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The Year of the Rabbit

Dear Friends:

The Chinese system of astrology is based upon a sixty-year cycle divided into five twelve year periods. The Oriental zodiac, therefore, is made up of twelve signs which are rulers over years rather than months. The system is applied to persons born in a certain year, as for example, those born in 1916 are in the Year of the Dragon; and those born in 1926 are governed by the Tiger. Nations are also affected by the ruler of any given year, and by these calculations 1975 is the Year of the Rabbit. This is fortunate for any person born in one of the previous Rabbit years. Where the exact date of the founding of a country is known, the nation will be especially flourishing in years governed by its own sign. 1974 was the Year of the Ox, and like the Western astrological sign of Taurus, it emphasizes financial situations. The various animals identified as year rulers may be compatible or incompatible. In the Year of the Tiger, the Rabbit would be afflicted; but in the Year of the Rabbit, the Tiger would not be in danger, for obvious reasons.

The Chinese depend heavily upon divination by the sexagenary cycle for all the important concerns of life. Marriages must be arranged between persons born under compatible animals. When ground breaking for a building, the omens of the year are the first consideration, and an astrologer must be consulted. Even the placing of the desk of an executive must be carefully calculated, and if this is overlooked, he may never be able to employ subordinates. Each of the zodiacal animals have strong dispositional tendencies. Mao Tse Tung was born in 1893, which was the Year of the Serpent, and to understand his personality in terms of depth psychology, one should study all habits of snakes, both good and bad. It is not known that Chairman Mao is addicted to divination, but he is administering a huge domain, the citizens of which have profound respect for the "Cycle of the Holy Animals." Up to recent days, the Chinese issued annual almanacs which enjoyed a wide circulation, much like the farmers' almanacs upon which Western agriculturists depend heavily. Unfortunately, we know of no comprehensive study of Chinese astrology available in English, but there are fragments which indicate the scope of the subject.

The Year of the Rabbit in this case, would be fully described as The Year of the Wood-Bamboo Hare. Oriental peoples have always admired wood for its beauty and utility. It is also self-replenishing, and is strong enough to support massive structures and at the same time, adapts itself to the most minute carvings. It can be stained and painted and lacquered, but if not protected, is subject to infestation. Bamboo is the symbol of dignity and adaptability. Being flexible, it adjusts to the problems of the occasion. Bamboo is extremely valuable in the manufacturing of common utilities, such as baskets, mats, tableware, and large sections make excellent containers for liquids. Bamboo is also associated with heroic personalities, for determined persons, although they may bend to the needs of the moment, will spring back to an "upright" position. While professional

diviners have elaborate manuals to consult, the proletariat depend largely upon their intimate knowledge of the habits and qualities suggested by the cyclic symbolism.

The Rabbit is a quiet and apparently timid animal, but those who know it well recognize its sterling qualities. The Rabbit is often shown in the circle of the full moon, and is therefore considered a lunar creature. The moon has sway over generation, and the Rabbit is notably prolific. In the Year of the Rabbit, new projects will be set in motion. There will be considerable experimentation. Some of the innovations will endure, but they must face the inevitable changes which will come in 1976, which is The Year of the Fire-Flame Dragon. The Rabbit is nearly always a fortunate symbol indicating good harvests and success in commerce. Changes in society will be made without undue violence or stress. Leaders will be inclined to be patient, and will avoid publicity. When the Rabbit is in danger, it seeks the nearest cover and remains motionless. Having little defensive armament, it must depend upon strong self-discipline to survive in the animal world. It is an excellent parent, and trains its young by example. This is also true of officials and legislators born in a Rabbit Year, or occupying office in this year. Such persons seek to avoid unnecessary display, extravagance, or too much obvious activity. The moon rules the night; which in turn suggests that leaders will keep their own counsel and shun notoriety. The Chinese consider the Rabbit to be a happy little animal, with no delusions of grandeur, and without unreasonable ambitions. It minds its own business, but even when men have tried to exterminate them, Rabbits survive, multiply and proliferate. This suggests the promise in the New Testament that "the meek shall inherit the earth."

In the Year of the Rabbit therefore, the dignity of essentials will be recognized. The tendency will be to work primarily for the common good, rather than for the advancement of special interests. The trend toward the simplification of living, the strengthening of family relations, and a better distribution of essential commodities, will bear witness to the wisdom of the Rabbit. In 1975, the problems of the patient folks will be given special attention. The living standards of the underprivileged will be improved, and the ecological factor in the security of civilization will be emphasized. The emphasis upon wood is good for the building of homes, apartments and condominiums; but commercial and industrial construction is not in harmony with the Rabbit hutch, which is indeed a modest structure. The Rabbit is herbivorous, and like most such creatures, is gentle, patient, and intelligent. It has no desire to conquer the world or defend its range by violence. It therefore, also suggests that nations will become more concerned with putting their own houses in order, rather than extending their boundaries.

The Chinese greatly admired prudence, and gave great attention to detail. The Rabbit is small, cautious and careful, and these qualities, though unobtrusive, must always support great enterprises. In the Year of the Rabbit, people will be more patient, less critical, and will take better care of things nearer to themselves. Because it does not waste energy in unnecessary conflicts, the Rabbit is suitable to learning. In China, the wise and happy man simplifies his way of life as much as possible. He likes to sit in a small bamboo garden, communing with nature, writing poems, and meditating upon the universal truths of personal and collective existence. The Rabbit has been called timid. We like to assume that an exhibition of bravery is a proof of strength, and it is often only a mask to conceal defects of character. The Superior Man, according to Confucius, depended upon inner strength and refrained so far as possible, from any exhibition of audacity. Like the central timber of a house, he remains unmoved, otherwise the structure will collapse.

Like many other smaller creatures, the Rabbit depends for survival upon instinct. It follows "The Way of Heaven," for in the animal kingdom, each must follow the law of its kind or perish. What in-



instinct is to an animal, intuition is to man. The sage is governed by the light within himself, and is not dependent upon society for security or peace of mind. Even when in a throng, the sage is alone. He hopes to understand the realm in which he lives, but he does not expect to be understood. In the Year of the Rabbit, self directives are strengthened, and each person should follow his own conscience, realizing that if he is lured away from his own righteousness, he becomes an easy victim of his own lower nature, or the foibles of his associates. The Rabbit is not protected by the society to which it belongs. It enjoys no special benefits. The world remains an unknown environment, but undisturbed by its isolation it follows the appointed way of its kind. In a Rabbit Year, resourcefulness is encouraged. The trend is toward independence, with each person learning to stand on his own feet, face his own problems, and meet his own destiny with a good hope.



The Rabbit person has one distinct shortcoming, and that is his tendency to "jump" at conclusions. There is no quicker way to attract the attention of an adversary, and in national affairs, hasty judgments and emergency measures call attention to defects without solving them. The Rabbit is often associated with children. It is playful, which to some degree suggests lack of concern for the serious duties of living. Actually, however, it accepts responsibility with good grace and seldom neglects needed precautions. The Rabbit that is said to live in the moon is usually shown working with a mortar and pestle. It is actually an alchemist transmuting base metals into precious substances for the improvement of mankind. In the Year of the Rabbit social alchemy will be emphasized. There will be a strong tendency to transmute the undesirable elements in human character, and establish practical reforms in the laws and policies of nations. Transmutation means to regenerate our own temperaments, and transform negative attributes into positive assets of character. This suggests the old chemist in his laboratory, working alone far into the night, and over the period of many years to discover the universal medicine which cures all ailments.

Many centuries ago, Bishop Toba, a priest of the Tendai Sect, painted three long scroll pictures on the theme of The Frolicking Animals. It was more or less a satirical endeavor believed to have been aimed at the Buddhist clergy, and Rabbits predominate. Like the animal stories of Aesop, The Frolicking Animals in Toba's scrolls represent the animal propensities in man, and actually, all twelve of the Chinese zodiacal creatures are phases of the human personality. These aspects are released into objectivity in their appropriate years, and it may also be assumed that humanity itself is divided into twelve types. This concept is also held in Western astrology. The pressures that arise are met in every case by the specialized resources of the twelve creatures. In a comparatively calm year, such as that of the Rabbit, humanity reacts more calmly to stress and uncertainty. In another year, like that of the Ox, people are inclined to be stolid, while in the Year of the Rooster, they are ambitious and militant. In 1975, folks will act a little more like rabbits, and therefore be reminiscent of Bishop Toba's design. Many individuals will make the best of existing conditions, and go quietly on their way seeking happiness with less luxury, and progress with less strain. It will be interesting to see how Western man in particular, will respond to Chinese astrology.

Always most sincerely,

Manly P. Hall

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