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The Chinese Horoscope and Personal Naming

Abstract

The Chinese culture and tradition includes the belief that a person's constitution and fate are predetermined by the person's Eight Characters indicating the year, month, day and hour of a person's birth, with each pair consisting of two appropriate cyclical signs drawn from two sets: Heavenly Stems and Earthly Branches. The Eight Characters are also connected with the 12 symbolic Chinese Zodiac animals and the Five Elements of the universe, i.e. Metal, Wood, Water, Fire and Earth. Therefore, giving the appropriate name to a person can secure that person's favourable constitution and fate.

The method of forming Chinese given names discussed here is based on the 12 symbolic animals of the Chinese Zodiac. The symbolic animals are: the Rat, the Ox, the Tiger, the Rabbit, the Dragon, the Snake, the Horse, the Goat, the Monkey, the Rooster, the Dog and the Pig. This method of naming combines information about the named person's birth with references to the specific features of the symbolic animal in order to influence the person's horoscope.

Additional discussion deals with some language strategies adapted by the above-mentioned method to specifically name people born in the Year of the Rat. The method considers the lexical meaning of names and their formal aspects, such as forms of Chinese characters and the meaning of individual graphical elements that make up the Chinese characters used to write the name.

Keywords

Chinese personal naming, Chinese given names, Chinese horoscope, Chinese Zodiac, Chinese Zodiac animals and name-giving

1. Introduction

Chinese naming practices based upon the characteristics of the Chinese language, Chinese writing system and Chinese naming culture grant a great opportunity for creative name-giving. There used to be and still is a great variety of algorithms for forming Chinese given names.

Chinese culture and tradition do not restrict the inventory of possible given names. In the Chinese lexicon there is no category of words reserved specifically for given names. All Chinese words (onyms included) are constructed from the same source of meaningful morphemes. In China, there has never been a fixed and limited set of appropriate given names to be chosen from. Indeed, the idea has always been to form/create given names individually by the processes of onymisation and transonymisation of words and onyms from the Chinese language lexicon.

Chinese given names are written with the use of Chinese characters (graphemes), the specific product of the Chinese ideographic-phonetic writing system. This system is roughly logosyllabic; that is, a character generally represents one syllable of spoken Chinese that may be a word or a morpheme. In some cases, characters are employed purely for their phonetic value, as phonetic (and graphical) representations of the transcribed syllables. The characters themselves are often composed of elements (structural parts) that may represent/depict physical objects, abstract notions, or pronunciation. All Chinese characters are made up of a finite number of elements which are put together in different orders and various combinations. The graphemic structure of Chinese characters is a hierarchy comprising three levels: strokes (sub-subgraphemes), elements (structural parts, subgraphemes) and characters (graphemes). Occasionally a character consists of only one element; more commonly two or more elements are combined to form more complex characters using a variety of different principles. Traditionally, 214 Chinese radicals, or roots, are the core elements of each character that carry information about the character/word meaning and/or sound (Mathews, 1963; Pleco). The specific characteristics of the Chinese script encourage considerable creativity in name-forming.

It seems evident that given names are not treated by Chinese society as purely onymic units whose sole purpose is to identify people; rather, they play a role of semantically motivated lexical units more commonly used in

the appellative sphere of the language. For Chinese society, the semantic-functional relation between a given name and its appellative source practically exists, and most given names still carry their appellative content. Chinese given names are predominantly semantically transparent and motivated – that is, they have lexical and/or associative meanings resulting from their usage as appellatives and proper names in various linguistic contexts. Given names are traditionally created with attention paid to their semantic content and to many formal aspects, e.g., the phonoaesthetic value of the component syllables, and the numerological and semantic characteristics of strokes or other structural elements of Chinese characters used to write the name. Many other factors, including various astrological or esoteric principles, are also important. Evidently, most Chinese given names are not random combinations of words or morphemes, but they are expected to have an underlying significance. However, it is often difficult to disambiguate the motivation(s) for choosing particular lexical items to create a particular given name (cf. Kałużyńska, 2008, pp. 33–39).

2. The magic influence of given names

In Chinese culture, the relationship between the name and the named person was traditionally regarded as very important for definition, or realisation, of the person's identity. A person's name was considered intimately connected, or associated, with the person. The name was supposed to express the 'essence', or the identity, of the person, and even to influence that person's fate and destiny.

Chinese names are not only helpful labels for physical identification of a person but also represent certain real or culturally desired characteristics of the named person. As given names are considered as very important determinants for a person's life and fortune, the Chinese usually pay considerable attention to both the form and meaning of each name (cf. Kałużyńska, 2008, pp. 36–37).

While creating or choosing a Chinese name, many various linguistic and extralinguistic (cultural and social) factors need to be considered. In China,

fortune-tellers and name-masters often help people to create or select the most appropriate name. Their advice is sometimes based on astrological or esoteric principles; these include the semantic and phonetic value of words, semantic and numerological value of Chinese characters used for writing the name, and the relationship to the person's horoscope based on his or her date of birth.

The Chinese believed (and this belief seems still quite popular) that a person's fate, mental characteristics and physical state, such as vitality, health and strength, are predestined or predetermined by the person's *bāzì* 八字 'Eight Characters', i.e. eight characters in four pairs indicating the year, month, day and hour of a person's birth, each pair consisting of two appropriate cyclical signs of two sets: *tiāngān* 天干 'Heavenly Stems' and *dìzhī* 地支 'Earthly Branches'. These Eight Characters are also connected with the symbolic animals of the 12-year cycle, *shēngxiào* 生肖 or colloquially *shǔxiàng* 属相 (also called in Western cultures the Chinese Zodiac), and the Five Elements of the universe, *wǔxíng* 五行, i.e. Metal, Wood, Water, Fire and Earth. A fortune-teller, after having studied the Eight Characters, determines whether the person possesses a full complement of the Five Elements. If any element is missing, an appropriate given name is created to correct the deficiency and make the person "complete". The Five Elements can form parts of, or the whole, Chinese character; they may be also represented by the number of strokes in a given character or the phonetic value of syllables.

Based on the belief that appropriate naming of a person may improve his or her fate, the words and characters used in a given name are often chosen with the intent to bring good fortune to the name bearer.

The traditional rules governing name-giving are evidently founded in the belief in the magical influence of language, the belief that words control objects, people and spirits. It is believed that a properly selected name might bring good effects and fortune, while an improper name might lead to trouble and misfortune for the name bearer (Kałużyńska, 2008, p. 49).

3. Classification of Chinese given names

There are many ways of cataloguing and classifying Chinese given names. However, the criteria of classifications are not sufficiently clear. Common categorisations of Chinese given names are based on the so-called methods, or motivations, or sources of naming. A typical example of such a classification is the one described by Wanyan Shaoyuan, based on 26 *qǔmíng fāngfǎ* 取名方法 ‘methods of naming’ (Wanyan, 1994, pp. 61–65; Kałużyńska, 2008, pp. 50–52; 2016, pp. 169–171; 2019, pp. 307–308; 2020, pp. 85–87). This and other classifications reveal the complicated nature of Chinese given names, name-giving methods and sources for names. They are sometimes based on the meaning of names (the meaning of the lexical items that names consist of), and sometimes on their formal aspects, such as pronunciation or graphical form. These selected classifications are described by Ji (1993), Xu and Xin (1999), Luo (2000), Deng (2002), and Li (2004).

4. Given names based on the Chinese Zodiac

The classification by Wanyan (1994, p. 64) mentions the method of naming: *shēngxiào fǎ* 生肖法 ‘method [based on] *shēngxiào* 生肖’. *Shēngxiào* 生肖 (also colloquially called *shǔxiāng* 属相) are 12 symbolic animals, also called the Chinese Zodiac, associated with a 12-year cycle. Properly speaking, the Chinese Zodiac is a classification scheme based on the lunar calendar that assigns an animal and its reputed attributes to each year in a repeating 12-year cycle.

In China, horoscopes dealing with a person’s personality or events in his/her life are mainly based upon the symbolism of the Chinese Zodiac (and also the Five Elements and a person’s Eight Characters). These 12 symbolic animals of the Chinese Zodiac are presented below. During translation, there is some confusion with the English synonyms of these twelve Chinese Zodiac animals, e.g., *yáng* 羊 ‘goat, sheep, ram’. The names of the 12 Zodiac animals listed below are the most commonly used synonyms. The 12 symbolic

animals of the Chinese Zodiac are: the Rat (*shǔ* 鼠), the Ox (*niú* 牛), the Tiger (*hǔ* 虎), the Rabbit (*tú* 兔), the Dragon (*lóng* 龙), the Snake (*shé* 蛇), the Horse (*mǎ* 马), the Goat (*yáng* 羊), the Monkey (*hóu* 猴), the Rooster (*jī* 鸡), the Dog (*gǒu* 狗), the Pig (*zhū* 猪).

Table 1 lists the 12 symbolic animals of the Chinese Zodiac and the associated years according to the Gregorian calendar (cf. Liu, 1997, pp. 52–55; Jiang, 2021).

Table 1. Chinese Zodiac signs and corresponding years

Chinese Zodiac sign	Years
The Rat	1900, 1912, 1924, 1936, 1948, 1960, 1972, 1984, 1996, 2008, 2020
The Ox	1901, 1913, 1925, 1937, 1949, 1961, 1973, 1985, 1997, 2009, 2021
The Tiger	1902, 1914, 1926, 1938, 1950, 1962, 1974, 1986, 1998, 2010, 2022
The Rabbit	1903, 1915, 1927, 1939, 1951, 1963, 1975, 1987, 1999, 2011, 2023
The Dragon	1904, 1916, 1928, 1940, 1952, 1964, 1976, 1988, 2000, 2012, 2024
The Snake	1905, 1917, 1929, 1941, 1953, 1965, 1977, 1989, 2001, 2013, 2025
The Horse	1906, 1918, 1930, 1942, 1954, 1966, 1978, 1990, 2002, 2014, 2026
The Goat	1907, 1919, 1931, 1943, 1955, 1967, 1979, 1991, 2003, 2015, 2027
The Monkey	1908, 1920, 1932, 1944, 1956, 1968, 1980, 1992, 2004, 2016, 2028
The Rooster	1909, 1921, 1933, 1945, 1957, 1969, 1981, 1993, 2005, 2017, 2029
The Dog	1910, 1922, 1934, 1946, 1958, 1970, 1982, 1994, 2006, 2018, 2030
The Pig	1911, 1923, 1935, 1947, 1959, 1971, 1983, 1995, 2007, 2019, 2031

Source: own work.

The *shēngxiào fǎ* 生肖法 method of naming is further explained in the examples discussed by Wanyan (1994) and others (cf. Lip, 1997; Liu, 1997; Luo, 2000; Yuan, 2001; Jin, 2002; Liu, 2003). The titles or headings of parts of the works dealing with the given names created by the method based on the Chinese Zodiac are the following: “The Chinese Horoscope” (Lip, 1997, pp. 117–119), “Naming according to the symbolic animal of the year” (Liu, 1997, pp. 52–57), “*Shǔxiang qǔmíng xuéwén dà* 属相取名学问大 ‘Great knowledge of naming based on *shǔxiang*’” (Liu, 2003, pp. 189–262), “*Shǔxiang qǔmíng fǎ* 属相取名法 ‘Method of naming based on *shǔxiang*’” (Jin, 2002, pp. 150–153); “*Yǐ shǔ’èr shēngxiào*

qímíng xísú 以十二生肖起名习俗 ‘Custom of naming according to 12 *shēngxiào*’ (Yuan, 2001, pp. 17–18); “*Ànzhào shí’èr shǔxiāng gěi hái’ǐ qímíng* 按照十二属相给孩子起名 ‘Naming children according to 12 *shǔxiāng*’” (Luo, 2000, pp. 89–94).

To name a person according to the symbolic animal of his/her birth, which is called his/her *shǔxiāng* 属相 (or *shēngxiào* 生肖), means creating or choosing a name that is considered compatible with the special features of the *shǔxiāng*. The purpose of such naming is to emphasize the good attributes of this animal (and the person named), or to avoid any risk connected with that animal to the named person.

The simplest types of given names based on a person’s *shēngxiào* are those consisting exclusively of the name of the symbolic animal, e.g.: *Niú* 牛 ‘Ox’, *Hǔ* 虎 ‘Tiger’, *Lóng* 龙 ‘Dragon’, or consisting of the name of the symbolic animal with some additional lexemes, e.g.: *Niúshēng* 牛生 ‘Ox born’ (*shēng* 生 ‘to be born’), *Dàhǔ* 大虎 ‘Great Tiger’ (*dà* 大 ‘great’), or *Fēilóng* 飞龙 ‘Flying Dragon’ (*fēi* 飞 ‘to fly’).

However, given names can also be created with the purpose of being compatible with the special features of the *shǔxiāng*, and with additional motivations behind the meaning of the name that are not explicitly stated. The lexical (or literal) meaning of the lexical items constituting such names has no evident connections with the *shǔxiāng*. As it is beyond the scope of this paper to analyze the characteristics of the names connected to all the animals of the Chinese Zodiac, the following analysis is limited to the naming of persons born in the Year of the Rat. Therefore, the paper deals with some guidelines for the creation of names for people born exclusively in the Year of the Rat; however, in some way similar guidelines are to be found for the naming of people born in the years of other Chinese Zodiac animals.

5. Given names for people born in the Year of the Rat

The Rat is the first animal of the Chinese Zodiac, and the Rat (as each of the Zodiac animals) is paired with one of the 12 Earthly Branches used cyclically in the Chinese calendar, that is *zǐ* 子 ‘the first of the 12 Earthly Branches’. And *zǐ* 子 is in turn paired with one of the Five Elements, *shuǐ* 水 ‘Water’, which is also important for the naming of people born in the Year of the Rat.

It is believed (Liu, 1997, pp. 52–57; Liu, 2003, pp. 200–201) that the main characteristics of the Rat (and of the people born in the Year of the Rat) are optimism, open-mindedness, resourcefulness and perseverance. However, the Rat is also known to lack a sense of security.

The two lists below include selected guidelines for the creation of names for people born in the Year of the Rat with features appropriate and inappropriate (or even forbidden) respectively, with some information on the motivation for their selection, and the related characteristics of Chinese morphemes/words/characters. The lists are based on the examples and information found in the works dealing with the given names created by the presented method (cf. Lip, 1997, pp. 117–119; Liu, 1997, pp. 52–57; Luo, 2000, pp. 89–94; Yuan, 2001, pp. 17–18; Jin, 2002, pp. 150–153; Liu, 2003, pp. 200–204). Other main sources of information are two Chinese-English dictionaries (Mathews, 1963; Pleco).

6. Appropriate words and characters for names of people born in the Year of the Rat

1. As rats eat various grains, it is good to name people of the Rat with morphemes/words written in characters having such structural parts or radicals as:

- (a) *cǎo* 艹 ‘grass’, the radical number 140, e.g.: *fēn* 芬 ‘sweet smell, fragrance’, *fāng* 芳 ‘fragrance, reputation’, *miáo* 苗 ‘young plant’;
- (b) *hé* 禾 ‘grain seeding’, a morpheme/character, and also the radical number 115, e.g.: *wěn* 稳 ‘steady, firm’, *yāng* 秧 ‘seedling, sprout’, *chéng* 程 ‘regulation, order’;
- (c) morphemes/words/characters: *mǐ* 米 ‘rice’, *liáng* 梁 ‘grain, food’, *dòu* 豆 ‘pod-bearing plant or seed’, *mài* 麦 ‘wheat, barley’.

2. As rats sometimes eat meat, names recommended for people born in the Year of the Rat also include words written in characters having structural parts visually or conceptually connected with *meat*, such as:

- (a) *xīn* 心 ‘heart’, a word/character, and also the radical number 61 with ↑ as the graphical variant, e.g.: *xìng* 性 ‘nature, character’, *sī* 思 ‘to think, to consider’, *ēn* 恩 ‘kindness, grace’;

- (b) *ròu* 肉 ‘meat’, a word/character, and also the radical number 130 with 月 as the graphical variant, having the same graphical form as *yuè* 月 ‘moon’, a word/character, and also the radical number 74, e.g.: *yǒu* 有 ‘to have, to exist’, *wàng* 望 ‘to look over’, *yòu* 宥 ‘to excuse, to forgive’.

3. As rats often drill holes/cavities to hide themselves, in order to guard and protect them and give them a sense of security it is good to name people of the Rat with morphemes/words written in characters having such structural parts or radicals as:

- (a) *mián* 宀 ‘roof’, the radical number 40, e.g.: *gōng* 宮 ‘palace’, *ān* 安 ‘security, peace’, *yǔ* 宇 ‘space, eaves, world’;
 (b) *kǒu* 口 ‘mouth, opening, hole’, a word/character, and also the radical number 30, e.g.: *hé* 合 ‘to join, to close’, *yòu* 右 ‘right (side)’, *tóng* 同 ‘same, similar, together’;
 (c) *sī* 厶 ‘private’, a morpheme/character, and also the radical number 28, e.g.: *tái* 台 ‘platform, table’, *hóng* 宏 ‘great, magnificent’, *sī* 私 ‘private, secret’.

4. As rats like to groom themselves, it is good to name people born in the Year of the Rat with morphemes/words written in characters having such structural parts or radicals as:

- (a) *shān* 彡 ‘to bristle’, the radical number 59, e.g.: *yàn* 彦 ‘accomplished, elegant’, *xíng* 形 ‘form, shape’, *cǎi* 彩 ‘colour, splendour’;
 (b) *jīn* 巾 ‘piece of cloth’, a morpheme/character, and also the radical number 50, e.g.: *bù* 布 ‘cloth, to declare’, *xǐ* 希 ‘to like, to love’, *cháng* 常 ‘common, constant’;
 (c) *sī* 纟 ‘silk’, the radical number 120, e.g.: *yuē* 约 ‘pact, to arrange’, *chún* 纯 ‘pure, skilful’, *jié* 结 ‘knot, to weave’;
 (d) *shì* 示 ‘to show, to reveal’, a word/character, and also the radical number 113, with 礻 as the graphical variant, e.g.: *shè* 社 ‘organized body, society’, *fú* 福 ‘good fortune, blessing’, *lǐ* 礼 ‘ceremony, rite, ritual’;
 (e) *yī* 衣 ‘clothing’, a word/character, and also the radical number 145, with 衤 as the graphical variant, e.g.: *chū* 初 ‘beginning, original’, *péi* 裴 ‘long and flowing garment’, *yù* 裕 ‘to enrich, abundant’;
 (f) *biàn* 采 ‘to explain, to distinguish’, a morpheme/character, and also the radical number 165, e.g.: *shì* 释 ‘to explain, to release’, *shì* 釈 ‘to explain, Buddha’, *yòu* 釉 ‘glaze (of porcelain)’.

5. As rats are nocturnal animals (more active at night), it is good to name people born in the Year of the Rat with words written in characters having such structural parts or radicals as *xī* 夕 ‘sunset, dusk’, a morpheme/character, and also the radical number 36, e.g.: *míng* 名 ‘name, fame’, *duō* 多 ‘many, much’, *yè* 夜 ‘night, evening’.

6. As the Rat is the first animal of the Chinese Zodiac, it is good to name people of the Rat with words meaning ‘king’, ‘ruler’, etc., or written in characters having structural parts or radicals of this meaning, such as:

- (a) *wáng* 王 ‘king, emperor’, a word/character with the same graphical form 王 as the variant of *yǔ* 玉 ‘jade’, a word/character, also the radical number 96, e.g.: *líng* 玲 ‘tinkling of jade pieces’, *qín* 琴 ‘musical instrument, zither’;
- (b) morphemes/words/characters: *jūn* 君 ‘monarch, supreme ruler’, *guàn* 冠 ‘crown’, *lìng* 令 ‘to order, to command’.

7. As the Rat is paired with *zǐ* 子, the first of the 12 Earthly Branches, and there are good relations among *zǐ* 子, *shēn* 申 ‘the ninth of the twelve Earthly Branches’ (paired with the Monkey), and *chén* 辰 ‘the fifth of the twelve Earthly Branches’ (paired with the Dragon), it is good to name the people of the Rat with words written in characters having them as structural parts or radicals:

- (a) *shēn* 申, e.g.: *kūn* 坤 ‘divinity of earth, one of the Eight Trigrams’, *shěn* 审 ‘to examine, to inspect’, *shēn* 珅 ‘piece of jade’;
- (b) *chén* 辰, also the radical number 161, e.g.: *zhèn* 振 ‘to shake, to vibrate’, *zhèn* 賑 ‘to relieve, to help’, *chén* 宸 ‘great mansion’.

8. As the Rat is paired with *zǐ* 子, the first of the 12 Earthly Branches, and there are good relations among *hài* 亥 ‘the last of the twelve Earthly Branches’ (paired with the Pig) and *chǒu* 丑 ‘the second of the twelve Earthly Branches’ (paired with the Ox), it is good to name people born in the Year of the Rat with the morphemes/words written in characters having them as structural parts or radicals, such as:

- (a) *hài* 亥, a word/character, also a structural part of some characters, e.g.: *hái* 孩 ‘child’, *hái* 骸 ‘bone’, *hé* 核 ‘seed’;
- (b) *shǐ* 豕 ‘pig’, a morpheme/character, and also the radical number 152, e.g.: *xiàng* 象 ‘shape, image, elephant’, *jiā* 家 ‘family, home’, *háo* 豪 ‘person of powers, unrestrained’;

- (c) *chǒu* 丑, a word/character, also a structural part of some characters, e.g.: *niū* 妞 ‘girl’, *niǔ* 扭 ‘to turn, to twist’, *niǔ* 纽 ‘knob, button’;
- (d) *niú* 牛 ‘ox, cattle, the Ox’, a word/character, also the radical number 93, e.g.: *mù* 牧 ‘to tend (cattle)’, *shēng* 生 ‘to be born, to live’, *móu* 牟 ‘to gain, to obtain’.

7. Improper words and characters for names of people born in the Year of the Rat

1. As rats are nocturnal animals, they do not like light or brightness, so it is improper to use the words written in characters having such structural parts or radicals as *rì* 日 ‘sun, daytime’, a morpheme/character, and also the radical number 72, e.g.: *dàn* 旦 ‘dawn, daybreak’, *míng* 明 ‘brightness, sight’, *chūn* 春 ‘spring’.

2. As rats are afraid of snakes, words written in characters having structural parts or radicals visually resembling snakes should be avoided, e.g.:

- (a) *chuò* 辵 ‘to walk’, the radical number 162, e.g.: *yíng* 迎 ‘to move towards, to meet’, *féng* 逢 ‘to meet, to come across’, *lián* 连 ‘to link, to join’;
- (b) *jǐ* 几 ‘small table, few’, a word/character, and also the radical number 16, e.g.: *fán* 凡 ‘ordinary, this world, all’, *fèng* 凤 ‘phoenix’, *huáng* 凰 ‘female phoenix’;
- (c) *gōng* 弓 ‘bow, anything bow-shaped’, a word/character, and also the radical number 57, e.g.: *zhāng* 张 ‘to open, to spread’, *gōng* 躬 ‘to bow, to bend toward’, *yǐn* 引 ‘to draw, to pull, to lead’;
- (d) *yì* 邑 ‘town, city’, a word/character, and also the radical number 163, with 阝 as the graphical variant, e.g.: *dū* 都 ‘big city’, *láng* 郎 ‘official title’, *yóu* 邮 ‘postal, to post’.

3. As rats are afraid of people, one should avoid words written in characters having such structural parts or radicals as:

- (a) *rén* 人 ‘human being’, a word/character, and also the radical number 9, with 亻 as the graphical variant, e.g.: *rèn* 认 ‘to know, to recognize’, *xiū* 休 ‘to stop, to rest’, *rèn* 任 ‘office, to appoint’;

- (b) *chì* 彳 ‘to step with the left foot’, the radical number 60, e.g.: *lǜ* 律 ‘law, rule’, *dé* 得 ‘to obtain, to get’, *dé* 德 ‘virtue, moral’.

4. As the Rat is paired with *zǐ* 子, the first of the 12 Earthly Branches, and there is a contradiction between *zǐ* and *wǔ* 午 (the latter being paired with the Horse, *mǎ* 马), it is wise to avoid the words written in characters having such structural parts or radicals as:

- (a) *wǔ* 午 ‘noon, the seventh of the 12 Earthly Branches’, a word/character, and also a structural part of some characters, e.g.: *xǔ* 许 ‘to promise, to allow’, *wǔ* 忤 ‘grudging, disobedient’, *wǔ* 忤 ‘equal, well matched, to violate’;
 (b) *mǎ* 马 ‘horse; one of the 12 animals of the Chinese Zodiac, paired with *wǔ* 午’, a word/character, and also the radical number 187, e.g.: *jùn* 骏 ‘fine horse’, *mǎ* 玛 ‘agate, cornelian’, *mǎ* 玛 ‘mammoth’.

5. As *zǐ* 子 (paired with the Rat) is also paired with one of the Five Elements, *shuǐ* 水 ‘Water’, and Water and Fire are in opposition, it is wise to avoid the words written in characters having such structural parts or radicals as *huǒ* 火 ‘fire’, a word/character, and also the radical number 86, with 灬 as the graphical variant, e.g.: *yán* 炎 ‘inflammation’, *zhào* 照 ‘to shine, to illuminate’, *yàn* 燕 ‘swallow’.

6. As *zǐ* 子 (paired with the Rat) and *wèi* 未 ‘the eighth of the 12 Earthly Branches’ (paired with the Goat) are in opposition, it is better to avoid the words written in characters having such structural parts or radicals as *yáng* 羊 ‘sheep, goat, ram’, a word/character, and also the radical number 123, e.g.: *shàn* 善 ‘good, virtuous’, *měi* 美 ‘beauty, beautiful, to beautify’, *qún* 群 ‘group, crowd’.

8. Conclusions

In China, horoscopes are based mainly on the symbolism of the Chinese Zodiac, the Five Elements and a person’s Eight Characters. Chinese culture and language associate each animal sign of the Chinese Zodiac with certain characteristics. It is believed that people born in a given year have the personality

of that year's Zodiac animal. In the past people closely adhered to the Chinese Zodiac compatibility in given name selection. Although not as common nowadays, this practice is still very much alive. One can find many publications and Internet web sites devoted to this subject (e.g., Ching, 2020; YourChineseAstrology.com).

An appropriate name for people born in a given Zodiac year needs to be compatible with the special features of the *shǔxiang*, i.e. the characteristics of the symbolic animal of that year, in order to impart favorable attributes of this animal onto the named person, and/or to avoid any risk associated with that Zodiac animal.

The rules concerning Chinese name-giving evidently originated in the belief in the magical influence of language and the belief that the name needs to be intimately connected with the characteristics of the named person. It is also believed that a properly selected name might bring good fortune and a bad name might cause trouble.

The method of naming based on the *shǔxiang* discussed here takes into account the meaning of names (the meaning of the lexical items that the names consist of), and their formal aspects, such as the graphical forms of Chinese characters used to write the names and the meanings associated with the graphical elements of the characters.

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