

## Constellations of the Chinese Zodiac

The ancient Chinese astrologers worked with little to no contact with those of the Greek world. This relative isolation means the constellations we know in the western world are unheard of in Chinese astrology. They have a system entirely their own.

The astrologers of ancient China divided their sky into 31 sections or regions. The three sections, which make up the north celestial pole are called the Three Enclosures. The stars in these areas can be seen at all times throughout the year. Each of the Three Enclosures has a name and rules a specific area of the night sky. The first Enclosure is referred to as Purple Forbidden Enclosure. This section governs the northernmost area of the sky. In ancient China, this was the middle of the sky. Next is the Supreme Palace Enclosure, which lies to the east and the north of Purple Forbidden Enclosure. Finally, the Supreme Palace Enclosure dominates the area to the West and South.

The remaining twenty -eight regions are together, referred to as the Twenty-Eight Mansions. Together, these sections are reflective of the movements of the moon in a lunar month. Each visible star in the sky is assigned to one of 283 asterisms. The name of a star is constructed by taking together the name of the assigned asterism and the number of the star.

The Twenty-Eight Mansions are grouped into what is known as the Four Symbols. Each symbol holds an equal number of mansions. These symbols are The Azure Dragon of the East, The Black Tortoise of the North, The White Tiger of the West, and The Vermillion Bird of the South.

Each of the Twenty - Eight Mansions are named in both Traditional Chinese and PinYin. While the meaning of the names can be translated into English, the actual names are not.