

## Cultural Analysis 文化解析

There are many things written in this episode that involve Chinese culture. While all countries and cultures celebrate the New Year every year, they celebrate it in different ways, and may even place emphasis on very different ideas. In America, for example, the countdown to midnight, January first, is always a custom for New Yorkers in Time Square. There will be dancing, performances, and parades, and everything is aired on TV live all over the country, and at midnight, precisely, a large ball will be dropped.

Strangely enough, although this is a huge celebration in the United States, its culture places more emphasis on Christmas instead. After Thanksgiving every year, the country begins almost immediately to prepare for Christmas, and on that day, everyone greets each other with “Wish you a merry Christmas and happy New Year!” Families gather to celebrate, and it is common custom to halt (停止、終止) work from the 24<sup>th</sup> of December to the second of January.

In Taiwan, we celebrate the New Year in a different way. Though we also have a countdown in front of Taipei 101 on December 31<sup>st</sup>, our cultural emphasis is always placed on the lunar New Year, where we have days off from the 31<sup>st</sup> of the twelfth month through the 4<sup>th</sup> of the first month of the Lunar Calendar. In this episode, we see the lighting of firecrackers, a traditional custom to scare off the Monster Nian, 年獸 the Year Monster. Eating fish on New Year’s Eve is a symbol of having an abundance of what we’d like to have in the coming year, and conventionally the fish is not finished on the first night, in hopes that 年年有餘 (魚). Breaking a glass will bring peace in the years to come, because 歲 and 碎 are homonyms (同音字), as in the auspicious phrase, 歲 (碎) 歲平安. Similarly, eating New Year’s Cake (年糕) is a wish for job promotions and achieving greater academic accomplishments, as in the auspicious phrase of 步步高 (糕) 升. For children, eating the cake also symbolizes that they will grow taller in the new year.