

Lunar Year of the Tiger

There is a saying: “the Buffalo works on the fertile lands and leaves good luck, the Tiger crosses the green mountains and brings fortune”. With the arrival of Lunar Year of the Tiger, the word “tiger” becomes a “fashionable word” and the themes and phrases associated with the tiger are widely used in the media and in the greetings of this festive season.

In Chinese culture, the Tiger is the king in the animal kingdom. According to the “Shuowen Jiezi”- China's first dictionary, “the tiger is the animal dominating the mountains”. This is not surprising as tigers have strong and sharp teeth, retractable claws, impressive strength and the ability to jump high. The tiger is an intelligent predator because it crouches and pounces on its prey, often managing to capture it with minimal effort and energy. The tiger can imitate the sounds of deer to trick and hunt them, leave claw marks on their prey to warn against other tigers, and swim long distance.

Liu Bowen, a Chinese military strategist, philosopher and politician during the Ming Dynasty, wrote in his book “Speaking of the Tiger” that “the strength of the tiger is far more superior to that of Man”. Since long, it is a creditable that tiger symbolises strength and majesty, and there are many Chinese expressions linked to the tiger, such as “tiger soldier”, which refers to brave soldiers in a battle; “tiger general”, which means a general determined to win a war; “tiger's greatness”, which indicates a majestic spirit, “tiger's courage”, meaning fearlessness, and “tiger's pliers”, which means the pliers, a simple tool which can be used to apply great strength to fix objects firmly.

The tiger is extensively depicted in folk customs, which have long been an important part of Chinese culture. These depictions include the “tiger shoes”, “tiger hats”, “tiger dresses”, “tiger pillow”, “tiger door god”, and others... reflect the Chinese people's admiration of the tiger due to its courage and intrepidity. If the position of tiger is considered to be at the top of the food chain to help balance nature's ecosystems, then the admiration of the tiger's bravery and strength in traditional Chinese culture illustrates the harmonious relationship between men and nature, the awe and reverence for nature and life as well as the desire to conserve the environment.

On this occasion when we say goodbye to the old year and welcome the new, Macao Post and Telecommunications Bureau issues this stamp celebrating Lunar Year of the Tiger with the following message:

The Buffalo says goodbye without forgetting to leave his strength

The Tiger arrives and brings all his majestic energy

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