. Another part that contributed to this feeling, was that they had been very unhappy and depressed in the Netherlands. Apart from growing up there and having friends and family in the Netherlands, they feel no connection with the Netherlands. Rachel also expressed wishing to go back to Taiwan. She claimed that Taiwan can become her second home but it will never be her first home since she wants to start her family in the Netherlands with her current partner. Still, she wishes that a part of her life remains in Taiwan even though she must buy an airplane ticket every once in a while. Another adoptee mentioned that they felt home in Taiwan but that was limited to the time she would spend with her biological family. She enjoys the beauty of the island, but does not feel at home aside from being with her family. In the Netherlands, she feels like people in general see her as Dutch. Similarly, Iris argued that if she did not have family in Taiwan, Taiwan would not really mean something to her because most of her family lives in the Netherlands and she grew up there. Debby mentioned that they feel excluded because of what people in Taiwan tell them:

Even locals tell me that I am really Dutch and you can feel that they do not fully perceive me as Taiwanese, not that they are less nice to me.

Interestingly, many adoptees confided to me that they want to have a strong connection with Taiwan but they simply do not have that. They account that to all the requirements they have of being 'Taiwanese', such as knowing about Taiwanese culture, the history and the language. On the other hand, the standards are not so strict for being Dutch. Taiwanese Dutch adoptees naturally learn about the Dutch culture because they grew up in the Netherlands with Dutch family who could teach them about the Dutch habits and customs. On the other hand, there is a connection between the Taiwanese adoptee and Taiwan simply because they were born in Taiwan. Most adoptees do take that fact as part of why they believe that they can feel at home in Taiwan. Here, we can see that a

Taiwanese identity can be defined by one's identification and relationship with Taiwan as well as their genetics. Still, it can be hard for the adoptee to accept the fact that they did not grow up with Taiwanese culture when they feel that they are supposed to know about it.

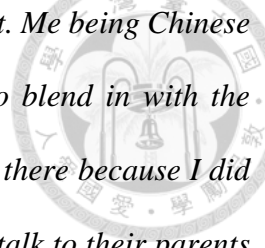


Only Julia mentioned that she does not have a strong connection with Taiwan as she views Taiwan as her birth country and nothing more. However, she does not rule out the possibility that she might one day feel a connection. She is currently more focused on her life in the Netherlands. Still, when she sees news about Taiwan she said that she would be more likely to watch that than any other Asian country.

When looking at the sample group it seems like the more adoptees visit their birth country, the more they feel connected to it. Nevertheless, this is not a linear process and at some points, the adoptee might even feel less at home after the trip. This is connected to how the adoptee reacts to the new experiences in Taiwan and whether they make the adoptee feel accepted in Taiwan or not. When this is not the case, the adoptee can become confused and enter the third space. This is discussed below.

From paradox to third space

Being adopted can feel confusing at times. On the one hand you feel like you belong in the Netherlands because you can speak the language and know about the Dutch tradition and culture. On the other hand, there can be feelings of not belonging in the Netherlands as the acts or behaviour of strangers, but also people that you know might signal that you are also slightly different than the 'others'. On top of that, there is the element of being adopted as it can come a bit as a surprise to strangers that the children do not look like the parents. At the same time, it is also difficult to connect with people who share a similar cultural heritage background.

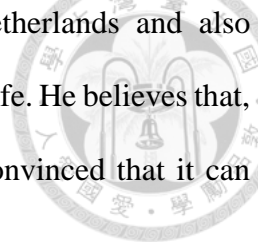


'I have Chinese friends with Chinese parents and that is also different. Me being Chinese is different in an adoption context. For example, I used to wish to blend in with the Chinese community but eventually I also did not feel like I belonged there because I did not speak Chinese and I did not celebrate their festivals. (...) If they talk to their parents on the phone I think by myself 'oh yeah, I am not able to do that' and then you kind of feel a little bit less Taiwanese.' (Hanna).

Here we can see that there is a wish of belonging to Taiwan amongst Taiwanese adoptees. However, when they come into contact with Chinese or Taiwanese people, it still feels a bit off because the adoptee has little knowledge of the culture and language the peers with Chinese or Taiwanese parents do have.

In these instances, sometimes the adoptee can feel part of a culture, whilst at other times he/she/they might encounter a situation that makes them feel excluded. Hanna voiced that she feels a bit like a ping pong ball that is going around all the time. At one moment, she feels extremely at home and the other time she does not. In a similar vein, Tim said:

I've never been strange to the concept of feeling alienated, because I have always felt kind of different, so I never belonged anywhere. (...) But something that the Dutch are very good at is letting you know that you are not like them. On the other hand, you are also again not quite Taiwanese because you are adopted. You do not know the culture, you do not know the people, you do not speak the language, let alone know the norms and values, so you're constantly being pushed back and forth from one side to the other. Which just makes you think that there is no side where I belong and then you are in a kind of grey zone where you start to wonder 'where do I belong' and that has bothered me for the longest time.



Tim still does not feel completely comfortable living in the Netherlands and also reinforces the idea that identity is fluid and changes throughout your life. He believes that, as an adoptee, you will always be a little bit confused but he is convinced that it can change for the better and that it is a process for him.

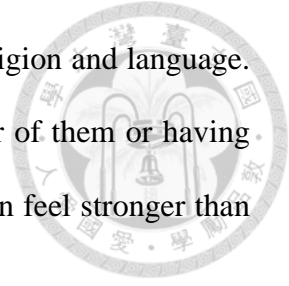
Julia actually feels like she belongs in the Netherlands because she enjoys living there and feels Dutch. But the fact that not everyone will see her like that makes her confused sometimes. It is not the people in her inner circle like friends and family, but strangers that remind her that there are people that point out the otherness. Moreover, Denise argues that they know how to be Dutch in the sense that they speak the Dutch language and know about the food. However, the behaviour of people in the Netherlands towards them make them not feel at home. They feel more Dutch, but they want to feel more Taiwanese because they do not fit in the Netherlands.

Rachel has been thinking about this paradox for many years. At first, she did not feel accepted in the Netherlands, but when she encountered the same thing in Taiwan, she felt confused about her belonging.

So just as I did not feel Dutch enough before, because the rest of the world said so, I now felt not Taiwanese enough.

Yet, she kept coming back to her birth place and eventually came to the conclusion: ‘Maybe you do not need to choose one thing. You can be a little bit of everything’. Here we enter the ‘third space’. This concept is developed by Homi Bhabha (1994) and describes the space where culture has no unity or purity, and where primordial notions of race and nation have been replaced by a floating and hybrid existence. Hübinette (2004) employs this concept to explain the situation of adopted Koreans who provide the perfect example of the existence of a third space between their birth country and the Western adoption country. I, too, believe that Taiwanese adoptees also have this third space as

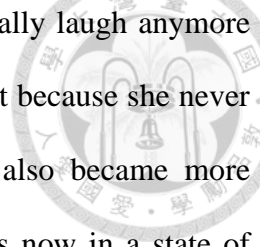
their perspective on identity transcends race, citizenship, culture, religion and language. In his third space, it is possible to feel part of both cultures, neither of them or having mixed feelings in which sometimes the connection to one culture can feel stronger than the other and vice versa.



Taiwanese heritage

Taiwan and adoption play a big part in the lives of some participants. They argue that it has made them who they are and. Still some adoptees did not really pay attention to their heritage until a certain point in time. The corona period and the Black Lives Matter movement (BLM) opened the eyes of adoptees as racism that used to be more invincible became more vincible. It put the Anti-Asian Hate movement into motion and it made people more aware about the micro-aggression against Asian people. This movement spread from the United States (U.S.) to the rest of the world, including the Netherlands. For example, the Asian Raisins foundation was founded in 2020 and is one of the leading organisations fighting racism against East- and Southeast Asian people in the Netherlands. Furthermore, in 2021, a few hundred people gathered in Amsterdam to demonstrate against anti-Asian racism and discrimination which was prompted by the Atlanta shootings the same year (Dutchnews, 2021). Because of these occurrences, some Taiwanese adoptees were almost compelled to think more seriously about their cultural background.

For example, Linda said that she had a pretty calm childhood but argued that she closed her eyes off to micro aggressions and racism and kind of ignored the uncomfortable moments. She told me that she realised that she had normalised a lot of things and that she had felt little twinges, but due to corona it became a lot more frequent. Before, peers or friends would make a racist joke and it would have felt a little bit awkward but she would laugh it away. However, the more she looked into BLM and the



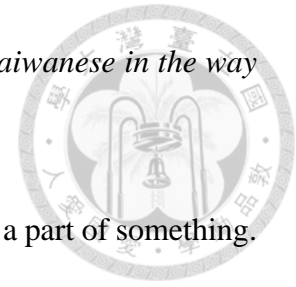
Anti-Asian Hate movement, the more she felt that she could not really laugh anymore about those jokes. However, she does not blame them for saying that because she never voiced her discomfort. After she recognized these feelings, she also became more interested in her roots and cultural background. She told me she is now in a state of mourning as she is mourning the loss of her Taiwanese heritage since she knows nothing about her roots and culture. Currently, she has not been back to Taiwan but is starting to gather information about her roots and is hoping to go one day.

Tim also found himself to be cheering for his Taiwanese roots and Asian heritage because of the Anti-Asian Hate movement. He argues that because he knows that there are people that simply hate people because they are Asian, let us just own it. Now he thinks being Taiwanese is part of his identity and he is proud of it and wants to support each other.

Identity

During this research, I ended the interview with asking about the identity of the adoptees. Even though some answers overlap, there is no homogenous answer as feelings of belonging are deeply complex. Still, there are a few patterns we can draw from the cultural adaptation patterns in chapter 1.1. For the majority of the adoptees, I discovered a pattern of assimilation. They felt more Dutch and sometimes did not feel Taiwanese, partly Taiwanese or felt that they ought to be more Taiwanese. Even after the root journey, they still believed that they were more Dutch because they grew up in the Netherlands and did not really know much about the Taiwanese culture. Others actually grew closer to Taiwan after the root journey and felt that they could both be Taiwanese and Dutch. This matches the hybrid pattern in which a person identifies with both the host culture and the culture of origin. Tim, Denise and Rachel all voiced patterns of in betweenness in which they felt that they were not part of anything and therefore stuck in between.

I feel Dutch but I do not feel at home in the Netherlands. I am not Taiwanese in the way that I cannot even understand Taiwanese people (Denise)



However, some grew out of that and are now looking for a way to be a part of something. For example, Rachel mentioned that she realised that might just needs to accept that she is a mix of cultures.

I am mixed. (...) The Netherlands is part of who I am but it is not something I am proud of. (Rachel)

Tim identified himself as Asian and adopted. He feels Dutch but when he thought about it long and hard he said that he would rather call himself a cosmopolitan. On top of that, one adoptee even voiced that her connection to America is even bigger than that of Taiwan. Even though Taiwan will always be her birth country, she feels more at home in America. I believe that this is also part of a hybrid pattern and even the host culture can change. Instead of the Netherlands, America became her safe haven.

As a child, I simply felt Dutch but that changed afterwards because I saw more of the world. I did not feel either Dutch nor Taiwanese. I now feel more cosmopolitan and then more American. (Iris)

When asked why they felt Dutch, adoptees responded that even though there are moments where they are confronted by other people about their origin or 'non' Dutchness, adoptees still hold a rational mindset that the care they got in the Netherlands, such as pension, rights and infrastructure are still one of the factors that make them stay in the Netherlands.

When they feel that they will not move out of the Netherlands soon, they say that they would then take time to visit their birth country or other countries and find other people that are like minded. But eventually many participants argued that they would

want to grow old in the Netherlands and only one adoptee in the sample group is actually living abroad.



Other adoptees are also aware of the fact how they are viewed by others.

I am a cosmopolitan. I feel Dutch but I think that for other people I remain Dutch-Taiwanese, or that is the association people have here. (Julia)

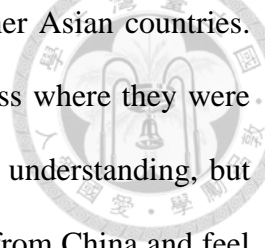
I feel Dutch but people will always point out that I am not. (...) I can never be fully Dutch and I will never be fully Taiwanese and it feels a bit strange sometimes because I never felt that way before [when growing up]. (...) I know nothing about Taiwan so I do not think I am allowed to call myself Taiwanese but I do long for it and I am now, thus, trying to find out more about my roots. (Linda)

I do not see myself as 100% Dutch. The other part is difficult to pinpoint because I have been interested in Taiwan, but also South-Korea, Japan and China. (Robin)

Some voiced feelings of a separation pattern during the interview but no one actually said that they identified with being only Taiwanese and not Dutch. In the end, they still identified being (partly) Dutch. Even though not everyone related with being Dutch, more adoptees felt Dutch than Taiwanese. In addition, no one from the sample group felt fully Taiwanese. The reason lies in the upbringing and because of the fact that they grew up in the Netherlands and were torn apart from their heritage culture. Consequently, because they lack the cultural understanding, many felt they were not qualified to be Taiwanese.

Being 'Chinese'?

Whilst the majority of the Taiwanese people is of Han-Chinese descent, it is difficult to call the people in Taiwan Chinese. As mentioned in chapter 2.2., less and less people in Taiwan identify themselves as Chinese. On the other hand, people in the Netherlands do



not really distinguish between Chinese people and people from other Asian countries. Taiwanese adoptees told me that strangers would almost never guess where they were from and usually assume that they are Chinese. Most adoptees are understanding, but believe that this is inaccurate. They believe that Taiwan is separate from China and feel that although there are similarities, Chinese and Taiwanese culture is not entirely the same. Additionally, Taiwanese adoptees might not understand why they are associated with Chinese people as they grow up in a white neighbourhood and therefore do not understand the link between Chinese people and those who grow up in a white neighbourhood with the same norms and values as the white people that live there.

In the beginning, I thought: Oh, that makes sense, because people cannot see the difference between Asians and Chinese. Yet, now I think, okay, really lazy and really such nonsense. Also when I say I am from Taiwan, then they do not understand or they think I am from Thailand or something. (...) I was often offended because I grew up in this environment with the same ideas about Chinese people which was often negative. (Linda)

Linda just never really associated myself with Chinese people in the first place and felt a little bit offended when she was associated with the Chinese people as she knew about the (negative) stereotypes. When confronted with this situation, some adoptees told me that they call others out on their behaviour and others keep quiet because they feel like it is not worth talking about it. Still, even the ones that stay quiet did not refer themselves as Chinese adoptees. The respondents all identified as Taiwanese adoptees. They would only call some things Chinese because they were thought to be Chinese by the general public. In Taiwan, some people would identify as Taiwanese and some as Chinese whereas Taiwanese adoptees in the Netherlands would only refer to themselves as Taiwanese instead of Chinese. There is no grudge towards China, but it was clear that to

some extent there was no arguing about Taiwanese adoptees being Taiwanese and not Chinese.

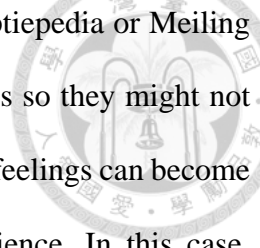


Community bonding in the Netherlands for Taiwanese Dutch adoptees

Compared to before, it has become more easy to come into contact with other Taiwanese adoptees. While Taiwanese adoptees grew up mostly in a white neighbourhood, the only other adoptees they knew were their siblings or adoptees they met at special events, such as Meilingdag (Meiling Day). Nowadays, there are certain groups and communities for adoptees and specifically Taiwanese and Chinese adoptees in the Netherlands. For example Whatsapp groups, Adoptiepedia, and before there was an organisation Wo De Gu Xiang (My hometown in Chinese). The extent to which adoptees feel connected to other adoptees is divergent. Everyone in my sample group felt connected to other adoptees to an extent since they felt that they all could understand what problems an adoptee might encounter regarding their adoption and race. However, some felt connected to adoptees in general whereas others felt more connected to Taiwanese adoptees and even among them had people that they got more along with or less. The majority was definitely more connected to Taiwanese adoptees as they felt they were more close due to the similar situation they were in and, consequently, their feelings became acknowledged.

I feel very connected with other adoptees since I have more contact with them. Even though you are adopted from another country, there are similarities amongst everyone's experiences. Other adoptees sometimes understand you without having to talk about it and that gives me a very safe feeling. (Linda)

Some adoptees are not interested in other adoptees and do not need to (re)connect with other adoptees as they are content with their lives at the moment. Still, when there is the

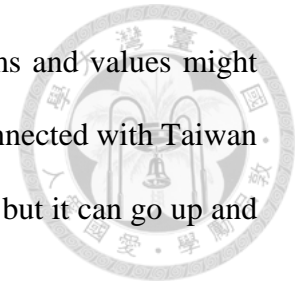


urge to connect with other Taiwanese adoptees, they can go to Adoptiepedia or Meiling events to share their experiences and read other people's experiences so they might not feel so lonely anymore. There is also a sense of belonging since their feelings can become acknowledged when talking to people who share a similar experience. In this case, Taiwanese adoptees form their own community where they are linked through the shared experience of adoption from Taiwan. It did not necessarily encourage them to feel more Taiwanese but they could share their opinion of what being Taiwanese means or what it means to be adopted to the Netherlands in order to feel more understood and accepted. This is a topic that is difficult to discuss with other non-adopted people since they simply do not have the same experiences and thus talking with someone or in a group with common experiences can create a space of belonging. Wherever the adoptee is situated, knowing that there are people that understand your situation can be comforting.

Conclusion

Home is a complex concept and interviewees had different types of answers. However, there were certain core elements that they considered important to feel at home. This included the feeling of belonging, acceptance and safety. A particular physical space is not necessarily most important but the people surrounding you that makes you feel like you belong and accept you are most important. This feeling can be found in both the Netherlands and Taiwan. In the Netherlands, this encompasses the ability to function in Dutch society by being able to speak the language and be versed in the Dutch culture by growing up in the Dutch society with friends and family that are ethnically Dutch. The feeling of belonging can be less strong when the adoptee feels excluded due to the dissonance of the culture of the birth country and the adoptive country. Furthermore, some adoptees feel different because their appearance does not match with their nationality. In Taiwan, adoptees can blend into the crowd and feel part of the society. Nevertheless, the

fact that they did not grow up with the language and cultural norms and values might make them feel less part of this society. Still, they will always be connected with Taiwan because of their blood ties. In both cases, this is not a linear process but it can go up and down depending on their experiences.



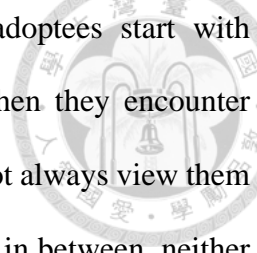
When adoptees are torn between the two identities it feels like they are ‘stuck in between’ as they feel that they can never become Dutch and Taiwanese enough. Yet, it is possible that during this process the adoptee grows to accept that they can be both Dutch and Taiwanese, not picking either one side. In this research, this type is rare but not impossible. They either called themselves mixed or cosmopolitan, not fully Dutch nor fully Taiwanese, but they felt part of a community that transcends nationality and culture. Still, many Taiwanese adoptees expressed that they felt Dutch whilst hoping to feel more Taiwanese in the future. As identity is a process, it will be interesting to see how these adoptees will identify themselves in a few decades. At least it will not be Chinese. And even though the search for identity might take a long time, they are no longer alone in their search. An entire community is blossoming in the Netherlands and ensures that there is more recognition for the experiences of Taiwanese adoptees. Here, they can share what it means to be Taiwanese and adopted to the Netherlands. This is because they have a similar experience and it can create a space of belonging.

Conclusion



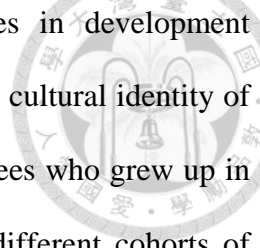
From this small sample of different perspectives we can conclude that Taiwanese-Dutch adoptees' feelings about cultural identity are heterogeneous. Interviewees exhibited several ways to explain why they feel Taiwanese, Dutch, Taiwanese and Dutch or neither of them. In the current study, some adoptees identified with being Taiwanese because they look Asian, whereas other adoptees realized they look Asian but they do not necessarily perceive themselves as being Taiwanese because they lack certain qualities they ascribe to being Taiwanese, such as being able to speak the language or having knowledge about the culture. Some participants did not even identify themselves as Taiwanese or Dutch, and instead would describe themselves as being cosmopolitan or even felt a strong connection with the other cultures. There were some adoptees who said they felt Dutch but wished they would feel a stronger connection with Taiwan. Most of the time, this was because they enjoyed being in Taiwan but felt alienated because of the loss of connection to Taiwan when they were adopted. One adoptee even argued that she is now finally grieving this loss. Although every adopted person deals with his/her/their roots interest in his own way, we can still distinguish patterns. Drawing from the 9 interviews, Taiwanese adoptees who grew up in the Netherlands exhibit four types of cultural identity. This study found that the identities of the adoptees were based on their affiliation with one of the following: their minority group assigned by birth (Taiwanese), the majority group (Dutch), both groups (Taiwanese-Dutch), or neither group. However, they did not use these terms with equal frequency. Most of the respondents said they identified as being Taiwanese or as Taiwanese-Dutch. Furthermore, there were no adoptees that identified themselves as solely Taiwanese. Still, when choosing between Chinese and Taiwanese, everyone chose to be called Taiwanese.

When we look at the cultural adaptation patterns, it is clear that there are shifts



between the patterns throughout the life of an adoptee. Most adoptees start with assimilation, in which they try to fit in with the host culture. When they encounter situations in which they realize that people in their host country do not always view them as members of the host country, the adoptees can come to feel stuck in between, neither fully belonging to the host culture nor the culture of origin. In this research, some adoptees tried to reclaim the culture of origin they lost during adoption, such as by trying to learn Chinese or visiting Taiwan to understand more of its culture. During that process, it has been observed that adoptees then can consider that they are able to identify with both the host culture and the culture of origin. In this third space, the adoptee can be a bit of everything, accepting both their Dutch and Taiwanese parts. Still, there is no case of separation in this study. Even though some adoptees voiced that they would have liked to feel more Taiwanese than Dutch, they believe that they are still Dutch to a certain extent as they cannot ignore the fact that they grew up in the Netherlands.

This study exhibits several parameters which potentially influence adoptees' cultural identity, such as parental influence, discrimination and stereotyping, returning to the birth country, finding the biological mother and/or family, and access to and knowledge of the birth culture. The current study is only a small sample of all adult adoptees in the Netherlands. I tried to reduce bias by only interviewing adoptees I had never met before. Nevertheless, the risk of attracting an inordinate number of adoptees with certain views on Taiwan, the Netherlands or adoption must be acknowledged, as well as the difficulty of assessing the effects of adoption experiences by retrospective recall. Moreover, the adopted people in this study might not be entirely representative of the children who are being adopted nowadays as adoption policy has changed and less and less children are adopted these days. Last, this study relied on data from one time point, giving us snapshots of the adoptees' identification at that point. Longitudinal



research would enable scholars to examine potential differences in development trajectories over time. This study encourages further research on the cultural identity of Taiwanese adoptees. As cultural identities of Taiwanese-born adoptees who grew up in the Netherlands are divided, it would be interesting to compare different cohorts of adoptees by adoptive country. For example, are there differences between the Netherlands and other countries in Europe? Another possible study could be carried out on the difference in view on cultural identity between Taiwanese adoptees and their adoptive parents. Drawing on the interviews, there is some connection between the way Taiwanese adoptees are raised and adoptees' cultural identity, therefore examining the perceptions on ethnic identity and adoption of parents and adoptees could potentially show to what extent adoptive parents influence cultural identity.

Furthermore, this study has relevance for intercountry and transracial adoptees and the implications are offered with such people in mind. Since some adoptees suffer from the micro-aggression and discrimination in the Netherlands, social workers should help facilitate parental involvement with their children in how to deal with these kind of situations. Adoptees should stand up for themselves more as well, since much of this micro-aggression and discrimination might be partly due to ignorance. Moreover, social workers might work with the schools to increase teachers' sensitivity to the needs of adoptees. For example, they could encourage teachers to give children opportunities to study and talk about their native cultures, and diversity education might be encouraged. By limiting negative connotations with being Asian due to racism and prejudice, Taiwanese adoptees then might not only feel they can be part of Taiwan, but also feel at home in the Netherlands.

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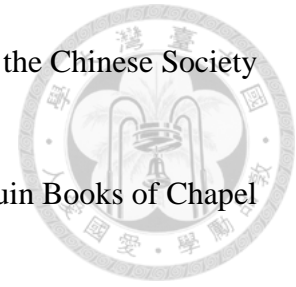
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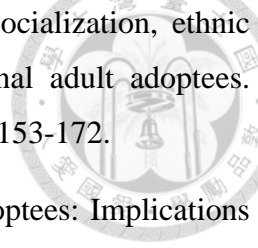
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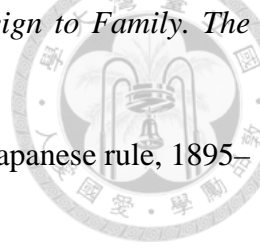
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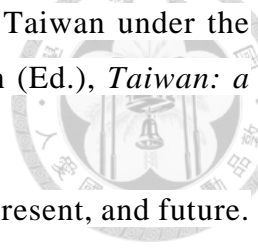
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Appendix I: Interview questions



Background

- Sex
- Birthyear
- Where in the Netherlands do you live?
- Current occupation
- At what age did you get adopted and from which place in Taiwan?
- Which adoption agency?

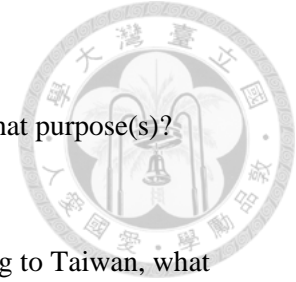
Family background

- Are you an only child? If not, do you have any other siblings, and are they also adopted?
- How did your parents introduce you to you being adopted?
- How was your upbringing in the Netherlands with a Taiwanese background for you?
- How did your parents present Taiwan at home? Did they actively promote Taiwan in your education, or did you do these things at your own initiative?

Taiwan trip

- Have you gone back to Taiwan and why? Did you go alone or did you go with other people?
- What did you visit and how long did you go?
- What was your motive for going to Taiwan?
- Did you have prior knowledge of Taiwan before going?
- What was your perception / expectation of Taiwan before your trip?
- Did you experience any stress / cultural shock?
- How was the interaction with the local people?

- Did your views on Taiwan change after the trip, and how?
- Would you like to come back to Taiwan in the future? If so, for what purpose(s)?
- Were you satisfied with this trip?
- If other adoptees would ask you if you would recommend returning to Taiwan, what would you say?



Identity

- Have you ever been confused about where you belong to?
- Where do you feel at home at and why? What is “home” to you?
- How do you think other people view you? (Dutch/Taiwanese etc)
- Is there anything that makes you feel not Dutch / Taiwanese?
- Do you feel a strong connection with Taiwan?
- What does Taiwan mean to you?
- What does the Netherlands mean to you?
- Have you joined an organisation (before) that is focused on Taiwan or adoption?
- Do you feel connected with other (Taiwanese) adoptees?