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Part 1:Aspire

Being poor at studying and taking an exam during childhood

Compared to the younger generation today, Tai Chiang Ching aspired to become an abacus and mental arithmetic teacher early on, while he was studying in middle school. He established the “CMA” at the age of 23. However, he was not an extremely smart child and didn't have a glorious background.

A simple farmer's boy

Tai Chiang Ching was born in Yingchuan Village, Huwei Township, Yunlin County in May 1959. Tai Chiang Ching was the eldest son of his father, Tai Rong-hui, who was also the eldest son in his family clan, so Tai Chiang Ching was especially cherished by his grandfather. The Tai family had nearly five acres of farmland, which at that time was considered to be quite a lot. Tai's grandfather, Tai Yun, was a kind, generous and accommodating person. Therefore, he was usually asked to help resolve disputes by other villagers. This was how he came to be highly respected in the village, where people mostly called him “Mu-zai” or “Uncle Mu-zai” respectfully. His father Tai Rong-hui and mother Tai Lin Chai-lian were all hard-working and honest farmers. Indeed, the Tais come from a farming family with traditional morality and values.

In the early days, the demand for farming labour was high, so everyone in the family, including adults and children, had to help out on the farm. When Tai was a baby, his aunt would carry him to the farm to find his mother, who was working there. A story worth mentioning is that, three months after Tai was born, his family faced the well-known floods of 1959. 150 houses in his village were damaged because of the floods, including three, which were washed away. Tai's family fled to the top of the roof with the newborn Tai Chiang Ching. They stayed on the roof for one day and night to wait for the floods to finally and slowly subside. They were very relieved

no one got hurt, afterwards saying that “the child survived a great disaster and must be destined for good fortune for ever after.”

When Tai Chiang Ching was a third grade student, he had to herd cattle after school and during holidays. Besides cow herding, his job also included helping to harvest asparagus at 5am, because this vegetable has to be harvested before sunrise to avoid becoming sun-dried. His family also needed help cropping rice, garlic, watermelon, sweet potatoes, corn, tomatoes, peanuts, sugar cane, papaya, and so on. In addition, they also raised pigs and ducks. With 11 people in Tai’s family, their livelihood depended on these crops and livestock sales. That was a typical farmer’s life in the early days of Taiwan.

Although his family was not wealthy, they were not poor. Tai Chiang Ching remembered that his family had quite a lot of farmland (nearly five acres), but all of his family, including his grandparents and parents, had to work on the farm.

Tai and his two younger brothers and other relatives would also help on the farm after school and during holidays. They would also hire some temporary workers to help during peak times. As a practical and honest farming family, the Tais were busy working every day. He was always dedicated to operating his own business in an earnest manner. Though Tai was strict with himself he was lenient towards others when interacting with people. With this kind of personality, Tai Chiang Ching built and operated his cultural and educational empire practically, thus earning trust and affection from many parents and students.