

Meet Your Chinese Zodiac Animal
中国生肖文化解读系列

The
YEAR
of the
TIGER

生肖虎

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Introduction



Dear friend, how much do you know about traditional Chinese culture?

Let's try a riddle to start: "There are 12 of them, each person claims but one of them; they can only be found in China. What are they?"

If you can figure it out, it shows that you know something about Chinese culture. In fact, former Japanese Prime Minister Kakuei Tanaka put this riddle to Chinese Premier Zhou Enlai during his visit to China in September 1972 to enliven their meeting. The key to the riddle is "the 12-year cycle of animals in the Chinese zodiac", or simply "the 12 zodiac animals".



The riddle was a piece of cake for Premier Zhou, as the 12 zodiac animals are familiar to everyone in China. But what is the Chinese zodiac?

In Chinese, it is called 生肖 (shēngxiào). 生 means "be born", while 肖 means "resemble". In the eyes of the ancient Chinese, human beings are part of nature. People born in different lunar

years correspond to specific animals. A person's character resembles that of his or her animal. The 12 animals are the Rat, Ox, Tiger, Rabbit, Dragon, Snake, Horse, Goat,^① Monkey, Rooster, Dog and Pig. People thus use them to number the years in a 12-year cycle.

The Chinese people often mark the beginning of a year with the Spring Festival, which is the most important festival in the country. It corresponds with one of the 12 zodiac animals, which will in turn become the auspicious image of the festival. Most New Year pictures, couplets, and greetings will feature the zodiac animal.

"In the Year of the Rat, you will have good luck; in the Year of the Ox, you will grow stronger; in the Year of the Tiger, you will behave more bravely; in the Year of the Rabbit, you will become smarter; in the Year of the Dragon, you will have a promising career; in the Year of the Snake, you will be safe and sound; in the Year of the Horse, you will live a brilliant life; in the Year of the Goat, you will enjoy prosperity; in the Year of the Monkey, you will get a promotion; in the Year of the Rooster, you will win a prize;

① The Chinese character 羊 (yáng) refers to both the goat and the sheep. Therefore, the eighth zodiac animal can be named goat or sheep. In this book, goat is used for the sake of convenience.

in the Year of the Dog, you will flourish; in the Year of the Pig, you will become more prominent." This is a Chinese New Year greeting related to the 12 zodiac animals used to wish everyone the best every year.

In China, there is a tradition associated with the Spring Festival that has been handed down for over a thousand years. When meeting with people during the festival, one should offer felicitations to others as often as possible. If instead you were to utter something ominous, it is said that this utterance will come true. In addition, Chinese people often use different felicitations in different years. If the year happens to be a year of a zodiac animal that has a noble status based on traditional Chinese culture, a good image, or a name that shares a similar pronunciation with words portending good fortune, they will use the zodiac animal name in their New Year greetings. These zodiac animals are the Ox, Tiger, Rabbit, Dragon, Horse, Goat, Monkey, and Rooster. As for the other zodiac animals, which are the Rat, Snake, Dog and Pig, they do not appear in New Year greetings. Tiger is one of Chinese people's favorite zodiac animals. It symbolizes bravery, authority and power based on traditional Chinese culture. If you were born in 2010, the Year of the Tiger, your zodiac animal will be the tiger, which

will become the mascot and protector of your life. In the Year of the Tiger, therefore, during the Spring Festival Chinese people often greet each other with such good wishes as:

1. I wish you a happy and auspicious Year of the Tiger!

祝您虎年快乐，吉祥如意！

Zhù nín hūnián kuàilè, jíxiáng-rúyì!

2. I wish you great fortune in the Year of the Tiger!

祝虎年行大运，发大财！

Zhù hūnián xíng dà yùn, fā dà cái!

3. Wish you great progress in your career in the Year of the Tiger!

祝您虎年事业发展如虎添翼！

Zhù nín hūnián shìyè fāzhǎn rúhǔ-tiǎnyì!

4. Good health to you! Be as robust as a tiger!

祝您身体健康，如虎似虎！

Zhù nín shēntǐ jiànkāng, rúhǔ-sìhǔ!

5. All the best in the Year of the Tiger!

祝您虎年万事如意！

Zhù nín hūnián wànshì-rúyì!

引言

亲爱的朋友，您对中国传统文化是否了解？

请您先猜个谜语。谜面是：“共有十二个，每人占一个，东洋西洋都没有，请问是什么？”

如果你猜出了正确答案，说明你对中国文化有一定的了解。这个谜语是1972年9月日本前首相田中角荣先生访华时，为活跃气氛，给时任中国总理的周恩来先生猜的一个谜语，谜底就是“十二生肖”。

这个谜语当然没能难住周恩来总理，因为每个中国人都熟知十二生肖。那么，什么是中国人的“生肖”呢？

“生肖”的“生”就是“出生”的意思。“肖”是“相似”的意思。也就是说，在中国古人的观念里，作为自然界的普通一员，不同时间出生的人，就会与某一种动物相对应，其性格也会与该动物特征相似。这些动物分别是鼠、牛、虎、兔、龙、蛇、马、羊、猴、鸡、狗、猪，共12种。中国人就用这12种动物来纪年，12年一个循环，周而复始。

中国人以自己的传统节日——春节为一年之始，每一年的春节都以当年对应的生肖动物为节日图腾。春节时张贴的年画，春联和新年祝福语都会以当年的生肖为主题。

“鼠年运来，牛年身壮，虎年勇猛，兔年欢行，龙年飞腾，蛇年安康，马年奔跃，羊年开泰，猴年高升，鸡年中央，狗年兴旺，猪年响当当！”这就是一句以12生肖为主题的新年祝福语。寓意是“年年你都会有好运气。”



中国人有一个流传千百年的文化传统，在春节前后，见人要多说吉利话。传说如果在这个佳节期

间说不吉利的话会应验成真。但是，不同生肖年度的春节，中国人常用的吉利话也有所不同：在中国文化传统中地位高，形象好或者谐音吉利的生肖动物就会直接出现在吉祥话中，比如牛、虎、兔、龙、马、羊、猴、鸡；另外一些生肖动物并不适宜出现在吉利话中，如鼠、蛇、狗、猪等。如前所述，虎是中国人最喜欢的生肖动物之一，在中国传统文化观念中，虎是勇敢、权威和力量的象征。假如一个人出生在2010年，这一年在中国历法中正是虎年，那么你的属相就是虎，虎就成为你一生的吉祥物和保护神。因此，在虎年春节，中国人见面会以虎年好运为主题说些吉利话。

- 1) (祝您)虎年快乐,吉祥如意!
- 2) 祝虎年行大运,发大财!
- 3) 祝您虎年事业发展如虎添翼!
- 4) 祝您身体健康,如龙似虎!
- 5) 祝您虎年万事如意!



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Chapter One

Zodiac Culture in
Everyday Chinese Life

The long-cherished Chinese zodiac tradition has been passed down from generation to generation and has become deep-rooted in people's minds. It is widely recognized among the Chinese people that the 12 zodiac animal signs are closely linked with people's personalities, destinies, lives and careers. Just as British people might talk about the weather when they first meet, Chinese people often ask what zodiac animal a person is when they meet for the first time. This can be explained for the following reasons:

First, it is a good way to deduce the age of a person. Since it's not very polite to ask another person's age directly, their zodiac animal coupled with their appearance can help one deduce a person's age.

Second, it serves as an ice-breaker and makes people feel at ease. Asking about zodiac animals is considered a common communication skill by Chinese people. When two people find they share the same zodiac animal, they will have a natural



affinity and be eager to talk with each other.

Chinese people tend to group themselves according to their zodiac animal signs out of the belief that those with the same sign possess similar personalities and characteristics. Hence, they like discussing in which zodiac animal year a prominent figure was born in their space time. They even consider it a great honor if they find that they happen to share the same zodiac sign with a renowned historical or contemporary figure, such as Genghis Khan (born in the Year of the Horse), founder of the

Mongol Empire; Zhuge Liang (born in the Year of the Rooster), a statesman during the period of the Three Kingdoms (220-280) and a paradigm of wisdom and good virtue; Li Shimin (born in the Year of the Goat), the co-founder of the Tang Dynasty (618-907), a golden age in Chinese history; Deng Xiaoping (born in the Year of the Dragon), the late Chinese leader regarded as the chief architect of China's reform and opening-up; and Xi Jinping (born in the Year of the Snake), the current Chinese President.

Third, it can help people extrapolate other people's personalities. According to zodiac animal culture, people born in the same zodiac animal year often share similar personality traits, luck for wealth, professional achievements and marriage patterns. Some Chinese people even get to know and choose their spouses, co-workers or business partners by talking about their zodiac animals. This topic seems simple, but it has rich connotations to the Chinese people.

If you are born in the Year of the Tiger, what kind of character, luck and marriage will you have according to the Chinese zodiac? Please read the following introduction and see if it is true for you.



十二生肖

☉ Characteristics of “Tigers”

Chinese people tend to believe that people born in the Year of the Tiger are born leaders or managers. This is because they are typically as brave as a tiger. Though they may be cavalier with money, they tend to have a greater aptitude for earning it, as they have clear goals and are determined in their actions. However, many often get into financial difficulties because they are unaware of the importance of saving money.

In terms of personality, people born in the Year of the Tiger are passionate, courageous, and decisive. They are resolute and tenacious; once they have set a goal, they will stop at nothing until they achieve it. Such people are ambitious, adventurous, and confident, and are perseverant in the face of adversity. They cherish honesty and integrity, and never break their promises.

Men born in the Year of the Tiger are independent, proactive and tend to be strong leaders. Women born in the Year of the Tiger are expressive, carefree, fashionable and open-minded; they flawlessly combine their social and family lives.

But people born in the Year of the Tiger are also quite



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rebellious. Their overconfidence can lead to a strong stubborn streak, making it difficult for them to communicate smoothly with others. They are known as loners. Such people are often in want of romance and tend to treat their family members in an arbitrary and despotic manner.

☹ Marriages for “Tigers”

Matchmaking related to the Chinese zodiac is intriguing. If the zodiac animals of a couple are a good match, they will enjoy a loving relationship and a happy life; otherwise, their marriage may not be satisfactory. For instance, for a man born in the Year of the Tiger, his best match is a woman born in the year of the rabbit, horse or dog. But for a woman born in the Year of the Tiger, her best match is a man born in the year of the horse, dog or pig.

This notion has exerted great influence on people's attitudes towards marriage for nearly two thousand years. During the Qing Dynasty (1616-1911) and dynasties before that, marriages were arranged by parents, while people themselves had no freedom to choose their spouses. People often considered the match of zodiac animals as one of the important factors in determining a marriage. This resulted in a great number of



tragic marriages during the long period of feudalism in China. However, young people today no longer cling to matches based on zodiac animals when they choose their boyfriends or girlfriends. At any rate, this remains an indispensable topic for *chitchat* among Chinese people.

🐅 Eminent Figures Born in the Year of the Tiger

According to the Chinese zodiac, many eminent people in Chinese history were born in the Year of the Tiger. They often had a strong character and behaved like a king. They are extraordinarily talented and confident. All of them had outstanding achievements.



The First Emperor of the Qin Dynasty

Born in 259 BC, the first emperor of China.



Zhang Heng

Born in 78 A.D., an astronomer in the Eastern Han Dynasty (25-220).



Li Shizhen

Born in 1518, the author of *Compendium of Materia Medica*, a renowned herbalist in the Ming Dynasty (1368-1644).



Dr. Sun Yat-sen

Born in 1866, founder of the Kuomintang (the Nationalist Party of China). He put an end to the Chinese feudal monarchy and became the first president of the Republic of China.

In other countries, a lot of outstanding people were also born in the Year of the Tiger. They include:



Marco Polo

Born in 1254, an Italian explorer and the author of *The Travels of Marco Polo*.



Louis XIV

Born in 1638, the third king of the French Bourbon Dynasty (1589-1848).



Ludwig van Beethoven

Born in 1770, known as the greatest German symphony composer.



Thomas Hunt Morgan

Born in 1866, an American biologist and geneticist.



Karl Marx

Born in 1818, founder of Marxism and the international communist movement.



Dwight David Eisenhower

Born in 1890, Supreme Commander of the Allied Expeditionary Forces in Europe in World War II, the 34th US President from 1953 to 1961.



Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel

Born in 1770, a renowned German philosopher, a representative of classical idealism.



Romain Roland

Born in 1866, a well-known French thinker, writer, music critic, and social activist.

第一章 中国人生活中的生肖文化

生肖文化在中国历史悠久，世代相传，家喻户晓，早已深深根植于中国人的血液之中。它与每个中国人的性格、命运、生活和事业紧密联系在一起，并得到了中国人的普遍认同。直到今天，人们初次见面时，问询对方的生肖也是常事，如同英国人见面谈论天气一样普遍。这主要有以下几方面的原因：

一是通过询问生肖来推测对方的实际年龄。因为直接询问对方的年龄不大礼貌，所以可以通过间接询问对方的生肖后，再根据外貌特征显示的年龄范围基本可以确定对方的实际年龄。

二是谈论生肖可迅速打破尴尬，拉近双方的心理距离。这也是中国人常见的一种见面沟通技巧，尤其是当生肖相同时，两个人就有了天然的亲近感，话题自然打开。

在工作、生活中，中国人会不自觉地按照同一个生肖划分出小群体，以显得亲近。闲暇时人们还喜欢聊聊中国某一著名人物的生肖，还会以与历史伟人或当代名人的生肖相同而沾沾自喜。



比如：蒙古中国的缔造者成吉思汗属马；被中国人公认为智慧与品德典范的三国时期政治家诸葛亮属鸡；中国古代“大恩盖世”的开创者李世民属羊；被誉为当代“中国社会主义现代化建设和改革开放总设计师”的前国家领导人邓小平属龙；现任的中国国家领导人习近平属蛇。等等。

三是根据生肖来推测对方的性格类型及特点。中国人认为，相同生肖的人往往具有相似的性格、财运、事业成就和婚姻状况等。一些中国人就是在谈论生肖的过程中了解、选择自己的婚恋对象、同事搭档和创业伙伴的。这个看似简单的生肖话题，却被中国人赋予了如此丰富多样的内涵。

按照中国生肖文化的观念，属虎人有着特定的性格、运气和婚姻状况。如果你是属虎的，你可以对照一下自己，看看有哪些特点与你相契合。

一、属虎人的性格特点

中国人认为，虎年出生的人往往具有过人的气魄和胆识，适合做领导或管理者。属虎的人不太看重金钱，但因做事目标明确、行动坚定而有极好的经济来源。也有属虎人因缺乏储蓄意识而

常常让自己陷入经济拮据的状态。

在性格方面，属虎的人热情、勇敢，做事大胆果断；性格刚毅倔强，凡事认定目标，不完成绝不罢休。属虎的人极具雄心壮志和冒险精神，往往是越挫越勇，自信心强。属虎的人讲究诚信，说到做到，绝不反悔。

属虎的男性往往独立性强，具有较强的行动力和领导力。属虎的女性表达能力较强，自由、时髦、开放，能够把社会生活和家庭生活完美结合起来。

另一方面，属虎的人颇具叛逆性，往往过于自信而固执己见，难以与人很好地沟通，喜欢独来独往。属虎人往往缺乏浪漫情调，对待家人也有独断专行倾向。

二、属虎人的姻缘

在恋爱、婚姻观念方面，中国生肖匹配观念十分奇特；如果生肖匹配，夫妻二人就会感情深厚，婚姻幸福；否则，就会不如人意。比如：属虎的男人适宜寻求生肖为兔、马和狗的女人作为

结婚对象；属虎的女人则适宜嫁给生肖为马、狗、猪的男人为妻。

这种传统的婚姻选择观念已经影响了中国人长达近两千年。在以前的封建王朝时代，婚姻双方当事人没有自由选择的权利，父母是儿女婚姻的绝对决定者，而男女双方的生育是否匹配是能否结婚的重要依据之一。没有人知道，在中国漫长的封建时代里，有多少自由的婚姻模式到底酿成多少婚姻悲剧！当然，这些早已成为了历史，今天的年轻人不再执着于生育相配的恋爱观，可生育是否匹配仍旧是中国人茶余饭后津津乐道的谈资。

三、属虎的中外名人

按照中国人生肖纪年的算法，中国历史上虎年出生的杰出人物非常多。他们个性鲜明，多有王者之风，往往拥有常人不及的天赋，而且自信心强，常常可以取得非凡成就。

中国历史上第一位皇帝——秦始皇（公元前250年出生）；

中国东汉天文学家——张衡（公元78年出生）；

明朝著名医药学家，《本草纲目》的作者——李时珍（1518年出生）；

中国国民党创始人、中国封建帝制终结者、中华民国首任大总统——孙中山（1866年出生）；

中国以外，虎年出生的各国各界杰出人物主要有：

意大利旅行家，《马可·波罗游记》的作者——马可·波罗（1254年出生）；

法国波旁王朝第三位君主——路易十四（1638年出生）；

德国交响曲作家——路德维希·凡·贝多芬（1770年出生）；

国际共产主义运动的奠基人、马克思主义学说创始人——卡尔·马克思（1818年出生）；

德国著名哲学家，古典唯心主义哲学的主要

代表人物——格奥尔格·威廉·弗里德里希·黑格尔（1770年出生）；

法国著名思想家、作家、音乐评论家和社会活动家——罗曼·罗兰（1866年出生）；

美国生物学家与遗传学家——托马斯·亨特·摩尔根（1866年出生）；

二战时期盟军统帅、美国第34任总统——德怀特·戴维·艾森豪威尔（1890年出生）。



Chapter Two

The Origin and Cultural
Significance of the
Chinese Zodiac Animals