

## Culture point: Why Don't Taiwanese People Celebrate Their Birthdays?

母親節 母難日

你們知道嗎？我的爸媽從來沒送過我生日禮物！

Mǔqīnjié, mǔnànrì

Nǐmen zhīdào ma? Wǒ de bànmā cónglái méi sòng guò wǒ shēngrì lǐwù!

Mother's Day, also called "Mother's Suffering Day"

You know what? My parents have never given me a birthday present!

其實我一開始並不覺得怎麼樣，直到我跟我的比利時伴侶說這件事，他感到非常驚訝。

Qíshí wǒ yì kāishǐ bìng bù juéde zěnmeyàng, zhīdào wǒ gēn wǒ de Bìlìshí bànǚ shuō zhè jiàn shì, tā gǎndào fēicháng jīngyà.

Honestly, I didn't think it was a big deal at first—until I told my Belgian partner, and he was really surprised.

我看到他生日的時候，家人都會送他禮物，甚至阿嬤有時候也會給他一些零用錢去買生日禮物，這在我眼裡也是有點不習慣，可能是因為我從小都沒有這樣的傳統吧。

Wǒ kàndào tā shēngrì de shíhou, jiārén dōu huì sòng tā lǐwù, shènzhì āmà yǒu shíhou yě huì gěi tā yìxiē língyòngqián qù mǎi shēngrì lǐwù, zhè zài wǒ yǎnlǐ yě shì yǒudiǎn bù xíguàn, kěnéng shì yīnwèi wǒ cóngxiǎo dōu méiyǒu zhèyàng de chuántǒng ba.

I saw that on his birthday, his family would give him gifts—even his grandma sometimes gave him some pocket money to buy a birthday present. To me, that felt a bit unfamiliar, probably because I didn't grow up with that kind of tradition.

但這也不是沒有原因，我問過我的媽媽，他說我生日的那一天就是他的「母難日」，這好像是佛教的一個概念，意思是這一天母親懷胎10個月，冒著生命危險把小孩生下來。

Dàn zhè yě bú shì méiyǒu yuányīn, wǒ wèn guò wǒ de māmā, tā shuō wǒ shēngrì de nà yì tiān jiùshì tā de "mǔnànrì", zhè hǎoxiàng shì Fójiào de yí gè gàiniàn, yìsi shì zhè yì tiān mǔqīn huáitāi shí ge yuè, màozhe shēngmìng wéixiǎn bǎ xiǎohái shēng xiàlái.

But there's a reason behind it. I once asked my mom, and she said that my birthday is her "Mother's Suffering Day." It's a Buddhist idea that on this day, the mother went through ten months of pregnancy and risked her life to give birth to a child.

所以比較傳統的人會覺得，不應該「慶祝孩子的出生」，反而應該「感謝母親的辛勞」。

Suǒyǐ bǐjiào chuántǒng de rén huì juéde, bù yīnggāi "qìngzhù háizi de chūshēng", fǎn'ér yīnggāi "gǎnxiè mǔqīn de xīnláo".

So more traditional people believe that instead of "celebrating the child's birth," we should "show gratitude for the mother's hard work."

但是在現代的社會裡面，我覺得幫小孩慶生是蠻普遍的，只是比較傳統的家庭好像就真的不會慶祝，我也不記得我的阿公阿嬤有幫我爸媽慶生過。

Dànshì zài xiàndài de shèhuì lǐmiàn, wǒ juéde bāng xiǎohái qìngshēng shì mán pǔpiàn de, zhīshì bǐjiào chuántǒng de jiāting hǎoxiàng jiù zhēnde bú huì qìngzhù, wǒ yě bù jìdé wǒ de āgōng āmà yǒu bāng wǒ bànmā qìngshēng guò.

But in modern society, I think celebrating a child's birthday is pretty common. It's just that in more traditional families, they really don't make a big deal out of it. I also don't remember my grandparents ever celebrating my parents' birthdays.