Lunar Year of the Monkey

The Monkey sets on fire with a fan
The light guides the monk to the West

In the Chinese lunar calendar, the year of 2016 ("bingshen" year) is the year of the monkey, being the feature of the "Heavenly Stems", among the Five Elements, the fire. The issuing stamp of the year of the monkey is related to the classic of the Chinese literature "A Journey to the West". Although based on a legend, this work talks about a monk, named Chen Yi who, in reality, lived during the Tang dynasty, also being known as The Grandmaster Sanzang. Chen Yi was born in Luoyang in 602 and died in 664. In 627, he left on pilgrimage from Chang'na to the West. After overcoming several obstacles, he arrived to India where he has studied the Buddhist Sutra and has learnt to be a master. He has stayed in India for 17 years, and has returned to China with 657 Holy Scriptures from Buddhism. For over 10 years, together with his disciples, he has translated from Sanskrit to Chinese language, 73 of those texts, divided into 1,330 booklets.

However, the Monkey is the main character of the novel "A Journey to the West". Because he is so strong, it is said that when "the golden monkey angrily waved the giant stick, the firmament of jade lied clean of dust". Later, the Monkey King abandoned the stick and started to wag a fan towards the "Burning Mountain", setting a light way for Monk Tang Sanzang. Sun Wukong, also called the Great Wise Man, with his outstanding powers, had the ability to douse the flames with his fan, but he was also able to set on the "bing fire" to generate the "shen light" that illuminates the world.

Among the 5 elements, "bing", the feature of the "Heavenly Stems" of that year, is fire and therefore the designation "bing fire", being "shen" the feature of the "Earthly Branches". In the anthology of Chinese poetry "Chu Ci", "shen dan" means "dawn", reason why the "shen" light is the first light.

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~ About the "Five Monkeys" ~

There are two kinds of theories about the attributes of the Five Elements in each year: one saying is dependent on the "Heavenly Stems" while the other is based on the sound retainers of the Five Elements, which are calculated by "Heavenly Stems" and the "Earthly Branches".

If it is calculated by "Heavenly Stems", the monkey's nature for the Five Elements is as follows:

"Fire Monkey":	*Bingshen* Year	(*Bing* belongs to Fire)	2016, 1956
"Wood Monkey":	*Jiashen* Year	(*Jia* belongs to Wood)	2004, 1944
"Water Monkey":	*Renshen* Year	(*Ren* belongs to Water)	1992, 1932
"Metal Monkey":	*Gengshen* Year	(*Geng* belongs to Metal)	1980, 1920
"Earth Monkey":	*Wushen* Year	(*Wu* belongs to Earth)	1968, 1908

If it is based on the sound retainers of the Five Elements, the monkey's nature for the Five Elements and their mnemonics are as follows:

"Fire Monkey":	*Bingshen* Year	*Bingshen* – fire from mountain slope	2016, 1956
"Water Monkey":	*Jiashen* Year	*Jiashen* – spring water	2004, 1944
"Metal Monkey":	*Renshen* Year	*Renshen* – sword edge metal	1992, 1932
"Wood Monkey":	*Gengshen* Year	*Gengshen* – wood of pomegranate	1980, 1920
"Earth Monkey":	*Wushen* Year	*Wushen* – highway earth	1968, 1908

The Macao Post adopted the "Heavenly Stems" calculation method to figure out the nature of the "Five Elements" in the ninth issue of the third series of Chinese Zodiac stamps "Lunar Year of the Monkey". This year, the monkey's nature from the "Five Elements" is "Fire Monkey", so it becomes the main character of the five stamps.

"**Fire Monkey**" – The Fire Monkey belongs to the "Red Monkey" category. He is adventurous and smart, audacious and brave in facing challenges. He acts with both hastiness and vanity. Fascinating and a loyal friend, he establishes good relations with the others and with his spouse. He gets support from the "Noblemen" for his businesses, what brings him good fortune.

"**Wood Monkey**" – The Wood Monkey belongs to the "majestic" category. He is ambitious, but has a compassionate heart towards the weakest and he is available to help others. With a high sense of responsibility and being very diligent, he has a good reputation at work. He gets rewards and has very good luck.

"**Water Monkey**" – The Water Monkey belongs to the "King of the Monkeys" category. With unusual talent and great vitality at work, he is a natural leader. He enjoys a life full of energy, with very good luck in dating and in marriage, as well as in the financial field.

"**Metal Monkey**" – The Metal Monkey belongs to the "stubborn" category. As Sun Wukong (Monkey King), in the classic work "A Journey to the West", he is very dynamic, intelligent and determined, very confident and little frivolous. With strong personality, he deals with all matters with autonomy, and has talent to start businesses.

"**Earth Monkey**" – The Earth Monkey belongs to the "pragmatic" category. With a hopeful personality, capacity to face difficulties and to overcome adverse situations, he is humble and does not pursue fame. He does not miss good luck.

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