

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

母亲节 母难日

你们知道吗？我的爸妈从来没送过我生日礼物！

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!

其实我一开始并不觉得怎么样，直到我跟我的比利时伴侣说这件事，他感到非常惊讶。

Qíshí wǒ yì kāishǐ bìng bù juéde zěnmeyàng, zhídào wǒ gēn wǒ de Bǐlìshí bànlǚ 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.

我看到他生日的时候，家人都会送他礼物，甚至阿嬷有时候也会给他一些零用钱去买生日礼物，这在我眼里也是有点不习惯，可能是因为我从小都没有这样的传统吧。

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.

但这也不是没有原因，我问过我的妈妈，他说我生日的那一天就是他的「母难日」，这好像是佛教的一个概念，意思是这一天母亲怀胎10个月，冒着生命危险把小孩生下来。

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.

所以比较传统的人会觉得，不应该「庆祝孩子的出生」，反而应该「感谢母亲的辛劳」。

Suǒyǐ bǐjiào chuántǒng de rén huì juéde, bù yīnggāi "qīngzhù 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."

但是在现代的社会里面，我觉得帮小孩庆生是蛮普遍的，只是比较传统的家庭好像就真的不会庆祝，我也不记得我的阿公阿嬷有帮我爸妈庆生过。

Dànshì zài xiàndài de shèhuì lǐmiàn, wǒ juéde bāng xiǎohái qīngshēng shì mán pǔpiàn de, zhǐshì bǐjiào chuántǒng de jiātíng hǎoxiàng jiù zhēnde bú huì qīngzhù, wǒ yě bù jìdé wǒ de āgōng āmà yǒu bāng wǒ bànmā qīngshēng 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.