

Crossroads Talk

CROSSROADS Language Studio's Newsletter January, 2013

The Year of the Snake



In the Chinese zodiac, and other East Asian countries with connected calendar systems, 2013 is the year of the snake. This particular year is linked to the elemental symbol of water.

In many East Asian countries, locals combine water and snakes, as well as some other ingredients, to produce an alcoholic beverage which is said to restore health and vitality. Usually using rice wine as a base, there are two main types of snake wine.

The first, and a type very common in the numerous souvenir shops in China, Vietnam and other South East Asian countries is steeped snake wine. This is where a large poisonous snake is put into a glass jar, sometimes with other snakes and scorpions, and then filled with alcohol. After a few months, the wine has absorbed the supposedly beneficial essence and venom of the snake. The venom at this stage is no longer poisonous, as the alcohol has made it harmless.

The other type of snake wine is mixed, where the fluids of the serpent are drained into the rice wine, and the mixture is consumed immediately. These fluids are often snake blood, and sometimes the bile of a snake.

Because of the high alcoholic content of this drink, it is consumed mainly in shot form.

The first instance on record of snake wine being consumed was in China in 771 BC. Almost a thousand years later we can see the first documentation of the medicinal properties of snake consumption, in a Chinese medical journal. The benefits listed are vast, including cures for baldness, lack of virility, and poor vision.

Some drinkers also choose to maximise

their chances of the health benefits by eating parts of the snake such as the eyeballs or the internal organs, including, in northern Vietnam for instance, the still beating heart.

Importation of this drink to many countries is illegal as the types of snake used in the production of the drink are endangered, and therefore protected by countries with higher levels of respect for the protection of animal species than China, or many of the countries in South East Asia where this drink is commonplace.

The cobra is the most common species of snake to be used in the production of snake wine, and this is one type of snake which is protected by international trade law. The law applies to both dead and living animals. Other protected animals which are often seen in these types of "medicinal" elixirs are turtles and seahorses.

The benefits of consuming snake in any form are unproven and rank alongside rhino horn, dried seahorse and tiger bones as an example of a belief in eastern medicine which is contributing to the demise of these species.

Article by Craig

Net News

NET LESSONS: Are you too busy to come to CROSSROADS?....Try our *lessons on the Internet!*

SITE OF THE MONTH:

Find the meaning of dreams about snakes:

<http://esmesanbona.hubpages.com/hub/Snakes-In-a-Dream-The-Meaning-of-Dreams-About-Snakes>

Some Thoughts for the Month



Joshua Says: 2012 has passed and the world didn't end as some people were predicting. As a matter of fact, I'm feeling pretty positive coming into this new year. We have new students joining us and the new semester system looks like its going to work out well for everyone. Everything looks set for another great year. All I need to do now is wish everyone a "Happy New Year"!

Junko Says: The Academy Awards nominees will be announced this month. A number of UK movies are expected to do well, and many that succeeded in the BAFTA nominations (the UK Oscars) are expected to be in the front running for the USA nominations as well. I think watching movies can help your English a lot. You can often get scripts of your favorite movies from the Internet which helps, too.



Matthew Says: So 2013 brings in yet another year of nonsense from the media. One of my New Year's resolutions is to never watch, listen to or read the news, which should be fairly easy to achieve. Another one I made is to finish my piano book and to teach my dogs six new tricks each. How many resolutions did you make? I made thirty! You are welcome to ask me what they are in class!

Craig Says: In the last month I have managed to get to Hiroshima, Kitakyushu, Fukuoka and Nagasaki. That's quite a lot of travelling for one month, and I think I will have to stick around in Matsuyama for the next few months until Golden Week, when I can afford to go to Hokkaido and make my distillery pilgrimage! Then I will have been to all the main islands in Japan.



Arnaud Dit: Bonne année! Dur dur de reprendre le travail, dans le froid, après les fêtes de fin d'année! Mais courage! Je vous souhaite à tous de passer une merveilleuse année !

NOTICE BOARD

HAPPY NEW YEAR TO ALL OF OUR STUDENTS AND FRIENDS

My New Year's Resolutions

1. I'm going to do "10 minutes every day";
2. I'm going to drop in regularly at our International Cafe-Club so I can practise speaking English (and other foreign languages) more;
3. I'm going to read more books and watch more movies (without sub-titles), in English;
4. I'm going to support our 1+1 campaign by inviting more of my friends to join our school;
5. I'm going to be kind to snakes.



Here's some great news to start the New Year with: One of our students, Rikuta Morifuji, has passed the Eiken first level. Rikuta is a first-year high school student. Here is what he has to say about his experience:

"Last autumn, I passed the 1st level of the Eiken examination. Now, I'd like to tell you the experiences I had in my studies.

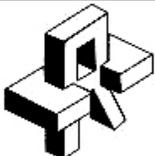
I first decided to take the Eiken examination about a year ago. I wanted to measure how well I understand the English language, and began preparing for the exam.

However, passing the grade 1 examination was much harder than I had expected. The level of vocabulary used in past questions of the exam was incredibly high and I could hardly understand what was mentioned in the passages, so I spend most of my free time memorizing English words.

A few months later, I went to take the Eiken examination. I was pretty nervous, but soon after the test began, I found myself solving the questions with ease! I was able to understand the passages easily, and the listening section was not so hard for me as well. Then, I passed the Grade1 exam.

It goes without saying that learning English is no easy task. However, the efforts you're making today will surely pay off in the long run. Please keep on studying English so that you can enjoy English in the future."

.....Congratulations, Rikuta! Good Job!!



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