

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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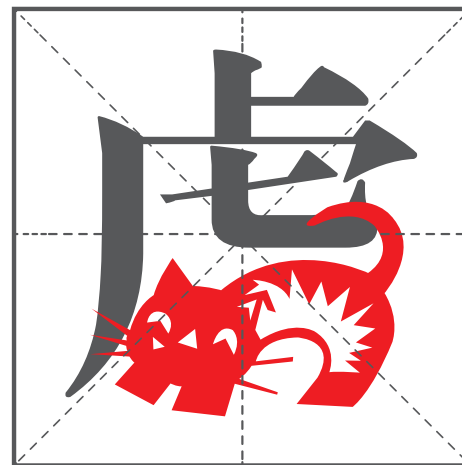
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Introduction



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

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 AD, 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.



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).