

**CHINESE NEW YEAR 2015**  
**THE YEAR OF THE SERIOUS SHEEP**  
**19 Feb 2015**  
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<b>Hour</b>	<b>Day</b>	<b>Month</b>	<b>Year</b>
<b>Stem: 9</b> Yang Water	<b>Stem: 3</b> Yang Fire	<b>Stem: 5</b> Yang Earth	<b>Stem: 2</b> yin wood
<b>Branch: V</b> Earth Dragon <i>Rain Dragon</i>	<b>Branch: III</b> Wood Tiger <i>Tiger in the Forest</i>	<b>Branch: III</b> Wood Tiger <i>Tiger Climbs the Mountain</i>	<b>Branch: VIII</b> Earth Sheep <i>The Serious Sheep</i>
<b>Combined</b> Water <i>Flowing Water</i>	<b>Combined</b> Fire <i>Fiery Furnace</i>	<b>Combined</b> Earth <i>Ramparts Earth</i>	<b>Combined</b> Metal <i>Excavated Metal</i>

CHART: Chinese New Year Feb 19 2015

Date/Time: 19 Feb 2015, 7:47 am (CCT -8:00)/18 Feb 2015, 23:47 UT

Li Ch'un (Start of the Chinese Solar Year): 4 Feb 2015 11:58 am (CCT -8:00)

The sayings of the Serious Sheep: Diligence brings its own reward. Thoughtful attention to detail wins out over brash and hurried actions. Wealth is achieved through hard work

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Gong hei fat choy, Everyone! (Congratulations and be prosperous!)

Time once again for the Chinese New Year letter. Many of you may be happy to see the back end of the Horse year as it saunters off into the clouds (this year ending is the year of the Horse in the Clouds). It has been a memorable year, as we might have expected from the Horse. It was particularly violent in some parts of the world, particularly so in the Middle East and Africa, with a distinctly tyrannical feel, as we can also expect from the Horse in the extremes of mundane concerns. The 'hard line' was taken in many spheres of influence, especially in business, politics and militias, but one of the interesting things we saw is that these hard lines resulted largely in stalemates rather than decisive victories, with the result that people taking such rigid stances were often the cause of their own undoing, as we see with politics in Australia and the US, for instance. We'll get to that more a little later. As a result, what we see, if we look beneath the surface, is that we have reached a sort of parity in mundane (world) concerns, with neither side, if there is a two-party system, being able to ramrod their particular brand of policy through over the objections of others. This is a side of the Horse we have not seen on the world stage in recent history. Now, people are forced to bargain, to come together to seek change, and although that might seem quite frustrating and paralyzing in the short term, in the end it opens many positive possibilities down the track. It brings in further systems of checks and balances and accountability, and we see this even in places like China.

But now we are about to move into the Year of the Serious Sheep, or Wood Sheep. It might benefit us to realize that the Horse and the Sheep are the two most polarizing signs in the Chinese

zodiac. They represent extremes of yin and yang force, and as such they highlight issues of power and control in mundane astrology, but with each demonstrating their own particular way of handling such things. The Horse, representing the yang polarity, seeks to create new structures and is outward-moving. It favors decisive action, vigorous activity, teamwork—working with ‘one’s own kind’—and can promote divisiveness. The Sheep, on the other hand, representing the yin polarity, favors a more inward approach, one that is inclusive, that looks more at the essence of things rather than what can be built, and thus promotes a more cooperative approach. One might think, as a result, that this Year of the Sheep will be a kinder and gentler year, being yin. In some ways it will be, but don’t be fooled. Sheep can be formidable when they are roused to a cause. Just ask anyone who has been unfortunate enough to find themselves on the business end of a ram’s horns. In general, though, the Sheep is kind and affable, and this one in particular can be a lot of fun to be around, even though from its name it means business.

Some people may be prone to think that only yang means power and skill in action, and that can be true, depending on the circumstances. But yin wields its own sort of power and skill, and as such should never be underestimated as to its effectiveness. We can draw an analogy from a glass of water. Yang represents the structure—the glass—and yin represents the essence of what makes that glass of water desirable to us, which is the water inside the glass. Without the glass to contain it, the water flows away and is lost to us. Without the water, the glass is useless to us, being thereafter only an ornament or a paperweight. One is useless without the other. It is a very simple example with many possible arguments pro and con, but perhaps we see the point. Because the coming year is a yin expression, we will be dealing more with the essence of arguments and agreements, but we should not be lulled into a sense that what is to come will be softer, kinder and gentler, although eventually it most likely will be. Water under pressure can cut through or burst glass, for instance. We have inherited a hot glass this year, in a manner of speaking, and it may take a while for things to settle down so we can enjoy the water.

So, perhaps we begin to see that the Sheep does not always present as the kind, gentle, pliable people we might expect. In fact, having looked at the characters (the animal signs) in Chinese astrology over the years, a rather different picture emerges of Sheep than one might expect. Sheep, for instance, are on the whole very pleasant to be around, but when circumstances prevail the Sheep can be some of the most opinionated, outspoken people of the Chinese zodiac. Rallied to a cause, they can rival Horses in their determination. This is because they know what they stand for—they know the essence of an argument—and they are not afraid to raise their voices when things seem out of character to them. There is a particular sort of stringency or aloofness that can arise if one rubs a Sheep the wrong way, and they can shun you for years if you are the one who has done the rubbing.

That being said, the Sheep has a fine eye for detail. They tend to lean toward crafts instead of art, being a practical sign, and they love to tinker with things. If they do end up in art the eye for detail shows in their paintings and music and they can make superb draftsmen and love to deal with the intricacies of art. This applies also if they find themselves in tech or science fields. They can make large sacrifices for their art, craft, family or chosen line of work. The Sheep is one of the signs that inclines toward religion, but they are also found in academia, and in extremes of either they can be quite pedantic. Sheep set high standards for themselves and they expect those around them to follow suit. That is not always an easy accomplishment, because the moral or operational standards of Sheep can be very high, and most of the world is not yet so motivated. A brief look at a few people who have or had the Sheep in their pillars will bear this out, and without going into details.

Barack Obama has the Wood Sheep in his month pillar. Other US presidents who had the Sheep in their pillars were John F. Kennedy (as did Jackie O), Herbert Hoover, James Madison, Ronald Reagan (his wife did, too) and George W. Bush. Paul Keating, ex Australian PM had both the Sheep and the Horse in his four pillars. Lech Walesa and Helmut Kohl both had Sheep pillars. Italian dictator Benito Mussolini was a triple Sheep, as was Mata Hari. Arnold Schwarzenegger has the Sheep as his month pillar. Johannes Kepler and Nicola Tesla both had the Sheep in their pillars, as did Alexander Graham Bell. Princess Diana was a Serious Sheep in her day pillar. In

entertainment, Antonio Bandares, Candice Bergen, the late Jack Bruce (bassist for Cream), Sean Connery, Willem Dafoe, Robert Downey, Jr., Harrison Ford, Whoopi Goldberg (Serious Sheep), Tom Hanks, Rutger Hauer, Katherine Hepburn, Elton John, Liberace, Jimmy Page, Dan Rather, Sylvester Stallone, Ringo Starr, Meryl Streep, Barbara Streisand, Robin Williams, Angus Young (of AC/DC and a Serious Sheep), Liv Tyler and Laurence Olivier all have or had the Sheep in at least one of their four pillars. So, maybe we can begin to see some patterns there.

These were people who are or were very dedicated to their chosen paths, right or wrong, unafraid to stand for what they believe. For the ones still living, they demand a lot of themselves and expect those close to them to do the same. In general, they are all quite well-received by the public and are excellent at what they do. The Sheep can have real difficulty tolerating weakness, either in themselves or others, and they will generally strive for a more humane approach to problems. That being said, they will fight for a weaker person if they see the person is being made weak due to circumstances or oppression. This is in distinction to the opposite sign, the Ox, which is often found in the charts of powerful people (it is also a yin sign) and which can exhibit a very hard and sometimes cruel disposition in the course of what they try to achieve in extreme cases. This is not to paint Oxen as hard, cruel people. They are not on the whole, but they are difficult to move from a course of action once decided.

In general, though, the Sheep is well-liked and is one of the signs that the Chinese typically hold in very high regard, and not without good reason if we look at the people who have the Sheep in their pillars. Usually the humanist, the Sheep makes a wonderful parent, teacher, community leader, caretaker and social reformer, with a keen eye for what is needed in any given situation and a way with people that is usually quite endearing and able to win them over. They can also be champions of women's rights. The Sheep can have a strong streak of feminism, especially in women. As for demeanor, Sheep can be prickly and overly fastidious, and they can have a furious temper, especially as children, when they feel their sense of ethics has been offended or their domestic tranquility has been upset—most surprising to those who are used to the Sheep's usually placid exterior. But, the Sheep is forgiving. And, if you are the one who has happened to rub that Sheep the wrong way, if they see you doing benefit for others, they will often drop their antagonism and welcome you back into the fold. The Sheep loves a good time, and they like having that good time with close friends and family. This particular Sheep likes the unusual, too. But although the Sheep can be quite forgiving, they also never, ever forget.

Some of the major events that took place in recent Wood Sheep years are as follows, although the list is by no means exhaustive: **1655**) Johannes Kepler came out with his version of the Copernican theory of the solar system (heliocentric), Huygens discovered Saturn's moon Titan and describes Saturn; **1715**) Edmund Halley observed 'Baily's Beads' during a solar eclipse, the Riot Act was enacted, the River Thames froze; **1775**) the American Revolutionary War started, the first US society for the abolition of slavery was founded by Ben Franklin, North Carolina became the first colony to declare independence from England, the US postal system was established; **1835**) PT Barnum's Circus was established, the Liberty Bell cracked, Charles Darwin began his voyages, Madam Tussauds Wax Museum opened, the Texas Revolution began; **1895**) volleyball was invented, there was snow in New Orleans (almost never happens there), X-rays were discovered, "Waltzing Mathilda" was penned by Banjo Patterson, the Cuban War of Independence started, Tsiolkovsky published the first of his papers on space flight, we had the first—comic strip, US pro football game, US Open golf tournament, commercial movie performance and gasoline-powered auto race; **1955**) the Salk polio vaccine was introduced, the MENTO, SATO and WARSAW Pacts were formed, the Vietnam War began, racial segregation was outlawed on public transport in the US, we saw the beginnings of the Civil Rights movement in the US, the first McDonald's was opened, and James Dean died in a car crash.

Before we get into the forecast for the year to come it will be of interest to see what happened with last year's forecast. The events that transpired last year have set the stage for the coming year, as is always the case. So, to give some continuity and a better sense of what is happening, to give some insight into the year to come, what follows are the major points from last year's forecast. It is

a bit long, but necessary, I think, and it might give a better sense of where to direct our energies. The forecast from last year is in bold letters:

**I expect to see our understanding of matter to change fundamentally this year in some ways.** There were no earth-shattering, paradigm shifting, life-changing discoveries this year in this regard, but there were a few items that will probably lead to so significant developments in years to come. Firstly, our understanding of dark matter took a step forward, with the observation of what appears to be ‘axions’<sup>1</sup> in X-ray signals. These axions are candidates for particles of dark matter. So far, dark matter is hypothetical, but it is thought to make up about 27% of the entire mass of the universe, with matter as we know it comprising only about 5%. That in itself is quite a statement and a mystery. The remainder of the universe is thought to be composed of dark energy, not to be confused with evil forces or some sort of nefarious galactic empire. Dark energy, as it is called, is simply an unknown type of energy that tends to accelerate the expansion of the universe.<sup>2</sup> I would associate this with the ethers of space—the subtle building blocks of matter as we know it.<sup>3</sup> We have also created our first ‘dropleton’, the first known quasiparticle that behaves like a liquid.<sup>4</sup> There is also now a reversible tractor beam which can move objects up to 0.2 mm in diameter a distance of up to 20 cm. Well, we have to start somewhere. These developments were in the realm of physics.

Perhaps the greatest developments in our understanding of matter were in the life sciences, and especially with regard to tissues and genetics. Like it or not, genetic engineering is here to stay, and it is producing some wonderful benefits along with its attendant problems. Big strides were made last year in being able to heal or replace organs. We can now heal decayed teeth without drilling or fillings, for instance.<sup>5</sup> We can now control embryonic development, leading to be able to grow entire organs from stem cells—a major breakthrough.<sup>6</sup> Following on this, scientists were able to grow the first complete, functioning organ in an animal using stem cells—a thymus in a mouse.<sup>7</sup> Before too long, we will probably no longer have to fear losing an organ, body part or a body function due to disease, ageing, or accidents.

**Watch the media for the coming technologies...2014 will produce powerful performances in film.** The media that most focused on emerging technologies in the past year was the internet. I see it all the time in emails and on websites as I browse through, and this is to be expected, as in past Wood Horse years there was no internet. The one film that explored modern science while still couched in a storyline was *Interstellar*. There were several films in 2014 that produced strong performances and gave strongly positive impressions on audiences and critics: *Boyhood*, *The Grand Budapest Hotel*, *The Theory of Everything*, and *Leviathan*, to name but a few. In a way, though, this past year produced less in the way of films than expected, perhaps because of the internet, but perhaps also because of the times. In the last Wood Horse year it was the era of the epic film in Hollywood and the big screen was the awe-inspiring medium of the time. Television was just emerging. Radio was ensconced as a medium, and was only about to emerge at the Wood Horse year previous. So, looking at the times and the media, we would expect the internet to be the medium where the cutting edge in technology is to be found, and the one with which people are most fascinated.

**In politics this will be a big year for immigration reforms.** It could have been. It should have been, at least from what I have seen in past Wood Horse years, but politics in the Western world is so divisive at the moment that it is difficult to get any legislation passed on matters of immigration. In the US this was set to be the year when something was done about immigration reform. In the end, it was an executive order by Obama that produced the change in November of last year and provoked the Republicans to take some sort of action. Whether any action comes from Congress remains to be seen. As it stands now, the executive order protects about 4.3 million illegal immigrants from deportation, with steps being taken to facilitate the legal migration of up to 250,000 skilled migrants. The last president to do such a thing was W’s father, Bush the elder in 1990. In Australia the policy for illegal immigrants, who come largely by boat, is harsh—the boats are turned away and those that are not are taken to offshore processing centers, most often thereafter with no chance of settlement in Australia for those who chose that path. The policy has worked, as

there has been a virtual cessation of boats that try the voyage—and this has largely been seen in the past year—but it has generated heated debate at home and abroad as to its legality, morality and the long-term effects it will have, both for Australia and for the wider world community. Many Australians may feel safer in the short term, but taking a hard line on any matter has a way of coming back on people in the long term. We'll have to wait and see what happens there, as it will be most interesting to see if other countries either take up Australia's model, or if they denounce the system and instead take up boycotts, sanctions and the like in protest. Europe may be a proving ground in that respect.

Europe is facing major headaches both with boat people from Africa and with migrants from all over Europe and the Middle East, especially from poorer areas of Europe to the more affluent nations. There has been a sharp rise in illegal immigration to Europe in the past 12 months, a trend which began in earnest in 2011 due to the Arab Spring, the Syrian civil war and unrest in Afghanistan and Eritrea. Due to the European Union, though, and the European Court of Human Rights, EU countries are prohibited from adopting something akin to a 'Turn back the boats' policy. As a result, we are seeing increasing numbers of political parties in European nations advocating a tough stance on immigration in their home states, and especially with some of the austerity measures that have been put in place in countries such as Greece, for instance, where large numbers of refugees pass through. The common lines of rhetoric of these parties revolve around job protection for the citizens and prevention of the erosion of the culture of their countries. Xenophobia is alive and well in the world.

All this being said, countries like the US and Australia were built by migrants, legal, forced and otherwise. In the early days of the colonies that were to become the US, for example, roughly half of all the people who came to the shores of the colonies were indentured servants (they may as well have been slaves in many cases) from European countries. There were large numbers of Italian and Irish migrants taking refuge there in the 1800s and onwards, too, as well as from many other nations, and they were eventually assimilated into the culture, contributing greatly to the richness of the country. The people in young countries like Australia and the US who make the biggest fuss about immigrants either don't think or tend to forget that their ancestors were probably immigrants at one point. The number of illegal immigrants is relatively small in comparison to legal migrations, yet the media and political hyperbole around the 'illegals' might lead one to think that there were hordes of people trying to get into the developed countries of the world illegally. Such is not the case, and in the large immigrants of all types eventually contribute to the growth of a country, excepting a few. Ah, but it is always the few that get the attention, isn't it? Well, true to form, immigration was a big deal in this passing Year of the Horse, and it is not a topic that will quietly die away. It will be further addressed in the year to come.

**The topic of spying will receive larger attention this year...we are likely to find similar scandals in other countries, or concerning them.** In July of 2014 we saw the breaking of the spy scandal in Germany with the resultant expulsion of the American CIA chief from Germany.<sup>89</sup> Some people in the US government were 'irritated' at the German response to the American spying, and now the Germans are reviewing their options about spying on the US. Then, a little later in the year it was revealed that Germany had been spying on Turkey.<sup>10</sup> Whoops...but that one received little attention in the media. Then, there was the Sony hacking by North Korea in response to the planned release of the film, *The Interview*, a fictional film about a planned assassination attempt on the North Korean leader. It was a year that did not favor the North Koreans, as their country has both the Rat (year, 1948) and the Rooster (month and day, Sep 9) in its four pillars. Theirs is a very prickly combination of energies. Then, in August it was revealed that the CIA had been spying on a senate panel probing the agency's torture and rendition program.<sup>11</sup> Then, recently it was revealed that the British government had been spying on British citizens through information gathered by the US Prism program. In 2014 it was illegal. Now the Brits say it is legal(?).<sup>12</sup> Then there was the stoush between the Poles and the Russians.<sup>13</sup> It all sounds like business as usual to me. Are we really surprised? All I'll say is, be careful what you put out through your phones and emails—and

your browsing history if you have been a little naughty. It is something of which to be mindful, and we cannot be too careful these days.

...Continued in Part II

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**Expect to see start-ups of new enterprises this year based upon the discoveries made in the years immediately passed. Robotics should get a boost this year, as well as materials technologies.** The start-ups in the tech fields continue to grow on past years, so I won't say much about this. For robotics, though, it is quite an exciting time. Have a look at the following few sites: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=diaZFIUBMBQ>, [www.en.wikipedia.org/wiki/DARPA\\_Robotics\\_Challenge](http://www.en.wikipedia.org/wiki/DARPA_Robotics_Challenge) and <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=S5AnWzjHtWA>

In materials technology we had the first single-molecule LED, nanomotors were controlled in living cells for the first time, there were new advances in thin-film solar energy cells, a battery that can charge in less than 30 seconds, a new hybrid flexible energy-efficient circuit that merges carbon nanotubes with other thin-film transistors which could soon replace silicon as the traditional material for solid state electronics, a neuromorphic (brain-like) computer chip with a million programmable neurons and 256 million synapses across 4096 individual synaptic cores, a carbon dioxide 'sponge', a self-organizing robot swarm, the first graphene-based flexible display, a new record-breaking laser that accelerates the interaction between light and matter by 10 times, a new process that can separate CO<sub>2</sub> into carbon and oxygen directly which could eliminate the need for air tanks for divers and in spacesuits, a new method to produce 3D metallic nanoparticles, a computer processor chip that operates at a terahertz and 3D printing of semiconductors and electronic circuits, to name a few.<sup>14</sup>

**Wood Horse years...do introduce legislation that favors worker's rights and wage laws.**

Well, when it comes to this forecast, it was a sad year, and there were a few surprises when it came to researching this. The fact that we didn't see legislation is reflective of the divisive politics and a faceoff that is building between labor and capital—a faceoff that has been building for years, slowly but with certainty. As it turns out, the level of a country's development does not directly reflect the status of its workers, either in terms of wages or rights. In a survey that came out mid-year, the results were rather telling: "At a time when corporate power has never been greater...almost every country can improve its treatment of workers."<sup>15</sup> We'll get to the stats in a moment. Of course, the report was put out by an organization that is representative of trade unions world-wide, based in Belgium, but one does not have to look far to see that the results are most likely fairly represented. One has only to look at restive workers in the US in many large companies and the corporate responses, for example (the US does not have a stellar record on worker's rights, according to the report) to see that moves are being made on the part of workers to better their conditions. So, we may not have had big legislation for worker's rights this year, but it is coming. A little bit of background here might prove revealing.

In 2008 with the big financial downturn, many companies curtailed worker benefits and wages, taking advantage of the more difficult financial times to justify their decisions. Industries such as fast food chains, large retailers, airports, etc., showed a sharp increase in part-time (temp) employment, resulting in virtually no protection for the worker. This is particularly marked in the US and I have had first-hand experience with it, having gone back into industry for a short time in the past few years. People are rescheduled at the last minute, have no benefits on the whole, can be dismissed at any time with little or no explanation or recourse and are not paid a fair wage for what they do. Often people are kept in these temporary positions for years with the hope of eventually being hired full time, only to be terminated over what might be a trifle, or because they have raised their voice and the company simply will not pay the benefits. It might interest readers to know that the US lies somewhere in the middle in terms of its protection of workers, lagging behind countries such as those in the EU, Australia, New Zealand, Canada and Brazil, for instance. There is a push in the US now for a \$15-an-hour minimum wage, and we hear all the voices there—largely of

corporate and moneyed interests—that cry foul and claim such a move would wreck the economy. Well, the argument is simply fallacious and is meant to keep the populace in check.

Australia, for instance, has a minimum wage of almost \$17/hr—the highest in the world.<sup>16</sup> It has had that sort of comparative wage since 2007. Have prices there risen sharply? No. Has the Australian economy tanked because of the wage? No. Australia is a first-world country. The standard of living is high. A Big Mac from McDonalds costs less there than in the US, where wages are low. Explain that one, if higher wages are supposed to raise prices. Australia's standard of living is comparable to anywhere in the EU and the US. It is an attractive place to live and levels of emigration to Australia remain high. Worker's rights are well protected on the whole and Australia ranks among the best in the world in that regard. I am not bashing the US or trying to sound like a tourism/migration ad for Australia. I have lived long-term in both countries and love them both. I make these statements to show that there is another side to the minimum wage argument other than the one we commonly hear from the nay-sayers. All the same arguments were rolled out beforehand in Australia, too. We are simply looking at comparisons here and looking at what might be coming around the corner. The US can easily absorb a higher minimum wage and benefits for all workers, for instance, and it would benefit the country, as it has in Australia. I have been a worker and a business owner myself, so I know where the money goes.

Here is the thing—it is not so much the country that drives low wages and lack of worker benefits. It is the corporate interests within countries and the influence they wield on governments that is at the root of the current restiveness, and their attempts at keeping workers on the low end, shall we say, are starting to come back to haunt them. We are seeing more and more protests, boycotts and strikes in industries such as those mentioned previously, and in other industries as well, and this worldwide. We are seeing it even in Iran and China. The latest move is in the US with the walkouts at Shell and BP oil refineries over health and safety issues and bad-faith bargaining practices, have come about due to a drop in profit margins because of the oil price war between the Saudis and the US. Expect a lot more of this sort of thing in the years to come. The coming Sheep year will be particularly marked by worker unrest, and probably also by some harsh countermeasures by business and government.

**Media icons will be born this year, and some long-lasting series will debut in the media.** We'll have to wait and see on this one, of course—probably at least another 10 years or so at least for the media icons. As for the series, it would not be possible to go through all of these, as there were 349 series alone that debuted in the US last year. Some of these were on cable networks while others were on free-to-air TV. "True Detective" was one that looks to have a strong chance of going the distance. On the other hand, for instance, I would have doubts that series like "Dating Naked", "Mike Tyson Mysteries" and "Id!otest" would last more than a year or two, although one can never second-guess the viewing public. There were some rather interesting concept series, such as "Forever", "Transparent", "Resurrection" and "Ascension", but as with the media icons, we will have to wait and see how long these shows run. Outside America, there were not too many new shows—more of a continuation of existing shows, like "Hairy Bikers Asian Adventure" out of England and "Spicks and Specks" out of Australia.

**Expect some strong leadership actions to take place this year, as well as strong people stepping forward.** We saw the surprise emergence of the ISIS, or ISIL insurgency out of the Syrian civil war a couple of years ago and with its rapid incursion into Iraq. The world was stunned by its ferocity, cruelty and military success. Now the world has stiffened itself against the militia. Its advances have since then been halted by actions in the Horse year and they are now slowly beginning to lose their past gains due to airstrikes by a coalition of nations. The situation in Crimea continues to dog the European nations with what we might say resembles a sort of slowly-evolving chess match. As for other acts of leadership, there are always many in any year from which to choose. But for the last year, although opinions will vary greatly on this point, we can point to a few success stories and a couple of others, starting with the new Pope. Pope Francis sets a tone for leadership in the Sheep Year with respect to the Church, with its focus upon human rights and the underprivileged, but for last year his actions within the Church were sometimes seen as

revolutionary, as one would expect in a Horse year. He is a reform-minded Pope, but many would argue his reforms don't go far enough.

Then, there is Angel Merkel, Chancellor of Germany, who played a key role in the management of the European debt crisis and also played a big role in keeping the EU intact. The focus in Europe this year was largely directed to the crisis in Crimea, with Merkel playing a role there, and leadership was particularly in evidence with Vladimir Putin in Russia in response to Crimea, though we in the West may not agree with the man, the outcome or his methods. He enjoys general popular support in Russia, though, for his handling of the situation. Also, in the US with the mid-term elections passed Obama is stirring the pot with executive orders, and one might argue his considered response to both the Crimea and the Middle East crises constituted a strong leadership position, waiting in the face of criticism and seeking to ally the US with Arab neighbors in the region. The recent murder of the Jordanian pilot by ISIL has galvanized the Jordanian leader and his government, and the Japanese government as well with the murder of its two citizens, with moves there toward militarization by Japan to protect its citizens. The latter has been coming on for a while, but the murder of its citizens by ISIL has been just the catalyst Japanese PM Abe needed to push the plans forward. In the end, there are so many examples one could put forward in all walks of life, and the preceding are just a few examples.

**It should be a year of strong growth...**Parts of the world are still in a state of stagnation regarding economic growth, but there were areas where growth was strong, with the big players being the United States, China and India. There was also a surprise from India this year—it became the world's fastest-growing economy.<sup>17</sup> The US dollar is stronger against most all world currencies than it has been for a few years, and this has happened in the space of the past few months, even though growth there is now slowing. The Australian dollar got clobbered recently, for instance, falling below 80 US cents against the US dollar, when only a couple of years ago it was worth 1.10 USD. With the fall of petroleum prices and the rapid growth of the US petroleum industry, the US has seen a strong economic turnaround. Whether that stays in place depends up whether they can withstand the price war on oil that has been introduced by the Saudis. It's a war of wills there, and there will be presidential elections in the US in a couple of years, so anything can happen. If the US oil industry suffers, then we could see some moves to the right in US politics. Europe slowly began to turn itself around last year and looks set for positive growth in the year to come for the first time in 2 ½ years.<sup>18</sup> Australian economic growth slowed last year and is expected to be slow in the year to come due to troubles in the mining sector and looming drought conditions. China's growth was the lowest it had been in 3 years, but it is still at just over 7%.

**The Year Ahead:** Given all the preceding, what can we expect in the year ahead? If past Wood Sheep years are any indication, we can expect some serious business to take place this Serious Sheep year, pun intended. Judging by the element count for the year starting in China (see the end of this letter), this will be a year where people will be inclined to stand their ground more. A marked stubbornness and determination will be in evidence, but decision making will be left wanting, unless those in leadership positions have abundant Earth and/or Metal in their four pillars—the Earth animals being Oxen, Dragons, Sheep and Dogs, the Metal animals being Monkeys and Roosters. However, it should be a good year for all creative pursuits, from the higher than average count of Wood. Thus, the Wood animals will be favored this year—Rabbits and Tigers—as well as Earth animals, and they stand poised to be quite successful at whatever they embark upon, because Earth is the 'money element' of Wood. In other words, 'Wood controls Earth'. It is a yang year, too, even though the Sheep is the featured energy for the year and is considered to be the most yin of all the animals. But don't let that generalization fool you. This Sheep is strong and there are two Tigers in the middle two pillars, plus a Dragon in the Hour pillar. However, the hour pillar will change according to one's country. Being a Yang year, it will be one in which people shape their own destiny in the outer world, for good or ill. With the Tiger in the middle pillars there will be plenty going on behind the scenes—jockeying for position on every side of matters. We already see this taking shape in American and Australian politics, and there are elections coming up in Europe this year, too.



For Europe, western Asia, the Middle East and Africa the meaning of the tetragram for the year is clear: gains that have been made can be easily lost if people lose sight of what is important due to irritation, petty concerns or any sort of negativity. The message for that hemisphere (those in the nighttime hours when the New Year commences) is to maintain a positive focus and to stay with the essentials of any issues that arise, not allowing any distractions. For the Americas, Australasia and the Far East the message is a bit different: Build partnerships with one's smaller neighbors, speaking in terms of nations, but it applies to individuals as well. In life, to ignore the small things or to think that people might be of small moment is a serious error. With these things in mind, let's have a look at specific points.

First of all, we have seen some pretty *cold weather* in places, such as in the US South and Northeast and we can expect more of the same. US winters have been getting colder and more severe in the past years, even though overall 2014 was the hottest year on record as a world-wide average.<sup>19</sup> However, what we are seeing now in no way tops the charts. The 1993 super storm in New England (US) has faded into memory for some, but it dumped 60 inches of snow in Tennessee, with falls of up to 40 inches in New York state. So, although the present winter storms in the US are bad, they are not the worst. We will also *worsening drought conditions* as we move into the next few years, *and hotter summers*.

We may also see a further *revolution* or two. The Wood Sheep likes a good revolution. The obvious place to look for this is in Ukraine, but we might get some surprises. The Syrian civil war is ongoing, as is unrest in Egypt and other parts of Africa. Of interest to note is that there is now an initiative that is being presented in Europe to the governing bodies there that *peace be mandated as a human right*—legislated. Laugh or shake your head if you like, but this is a serious proposal. It hasn't been made public yet, but I have it on very good authority. Now, *that's* something that would stir the pot significantly in world affairs, but don't expect it to make any immediate or significant ripples. There are too many parties who still see war as a viable, even desirable means of settling differences between nations and the sad fact is that there is far too much money to be made from warfare. This latter point is an obscene statement about the human condition. But, this effort for peace is being made, and it is coming out of Italy. You may not hear about it, but the seed is there. Now, *there* is a point on which to strongly meditate.

*The underdog receives attention* in Wood Sheep years. There is still slavery in the world. I know this is not a pleasant subject, but Wood Sheep years typically highlight initiatives to end slavery, so hopefully we can see moves this year to end this more barbaric aspect of human life. Although legally it is outlawed world-wide, it is still practiced under other names—sweat shops, prostitution, human trafficking (this used to be called 'transportation' in England in centuries past, and was legal), forced prison labor, child labor, forced marriages and sexual slavery, bonded and forced migrant labor and slavery by descent. That's quite a mouthful, and it is estimated that around 30 million people are directly enslaved in those various manners, with almost half of them being children. And, almost half of the 30 million slaves are in India, followed in the order of numbers by China, Pakistan, Nigeria, Ethiopia, Russia, Thailand, the Congo, Myanmar and Bangladesh, respectively. In India the primary form of slavery is debt bondage and bonded labor. Mauritania has deeply entrenched hereditary slavery. We might expect that countries such as the US, Australia and the countries of Western Europe are free of slavery, but such is sadly not the case, although the *per capita* percentage is very low. The forms of slavery that exist in these countries result primarily from human trafficking, forced migrant labor and sex slavery. The US has an estimated 60,000 people in direct slavery (0.02%, but still a lot of people), with most of them found in prostitution or domestic servitude. Australia is estimated to have just over 3000, roughly equivalent to the US *per capita* and in the type of slavery. Haiti still has a very high incidence of slavery (2%), right at the doorstep of the US.<sup>20</sup>

Slavery is quite profitable. World-wide it is estimated to be \$150 billion-a-year industry, just on the trafficking side. We in the West benefit directly from many products that are produced in factories that employ some of the aforementioned practices—think clothing, for instance, or cheap electronics. There is a final note about slavery, though, and that relates to the present world

economic condition. Almost all of us who have a lower or middle class life have to deal with a form of slavery on a daily basis—debt slavery. We know it as the daily 9–5 grind, the endless living-paycheck-to-paycheck, never-seeming-to-have-enough, prices-always-going-up, having-to-work-harder-and-for-longer-hours-just-to-make-ends-meet, money-not-being-worth-what-it-used-to-be sort of slavery.

At the end of each day, how much time do we have to pursue creative and spiritual interests and development? Do we always have money woes in the back of our mind? Are we too tired or rattled from work to do anything else than veg in front of the TV for the rest of the day? Do we have to take work home? Will we have our houses paid off before we leave this world? These sorts of thoughts, too, come to the forefront in Wood Sheep years. I have made this point before, and as the future unfolds it will become increasingly self-evident: Money is a house of cards. It has value because we and most everyone around us give it value, which places our destinies to a large degree in someone else's hands. If we don't believe this, then try to get a loan from a bank, and then look at the interest (usury) we get charged. If we began to value quality of life more than what money could buy us, for instance, what would happen? What is this illusion we buy into every day? Toward what do we work? Where is our true security? Most importantly—what is our true worth as a human being and our wealth? I think this year we might get some indications with regard to these points. The Wood Sheep works hard and is diligent, but the question is, toward what do we work?

***Entertainment will get a boost this year, especially in the realm of sports.*** Normally, we would expect this from a Horse year, but Sheep enjoy their pastimes and they enjoy doing things together. This Sheep in particular is creative and likes novel approaches to things, so we can expect ***new games, unusual forms of entertainment, a rise in public attendance of entertainment events,*** etc.—big spectacles—and I don't mean eyeglasses. Just look at the types of entertainment we saw born in previous Wood Sheep years—Tussauds wax museum, Barnum and Bailey's Circus ("The Greatest Show on Earth"), auto racing, etc.

***Space exploration*** will receive a bigger focus this year. As if we didn't know this already, with the various probes we have set to reveal secrets of our solar system. But, in past Wood Sheep years contributions to astronomy were made, and these at a time when astronomy was in its infancy. So, we now have probes on the Moon, Mars, a comet, on Saturn's moon Titan, on Venus, orbiting the Sun, Mercury, Venus, Mars, Saturn and the Moon, on their way to interstellar space and there already, to Pluto, Ceres, and having already been to Vesta, Jupiter and its Moons, Uranus, Neptune and Saturn's moons. So, in the space of a few decades (pardon the pun), we have been to every major planet and taken close-up pictures, to several comets, to many moons and to a few asteroids, and with more to come. We'll have close-up pictures of Pluto and Ceres—two dwarf planets that are very similar, as it turns out—and with the possibility of seeing a least a couple more. We continue to find exoplanets and now moons of exoplanets. We are very likely to ***solve some riddles about the formation of our solar system*** in the coming year due to these probes of Ceres and Pluto.

So, in all, it looks to be a fascinating year ahead. Aren't they all these days? But we can expect this one to have a more humanitarian focus than the last, with a wider world view and with a particular emphasis on solving the problems of the world's children and women, the underprivileged and the abused. Migration will continue to be a big issue and governments or factions thereof are poised to be shamed into action. We can expect the same with worker's rights and pay. In all, the Sheep focuses more on the inner development of people rather than outer action and achievement, but both aspects are needed. This is one Sheep that will not take things laying down, and with life on this globe the way it is now, we can be thankful for that and enjoin with the energy of the year to make a difference for our companions on this path we call life.

Happy New Year, Everyone!

(and Happy Valentine's Day!)

Malvin

14 Feb 2014

These letters are sent as a service. If you wish to be added to or deleted from the mailing list, please let me know. If you feel inspired, feel free to pass them along, but please do so without charge or alteration.

Following are additional details of the year for those readers who have an interest in Chinese astrology.

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New Year Details (set for China):

Element Counts:

Wood: 3 - Creative, literary, compassionate

Fire: 2 - Active, stimulating

Earth: 4 - Expansive, bold

Metal: 1 - Gentle, indecisive

Water: 2 – Talkative, clear, bright

CONSTELLATION OF DAY: Animal: Dragon

Day Indicator: A – Establish: This is a good day to start small and plan big.

9 STAR QI (CHINESE) Year Number: 3 Yin Wood Month Number: 5 Yin/Yang House Number: 3 Yin Wood Trigram: Chen	9 STAR KI (JAPANESE) Year Number: 3 Yin Wood Month Number: 5 Yin/Yang House Number: 7 Yang Metal Trigram: Tui
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**Tetragram 14:** Yang Chi focuses intelligence and ascends steadily. Experience unfolds the pattern within. 19 Feb (Nighttime): Imperil scatters the focus. All can be lost. (For those living west of China) 18 Feb (Daytime) The mountain can rely on lesser hills on either side. (For those living in China and eastward, including Australasia and the Americas)

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<sup>1</sup> “Inexplicable signal from the unseen universe provides tantalizing clue about one of astronomy’s greatest secrets—Dark Matter” *University of Leicester*, 16 Oct 2014

<sup>2</sup> Dennis Overbye, “New Images Refine View of Infant Universe”, *New York Times*, 1 Dec 2014

<sup>3</sup> For instance, we all have an etheric body—the ‘etheric double’—which forms the basis for the physical body, or the dense body as we know it. It is the etheric body that governs our growth and life processes, which is the seat of our vitality, and which is a body of luminous substance. The basic qualities of the ethers were more or less disclosed in the work *Occult Chemistry*, by Annie Besant and Charles Leadbeater, available through Theosophical Publishing.

<sup>4</sup> A. E. Almand Hunter, H. Li, S. T. Cundiff, M. Mootz, M. Kira and S. W. Koch, “Quantum Droplets of Electrons and Holes”, *Nature*, 26 Feb 2014.

<sup>5</sup> “No Drilling, no filling, no fuss—Kings spin-out will put tooth decay in a ‘time warp’” *Kings College, London*, 16 Jun 2014.

<sup>6</sup> “Scientists smash barrier to growing organs from stem cells”, *PhysOrg*, 4 Apr 2014

<sup>7</sup> “Whole organ grown in world first”, *BBC*, 24 Aug 2014

<sup>8</sup> <http://reason.com/blog/2014/07/09/spy-scandal-worsens-another-alleged-us-a>

<sup>9</sup> <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/jul/22/us-germany-restorative-talks-spy-scandals>

<sup>10</sup> [http://anniemachon.ch/annie\\_machon/2014/08/turkey-german-spy-scandal-rt.html](http://anniemachon.ch/annie_machon/2014/08/turkey-german-spy-scandal-rt.html)

<sup>11</sup> [http://www.democracynow.org/blog/2014/8/1/the\\_cias\\_other\\_spy\\_scandal\\_agency](http://www.democracynow.org/blog/2014/8/1/the_cias_other_spy_scandal_agency)

<sup>12</sup> <http://www.channel4.com/news/gchq-nsa-broke-law-surveillance-prism-snowdown>

<sup>13</sup> [http://english.pravda.ru/news/world/21-10-2014/128854-poland\\_russia\\_spy\\_scandal-0/](http://english.pravda.ru/news/world/21-10-2014/128854-poland_russia_spy_scandal-0/)

<sup>14</sup> Sourced from [www.en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2014\\_in\\_science](http://www.en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2014_in_science)

<sup>15</sup> [www.ituc-csi.org/new-ituc-global-rights-index-the](http://www.ituc-csi.org/new-ituc-global-rights-index-the)

<sup>16</sup> [www.en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List\\_of\\_minimum\\_wage\\_by\\_country](http://www.en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_minimum_wage_by_country)

<sup>17</sup> <http://blogs.wsj.com/indiarealtime/2015/02/11/its-official-india-has-passed-china-to-become-the-worlds-fastest-growing-economy/>

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- <sup>18</sup> <http://uk.businessinsider.com/germany-eurozone-gdp-growth-q4-2014-euroboom2015-2015-2?r=US>
- <sup>19</sup> <http://www.ncdc.noaa.gov/sotc/service/global/map-percentile-mntp/201401-201412.gif>
- <sup>20</sup> [www.mic.com/articles/84099/11-stunning-statistics-prove-slavery-didn't-die-150-years-ago](http://www.mic.com/articles/84099/11-stunning-statistics-prove-slavery-didn't-die-150-years-ago)