

THE 28 ANIMALS OF THE LUNAR MANSIONS

What follows are references pulled from works regarding the twenty-eight animals of the Chinese lunar mansions, in order, with the number of their corresponding mansion (Xiu in Chinese). These are used for the daily indicators and in the monthly cycle and are somewhat like a deity or totem for the day.

1) SCALY DRAGON: This is the Imperial Dragon. Also called a crocodile, or earth dragon. Exotic, flamboyant, extroverted. Elegant and trendy, always at the forefront of fashion. Extraordinarily fertile imagination. Dreaming and scheming-impractical. Mercurial. Strong and decisive, resolute but undependable. Great interest in the supernatural and occult. Narcissistic. Ideally suited to stage and acting. Public life. Astrologically auspicious. Glory and prosperity to all who build on this day. Men of letters are able to approach the Emperor. Marriage produces large numbers of children. Funerals and tombs should be avoided, though, bringing only grief.

NOTES ON THE IMPERIAL DRAGON: It has 1) The head of a camel with a pearl on its forehead, a long beard and a sharp sword as a tongue. On each side of its mouth are whiskers, and under its chin hangs a beard, where a bright pearl is placed. Its breath proceeds from the mouth like a cloud and changes into either water or fire. Its voice is like the jingling of copper pans. 2) Horns of a deer 3) Eyes of a rabbit 4) Ears of a cow—and, it is deaf 5) Neck of a snake 6) Belly of a frog 7) Scales of a carp, as a ridge on its back, 81 in number. The scales on its throat lie toward the head. Those on the head are disposed like the ridges in a chain of mountains. 8) Legs and claws of a hawk, and 9) Paws of a tiger, with 5 toes. Lesser dragons have only 4 or sometimes 3 toes.

2) SKY, OR SMOOTH, DRAGON: This is a winged dragon. It presides over the vaults of Heaven. It is said to purge one of their sins. The Imperial Dragon can do this, too. Guards and supports the mansions of the Gods and prevents them from falling. Astrologically inauspicious. Building on this day causes the eldest son not to succeed. Doing things the next ten days will be disastrous. Funerals and marriages bring untimely death and makes widows.

3) MARTEN/BADGER: One of the 5 Seers, along with weasels, hedgehogs, small deer and snakes. These have to be treated with reverence and respect, and that increases with their age. If they are not well-treated, unpleasantness follows. If anyone is made ill by one of these it is difficult to find a sorcerer to exorcise them because the work is very specialized. A sorcerer for one may not be able to deal with the other. They were also depended upon to keep diseases off of farmland.

4) RABBIT: The servant of a genie who pounds the remedies of the elixir of life in a mortar and pestle. A symbol of longevity. Strongly social. Reserved and withdrawn away from people, but independent within groups. Humble, submissive, will avoid confrontation. Happiest with friends, loves a good conversation, reading and literary pursuits. Remarkably brave when faced with danger. Excellent judge of character. Able to see deeply into people. Often gifted healers, both emotionally and physically. Astrologically brings wealth and prosperity. Happiness, longevity and honor.

5) FOX: Endowed with highly supernatural qualities. They are said to be near the Yin forces of the underworld. It passes between earth life and Hades. Enables the dead to return to life. Also carries out the behests of the dead, often relating to vengeance. The dead can also ride on a fox's back to the underworld. Takes human form only at night, usually in the form of a pretty girl in order to do mischief. Generally wicked in this guise, but sometimes good. Disarms suspicions. Longevity and craftiness. Aids in the recovery of lost documents. Could live for 800 years. Older foxes are mighty wizards. Following a fox's footsteps over ice guarantees safe passage. One of the 5 Feared animals, either beneficent or maleficent, depending upon circumstances.

6) TIGER: the embodiment of animal magnetism. Fiercely competitive, likes a good fight. Born leader with natural authority. A great stimulator of others. Strong on appearances to impress. Brave, rash and impetuous. Very strong competitive streak. Mercenary in business, good in personnel management and in uniformed careers. Warm, sincere, and even ardent in love.

7) LEOPARD: One of the 4 Power animals, along with elephants, tigers and lions. Bravery and martial ferocity. Associated with the military. Assuredness, forthrightness,

8) UNICORN/GRIFFON: Resembles a large stag with a single horn in the forehead if male, with the body of a musk deer, tail of an ox, forehead of a wolf and horse's hooves. Its flesh is multi-colored. Walks on water as well as on land. It never eats or drinks dirty things. It has a highly musical voice. Solitary. Like the Phoenix, it never harms other creatures. The prince of all beasts. It is one of the 4 Intelligent Animals. Said to be able to appear and disappear at will. Its appearance brings blessings to all who see it. Symbolizes perfect fidelity, longevity, fecundity, industrious descendants, wise administration. The monastic life. Gentleness to every living thing. It is able to detect the appearance of wise kings and sages. Prefers the company of scholars. The accidental killing of the last unicorn brought about the death of Confucius.

9) OX: steadfast and methodical, sometimes practical to the point of dullness. Reliable and sensible. Fears taking the initiative because suspicious of anything untried and unproven. Conservative. Often passed over because of reserve. Affectionate to those close, but unromantic. Loyal and possessive. Prosperous in business through logical thought, practicality and endurance. Great things through steady persistence. Inauspicious astrologically. Damages the charms of pretty ladies if building is started on this day. Arguments and strife.

10) BAT: Avoidance of obstacles, clear vision (possibly clairvoyance), good luck, auspicious undertakings, happiness and longevity, can cause jealousy due to increases. Inauspicious in astrology. Marriages inauspicious on these days and siblings will fight amongst themselves.

11) RAT: charm, adaptability, creativity, inventiveness. Quick witted, bright and sociable-ostentatious. Irritable. Upwardly mobile. A crafty and opportunistic character who will use friends before eventually losing or dropping them. Erratic in financial matters. Bright and gregarious, with a love of gossip. Nasty when riled. Remarkable command of abstract notions. Especially good with detailed and complex calculations. Rat meat is said to be a cure for baldness. Said to be able to divine a person's luck for the whole year and predict happenings 1000 miles away. Yin animal. An emblem of timidity and meanness, though also of sharp intelligence. One of the 5 Feared Household Animals, and was said to be able to bring on insanity. Inauspicious. Brings disturbed sleep and debauchery. An indicator, too, of writers and historians.

12) SWALLOW: Inauspicious. Dragons are said to eat swallows. Build nothing large on these days. Not good for business or irrigation, either. These will bring unhappiness and trouble with the legal system. Flock of swallows is a good omen and presages the coming of spring and prosperity.

13) PIG: Always a worker for future security, fun-loving, family-oriented. What you see is what you get. Loves company and a good time. Caring and industrious. Good manual skills. Will see things through to the conclusion. Can become extremely financially successful, but naïve and trusting. Career-minded. Volunteer work, always a good neighbor. Hospitable and trusting. A large and varied collection of friends. Live and let live. Astrologically auspicious. Marriages and funerals remove care forever. Everything increases.

14) PORCUPINE/HEDGEHOG: One of the 5 calamity animals, (as well as one of the Five Seers) along with foxes, weasels, snakes and rats. Paying homage and respect to these animals brings good

fortune. It is said to lie in the way of people and stepping on it causes an attack from the animal. Building brings good fortune. Marriages bring peace and joy. Businesses started on this day bring wealth and happiness.

15) WOLF: Suspicious of all except the master. Doing business on this day brings ruin. Burials bring disasters. Starting buildings is the only auspicious activity. Considered a treacherous and rapacious animal. Psychopathic temperament. Seen to be entirely evil.

16) DOG : Both a guardian and a scavenger. When a strange dog follows a person it is an omen of good luck. Fidelity, honesty, humor. Lifelong friends. Steady worker. Conservative. Will tolerate considerable hardship and inconvenience rather than make change. Not very adaptable. Intensely defensive of family and friends. The champion of causes. Sympathetic, a good listener. Rare displays of violent temper, but very forgiving. Very active and sporty. Astrologically auspicious. Building today is like building to the gates of heaven. Many joys, complete harmony.

17) PHEASANT: Imperial emblem of authority. An animal of the Sun and Thunder. Courage. One of the 8 diagrams of the I Ching—Li (Fire). Auspicious. All things done on this day bring advancement and expansion.

18) ROOSTER: The domestic equivalent of the phoenix. The rooster's crow in the morning wards off evil spirits. An embodiment of Yang. Represents the warmth and life of the universe. Can change into human form and inflict good or bad on mortals. It symbolizes the 5 Virtues—Literary spirit crown, War spirit spurs, courage always in the face of enmity, benevolence (always clucking for the hens when he finds a grain) and faithful—never failing to tell the hour. The white rooster is the only capable guide of transient souls. Cock-crow late in the morning is a bad omen for the family. Determination, pride, confidence. Abrasive, borderline aggressive. Frank and fond of style. Resolute in career. Shrewd business sense, but extravagant. Always an underlying motive. Precise attention to detail. Tends to take on too much. Stamina and vitality in business. A stimulating companion with high deals. Perfectionist. Astrologically inauspicious. Anything started on this day brings bad luck, and to a lot of worry.

19) CROW: Filial piety. A Sun animal. Takes care of the elderly and disabled. Auspicious. Brings plenty, especially from agriculture. Luck and fortune. In its negative state, this indicates the renegade and cunning usurper/assassin. The cry of the crow is said to be a bad omen, and that work should be delayed when it is heard. When crows gather in the corner of a city it is said to portend impending draught and infighting.. People whose heads are sat on by crows should offer clothing and sesame oil to the poor and deserving.

20) MONKEY: Said to be able to control hobgoblins, witches and elves. Thus, it confers health through keeping those spirits away. Also an emblem of ugliness and trickery. Inventive and agile mind. Insatiable curiosity. Quick-witted schemer. Always full of words and ideas, but tendency toward unscrupulousness. Fundamental insecurity behind mask of audacity and mischief. Rarely taken seriously. Prone to resentment and pent-up anger, leading to depression. Able to solve extremely complex problems. Extremely versatile, but success can go to the head. Latent arrogance, but always socially engaging. Inauspicious astrologically. Building today brings lawsuits. Funerals lead to collapse of the house with at least three deaths to follow, followed by dwindling reserves.

21) APE: Much the same as the monkey. Very little information available. Auspicious. Building brings great benefit. The star of a lettered man will bring Light. Irrigation brings fruitfulness. Marriages and funerals end in broken families, though.

22) WILD DOG/TAPIR: Little is known about this animal. It is said to bring benefits to agriculture and great success in general. The only thing to watch for is to take care in funerals for one who has died a violent death. Auspicious.

23) SHEEP: The emblem of retired life. The essence of the yin. Affectionate, caring, trustworthy, selfless. Artistic talents-crafts rather than portrait. A bit too fastidious. Complacent, but diplomatic. They follow rather than lead, but hate being told what to do. Prefers shared decisions. Resists advice. Social work. Astrologically inauspicious. Building on this day brings the loss of the master. Funerals bring advancement, but marriages lead to loneliness, esp. of the woman.

24) BUCK/STAG: Credited with longevity, thus an emblem of long life. It is the only animal able to find the Ling-Chi—the Fungus of Immortality. Astrologically, it portends legal troubles, thieves and disasters to the household. Funerals and marriages should be avoided on these days. Inauspicious.

25) HORSE: Speed and perseverance. Tyrannical, revolutionary. Most comfortable in company of their own kind. Difficulty relating to opposite sex. Sporty and sociable. Clubby. Team sports. Very conscious of social standing. Needs to feel successful. Good conversationalists. Deep-seated prejudice. Close liaison with others. It also symbolizes the passage from one life to another and was associated with the Sea Gods. Military greatness. Inauspicious. Building is favorable, but funerals or work in the fields will cause one's spouse to stray.

26) DEER: Much like the meaning of the buck, except Yin. Astrologically auspicious. Building today brings approach to high officials. Funerals and work on the land attract money and riches. Marriages bring unending happiness and harmony.

27) SNAKE: exotic like the Dragon, but more restrained and refined. Admires subtlety. Elegance of line. Will ride others to the top of the social ladder. The image of knowledge rather than fact. Truthful, but not averse to double dealing. Fond of scandal. Aptitude for research, detective work or academia. Powerful sensuality.

28) WORM: This is the silkworm. All male (Yang) things are considered genial to the silkworm. It is a sign of industry and its product one of refinement, delicacy and virtue. These worms are sometimes eaten in dried form and are considered a delicacy. It is considered to be an extremely auspicious day.

Source material is largely extracted from:

Chinese Animal Symbolisms, by Ong Hean-Tatt, Pelanduk Pubs., 1993

Ming Shu: The Art and Practice of Chinese Astrology, Derek Walters, Pagoda Pubs. 1987