Stories from Ancient China about traditions we are still practicing today

Ever wondered why people tap their fingers on the table whenever someone pours you tea in a Chinese restaurant? There was an emperor who was fond of travelling across his country in disguise. There was an issue when he poured tea for his subjects in a restaurant. People were expected to bow when they received something from the emperor in that era. However if they bowed at that moment, the emperor’s identity would be exposed. As a result, one of his subjects tapped the table with middle three fingers to represent prostrate arms and bowed head. Today, in many parts of Southern China, you will find people tapping fingers on the table as a way of expressing silent gratitude to the person refilling their tea.

The second story is about the custom of gifting mooncakes during mid-autumn festival. Although the confectionary mooncakes exists before the 10th century, giving mooncakes as a gift only became popular about 650 years ago. During that period, the Mongols ruled China. To prevent political uprising among the people, the Mongols imposed strict controls over the Han Chinese. This would cut off all communication among the revolutionaries and they would not be able to unite their members. One revolutionist suggested putting a piece of message inside the mooncakes. The message carried details of the revolution that would take place on the night of the mid-autumn festival. The mooncakes were then widely distributed to the people. The revolution eventually took place and the plan succeeded because the Mongols do not eat mooncakes. Today, mooncake gifting takes on a slightly new meaning as it represents giving of blessings to friends, relatives and loved ones.

Users will be asked to select the option that matched with the original story in order to solve the problem in each story.