

# Home

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I didn't get what home meant when I was younger. In junior high school in Gílân, the teacher had us write an essay remembering our hometown with longing. My hometown was Lôotong, just five minutes away by rail. I lived there and took the train to school every day. Nevertheless, after some head-scratching, I put out a four- or five-page essay longingly remembering Lôotong, sitting there in that classroom five minutes away for an hour.

Then I "left home" to attend a famous high school far away, the one next to a botanical garden. Here I realized that Gílân and Lôotong were both my hometowns. When I partook of *bíhún* soup or beef mein or plain ramen with a braised egg at the streetside stalls of Tàipak, I would think of the baked yams of Gílân as well as the *bíhún* stew and tapioca pearls of Lôotong. Come the holidays, I'd go home slowly on the stop-and-go local trains, to stretch and relish that homecoming flavor.

I missed home something awful when I came to America. But home had grown. Tàipak — known via Chinese as "Taipei" — had been an "otherland" when I was going to school there. Now it was just part of Formosa, and Formosa was home. All of it. On the weekends, after five days of immersion in the Anglophone culture, I needed to unwind with a bout of Formosan food, a Formosan book or two, and conversation with a few fellow Formosans. Two years ago, I made the trip home. I went back to Tàipak and Thô Hng as well as Gílân and Lôotong. Home had changed a lot. I didn't know it, and it didn't know me. I could probably still write about home, but not an essay of longing remembrance.