

Cultural Analysis 文化解析

In the previous episode, we discussed the origins of Dragon Boat Festival and a little bit about dragon boat competitions. Here, we shall talk more about other traditions that we **observe** (遵守) during the Dragon Boat Festival.

We are told that this day is the day to **grieve** (哀悼) for the death of Qu Yuan, and celebrate his story when he had lived, but in truth there is so much more to that. For example, why do people drink **xiong huang wine** (雄黃酒) on this day? Why do children wear **fragrant packets** (香包)? Why, in the past, on this day did (and still do, in some homes) our parents hang **wormwood** (艾草；下同) and **calamus** (菖蒲；下同) on our doors? This is because the fifth day of the fifth lunar month is not only a day during which we hold a festival in memory of Qu Yuan, but is also a day to get rid of diseases. As is well known, summer is when **plagues** (瘟疫) and diseases spread most quickly, and in ancient times, people did not have the daily comforts that we **take for granted** (理所當然地) today. It was believed that drinking xiong huang wine would strengthen one's body, as the smell of the wine would chase away poisonous snakes, and the wine itself would cure and prevent diseases. The fragrant packet for children not only served to protect children from poisonous animals (as poisonous animals tend to avoid its smell), but it also prevented evil spirits from **luring** (吸引) the children away from safety. Similarly, wormwood and calamus were mainly used to keep evil spirits outside of homes. Oftentimes, the two were placed next to **garlic** (蒜), which is an **invaluable ingredient** (貴重的成份) used in medicine.

