The Chinese Zodiac: Personalities, Compatibility, and Divination

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OUTLINE

1. Popular literature:
   ▪ 12 animals of the zodiac
   ▪ Personality traits
2. Esoteric literature:
   ▪ Compatibility theory
   ▪ New Year traditions
   ▪ Auspicious dates
3. Historical origins
   ▪ Early Chinese texts
   ▪ Non-Chinese traditions

12 ANIMALS (plus sequence)

PERSONALITIES

• Your own year of birth
• Year of birth of 1-2 close friends or family members
• Lunar vs solar calendar

1. Rat (mouse; hamster; guinea pig; squirrel etc)

2. Ox (cow; buffalo; bison; bull)

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1. Rat (mouse; hamster; guinea pig; squirrel etc)

2. Ox (cow; buffalo; bison; bull)
3. Tiger

- Strong sense of justice
- Fearless; not easily intimidated
- Proud; big ego; strong sense of dignity
- Likes to order people around
- Lazy but impulsive

Feb.08,1902 to Jan.28,1903
Jan.26,1914 to Feb.13,1915
Feb.13,1926 to Feb.01,1927
Jan.31,1938 to Feb.18,1939
Feb.17,1950 to Feb.05,1951
Feb.05,1962 to Jan.24,1963
Jan.23,1974 to Feb.10,1975
Jan.29,1987 to Jan.28,1988

4. Rabbit (hare)

- Gentle, elegant, polite – admired by all
- Good with details; careful; cautious
- Wants to get along with everyone
- Sometimes reads too much into things
- Tendency to get jealous

Feb.29,1904 to Feb.15,1905
Feb.14,1915 to Feb.16,1916
Feb.02,1927 to Jan.22,1928
Feb.19,1939 to Feb.07,1940
Feb.06,1951 to Jan.26,1952
Feb.11,1975 to Jan.30,1976
Jan.29,1987 to Feb.16,1988

5. Dragon

- Born to succeed; symbol of success
- Grand ideals, great sense of honor
- The ultimate perfectionist
- Self-indulgent; doesn’t listen to people

Feb.16,1904 to Feb.03,1905
Feb.03,1916 to Jan.22,1917
Jan.23,1928 to Feb.09,1929
Jan.27,1941 to Feb.10,1942
Feb.17,1953 to Feb.02,1954
Feb.06,1965 to Jan.20,1966
Feb.09,1977 to Feb.06,1978
Feb.06,1989 to Jan.26,1990

6. Snake (serpent)

- Smart and intelligent
- Pursuer of fame and fortune
- Attractive because people find your intelligence mysterious
- Down side: intelligence can be viewed as cunning or sly

Feb.04,1906 to Jan.24,1907
Jan.23,1917 to Feb.10,1918
Feb.10,1929 to Jan.29,1930
Jan.27,1941 to Feb.04,1942
Feb.14,1953 to Feb.02,1954
Feb.02,1965 to Jan.20,1966
Feb.19,1977 to Feb.06,1978

7. Horse (mare; stallion; pony)

- Energetic and vibrant personality
- Highly motivated and efficient worker
- Values freedom and independence
- Generous with money
- Can be impatient; gives up easily

Jan.25,1906 to Feb.12,1907
Feb.11,1918 to Jan.31,1919
Jan.10,1930 to Feb.16,1931
Jan.15,1942 to Feb.04,1943
Feb.03,1954 to Jan.23,1955
Jan.21,1966 to Feb.08,1967
Feb.07,1978 to Jan.27,1979

8. Sheep (lamb; ram; goat)

- Gentle and peace-loving
- Patient and attention to detail
- Has artistic and spiritual gifts
- Tendency to be pessimistic
- Not good at dealing with pressure

Feb.13,1907 to Feb.01,1908
Feb.01,1919 to Feb.19,1920
Feb.11,1931 to Feb.05,1932
Feb.05,1943 to Jan.24,1944
Jan.24,1955 to Feb.11,1956
Jan.28,1979 to Feb.15,1980
Feb.15,1991 to Feb.03,1992
9. Monkey (ape)
Feb.02, 1908 to Jan.21, 1909
Feb.20, 1920 to Feb.07, 1921
Jan.25, 1944 to Feb.12, 1945
Feb.12, 1956 to Jan.30, 1957
Feb.04, 1992 to Jan.22, 1993

- Clever, good at solving problems
- Good talker, good sense of humor
- Shine at social functions; popular
  - Tend to say what’s on your mind
  - Not very disciplined; flaky; unreliable

10. Chicken (rooster; cock; hen; fowl)
Jan.22, 1909 to Feb.09, 1910
Feb.08, 1921 to Jan.27, 1922
Jan.26, 1933 to Feb.13, 1934
Feb.13, 1945 to Feb.01, 1946
Feb.17, 1969 to Feb.05, 1970
Feb.05, 1981 to Jan.24, 1982
Jan.23, 1993 to Feb.09, 1994

- Does things by the book, by the rules
- Highly efficient worker
- Pushes other people to work as hard
- As a result, can be unpopular in groups
- Can be pompous; likes to show off

11. Dog
Feb.10, 1910 to Jan.29, 1911
Jan.28, 1922 to Feb.13, 1923
Feb.14, 1934 to Feb.03, 1935
Feb.02, 1946 to Jan.31, 1947
Feb.18, 1958 to Feb.07, 1959
Feb.06, 1970 to Jan.26, 1971

- Extremely faithful and reliable
- But only to those they like or respect
  - Tends to get emotional; hot-tempered
  - Likes to nag
  - Sometimes antisocial

12. Pig (boar; hog)
Jan.30, 1911 to Feb.17, 1912
Feb.16, 1923 to Feb.04, 1924
Feb.04, 1935 to Jan.23, 1936
Jan.22, 1947 to Feb.09, 1948
Feb.08, 1959 to Jan.27, 1960
Jan.27, 1971 to Jan.15, 1972
Feb.13, 1983 to Feb.01, 1984

- Optimistic personality; loved by all
- Efficient worker; always finishes job
- Great at handling finances
  - Not very flexible; stubborn
  - Too nice; easily taken advantage of

COMPATIBILITY THEORY
- Compatible signs
  - 六合 (the six latitudinal pairs)
  - 三合 (triangular relations)
- Incompatible signs
  - 相穿 (the six longitudinal pairs)
  - 相沖相刑 (the perpendiculats and diagonals)
COMPATIBLE: triangular (1)

• 羊鼠一旦休
  Goat and rat will have a spat

• 白馬怕青牛
  White horse fears the big blue ox

• 蛇虎如刀措
  Snake and tiger—blades in a grinder

• 龍兔淚交流
  Dragon and hare will bathe in tears

COMPATIBLE: triangular (2)

• 羊鼠一旦休
  Goat and rat will have a spat

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COMPATIBLE: triangular (3)

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COMPATIBLE: triangular (4)

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INCOMPATIBLE: longitudinals

• 豬猴不到頭
  Monkey and hog will be at odds

INCOMPATIBLE: longitudinals

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INCOMPATIBLE: perpendiculars (1)

INCOMPATIBLE: perpendiculars (2)

INCOMPATIBLE: perpendiculars (3)

REVIEW

• Compatible signs
  – 六合 (the six latitudinal pairs)
  – 三合 (triangular relations)

• Incompatible signs
  – 相穿 (the six longitudinal pairs)
  – 相刑相刻 (the perpendiculars and diagonals)

NEW YEAR TRADITIONS

EXAMPLE: 2006 (year of the dog)
CHARM:
- Acquire a charm for honoring the Year God from a Chinese temple.

WHERE:
- ALTAR: Post the charm beneath the altar, or stick it on the wall at a height level with that of your other Buddhist deities
- KITCHEN: You can also choose to place the charm in the kitchen area and worship the Year God together with the Kitchen God

WHEN:
- 1st choice: Perform ritual on Chinese New Years Day, or
- 2nd choice: Before the 15th day of the first lunar month, or
- 3rd choice: On the first or fifteenth day of any lunar month, or
- 4th choice: Select any auspicious date from Chinese almanac.

FOOD (1):
- As offerings, prepare
  - 9 vegetarian dishes
  - 3 plates of fruit
  - 3 cups of tea
  - 3 bowls of red and white dough balls in soup
  - 1 portion of cooked vermicelli
- In addition, prepare
  - 7 unused cups
  - 1 teapot full of tea.

INVITATION:
- The next step can be performed in your yard or on your balcony, or if you choose, inside of your house but with all of the windows open.
- Hold three sticks of lit incense in your hands, and in your mind invite the Year God to come to your home to avert evil and offer protection for family and property.
- After you make this wish, place the incense sticks on your door, on your window, or in the incense burner on your altar.

POST-RITUAL:
- After the ritual is completed, the food that was prepared for the Year God can be shared with friends and family.
- When eating, consider this food to be especially auspicious.
SEEING OFF:
- The 24th day of the twelfth lunar month is the day to see the Year God off.
- When seeing him off, remove the Year God charm and burn it in fire.
- As you do this, visualize that the Year God is returning to his palace in heaven.
- Make sure that the offerings you present when seeing the Year God off are different from the food you offered when inviting him to your home.

(Source: Yun Lin Temple 2006 Calendar/Agenda [Thomas Lin Yun; Crystal Chu; translation by Wen-Chao Li])

ALMANAC (top)

ALMANAC (bottom)

ORIGINS: Early texts

ORIGINS: Similar traditions

ORIGINS: Variant traditions
FURTHER READING: Zodiac

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FURTHER READING: Almanacs

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THANK YOU

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