THE SHIKONGREN ARCHIVE

VOL. I

Foundations of Yixue

Yin and yang, the five phases, the stems and the branches — how the system was built

Lü Wenyi

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24 essays · www.shikongren.com

How to read this volume

The vocabulary layer. Twenty-four essays that take apart the terms every other branch of Chinese metaphysics borrows — and show what each one is actually doing before anyone starts using it.

Everything else here rests on this section. Before a chart can be read or a site judged, the system needs a vocabulary — and this school's vocabulary is not the one the popular books use. The ten stems and twelve branches are not mystical symbols. They are counters derived from astronomical observation, and they mark time and direction before they mark anything else. The five phases (*wuxing*, 五行) are not five substances but five states of movement, which is why a translation like “five elements” keeps producing nonsense.

Read in order, the first seven essays rebuild the stems and branches from their origin in sky observation. The next three take the five phases apart, including the question of whether the generating cycle is a theorem or something the tradition simply assumed. The middle block covers the two divination systems this school actually uses — Liuyao and Shenbing Qimen. The last essays are about the business of studying at all: what the school claims, what it refuses to claim, and why students of the *Yijing* keep getting cheated.

If you only read three: *The Physical Nature of the Heavenly Stems and Earthly Branches*, *Is the Five-Element Sequence a Theorem or an Axiom?*, and *What Can Feng Shui and the Yijing Actually Predict?*

About this book

This volume collects 24 essays first published at **shikongren.com**, a free public archive of Chinese metaphysics (yixue) maintained by Lü Wenyi. The archive runs to several hundred pieces in Chinese; the English shelf is a translation project, and each essay here was translated from a Chinese original that is still online.

The translation is faithful to the argument rather than to the sentence. Idiom was rebuilt, not carried over. Where an essay names living people in dispute, the translation generalises the name; where a passage was pure invective, it is compressed to the argument and a note says so. Course prices, phone numbers and enrolment notices — common in the Chinese originals — are omitted.

Everything in these pages is a position taken by the author and argued from cases. It is not presented as laboratory finding, and no reader is asked to accept it on authority. The useful test of any claim in this book is whether it describes something you can go and look at.

Free to download and pass on. Please keep the source and credit it; do not sell it. Each essay is also readable, with its Chinese original, at www.shikongren.com.

Compiled 2026 · 24 essays

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CHAPTER ONE

What Exactly Are the Heavenly Stems and Earthly Branches? (Part 1)

2021-05-23 · 1,911 words

> **Translator's note.** This is not an introductory text. It is an argument, written by a practitioner against his own tradition. Lü Wenyi's method is to take a classical rule, test it against logic and against observable fact, and discard it if it fails. Readers new to the subject may find the opening section dense; the glossary entries for *tiangan dizhi*, *yongshen* and *tiaohou* will help. Terms are given in pinyin on first use so they can be checked against the Chinese sources.

For several thousand years our understanding of the Heavenly Stems and Earthly Branches (*tiangan dizhi*) has been narrow. We have taken the pair to mean only four things:

1. **Time.**
2. **Direction.**
3. **Environmental objects.**
4. **Anatomical correspondences** — in the reading of a person's fate, the Stems and Branches are taken to point to parts of the body.

What we actually know is the sexagenary way of counting years — and counting years is only time. Students of the tradition and professional diviners alike have therefore concluded that the Stems and Branches *are* time. From that conclusion everything else follows: when we use the system to study a person's fate or to solve a problem, we treat the pair as nothing but a timestamp.

But our ancestors were explicit. The Stems and Branches carry time, and they carry direction, and they carry environmental objects. They stand for time, and at the same time for direction, and beyond that for the ten thousand things.

The truth is that our ancestors understood this pair more completely, more concretely and more deeply than any master of the past three thousand years — ourselves included. We have cast fortunes for three thousand years. We say *tiangan dizhi* every day. And we have used it to do nothing but tell time, while quietly ignoring the direction, the environment and the bodily correspondences the system also encodes. That is why Bazi fortune-telling has been, for millennia, a set of folk tricks that simply does not deliver accurate results.

I have said before that the seventy or eighty per cent accuracy these practitioners claim is a matter of probability plus cold reading. You may object: *I predicted that this client would marry in 2014, and she did marry in 2014 — was that cold reading too?* No, you could not have observed a 2014 marriage by watching her face. But you do not know *why* the chart let you derive 2014 rather than 2015. You do not actually understand the principle at work, and the derivation you believe you used is not necessarily correct.

Correctness is not decided by what you think or what I think. Nor is a conclusion correct merely because you reached it by reasoning — because there are two kinds of reasoning: rigorous logical inference, and a process that merely *looks* like reasoning. You may be running the second kind. And a flawed process will *sometimes* still land on a correct conclusion.

Even mathematics, the most rigorous form of inference we have, sometimes produces results that contradict observed fact. That is why mathematics still contains unsolved problems. Some years ago, at a middle-school olympiad in the United States, a student placed first but did not score full marks. He asked the committee to re-mark his paper. They did, and told him he had one

answer wrong. He said he had not. They replied that they were mathematics experts and did not misjudge papers.

The question, roughly, was this: after folding a sheet of paper a certain number of times, how many edges does it have? The boy went to the committee and folded the paper in front of them. The result had one more edge than the mathematicians had calculated. To this day they have not identified the error.

Think about what that means. The reasoning looked impeccable. If it had truly been impeccable, the result would have matched the fact. It did not, so there is an error in it — and nobody can say where. A flawed chain of reasoning can therefore produce a correct answer; a rigorous chain can produce a wrong one. All we can do is defer to the observed result.

This is why I say that any theory or technique in Yixue must be judged on three grounds: **scientific interpretation, rigorous logical inference, and observed fact.** If we cannot prove by logic how many edges the fold produces, then we count the edges. The count is the count. Fact can overturn inference. Fact can discard every scientific interpretation we have.

Take the rule that “a door facing a door is inauspicious.” If logical reasoning can refute it, well and good. If logic cannot, and science cannot interpret it, then we look at the facts — and the fact is that not every household with facing doors suffers misfortune. Some prosper. Every household has bad things happen to it. If you insist that the bad things must have been caused by the facing doors, you have made an error of thinking, a serious error of inference. For any household that suffers misfortune, we could name any number of causes: the husband's flatulence at night, the son's table manners, the colour of the bedsheets, the timing of when the bedsheets were laid out. To single out the doors is arbitrary.

So “facing doors bring misfortune” is a proposition that survives neither logical scrutiny nor contact with fact. And this is the proposition that has been

in use for millennia.

Our ancestors held that the Stems and Branches have these four aspects. In practice we use only the time aspect, and now and then the directional one — and even then we have never established what the precise correspondence between direction and the sexagenary signs actually is, or what rule governs it.

The result is familiar. We glance at a chart, announce “Kui Gang meets the realm of Fire — riches and honour under heaven,” and send everyone whose chart contains the Kui Gang star off to the south, the direction of Fire. Some of them go south and die there; some go bankrupt; some lose their families. This is what the traditional theory has been doing: harming people.

Consider *tiaohou* — “temperature adjustment” — the classical technique of choosing a chart's Yongshen by warming or cooling it. Then answer me this: if we ship a polar bear to the tropics and adjust its temperature, does the polar bear live? If we drop ice cubes into the aquarium to cool things down for your tropical fish, do the fish live? The rule that “when Metal is cold and Water is chilled, use Fire to warm them” is absurd. For a great many things in this world, temperature adjustment is simply not available. The result of adjusting them is death.

The coconut palm grows on Hainan Island and suffers from heat. Move it to Shanxi and it might survive two or three months of summer before dying. You cannot adjust a coconut palm. Adjusting it kills it.

Human beings are no different from anything else in this respect. Adjust, and you adjust to death. The whole notion of selecting a Yongshen by temperature adjustment is absurd. We must respect the facts: you cannot adjust a polar bear, a tropical fish, a coconut palm or an apple tree.

Why are there no apples in the south? Because an apple tree moved to a warm region flowers but does not set fruit. Adjust its temperature as you like; it will not produce apples. In real life, the things that can actually be “adjusted”

amount to less than one per cent. No species — plant or animal — can simply be planted anywhere and expected to flower, fruit and reproduce.

I once picked up a seed of the Hainan sword bean and planted it in my home village in Shanxi. The following year the vine grew vigorously — and produced not a single flower, let alone a pod. On Hainan the pods grow as long as a sword. In Shanxi, nothing. That is what “adjusting the temperature” of a Hainan bean does.

The same applies to potatoes. Take seed potatoes straight from Heilongjiang to Shanxi and you get a poor crop. They have to be brought south in stages. Plant them in Shanxi in the first year and the yield will be low and the tubers small; plant the following year's generation and only then do you get a good crop. Even plant breeding cannot be “adjusted” — the organism has to adapt to the new environment before it can take root, sprout and reproduce.

Our *tiaohou* theory is armchair theorising. On paper it sounds reasonable: the chart runs too hot, so cool it toward the middle. But that is a philosophical notion, and it does not translate into natural science.

The books offer another version. Two people whose charts both “need Water”: one is born on a boat, the other beside a blacksmith's furnace. The one born on the boat later becomes an official in the capital; the one born by the furnace becomes a blacksmith. The explanation given is that the Water-deficient person born on the water became an official, while the one born by the fire stayed at the forge.

It sounds plausible for about three seconds. In fact it is a delusion built on careless thinking. If Water is the Yongshen, *how much* water? A drop, or a bucket? An ocean, or a stream? If Fire is the Jishen, is the fire of a forge necessarily the Fire that harms this chart? *How much* fire does it take to damage it?

The ancients never asked about quantity. Picture a man in the desert. A bottle of water will slake his thirst; a single water molecule will do nothing. Water may be his Yongshen, but one molecule will not carry him out of the desert. So the inherited theory rests on a flawed mode of thought, and it misleads us. "The Yongshen is Water, so live near water; the Jishen is Fire, so avoid fire" — logic alone shows this to be absurd.

Then there is the maxim "when things reach an extreme, they reverse." This too is a philosophical concept. In physics it does not exist. In the physical world, reaching an extreme does not produce reversal; it produces destruction. Do you turn back into a child at eighty? No — you live on, and then you end. You go to the extreme and you die; you do not return to childhood and start again. Eat steamed buns without stopping and eventually you die of them, but the buns do not come back out of you.

In the physical world, anything pushed to its limit undergoes qualitative change, and the result is *a different thing* — not the original thing reversed. So "extreme produces reversal" has no place in physics.

Yet practitioners of traditional fortune-telling spend their days applying a philosophical concept to a physical world. Human beings do not live inside philosophy. They live inside matter and energy, and in that world they are affected by matter and energy. They are not affected by philosophy. Philosophy, properly speaking, belongs to psychology, or to a corner of the humanities and social sciences.

And we have conflated the humanities with the natural sciences in the study of prediction. Until that changes — until the habit of thinking changes — you will not see what divination actually is.

CHAPTER TWO

What Exactly Are the Heavenly Stems and Earthly Branches? (Part 2)

2021-05-24 · 1,613 words

> **Translator's note.** This part carries the author's central claim: that the sexagenary cycle is not a clock but a description of a physical configuration in the solar system. The astronomical arithmetic here — Jupiter's twelve-year period, Saturn's thirty, the sixty-year least common multiple, the five-year Jupiter–Saturn–Sun alignment — is the author's own reading, offered as support for a traditional system rather than as a contribution to astronomy. Readers should take it as an argument, not as a citation. The Chinese original remains the authority.

In Taiyuan I met a professor who told me the *Yijing* is not a science. I told him plainly that the *Yijing* operates on two levels: one philosophical, one natural-scientific. The *Yijing* itself is not a natural science, but Yijing prediction is a hundred per cent natural science. Anyone with modern scientific training knows that prediction requires a model, and a model requires a system; you reason inside that system and arrive at a prediction about the future. Building a model requires data. Without data you cannot build a model; without logical relations you cannot build one either. Every predictive discipline, therefore, is built on data and on strict logical relations. How could strict logical relations and concrete data be philosophy?

When I had finished, the professor shut up. People who hold his view have a problem with how they think.

The same is true of the Stems and Branches. When we analyse a Bazi chart it looks as though we are analysing a time system — but that is only because we

do not know what the Stems and Branches specifically mean. First, we know that they stand for four things. Second, we have to ask what they actually *are*. They are not time at all.

For our purposes, in a Bazi chart, they mean precisely this: **what manner of motion, and what intensity of motion, fills the body of a person born at this moment.**

Why say that? We have to explain where the Stems and Branches came from.

The twelve Earthly Branches

Our ancients said it plainly: these are the twelve segments of Jupiter's orbit around the Sun. Jupiter takes about twelve of our years to go round once, so our ancestors divided the distance Jupiter travels into twelve parts and assigned a distance to each. What happens in the *Zi* segment, the *Chou* segment, the *Yin* segment is entirely different.

What has Jupiter's orbit to do with Earth? I do not know why our ancestors defined it this way. But modern astrophysics and astronomy happen to vindicate both the wisdom and the strange habit of mind of the Chinese ancients. Modern science shows that without Jupiter — or with Jupiter removed from the solar system — Earth would be a sheet of fire where nothing grows. Every day we would take incoming meteor strikes generating disasters equivalent to countless atomic bombs, and no life of any kind could exist here.

Jupiter draws 99.9 per cent of the radiation in the cosmos, and of the meteors and planets inside the solar system that might strike Earth, onto its own surface — or, under its enormous gravity, flings them back out into space. Jupiter keeps these world-ending energies, physical and radiant alike, away from us. Jupiter is what protects all life on Earth.

Why, with so many planets available, did the ancients fix on Jupiter? That is the wisdom of the Chinese ancients, and we their descendants have distorted

it. Only modern science tells us that without Jupiter there would be no life on Earth.

Jupiter's position changes its effect on Earth completely. The influence on all life of Jupiter moving through the *Zi* sector is entirely different from its influence in *Chou* or *Yin*. **This is why a zodiac sign alone, without a full chart, can sometimes read a life correctly.**

But the zodiac alone cannot be right every time. What it gives you is the fate shared by everyone born under that sign — the common part. “Common” means that while Jupiter moves through *Zi*, it exerts a common influence on all life on Earth. But people live in different environments. When it rains, one person is indoors, one holds an umbrella, one is out in it. The same rain affects all three differently — and yet all three are affected; only the size and the manner of the effect differ.

That is why the zodiac can be right and cannot be right. It cannot be right because every person on Earth has a particular living environment, and that is what produces the difference between fates. It can be right because everyone lives on Earth, and everyone receives the influence of the rain.

Saturn, and where the sixty come from

Why the ancients fixed on Saturn is another puzzle. Modern science tells us that what most affects human life is neither the Sun nor the Moon but Saturn.

Because the influence of Sun and Moon on Earth is a *balanced* system, and a balanced system needs no attention paid to it. Solar radiation does affect Earth, but constantly and evenly — again like a balanced system. Whether people on Earth are irradiated to death is decided by Saturn and Jupiter. Remove Jupiter and Saturn and the Sun's radiation kills everyone; no life survives. So where Saturn and Jupiter sit governs, severely, how solar radiation affects life and how life changes.

That is why the ancients fixed on Saturn and Jupiter. Modern science holds that the Jupiter–Saturn system decides whether life on Earth can exist at all. Which way life on Earth develops is not decided by the Sun and Moon, because their influence is balanced — whereas the Jupiter–Saturn system's influence is not. It changes with position.

Which is to say: the Chinese ancients' notion of “nine stars in a line” is not necessarily inauspicious, nor necessarily auspicious. That is an astronomical question. But we know Saturn takes about thirty years to go round the Sun. Take the least common multiple with Jupiter's twelve, and you see where the sixty-term cycle comes from.

You also see why there is “Jia combines with Ji, Yi with Geng; Jia clashes with Geng, Yi with Xin”: every five years, Jupiter, Saturn and the Sun fall on a single line. If Jupiter and Saturn are on opposite sides of the Sun, that is a clash (*chong*). If they are on the same side, that is a combination (*he*). That is where the “clash” and “combination” of the Heavenly Stems come from.

And for Earth, whether those three bodies lie on one line, or Jupiter and Saturn sit on opposite sides of the Sun, makes an entirely different difference.

So people born in a *Jiazi* year and a *Yichou* year differ enormously, both in the direction of their fate and in its substance. Because when Jupiter, Saturn, the Sun and Earth sit in a given configuration, everyone on Earth receives the same energy — but because the terrain and landforms of Earth's surface vary, and people live in different environments, that same energy acting on one particular person varies in intensity and in mode. That is what produces the difference in fate between people born in the same year.

By this point, do you still think “Jiazi, Yimao, Bingyin, Dingchou” is a time?

A person born in a *Jiazi* year has a different form of particle-clustering in the body from one born in a *Yichou* year. Take an example. In a *Jiazi*-year person the particles cluster hand-in-hand, in rings. In a *Yichou*-year person they

cluster back-to-back, in heaps. Different formation, different pattern. When a car ploughs into the pattern, different people are injured and the disorder takes a different shape.

So the Stems and Branches of our birth moment are not time. They mean **what form the particle-clustering in our body takes**. That is the root of it.

If you think it is a time, then do not expect to read a fate accurately — or a hexagram, or to adjust a feng shui correctly. Every practitioner who has adjusted a client's house is afraid to answer the client's phone afterwards, afraid the client will come after him, because he does not know whether the method worked. He only followed what the book said, or improvised something out of thin air, so he dreads the phone. He cannot answer it and he cannot sleep. Only when whatever was going to happen to the client has happened does the stone in his chest come down. Or else he cheats the client, and the client never contacts him again. Occasionally he gets one or two right, boasts loudly of his skill — and never mentions the ones he killed.

That is the psychology and the behaviour of this profession.

When you understand what the Stems and Branches essentially are, what relation they bear to the ten thousand things, and how they act on one another, then the feng shui adjustments we prescribe and the plans we make for remaking a fate will, if the client carries them out, reach the goal within the time frame we specify. **That is the difference between science and superstition.**

A person has cancer. A psychologist who has talked with you for an hour will never guarantee whether you recover. A physician can tell you, with real accuracy, whether you will be alive in three months. The psychologist cannot and would not, because all he has is psychological analysis and inference — he has not seen the nature of the world. He treats appearances. The physician

knows through test data and a large body of clinical experience. The scientist goes to the essence.

CHAPTER THREE

What Exactly Are the Heavenly Stems and Earthly Branches? (Part 3)

2021-05-25 · 3,437 words

> **Translator's note.** This final part is the most polemical of the three. It moves from the mechanics of the system to an attack on the profession — on the schools, on the masters who write the books, and on the habit of mind that keeps the whole thing running. The author names the four canonical Tang-dynasty geomancers (Yang, Liao, Zeng, Lai) and refers to a living academic under the anonymisation used in the Chinese original; that anonymisation has been preserved. The Chinese text is more personal in its accusations than the English renders it. Nothing in the argument depends on the accusations, so readers who find them distracting can skip the four paragraphs marked as such without losing the thread. Two technical terms recur: *shengqi*, the "life-breath," and *yinyang chonghe zhi qi*, the qi of yin and yang in harmonious opposition.

When you study traditional culture, do not assume that traditional culture is superstition. It is called superstition because you tell clients nonsense like "Jia Yang Wood is a towering tree, Yi Yin Wood is a flower or a shrub." If you genuinely understood that *Jiazi* means a particular kind of energy in your body — that a person born in a *Jiazi* year has a different particle-clustering from one born in a *Yichou* year — then things would look different.

When the year *Jihai* arrives, the energy that *Ji* and *Hai* bring from the cosmos, the energy of the configuration of *Ji*, *Hai*, Saturn, Jupiter, the Sun and Earth, strikes the Earth. The clustered particles in your body are affected by that incoming energy, and the clustering changes.

Take an example. We are sitting in orderly rows in a classroom when a wolfdog bursts in, leaping and thrashing. Our seating is scattered and disordered. That is how external energy breaks an existing order.

This is why the “current year, current month, current day, current hour” affect a person's fate. Not because time acts on us. Because energy arriving from that direction strikes our bodies and turns the hand-in-hand particles into back-to-back ones. Our fate changes. Time is not what changes it.

If your habit of thought shifts, then when you look at a Bazi chart or at a feng shui you will understand why a human fate is the way it is.

This is the essence of the Stems and Branches: they stand for the form of particle-clustering in the body; they stand for what energy our body will receive in a given period, and therefore what mode and what intensity of influence we are under. That, and nothing else, is the essence.

Direction is not a detail

Once we know that, we know how much direction matters. This year is a *Hai* year. We are affected far more by energy from the *Hai* direction than from the *Xu* direction.

If we understand how the Jupiter–Saturn system relates to the Sun and to Earth, then in a *Jiazi* year we know their positional relation, can draw it on paper, and can go outside at night and find where Saturn and Jupiter actually are. In a *Hai* year the greatest influence on us is Jupiter's occupying the *Hai* sector of the sky. So in a *Hai* year, energy from the *Hai* direction has absolutely first-order influence on everything on Earth, people included.

Move toward *Hai* and you are going against the current. Move away from *Hai*, toward *Si*, and you are going with it. Going with the current and against it affect a fate differently.

So reading a fate from time alone is reading blind. You must understand that moving in different directions — the energy arriving from that direction — will affect the clustering of the particles already formed in your body. Move toward *Hai*, and the energy of *Hai* turns your hand-in-hand particles back-to-back. Move toward *Mao*, and the energy of *Mao* turns them head-to-head. Move toward *Wu*, and the energy of *Wu* turns them foot-hooked-to-foot.

A human fate is not decided by time at all. It is decided by the direction we move in, and by the environment we live in once we have moved there. Time is only a label — but from that label we can roughly judge how a thing will develop and change.

Here is an example. I tell you this glass of water has stood for three days. Counting three days, you infer that the water has gone cold. But it may not have. Ignore the environment the glass is in, and of ten thousand glasses of water, nine thousand nine hundred and ninety-nine will have cooled and one will not — because nine thousand nine hundred and ninety-nine were carried to the North Pole and one to the equator, set out in the sun. After three days that one is still warm. Direction of movement and the environment a thing exists in decide whether the glass is hot or cold after three days.

It is quite normal that reading a fate from time alone gets some of it right, because what you get right is the shared part of some people's fates. But **the world does not move according to fixed laws.** If it did, the world would not deteriorate. If every driver obeyed the rules there would be no crashes. If every part in a car ran as designed, the engine would never fail and the brakes would never give out. The world's actual motion is not one hundred per cent according to basic law. The world changes because nothing in it — people included — moves according to the normal law of fate.

Which brings us to another habit of thought, and the enormous gap between it and objective fact.

The basic law is not the world

From the day we begin learning fortune-telling we are shown “Wood generates Fire, Fire generates Earth, Earth generates Metal, Metal generates Water, Water generates Wood.” This cycle is not wrong. It is only the basic law — and the basic law is not the whole of how things generate and overcome one another.

In objective fact, the quantity of Fire generating Wood vastly exceeds the quantity of Wood generating Fire. **Fire generating Wood is the fundamental reason the world exists, not Wood generating Fire.** Wood generating Fire is the basic law. In the human world we see only that wood can light a fire, and we do not see the fire that is sunlight. The ancients said sunlight is Fire. Without sunlight, would plants on Earth still exist? Without light, every plant on Earth dies and is gone. Plants exist because they are struck by sunlight — Fire generating Wood. Without that, there would be no plants on Earth.

Everyone says Fire generates Earth. But you have not noticed that Earth generating Fire is more powerful still. Coal is Earth, and coal generates fire — Earth generating Fire.

Petroleum has the Water property of the Five Phases. “Moistening and descending” is the signature of Water, and petroleum, gasoline, kerosene and diesel all have it: *run*, moistening, means it penetrates; *xia*, descending, is a mode of motion. Every petroleum has this moistening-descending function. By the Five Phases, petroleum is Water in character — and petroleum is precisely what generates fire. Which shows that the ancients' generation-and-overcoming cycle is only the basic law, and the basic law cannot explain everything in this world.

In geometry, side-angle-side gives you congruent triangles. That one rule cannot solve every triangle problem, because you can also prove congruence

by side-side-side, or by angle-angle-side. So the Five-Phase cycle is only the basic law.

If we want to read a fate accurately, if we want to interpret this world, we cannot judge by the basic law.

In the *Jinsuo Yuguan* and *Guolu Yinyang* schools: “sand in the east is auspicious, water in the west is auspicious.” In practice, plenty of eldest sons with water in the east still get promoted, get rich, fill the house with children and live to a hundred — while men with sand in the east lose money, die young, and are cut down by blades or shot. The facts show that “sand east, water west is auspicious” is only the basic law.

To try to unlock the world's secrets with one basic qualitative rule is like a kindergarten child who has just learned that 1 + 1 = 2 setting out to crack Goldbach's conjecture.

There is a joke about this. A landlord hires a tutor for his son. Day one the tutor teaches “one” — a single stroke. Day two, “two” — two strokes. Day three, “three” — three strokes. The son then tells his father he has learned to write, and the tutor is dismissed. Day four, the landlord wants to invite a guest to dinner and asks his son to write an invitation to a man named *Qian Baiwan* — “Thousand Hundred Ten-Thousand.” Days pass and the invitation is not ready. The landlord goes to look, opens the door, and finds the room strewn with paper covered in horizontal strokes. The son looks up: “Why does this guest have such a strange name as Thousand Hundred Ten-Thousand? I haven't finished the strokes yet.”

That is the joke that basic law alone produces. To think you can finish writing by basic law is an absurd habit of thought — and it is widespread among practitioners of Yixue.

So when we face the basic law we must ask: every rule, every judgement, has a range of application. Every science has a range of application. There is no

science that holds everywhere. Every science is reliable within a certain range and unreliable outside it. So every judgement is reliable — and because you do not know its range, you get hit-and-miss results.

Someone says scientists have identified more than two hundred kinds of cold virus; vaccinate against one and you catch another, so no matter how you treat it you still catch colds. Then a few days ago, at the import expo in Shanghai, an American company launched a cold remedy that clears every type of cold virus within twenty-four hours — because earlier remedies looked at the body structure of one particular virus, whereas this one found the single life-defect common to all of them. So one drug clears them all.

Feng shui is the same. If we understood what feng shui essentially is, all the feng shui schools would be like the different cold vaccines. Look for the common flaw the way the drug company looked for the common defect, and one school would solve every feng shui problem the way one drug cures every cold. Our theory can defeat every school, because we know what feng shui is.

Feng shui is not a magnetic field

Many people say feng shui is a magnetic field. It is not. The magnetic field is only a tool we use when we study feng shui.

Why use that tool? Because through it we can tell where east, south, west and north are. The magnetic field is for determining direction — because only by determining direction can we know that energy from the east and energy from the west have different effects on our bodies once they enter. We must know which direction's energy is entering our body before we can know whether we are fortunate or unfortunate in this environment.

The magnetic field is nothing but a tool for judging direction. Feng shui is not a magnetic field, and a magnetic field is not feng shui. Anyone who says the magnetic field is feng shui has not even understood the old books.

The ancients said it plainly: **“The buried take advantage of the life-breath.”** Every practitioner knows this line and quotes it. About the life-breath, or the vein-breath of the dragon, the ancients were clear: it is the qi of yin and yang in harmonious opposition. That is not a magnetic field. Feng shui is the qi of yin and yang in harmonious opposition; the energy of feng shui is the life-breath; the energy of feng shui is the vein-breath of the dragon. Therefore feng shui is not a magnetic field.

We, the descendants of the ancients, actually believe feng shui is a magnetic field — and then wonder why we cannot use feng shui to benefit people and ourselves and solve their problems. This is the fundamental reason the masters ruin themselves and their own children. How many masters have adjusted their own sons and daughters into good fortune? Not many. Nor have many adjusted other people's families completely — because they all believe feng shui is a magnetic field.

Now there is even a school called “genetic feng shui.” Feng shui has nothing to do with genes. What a gene is, the masters themselves do not know. I asked a master the difference between DNA and RNA and he did not know — and having invented “genetic feng shui” without knowing the relation between the two, he founded a school.

The profession

The next four paragraphs are the author's attack on the profession. They are translated as written.

So I say this profession is full of deliberate frauds. Such deliberate frauds come to a bad end.

The ordinary practitioner who studies the theory and does not set out to cheat people still accumulates merit — because everyone a non-deliberate practitioner kills was going to die anyway, and everyone he helps was going to be well anyway. Those practitioners are only doing the work of folk custom,

and the content of that work is burying the dead. That is why the village grave-diggers, the *tu yinyang*, mostly suffer no retribution. Most of them accumulate merit by burying the dead, and many of their descendants get into Tsinghua and Peking University, or rise in office and grow rich.

But of the masters who write books and run classes and take disciples, hardly any have outstanding descendants, and hardly any escape cancer — because they know they are harming people and go on harming them, whereas the village *tu yinyang* is following the book, burying people by the methods written in the book, inventing nothing and defrauding no one. So the spirits do not settle accounts with the *tu yinyang*. They settle them with the men who wrote the books. Which is why, from antiquity to the present, few of those who wrote the books died well. Of the four great masters who wrote — Yang, Liao, Zeng and Lai — not one died well. All came to miserable ends. Shao Yong could calculate heaven and earth and everything else with accuracy, and in the end died of cold and hunger, disease and a shortened life. Had he truly known the relations among the way of Heaven, the way of Earth and the way of Man, then even without office, riches or long life, he should not have died in poverty and sickness.

A professor at a certain university, well past eighty, was found by several hospitals to have a tumour; when they opened him up there was none. Medicine has never explained it. After that his health declined sharply and he stopped reading feng shui and telling fortunes — because when he worked for clients he was not thinking about getting them completely well, he was thinking about how to talk them into paying more. Spirits have powers; some are weaker than a man, some stronger. This professor met one stronger than himself, one that left his belly alone ordinarily but tormented it exactly when he went to hospital, so that the scan found a tumour. Even if you do not believe in spirits, I can put it in physical terms: when he went to a client's house to read the feng shui and take the client's money, he was moving, doing work — and work done accumulates energy in the body. A master who knows

his theory is wrong and lectures anyway, who knows he cannot adjust a client's fate and takes the money anyway, will certainly come to a bad end.

What the Stems and Branches actually stand for

The Stems and Branches are not only time. They stand for what clustered particles exist inside a thing; for the form of particle-clustering in each person's body; and for the fact that energy arriving from the different directions — *Jia*, *Mao*, *Yi* and the rest — acts on a person in entirely different modes and at entirely different intensities.

Take an example. The classroom is a person, and we students in it are the cells in that person's body. Now a wolfdog, a small fox terrier and a biting Tibetan mastiff burst in.

If it is the little fox terrier, we glance at it and go on listening quietly — as harmless as a fly. If it is a mastiff that bites, we panic, get up out of our seats, stop listening; and the disorder is like a man getting cancer, or his head being crushed under a car — disaster, and death.

The Stems and Branches stand for energy from different directions, whose influence on a person is entirely different. And they stand for the ten thousand things — because energy from the *Jia* direction has a particular mode of motion, energy from *Jia* and from *Yi* in the sky has its own distinctive mode of motion, and the matter inside every thing around us likewise has a mode of motion.

The energy in this glass of water has its own mode of motion, and it resembles the mode of motion of energy arriving from the cosmic direction *Ren–Zi–Gui*. So we connect the thing “water” with *Ren Zi Gui*.

Plants are Wood. The mode of flow of the energy moving inside a plant resembles the mode of motion of energy arriving from the cosmic direction *Jia–Mao–Yi*. So we connect “Wood” with *Jia Mao Yi*.

That is, the Stems and Branches stand for which thing's internal mode of energy motion is identical with which cosmic mode of energy motion. Only when you understand this can you find what prediction actually rests on, and know how feng shui acts on a human life. Only then, when we use these techniques to remake a life — using the chart and the environment a person lives in to remake their fate — will we know what is needed.

It is emphatically not a matter of putting out a lucky cat and expecting money. **A lucky cat may bring you cancer.**

Keeping a dog is not necessarily for guarding the gate; dogs also kill people. To think a dog will certainly bring you happiness is a foolish habit of thought, because the objective material world does not move in the order of your thinking. If it did, the world would be good and free of suffering. So only when you know what a lucky cat placed *there* is attracting can you place one — because a lucky cat can attract money, and can also attract disaster, thieves, illness, and a lover for your husband. Whether to place one is a question for scientific logic and objective fact, not for subjective imagination.

Some people place a *pixiu* thinking it will eat other people's wealth and deposit it in their house. But I can equally hold that the *pixiu* eats your household's wealth, keeps it in its belly, and drops it far outside your gate. So a *pixiu* does not necessarily enrich you; and even if it does bring wealth inside, a *pixiu* of Wood, Fire, Earth, Metal or Water brings a different kind of wealth.

Our entire traditional culture sits inside absurd habits of thought. We must face it rationally and objectively rather than hearing, believing and following blindly. If you are one of the three-blind — blind of ear, blind of belief, blind of following — then it would be very strange if you were neither cheated nor cheating. For the three-blind to be cheated by masters is what accords with the way of Heaven and Earth; otherwise Heaven's principle would not permit it. And if you are *not* cheating people, Heaven's principle does not permit that

either, because your habit of thought is the habit of thought of the cheated and of the cheating.

Only by adjusting your habit of thought, and knowing the nature of this world rationally and objectively, will you stop being cheated — and you will not need to cheat, and can still rise in office and grow rich, change your life for the better, and steer your fate toward the best direction available.

CHAPTER FOUR

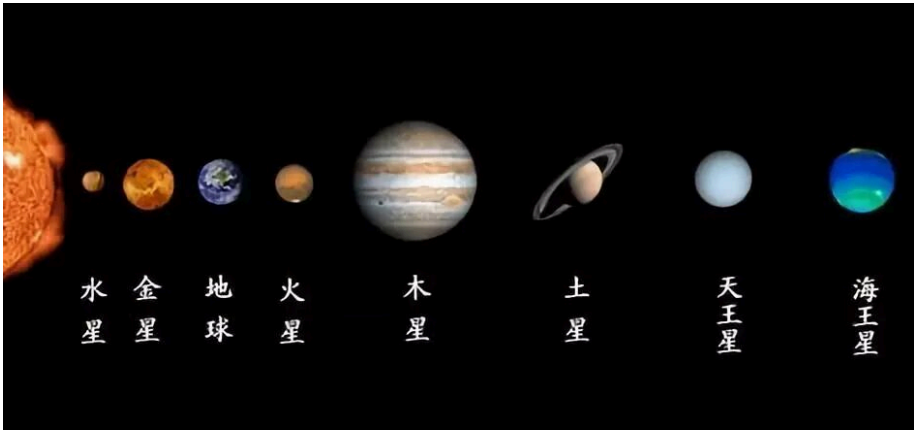
What Is the Astronomical Origin of the Ten Heavenly Stems?

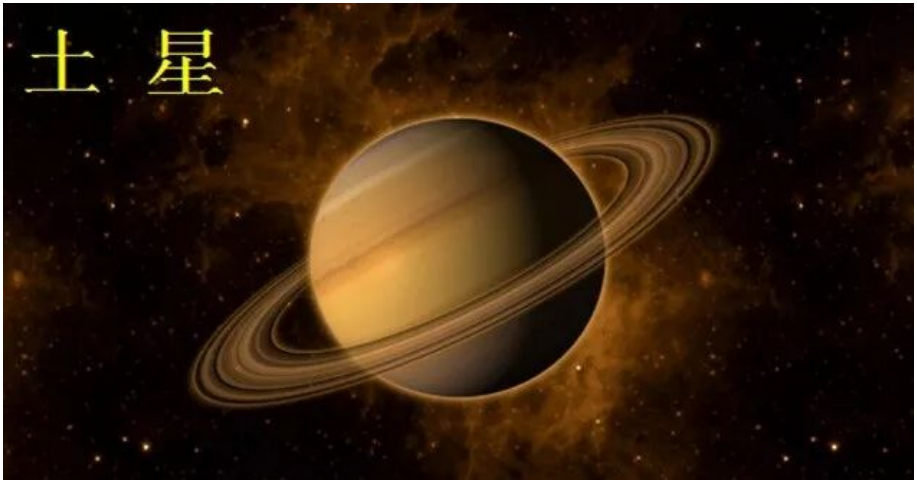
2020-02-04 · 1,114 words

> **Translator's note.** This article belongs with the three that follow it. Together they answer a single question: what are the Stems and Branches *made of*? The answer given here is astronomical, not symbolic — the ten Stems are read as ten configurations of Jupiter, Saturn, Earth and the Sun. Readers who have met the Stems only as "Yang Wood is a tall tree, Yin Wood is a flower" should expect that reading to be dismissed, politely at first and then not politely at all.
>
> The original contains a passage cursing named and unnamed plagiarists in extremely violent language (premature death, dismemberment, the extinction of one's descendants). It has been condensed into a single sentence. The argument does not depend on it.

Saturn was called *zhenxing*, "the garrison star", in ancient China. It is one of the eight planets and the second largest in the solar system.

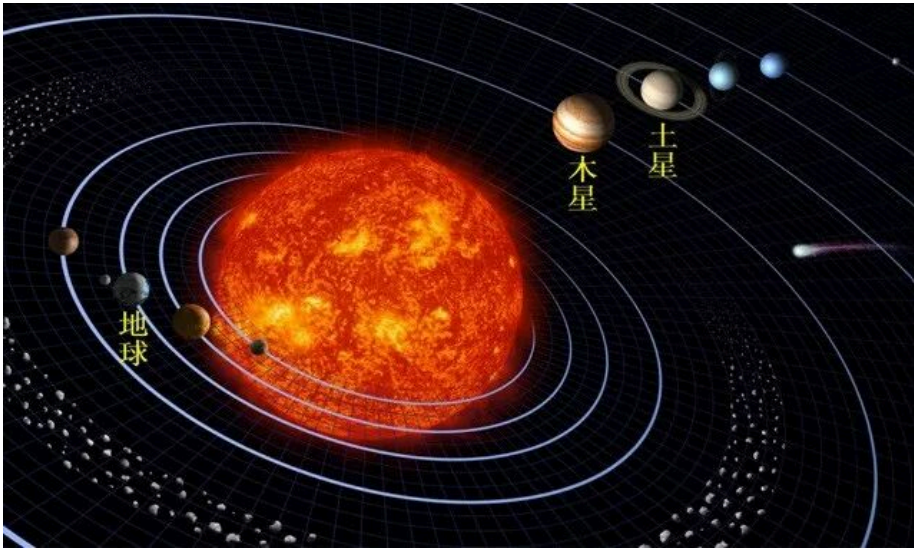
On the question of the Heavenly Stems, modern astronomy has established something specific: of all the planets, the two that most affect life on Earth are Jupiter and, after it, Saturn. The relationship between the two is called, in astronomy, the Jupiter–Saturn system — and that system exerts a substantial influence on terrestrial life.



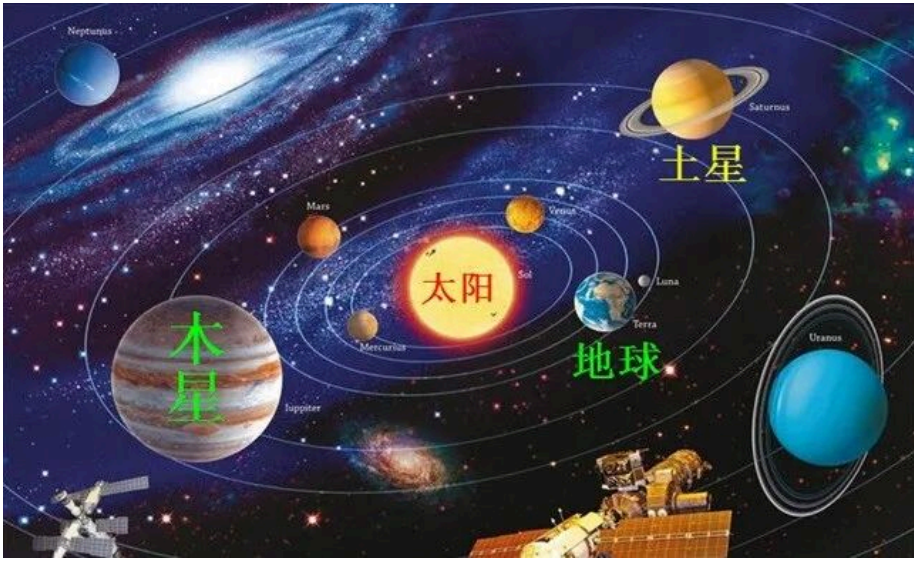


Saturn's orbital period is 29.5 Earth years, roughly thirty. Jupiter's is twelve. The ratio between them is five to two.

A striking consequence follows. Roughly every ten years, Earth, Jupiter, Saturn and the Sun fall essentially into a straight line. **This is what the concordances of the ten Heavenly Stems describe.** (See the diagram below.)



Every five years, Jupiter and Saturn sit on opposite sides of the Sun. (See below.)



Jupiter is the largest planet in the solar system, so its influence on Earth is the greatest. Saturn is the second largest, so its influence is second.

When Jupiter, Saturn, Earth and the Sun form a line, their combined gravitational field acts on Earth in a way that matters — and life on Earth is affected accordingly. **That, in fact, is where the ten Heavenly Stems come from.** Once this is grasped, the question of which Stems combine and which clash resolves itself: why there are five concordances and four clashes among the Stems stops being an arbitrary rule to memorise and becomes a consequence.

It also explains why a reading can be done from the Stems alone, without the Branches. Take a *bing-shen* year. Working only from the *bing* fire, one can still say a great deal about the people born in that year — but what one is describing is the *shared* fate of everyone born under that configuration. What the Stems alone cannot do is distinguish one such person from another.

And here we must be blunt about a widespread misreading. The Stems are **not** what the popular books say they are — *jia* wood as a towering tree, *yi* wood as a delicate flower. That is a corruption of the system. You may, if you like, describe the Stems as a life cycle; as poetry it is harmless. But if you *use* that picture to do a reading — if you think of the Stems and Branches as a narrative of growth and decay — then your entire mode of reasoning has already gone wrong, and you will never be able to explain why two people born in the same year, month, day and hour nonetheless live different lives.

Only when you treat the Stems and Branches as **different intensities of energy acting in different ways** does that problem become solvable.

Anyone studying this system has to go down into its nouns and concepts. Stay at the level of the humanities — treat the system as literature, as culture, as a way of talking about life — and the result is self-deception. You will not understand why a reading sometimes hits and sometimes misses. When you sit in front of a client and get something exactly right, and then get the next

thing wrong, you will have no idea why, and your practice will remain a cat chasing a mouse.

Once the nature of the four-pillar chart is clear, the rest follows. Take any combination of Stem and Branch — *jia-zi*, say. If it appears as a **year**, it denotes one particular arrangement of Earth, Sun, Jupiter and Saturn; you could locate those four bodies in the sky at that moment. If the year is *yi-chou*, that denotes a different arrangement.

Different arrangements mean that every living thing on Earth receives the "primordial life energy" of the cosmos at a different intensity and through a different mode of action. Because the positions of Earth, Sun, Jupiter and Saturn differ from year to year, people born in a *jia-zi* year, a *yi-chou* year and a *bing-yin* year differ enormously in their fates.

A year denotes the broad positional relationship among these four bodies.

A month — say *bing-yin* through *ding-chou* within a *jia-zi* year — denotes twelve finer variations *inside* that broad relationship. This is why people born in the same year but different months receive the energy at different intensities and in different modes, and why their fates diverge substantially.

A day and an hour work the same way at a still finer scale. People born in the same year and month but on different days, or at different hours, receive the energy differently again, and their fates differ accordingly.

> *The Chinese original inserts here a long passage cursing plagiarists of the author's work, promising them early death, mutilation and the end of their family line. It is omitted.*

When a person's four pillars are written out, one can mark on a single diagram exactly where Earth, Sun, Jupiter and Saturn stood during the two-hour window of that person's birth. This is the shared component of fate among

people born in the same year, month, day and hour — and it is why a chart can be accurate at all. Different charts give different fates.

So why is a chart *not* accurate? Because everyone born in the same year, month, day and hour occupies a different spatial environment. Different environment means a different intensity and mode of reception of that same cosmic energy, and therefore a different fate.

It is raining outside. One man is indoors; another is in the yard. The man indoors receives only damp air. The man in the yard gets soaked, and catches cold. Same rain, same hour, different outcome — because the receiving environment differed.

That is the root of why the chart alone is never enough.

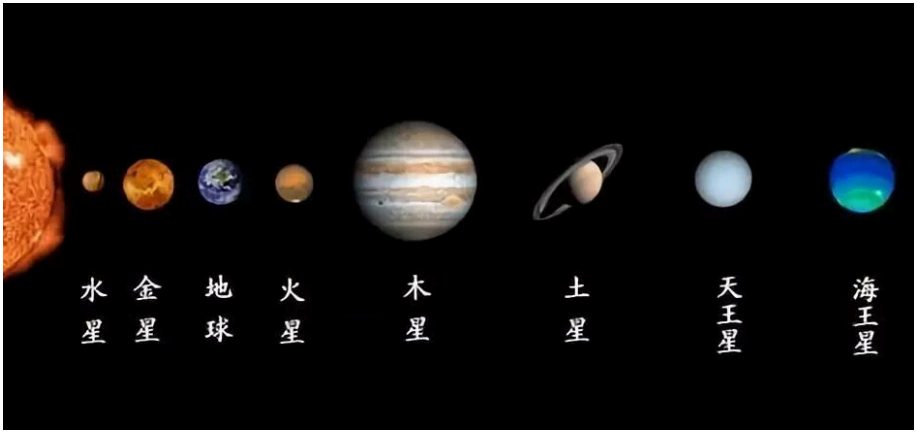
CHAPTER FIVE

What Is the Astronomical Origin of the Twelve Earthly Branches?

2020-02-02 · 624 words

> **Translator's note.** The companion piece to the previous article. Where the ten Stems track the Jupiter–Saturn alignment, the twelve Branches track Jupiter alone. Read together they make a single claim: the sexagenary cycle is not a convention that happens to have survived, but a record of two planetary cycles and the way they interlock.

The twelve Earthly Branches were fixed by the ancients from the motion of Jupiter. Jupiter's orbital period around the Sun is twelve years; Chinese astronomy calls the planet *suixing*, "the year star", or *taisui* — and the twelve-Branch count is the same twelve years. (The figure shows Jupiter's position within the solar system.)



But why did the ancients insist on watching Jupiter in particular? Why use the relationship between Earth and Jupiter as the key to how the ten thousand things on Earth arise, develop and change?

Modern astronomy gives a scientific reading of that choice. Jupiter is the fifth planet outward from the Sun, and by a wide margin the largest of the eight.

Among the eight planets, Jupiter has the greatest volume and the greatest mass. Its mass is more than two and a half times the combined mass of all the other seven. It is 318 times Earth's mass and 1,321 times Earth's volume. It is the fourth brightest object in the sky, behind only the Sun, the Moon and Venus — though at times it appears dimmer than Mars, and at other times brighter than Venus itself.

But the decisive fact is this: **Jupiter's immense gravity intercepts roughly 99 per cent of the asteroids and comets — coming from beyond the solar system and from within it — that would otherwise threaten Earth.** It has created a safe environment for life to evolve here. By astronomers' calculations, without Jupiter the rate of impacts on Earth would be more than a thousand times what it is today. Without Jupiter there would have been no life on Earth at all; and even if life had appeared, it could not have persisted. Jupiter is the umbrella over terrestrial life.

Ranked by influence on Earth: the Sun first, the Moon second, Jupiter third.

The twelve Earthly Branches come from exactly that twelve-year period. And here it is worth being precise, because almost everything written for a popular audience gets it wrong. The sequence *zi, chou, yin, mao, chen, si, wu, wei, shen, you, xu, hai* is **not** a dramatisation of the twelve zodiac animals. Nor is it the ancients' claim that *zi* stands for a rat that comes out at midnight, that *chou* stands for an ox, or anything else of that kind. Those are illustrations of the sequence, nothing more — pictures attached to it after the fact to help people remember the order.

What the twelve Branches actually denote is **the relative positional relationship among Jupiter, Earth and the Sun.**

When that three-body geometry differs, the "primordial life energy" arriving from the cosmos reaches Earth with a very different intensity and through a very different mode of action — precisely because Jupiter is standing somewhere else.

Since the intensity and the mode of that energy differ from one year to the next, the ancients broke the cycle of Jupiter, Sun and Earth into twelve types, twelve configurations. A person born in one year therefore receives the energy differently from a person born in the next, and differently again from a person born in the year after that. This is why those born in a *zi* year, a *chou* year and a *yin* year are not the same in their fates.

And that — not the animal pictures — is the root of why the zodiac sign carries any information at all.

CHAPTER SIX

What Is the Real Meaning of Yin and Yang in the Stems and Branches?

2020-08-08 · 580 words

> **Translator's note.** A short piece that does one thing: it converts *yin* and *yang* from a pair of adjectives into a pair of concrete categories. Once the pair reads as **mass** versus **spirit**, a number of classical rules stop being rules to memorise and start being consequences you can derive. The original contains an embedded advertisement — a phone number and a contact name inserted mid-paragraph — which has been removed here.

A Yang Stem or a Yang Branch can be understood as the *form* of a thing — its physical body, its mass.

A Yin Stem or a Yin Branch can be understood as the *qi* of a thing — its spirit.

Read the pair that way and two things follow. First, a great many traditional formulations that currently have to be memorised become readable — you can see why they were formulated at all. Second, a great many errors that practitioners make in the middle of a reading become avoidable, because you can now tell which of two similar-looking configurations actually threatens the client and which does not.

Traditional Bazi holds that when the Officer and the Seven Killings appear together — *guansha hunza*, "officers and killers mixed" — the configuration is bad. In ordinary cases that judgement holds. But in practice, not every such chart is bad, and practitioners who apply the rule mechanically get it wrong.

Why is it *usually* bad? Because when the Officer and the Seven Killings appear together, what you actually have on the chart is **the same element showing up in both a Yang and a Yin Stem or Branch.** And if Yang is the body and Yin is the spirit, then both of the forces that control you are present at once — one aimed at the flesh, the other at the spirit. *Guansha hunza* therefore destroys the body **and** destroys the spirit.

And destruction of both is what it takes. To destroy a thing utterly, you must destroy it at both levels. Jiang Jie was executed by the Kuomintang, but her spirit outlived her body. Dong Cunrui destroyed a bunker with his own body, but his spirit outlived him. Reverse the case: conquer only a person's spirit while the body remains intact, and you have not destroyed them either — you have only broken them.

So when *guansha hunza* turns up in an actual reading, whether the outcome is auspicious or inauspicious has to be judged case by case. Sometimes the body is what is under attack and the spirit is unharmed. Sometimes the reverse. Sometimes both are under attack but the client's environment supplies enough support that neither fails. The rule tells you what is being aimed at; it does not tell you what will land.

The yin–yang attribute of the Stems and Branches therefore has genuine analytical value in practice — it is one of the few distinctions that carries real information.

But the finer subdivisions that the tradition piles on top of it — splitting the Officer into “Seven Killings” and “Direct Officer”, splitting Wealth into “Proper Wealth” and “Indirect Wealth”, and so on through the whole list — have almost no practical value at all. Whatever analytical work those categories were supposed to do is already done by the yin–yang distinction underneath them. Their only real effect is to leave students of the system thoroughly confused about what they are looking at, and to give practitioners a vocabulary for sounding authoritative while saying nothing.

CHAPTER SEVEN

How the Stems and Branches Generate and Control One Another

2021-05-27 · 1,490 words

> **Translator's note.** This is the most combative piece in the set. Its subject is nominally technical — what "generation" (*sheng*) means when one Stem or Branch supports another — but most of the article is spent demolishing the popular wealth-cures sold on the Chinese internet. Readers who find the tone harsh should know that the harshness is the point: the author is arguing that a large commercial industry is built on claims that fail their own internal logic. One passage is crude by design; it has been rendered with the coarseness intact but without gratuitous detail. Named individuals are left as the original left them, partly anonymised.

There are two kinds of "generation" among the Stems and Branches. One genuinely generates you. The other only appears to — it is generation in words.

Real generation puts money on the table. Fake generation talks.

Which means that generation is not automatically auspicious. A bad man who generates you may be walking you to the execution ground. A good man who generates you may be the real thing. To be praised by a good person is a good thing; to be praised by a bad person is quite possibly the beginning of your trouble.

Take a football match. The only people genuinely helping you score are your teammates. The crowd in the stands is also supporting you — but the crowd cannot step onto the pitch and put the ball in the net. The crowd supports the

team without determining the result. So even within “generation” there are two cases: **generation that lands, and generation that does not.**

However loudly the crowd cheers, it is noise. It cannot decide the match. Generation of that kind has no bearing on whether the outcome is auspicious or inauspicious, and so we simply disregard it. If you buy a football lottery ticket, will you certainly win by backing the team with the loudest supporters?

So: two modes of generation. Real and apparent.

There is also **magnitude**. Generation of insufficient strength is equivalent to no generation. Hand someone one yuan and they feel nothing. Hand them a hundred million and someone may die of a sudden cardiac arrest — that is what a difference in the *quantity* of generation does.

Anyone who studies this system without thinking rigorously about its most basic nouns and concepts will never learn to do a reading. To claim mastery, and to offer to “resolve” other people's misfortunes, on that basis is absurd.

I once read an article titled “Methods for Inviting Wealth”. To get rich, it said, first sweep your front doorstep clean — only then can the God of Wealth come home. It also said the cupboards in your kitchen must be crammed full; an empty cupboard means the household will never prosper. And it said that if you place the God of Wealth in the “wealth position”, wealth will follow.

All of this is nonsense.

The God of Wealth is a deity. Once a being reaches that level, it passes through walls — a god's energy is not energy our eyes can see; it passes through walls, through a water glass, through our bodies. A door cannot stop the God of Wealth from entering your house, and the God of Wealth does not need the door to get in. “Sweep your doorstep so the God of Wealth can come home” therefore has no necessity to it. Whoever wrote that article is a fraud.

He does not know what the God of Wealth actually *is*. He does not know the laws of its motion. He does not know its temperament. And — consider this —

does the God of Wealth's arrival at your house necessarily mean it is bringing you money? Why could its arrival not mean it is taking your money out and giving it to someone else? On what basis do you guarantee that its arrival is a delivery and not a withdrawal?

To assume that enshrining the God of Wealth at home produces wealth is a mode of thinking that simply assumes what it wants to prove.

Place the God of Wealth in the “wealth position”. Which position would that be?

Every school, every faction, every half-baked theory has its own answer. Assemble all the fraudulent theories in China into one list and you will discover that all 360 degrees — sky above, ground below — are a wealth position. Some diviners cast a hexagram to find it: cast once and wealth sits in the *chou* direction; cast again and it is in *yin*; cast again and it is in *jia*. Run all sixty-four hexagrams and every degree of your house is a wealth position.

Different theories, different positions. **The very question “where is the wealth position” is incoherent.**

And even granting the premise: all 360 degrees are wealth positions. The real question is *which direction are you actually connected to?* That is one reason a person becomes wealthy or does not. Which direction is closest to you, and which is not — a bank lends money to anybody, but will any bank lend to *you*? Anyone can walk in with a hundred million to deposit, but must the bank take it? Plainly not.

So the whole literature of wealth positions is nonsense. And for several thousand years we have used these frauds on ourselves, and then used them on clients. That is precisely why I say this industry runs mainly on deception.

Having learned a master's fraudulent theory does not make us frauds — we are victims too. But if you have not understood something, **do not write an**

article about it. And yet almost every article circulating on WeChat states a fraud's conclusion as though it were established.

The cupboards must be full, or you will not prosper. Go and look: the poorer the household, the fuller the kitchen cupboards. Go to a billionaire's house and the cupboards are empty — billionaires do not cook. They do not stockpile, because food goes off; they buy fresh. Only poor households buy a pile of cheap ingredients and eat through them slowly. The observable fact is that **crammed cupboards belong to the poor, not the rich** — and the frauds conclude from this that a full cupboard brings wealth.

For millennia this is what we have propagated: confidence tricks dressed as doctrine. When I read these articles I am not merely unconvinced, I am angry. If you have not understood the subject, by all means keep it to yourself — but do not write it down and keep deceiving students and people who genuinely want to learn. Writing a fraudulent article is deceiving people's *thinking*, and that is a heavier offence than deceiving their wallets. If you are simply reciting someone else's theory, that is on them. Do not invent your own.

We are going to deal with the whole family of methods for “inviting wealth”, “inviting office” and “inviting marriage”. Let me state the conclusion now: **every traditional method for promoting wealth, position or marriage fails on scientific grounds, fails on logical grounds, and has no effect in observable practice.** They are confidence tricks.

A management-training consultant came to see me recently. He had paid 180,000 yuan to a certain Master Wang XX for a method to hurry his daughter into marriage. The method: place a lily in front of his daughter's bed every day for three months. The reasoning was a pun — *baihe*, “lily”, sounds like *baihe*, “a hundred unions”; so a lily produces a husband.

He did it for four months. Nothing happened. He went back to ask. Master Wang told him to keep placing lilies, and to continue until the girl was married.

That is the behaviour of a fraud, and the outcome was the outcome of a fraud. Master Wang XX died at fifty-nine, on 30 June 2019, while teaching a class.

What about a husband who is having an affair? Point his shoes towards the inside of the house rather than the door, and he will want to come home. Then take a pair of his underpants and chain them inside the wardrobe, and he will stop straying. This is what is being sold as a remedy.

By that logic, chaining a man's underpants in a wardrobe is a good deal less effective than the more direct surgical solution — and equally absurd.

Is someone who keeps teaching people these methods anything other than a fraud? And these are only the ones you will encounter first.

To sum up. You must understand that the Stems and Branches stand for **four things at once**:

1. **Time**
2. **Direction**
3. **Concrete objects**
4. **Specific parts of the human body**

If a reading leaves any of these four out of account, it will not produce an accurate chart and it will not produce an accurate reading of a site. There is no shortcut around this.

CHAPTER EIGHT

Is the Sequence of the Five Elements a Theorem or an Axiom?

2018-03-03 · 968 words

> **Translator's note.** The argument of this essay is structural, not chemical. The author's claim is that the standard sequence of the five elements is *conditional* — a theorem, not an axiom — and he demonstrates it with cases where the sequence is bypassed. Several of the identifications he offers along the way (coal as Wood turned directly into Earth, combustible ice as Metal, photosynthesis as Fire generating Wood) belong to his own working scheme rather than to standard physics or chemistry. They are translated as given, because the argument turns on them. Readers who want the chemistry should read them as the author's analogies, not as claims about chemistry.

What is a theorem? In plain terms, a theorem is a truth with conditions attached — a relative truth.

What is an axiom? An axiom is a truth with no conditions attached — an absolute truth.



The generating and controlling cycle of Metal, Wood, Water, Fire and Earth is normally given as follows. Generating: Metal generates Water, Water generates Wood, Wood generates Fire, Fire generates Earth, Earth generates Metal. Controlling: Metal controls Wood, Wood controls Earth, Earth controls Water, Water controls Fire, Fire controls Metal.

But that sequence holds only in the general case. Under particular conditions, the order does not run that way at all. Some concrete examples:

1. Water's characteristic is *run xia* — moistening and sinking downward. Petroleum, gasoline, diesel, alcohol, liquefied gas, kerosene: all of these moisten and sink, so all of them fall within the Water element. Yet these Water substances do not generate Wood. They generate Fire directly.

2. Wood's characteristic is *qu zhi* — bending and straightening. But at high temperature and pressure with air excluded, Wood can generate Earth directly. Coal, for instance, is Wood converted directly into Earth. Petrified wood is the same thing.

3. Earth's characteristic is *jia se* — sowing and reaping. Coal is Earth. But coal burns directly into Fire, which is Earth generating Fire. It can also be liquefied, or refined into coal tar, which moistens and sinks and is therefore Water — Earth generating Water.

4. Metal's characteristic is *cong ge* — following and reforming. Combustible ice, methane hydrate, has that character, so it is Metal. Yet combustible ice burns directly into Fire: Metal generating Fire.

5. Fire's characteristic is *yan shang* — flaming upward. Light waves, radio waves, magnetic fields, thermal radiation all carry Fire's character and are all Fire. Yet light passing through chlorophyll can convert directly into Wood. Photosynthesis is precisely the conversion of light energy into plant energy — Fire generating Wood. Fats, oils and liquefied gas are Water by element, and all of them are produced by the transformation of Fire — Fire generating

Water. Combustible ice is Metal, and it too is produced by the transformation of Fire: Fire generating Metal.



Everything in the world is like this. Nothing in the world develops strictly along the Metal–Water–Wood–Fire–Earth–Metal sequence. This is a fact of science and a fact of the world.

A human being is composed of these five kinds of substance, so a person's fate is determined by their generation and transformation. The *bazi* — the four-pillar chart used to examine that fate — is built from Stems and Branches that carry these five properties. If the material world does not develop only along the standard sequence, then the five-element sequence inside a *bazi* does not run only that way either. Which is why the ancients had the categories of *hehua* — combining and transforming — and *heju* and *huiju*, combining and meeting into a structure.

So why can the five elements generate across the standard order?

Because in their essential nature, Metal, Wood, Water, Fire and Earth are one and the same thing. They are given different names only because that one thing performs different functions and produces different effects.



Consider big-bang cosmology. The universe formed when a “singularity” exploded and particles of like nature spread outward. If that account is correct, then everything in the universe — however unlike on the surface — is made of the same basic constituents. Modern physics confirms it: a flower, a pile of dung, a dog, a person, all children of the same mother.

That is why Wood generates Earth (a tree becomes coal), Fire generates Wood (light energy becomes a tree), Water generates Fire (oil burns directly), and so on, outside the standard order. It is also why a single object can carry several elements at once.

Gold is Metal — it is a metal — and also Earth. Gold reflects yellow light and absorbs the rest; yellow light has a different wavelength from the others, and its force on other things differs accordingly, which places it in Earth. *Baijiu*, Chinese liquor, is Water, because it moistens and sinks, and also Fire, because the alcohol in it burns.

Only when this is understood can objects be selected precisely when adjusting a site or remedying a condition. Otherwise the remedy backfires.

Suppose a chart needs Metal. Platinum, which is purely Metal; gold, which is Metal and Earth; silver — these are not interchangeable.

Suppose it needs Earth. Petrified wood is Earth and Wood. A white pearl is Earth and Metal. A yellow pearl is purely Earth. Amethyst is Earth and Fire. Clear quartz is Earth and Water, since colourless transparent objects belong to Water. These differ substantially.

Suppose it needs Wood. Black rosewood is Wood and Water. Red *suanzhi* is Wood and Fire. Again, not the same instrument.

What matters in study is understanding the principle. Once the principle is clear, no technical problem remains difficult. But if you do nothing but listen to masters pronouncing what has which property, you will never get through the door of prediction.

CHAPTER NINE

What Do the Twelve Zodiac Animals Have to Do with the Earthly Branches?

2021-05-26 · 983 words

> **Translator's note.** Two things in this essay need flagging for a reader outside China. The "twelve zodiac animals" here are the twelve *shengxiao* — rat, ox, tiger, rabbit, dragon, snake, horse, goat, monkey, rooster, dog, pig — one per Earthly Branch, familiar to every Chinese child and, in the popular mind, a complete system of fortune-telling in itself. The author's target is not the animals but the assumption that the animals *are* the meaning of the Branches. The second thing is the argument's structure: the first half dismantles the animals, and the second half uses that dismantling to make a much larger point about all conceptual categories, including the ones practitioners treat as fixed rules.

First. That *zi* is a rat and *chou* is an ox is itself a crude misunderstanding.

In antiquity scientific knowledge was scarce. Had you told a peasant that *zi* refers to the stretch of sky through which Jupiter moves in a given direction, you would have made the idea impossible to hold and impossible to pass on. So the ancients married the Branches to animals and objects people already knew, and the Branches travelled through the culture on the back of familiar animals. *Zi* and *chou* and *yin* and *mao* reached the next generation because a rat and an ox and a tiger and a rabbit could be remembered.

Which is to say: a scientific idea may well need to borrow a non-scientific vehicle in order to spread.

So *zi* is not necessarily a rat. But turn it around. The fact that the ancestors paired *zi* with the rat and *chou* with the ox suggests a possibility worth taking

seriously: that they had grasped something real. Perhaps the energy state inside a rat's body is consistent with the energy arriving from the *zi* direction. Having seen that, they paired the animal with the direction, so that we could grasp what the concept *zi* refers to. The same reasoning applies to *chou* and the ox.

Second. Every concept is a human judgement.

Had the ancestors paired *chou* with the rat and *yin* with the ox, we would now be saying that *chou* is the rat and *yin* is the ox. That, too, would simply be a convention.

Take Metal. Everything with a killing, withering function is assigned to Metal. That assignment is also a correspondence. But had the ancestors decided that everything with a killing, withering function belongs to Fire, we could still do readings today, and they would still be accurate. Concepts are human stipulations.

We must not let concepts block our enquiry into the world. We have to see what lies underneath a concept. And students of the *Yijing* are deceived by concepts constantly. What we see is the concept itself, or the concept's literal sense, and we never ask what is underneath.

So in practice, when we meet *xing*, *chong*, *he* and *hai* — punishment, clash, combination, harm — we say combination is good and clash is bad, and punishment and harm are bad too. But go back to what these relations actually *are* — generation, control, punishment, clash, combination, harm, storage — and you find that punishment and harm, clash and combination, only state what the relation between one thing and another is.

Clash means opposition. Opposition is not necessarily bad. Sometimes opposition is excellent.

Cutting you with a knife sounds bad. But give a man liver cancer and he will beg the surgeon to cut the liver out. Clash itself carries no auspice. What

matters is whether the clash carries away energy you need or energy you do not, whether it carries away a beneficent part of you or a malefic one. Only then can you say whether that clash is good or bad for you.

We all say combination is good. Combine a cancer into you — combine cancer cells into every organ in your body, combine poison into your stomach — and it is not good at all. Combine money into your chart, or an official post, and it is not necessarily auspicious either, because it depends how much money and how senior the post. If a hundred tons of gold is combined into your chart and you have to catch it at the foot of the building, then the wealth has arrived and you are dead.

Wealth is a good thing. What matters is whether what comes in is your *yongshen* — the useful spirit, the element your chart needs — or your *jishen*, the element it must avoid.

And yet we do a whole reading off a single *he* or a single *chong*. We see a *xing* or a *hai* and the verdict is already in.

Here is a car bearing down on you. I shove you, or I kick you, and you dodge. My shove and my kick were a *xing* and a *hai* — and that punishment saved your life. Now suppose instead that I pull you back into the car's path. My pull was a *he*, a combination — and that combination killed you. Is combination still good?

So *xing*, *chong*, *he* and *hai* only describe a relation between two things, or between two energies. As for auspice: you have to ask which of the two dominates and which submits, whether what dominates is auspicious or not, whether what is dominated is auspicious or not. Only then do you know whether the punishment, the clash, the combination, the harm is auspicious or not.

But for several thousand years nobody has reasoned this way. See *xing* or *hai* or *chong*, and the judgement is already made. That habit of thought is

precisely why we have been unable to get to the bottom of what human fate is.

From now on, do not assume that *xing*, *hai* and *chong* are bad. If the old habit of thought does not change, you will never understand what fate is.

CHAPTER TEN

The Five-Element Properties of the Twenty-Four Compass Directions

2021-05-05 · 562 words

> **Translator's note.** Feng shui divides the compass into twenty-four *shan*, "mountains" — that is, twenty-four sectors of fifteen degrees each. Twenty of them are named after Stems and Branches; the remaining four are named after trigrams. This short essay is about those four, and it makes a claim that runs against almost every feng shui manual in print. For readers new to the system: the eight Stems that can be used as directions are *jia, yi, bing, ding, geng, xin, ren, gui*; the twelve Branches are *zi* through *hai*; the four trigrams used here are *qian* (northwest), *kun* (southwest), *gen* (northeast) and *xun* (southeast). The table below the opening lines was added by the translator to make the argument easier to follow; the original states the same information in prose.

Jia, yi, yin and mao are Wood.

Ren, zi, gui and hai are Water.

Bing, ding, si and wu are Fire.

Geng, xin, shen and you are Metal.

Chen, xu, chou and wei are Earth.

That accounts for twenty of the twenty-four directions. The remaining four are *qian*, *kun*, *gen* and *xun* — and this is where the received tradition goes wrong.

Direction	Half one	Half two	What the tradition says
Qian (northwest)	50% *xu* (Earth)	50% *hai* (Water)	"Metal"

Direction	Half one	Half two	What the tradition says
Kun (southwest)	50% *wei* (Earth)	50% *shen* (Metal)	“Earth”
Gen (northeast)	50% *chou* (Earth)	50% *yin* (Wood)	“Earth”
Xun (southeast)	50% *chen* (Earth)	50% *si* (Fire)	“Wood”



Qian is half *xu* and half *hai*. *Kun* is half *wei* and half *shen*. *Gen* is half *chou* and half *yin*. *Xun* is half *chen* and half *si*.

Remember this. Do not follow traditional feng shui and say “xun is Wood, qian is Metal, gen and kun are Earth.” Absolutely not.

Even if you go on practising traditional feng shui, once you return to what these four names actually contain, you will find your hit rate rising sharply. Considerably higher than when you treat *qian* as Metal — both when adjusting a site for someone and when calling outcomes.

Why are *qian*, *kun*, *gen* and *xun* not “Metal, Earth, Earth, Wood”? Let us go through it again.

The compass is divided into twenty-four directions. But only eight of the ten Stems can serve as directions, and only twelve of the twelve Branches. That leaves four short of twenty-four.

What did the ancients do? They noticed that in the eight trigrams *qian* sits to the northwest and *xun* to the southeast. So they took the names *qian*, *xun*, *gen* and *kun* and used them to stand for **directions** — not for elements. The four names were borrowed because they could denote those directions. That is all the borrowing was.

Nobody asks why four trigrams suddenly appear among twenty-four directions. *Jia*, *yi*, *bing*, *ding* are not trigrams. Why would the ancestors, who everywhere else speak in Stems and Branches and not in trigrams at all, suddenly produce four trigrams in this one place?

There is a reason. Return to the reason and you see it. *Qian* was borrowed to stand for a direction. *Gen*, *xun* and *kun* likewise.

The confusion is a confusion between a name and its function. A borrowed label is not a classification.

CHAPTER ELEVEN

Why Do Students of the Yijing Keep Getting Cheated by the Masters?

2021-01-25 · 1,431 words

> **Translator's note.** This essay is written for Chinese readers inside a specific ecosystem — the *yixue* training market, where teachers sell courses and "masters" sell remedies — and it assumes familiarity with a few things an outside reader will not have. Sima Nan (司马南) is a well-known Chinese broadcaster who spent decades publicly debunking qigong healers, fortune-tellers and other claimants to supernatural power; he is the figure the professors in this essay are arguing against. The "New School, Old School, Blind School" mentioned near the end are the three main lineages in modern Chinese fate calculation: the twentieth-century reformers, the classical tradition, and *mangpai*, the blind masters' tradition, transmitted orally among blind practitioners. The essay's argument, however, does not depend on any of this: it is about why people believe what they are told.

Why do people who study the *Yijing* keep getting cheated by the masters?

You may think you know why. I doubt you do.

One: the masters are, in fact, frauds. Deal with them and you will be cheated.

Two: from your own side. There are four reasons.

(a) You have too little scientific knowledge, so you cannot read the theories you are learning through a scientific lens. Without science you are easy to cheat.

People say feng shui is in your genes. If you knew what a gene is, you would not be taken in. If you knew what feng shui is, you would not believe in "cosmic feng shui." Take the nano water cup: if you knew what *nano* means, you would not buy one. The whole country bought these things because nobody knows what a quantum is, and so people believe in quantum clothing and quantum cups. Insufficient science is enough to get you cheated.

(b) A severe lack of logical reasoning. Whatever someone tells you, you believe. You do not put questions.

Of all the deficits in our culture this is the one. From antiquity to the present, we have not reasoned logically. We open our mouths and it is *qu lei bi xiang* — "assign by category, infer by analogy." Analogy has its uses. But inference is a far more powerful instrument.

Take doors facing doors. A master says doors facing doors is inauspicious, and you believe it. Reason for a moment and you would ask: a toilet door facing a kitchen door — is that bad for the toilet, or bad for the kitchen? A kitchen door facing a bedroom door — bad for the kitchen, or for the bedroom? Does a kitchen door in the east facing west give the same result as the reverse? Why is it that cinemas, theatres and shopping malls all have doors facing doors, and the government says that is auspicious, and the scientists say so too — try opening a shop *without* doors facing doors and see whether they let you trade.

Two or three questions and you know they are wrong. Make inference a habit. This is the second reason students of the *Yijing* get cheated.

(c) You believe people instead of looking at the facts.

Your teacher says something and you believe it. Why not look at the facts? The facts are sitting right there and you do not look at them. You believe the teacher. And students of the *Yijing* are mostly this kind of person.

Here is an example. Two professors — one from the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, one from the Shandong Academy — once debated feng shui

with Sima Nan. Sima Nan asked: how do you prove that feng shui is a science? The professor from Shandong said: in Jinan I read a site for a man. There was a crossroads to the northwest. I told him his company would go bankrupt and he would go to prison. And that is what happened.

Does that strike you as a precise hit? A crossroads to the northwest, therefore bankruptcy and prison?

Sima Nan's mind is a sharp instrument — though on the *Yijing* I do not rate him above me. If I were Sima Nan, I would have taken journalists to Jinan and surveyed every business with a crossroads to its northwest, and seen whether every one of them had gone bankrupt and every owner had gone to prison. Look at the facts and you know.

But the professor said it, and so a great many people believe that Water in the northwest is bad — *qian* being Metal in the eight trigrams, the Water drains the Metal, inauspicious. As a theory it is not unreasonable. Why not look at the facts?

So from your own side: we believe what the teacher says instead of looking at the facts. And do not be persuaded because what I say sounds reasonable. Reasonable is not enough. Objective fact does not necessarily follow reason.

Mathematics is reasonable, and mathematics still has problems. An American olympiad once set this question: fold a sheet of paper a certain number of times, how many creases do you get? One child won, but not with full marks. The child asked which question he had got wrong. The experts told him: this one. The child said, you don't need to calculate — let me fold it, and you count. The mathematicians' formula and the actual creases differed by one edge. To this day mathematicians do not know why.

Even mathematics and physical fact can fail to agree. So how could a crowd of fortune-tellers be right about everything?

(d) Greed undoes you — greed to learn more, greed to learn faster, greed to get rich now.

Beyond the first three, the fourth is a weakness of human nature.



The first greed: the more the better. Most students of the *Yijing* want to know everything — the New School, the Old School, the Blind School, all of it. Are you a god? Can you master that much? You have not got the capacity.

The second greed: the faster the better. Someone says he will make you a master in three days, and you believe him. Can you grow a sapling into a towering tree in three days? Everything in this world, from arising to developing to changing, proceeds by a process, and a process takes time. Nothing produces a result in an instant — a science least of all. How could anyone become a master in three days? I say ten days and a man tells me he has no time. Another master says three days and off he goes. He was greedy for speed.

The third greed: getting rich. Because you are in a hurry to use this theory to make money, the moment someone says *fast*, says *more*, you walk into the trap. A fraud in Shenzhen told his students: study my theory and I

guarantee you a million in three months. Last year the students he had cheated joined forces and sued him in Shenzhen. How does studying fortune-telling earn you a million in three months?

Wanting to be rich is not wrong. But the attitude has to be right, and you need the notion of going slowly.

Money that arrives all at once can kill you. Hand you ten or twenty thousand and drop it from a rooftop a little at a time, and you will be fine — you might even get rich. Bundle it up, a ton of it, and drop it from the roof in one go: can you catch it? It depends on what your chart can carry. If you can carry five kilograms, then drop it five kilograms at a time; a ton takes two hundred drops. Drop it once and the money was yours, and so was the death.

So on the question of making money, think about how to make it according to what your own chart can bear. If greed has blinded your eyes and clouded your judgement, then being cheated is settled in advance.

These are the reasons students of the *Yijing* have been cheated for so many years. I believe that after you leave here you will never be cheated by a *Yijing* master again. And if you are, I hope this was the last stop.

Someone once asked a teacher: what is a foolish man? The teacher said: a man who trips twice over the same stone in the same place.

How many times have you tripped? I suspect more than twice. Most of the people who come to me have been cheated by *Yijing* frauds until they were nearly bankrupt. I could not cheat you now if I tried.

CHAPTER TWELVE

What Is the Physical Nature of the Heavenly Stems and Earthly Branches?

2020-02-26 · 1,751 words

> **Translator's note.** This piece closes the tiangan dizhi series. Everything before it described *what* the Stems and Branches are; this one argues *what they are made of* — energy arriving from particular directions at particular times — and why that three-part definition is the difference between a reading that works and one that only appears to. The last third opens the door to the three practice lines that follow: Bazi charts, liuyao divination, and feng shui. The specific birth-year claims in the middle (1967, 1987, 1963) are the author's own empirical generalisations; he offers no dataset, and we have translated them as claims rather than findings.

The Heavenly Stems and Earthly Branches are, in themselves, nothing but symbols. So where did the twelve Earthly Branches come from? The ancients arrived at them by watching the sky. Jupiter takes roughly twelve years to complete one orbit around the Sun, so they gave each segment of Jupiter's journey a name: *zi*, *chou*, *yin*, *mao*, and so on.

There are two kinds of matter in the universe. One is debris — rock, dust, the scattered fragments of everything that ever broke. The other is the solar wind, which is not wind at all but matter blasted outward when the Sun explodes. If Jupiter did not stand in the way of the material moving through the solar system, there would be no life on Earth at all, because Jupiter blocks 99% of the objects that would otherwise threaten it.

Jupiter's position changes its effect on Earth. And because that effect changes, the fate of the people, animals and plants born in a *zi* year, a *chou* year, a *yin*

year, a *mao* year — each is different.

Why different? Because the intensity of the cosmic energy they receive differs, and the manner in which that energy acts on them differs. Put simply: it is the difference between cutting something lengthwise and cutting it crosswise.

Why can a single zodiac animal still produce an accurate reading? Because people born in the same year share common features of fate. This is the whole reason the old street practitioners could hit a target with nothing but a birth year — **people born in the same year share a common fate signature.**

Think of it this way. It is raining today. If all of us are standing in the courtyard, do we not share a common fate? Yes — we all get wet. Now suppose the sky is clear and we are all out in the courtyard again: our common feature is that we are all in sunlight. But the intensity of light each of us receives is not the same. Why?

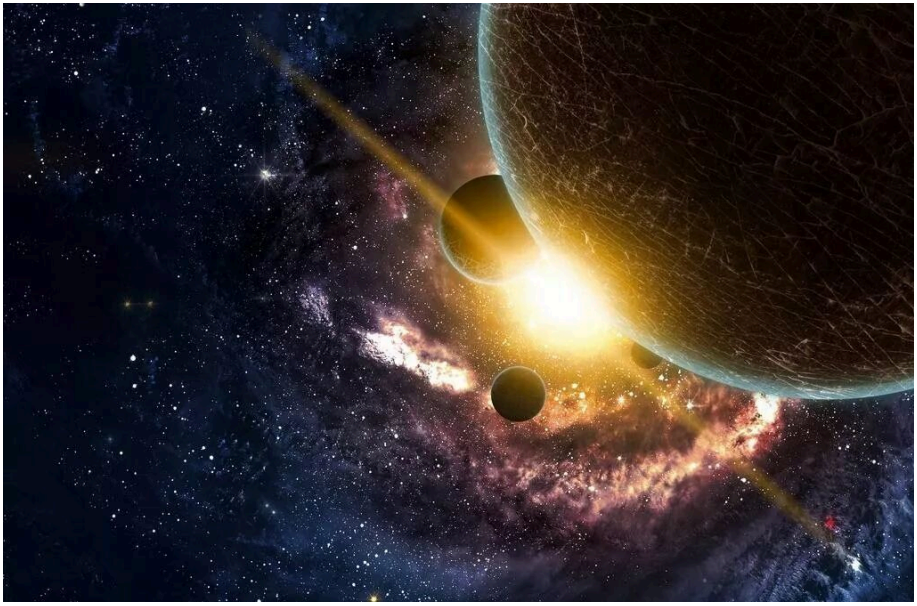
I am under the eaves, so I get less. You are lying down and I am standing up — the person lying down catches more light, the one standing catches less, and someone crouching catches less still. That is your own posture. Then there is your surroundings: I have opened an umbrella, you are indoors, he is inside the Great Buddha Hall. Three different intensities, and three different *modes* of action — scattered light, direct light, reflected light, refracted light.

If you understand the energy of the harmonized yin–yang qi (*yin-yang chonghe zhi qi*) arriving from the cosmos as being like sunlight, then Jupiter is the umbrella, or the house. In different positions, life on Earth receives a different influence from cosmic energy. That is why people born in the same year share a common fate signature — **and also differ enormously.**

So why are their fates not identical?

Because each person's own environment is not identical. The Earth is not a flat plane; it is uneven. Two people born in the same year were carried by mothers standing on different terrain, so the cosmic energy reaching the fetus

differed in intensity and in mode of action. Hence: shared signature, enormous difference. And the reason a zodiac animal can produce a hit is that what it captures is precisely the shared part.



Saturn takes about thirty years to circle the Sun. The ten Heavenly Stems are what you get when you divide the influence of Jupiter and Saturn's relative positions, across different periods, into ten equal parts and name them.

Every five years the Sun, Jupiter and Saturn fall into a straight line. That is the Five Combinations of the Stems.

Where does the sixty-year cycle come from? It is the least common multiple of 12 and 30. Every sixty years, Saturn, Jupiter, Earth and the Sun hold their reunion. Within those sixty years, the energy Earth receives in any given year — in any given moment — is never the same twice.

So the energy a fetus receives in the womb is never the same. And because the point of origin differs, even twins do not receive identical energy, which is why

twins also differ in fate.

Everyone born in a given year carries a certain shared energy body — and it is genuinely quite different from the body carried by people born in another year. For example:

- Women born in 1967, year of the Goat (*dingwei*): ninety percent are divorced. Of those who are not, the marriage is generally unhappy; they are getting by. The cosmic energy of a *dingwei* year is an energy that does not permit them to be happy with a husband.
- Men born in 1987, year of the Rabbit: most are useless. The women born that year, by contrast, are mostly outstanding — each one sharper than the last.
- Women born in 1970: uniformly excellent.
- Women born in 1963, *guimao* year: most become entrepreneurs, and even in a village they are the capable sort. Men born in 1963 are thoroughly ordinary.

This is why traditional fortune-telling can also produce hits. Is it *calculating*? No. It is picking up patterns.

The Stems and Branches represent energy, more than anything else. *Jia* is the energy of *jia*. *Zi* is the energy of *zi*. *Yi* is the energy of *yi*. *Jiazi* is the energy of *jiazi*; *yimao* is the energy of *yimao*. What they represent is a **form of energy**.

You may object: isn't fortune-telling just stringing *jiazi*, *yichou*, *bingyin*, *dingmao* together into a chart?

Yes. But the Stems and Branches do not represent time alone. The Stems and Branches of a chart are merely the instrument by which we record the process of a thing arising, developing and changing — because time itself has no mass and no weight, and time does not exist apart from matter. When we say "the *jiazi* year," *jiazi* is a time. But is it the *time* that acts, or the specific

combination of Jupiter, Saturn and the Sun that acts? **It is the structure that acts, not the time.** Saying "the *jiazi* year" is simply more convenient than saying "that particular structural combination."

So when a student of fate says: "someone born in a *jiazi* year meeting *wuxu* means *jia* wood controls *wu* earth, and *xu* earth in turn controls *zi* water" — if that is how you think about chart reading, you will never become a master. We should reason like this instead: someone born in a *jiazi* year carries within their life a certain mode of energy. What happens to that mode of energy when it meets the energy of *wuxu*?

What happens to a watermelon dropped in boiling water? What happens to a watermelon put in a freezer? *That* is how you should be thinking, and only then can you actually read accurately.

Take it further. The Sun–Jupiter–Saturn combination of a *wuxu* year is a freezer. A person born in a *jiazi* year is a hot-water bottle. *Wuxu* is the freezer. When you put the *jiazi* hot-water bottle into the freezer, the heat of that bottle ceases to exist — and depending on which position in the freezer you put it, after twenty minutes the rate at which it loses heat, and the shape of the ice it becomes, will differ.

The reason a reading can be accurate is that there is a shared factor between them. So is it only time? No — **position** matters too, and position is the same thing as direction of movement. A person born in a *jiazi* year has been put into the freezer, yes — but *which direction, which corner* of the freezer decides their fate entirely differently. And if there is a pile of cotton batting next to them in there, then after twenty minutes the bottle taken out will be in a completely different state than one without cotton beside it. Which brings in the question of **environment**.

So you must grasp all three at once: *this person born in a jiazi year, at the time of wuxu, has moved to which direction on Earth, and into what kind of*

environment. Only with those three factors can you say what this person's fate is this year, and what changes it will bring.

If you assume that a hot-water bottle put into a freezer must freeze into ice, you may well be wrong — because my bottle has a heating element, and it is plugged in, charging the whole time. The end result may be that the freezer stops being cold and becomes warm instead. Yet every traditional chart reader today believes he reads accurately. Why does he hit? **He is reading only the shared part.** He has accurately read the outcome for the hot-water bottles that went into the freezer *without being plugged in*. For the ones that were charging, he has no reading at all.

Whether you study fate calculation or hexagram divination, whenever you use the Stems and Branches, do not treat them as "just time." They are time, and direction, and energy. If "energy" feels too vague, call it **thing, direction, time** — only when the three are joined as one can you predict precisely. Only then can you actually adjust a person's fate and relieve their misfortune. Otherwise, any relief you deliver was coincidence — which is exactly what those masters mean when they say, "my own fate is good, so whatever I adjust works."

In feng shui, the energy arriving from the *jia* direction, from the *mao* direction, and from the *yi* direction has a completely different effect on the same point of origin.

Free gift: Lü Wenyi's 2018 lectures on feng shui and Bazi, plus e-books. Those who want them, long-press the QR code below to add WeChat and ask.



CHAPTER THIRTEEN

How Do You Read a Chart With Only One or Two Elements?

2018-01-27 · 1,320 words

> **Translator's note.** Two things to flag before you read. First, the "Ten Gods positions" table below is **not** the classical *shishen* system. In standard Bazi, the Ten Gods are derived relationally from the day stem against every other character, so *which* god appears in a given position depends on the chart. The table here assigns **fixed** meanings to positions — the year stem is *always* the Wealth position, the month branch is *always* the Lover position, regardless of what character sits there. This is the author's own "Bazi model," and reading it as classical *shishen* will make the rest of the essay incoherent. Second, "special charts" (*teshu mingju*) is a real term of art in Chinese fate calculation, used for charts that break the normal patterns — one element only, or two. The author's argument is that the category is a confession of theoretical failure, not a description of rare cases.

In Bazi practice you will meet many charts built from a single element, or two, or three. Traditional fate calculation calls these "special charts" and reads them as exceptions.

But what *is* a "special chart"? I have put it this way: **a "special chart" is a chart the masters cannot explain in theory and cannot predict accurately — it is the excuse they offer clients and readers, the loincloth they use to cover the fatal defect in their own system.**

In reading fate there is no such division as special versus ordinary. If the theoretical system is scientifically correct, then **every** chart is an ordinary

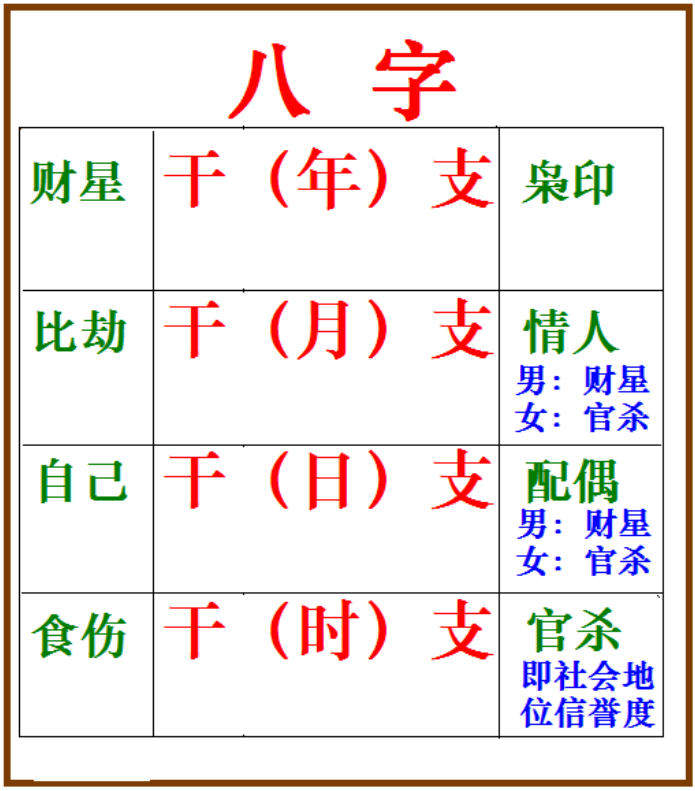
chart. Only when a system is flawed — congenitally, fatally flawed — does the category “special chart” have to exist.

Using our Lü Wenyi Bazi Model, a chart of one element, or two, or three is just an ordinary chart. There are no special charts. Whatever chart you face, memorise the following positional assignments and every chart becomes ordinary.

The Ten Gods positions

Position	Represents
Year stem	The **Wealth star** position
Year branch	The **Owl Seal** (indirect resource) position
Month stem	The **Parallel** (peer/competitor) position
Month branch	The **Lover** position — and, for a woman, the **Officer–Killing** position
	(also a secondary Parallel position; for a man, also a Wealth position)
Day stem	**Oneself**
Day branch	The **Spouse** position — Officer–Killing for a woman, Wealth for a man
Hour stem	The **Output** (food/wounding) position
Hour branch	The **Officer–Killing** position, and a secondary Output position

Memorise this and every chart is ordinary. The notion of a “special chart” disappears.



An example

Male: *wu-wu / wu-wu / wu-wu / wu-wu* — four identical pillars, 戊午 repeated.

From antiquity this has been treated as the textbook "special chart." Virtually every system on record is helpless against it — the classic image is a dog trying to bite a hedgehog, with nowhere to start. Even the *Ditan Sui* — the eighteenth-century classic on Bazi — gives an account of this configuration that does not match the actual lives of the men who carry it.

I have been fortunate enough to meet two men with this exact chart. The first was a computer typist at Li Hongcheng's company in Haikou. Every master in

that company read his chart on the spot. Not one got even a single event in his life right. The second was a neighbour of a friend in the Henan *Yijing* circle.

Read with the Bazi model, a chart like this is **simpler** than the charts the masters call ordinary. Here is the analysis.

Male chart:

- Year pillar: *wu* (Wealth position) — *wu* (Owl Seal position)
- Month pillar: *wu* (Parallel position) — *wu* (Lover / Wealth position)
- Day pillar: *wu* (self) — *wu* (Spouse / Wealth position)
- Hour pillar: *wu* (Output position) — *wu* (Officer–Killing position)

Once you see how the structure is built, you can assess the fate of any person carrying it — provided you also have the *bodily* facts: the nine regions of the body as they actually are in this person.

The typist in Haikou was under 1.70 m, thin all over, a vocational-school graduate, both parents working. The man from Nanyang in Henan was tall with a standard build, a farmer, who left school after primary, both parents farmers.

Same chart. Why completely different fates? Work through the chart's bodily signature and it comes clear.



1. Height

The day stem *wu* earth is strengthened by the month stem *wu* and the hour stem *wu* supporting it. A strong day stem implies a **tall** person. But earth is an unfavourable element (*jishen*) in this chart.

If this person is tall, then both the month stem and the hour stem — both unfavourable — have been *doing their work*. When the actual height matches the height implied by the unfavourable elements, that is already inauspicious. Add to it that the two unfavourable peers are actively supporting the day master: the hour stem sits in the Output position, so an unfavourable *wu* there means the Output position itself is unfavourable. An unfavourable Output position means this tall man not only lacks a source of income but will

struggle to realise any ambition at all. The month stem sits in the Parallel position, unfavourable and active, which means a life of constant competition and loss. So for the tall man, wealth is very hard to reach.

Now suppose this person is **short**. Then the month stem and hour stem never actually came to the day master's aid — had they truly helped, he would be tall, not short. The fact of being short means they did not help. The hour stem is the Output position, and Output is unfavourable in this chart; if the unfavourable Output position did not act on him, then the Output position delivered its *favourable* function instead. Output favourable means he has a source of income, can realise his ambitions, and is content. The month stem sits in the Parallel position, also unfavourable, also inactive for a short man; Parallel governs competition, so this man rarely meets competition and things go relatively smoothly.

2. The crown of the head

Now the year stem *wu* earth. Its strength in this chart is “strong.” Earth governs squareness, so a strong year stem implies a **square** crown. But the short man in Haikou has a round crown — small, thin, round-headed.

The year stem is unfavourable; the crown implied by an unfavourable element is square. His is round. **The fact contradicts the implication, so the fact is auspicious.** And the year stem is the Wealth position — an auspicious Wealth position means this man will never be without money. The year stem is also the father's position, likewise auspicious, so he inherits from his father.

The tall man from Henan has a crown that is square-to-round, essentially matching the unfavourable implication. Fact matches, so the fact is inauspicious — the Wealth position is inauspicious, so throughout life money is scarce; the father's position is inauspicious, so no inheritance from his father.

From this I hope it is now entirely clear: **there are no "special charts" in the world. There is only the falseness and error of chart-reading theories.** There is exactly one kind of chart, the ordinary kind. The so-called special chart is simply a chart the masters cannot read and never could.

The Bazi model is scientific, materialist, dialectical, objective and grounded in reality. And once this is understood, three central questions in Bazi follow:

Why do people born at the same time — five or six of them, same year, month, day and hour — differ so much in fate? How can those differences be predicted accurately? And what, precisely, is the Lü Wenyi Bazi Model as a technique?

CHAPTER FOURTEEN

How Do You Choose the "Yongshen" in Liuyao Divination?

2017-11-13 · 1,344 words

> **Translator's note.** In liuyao (six-line divination), the *yongshen* — the "useful god," the line that carries the answer — is the single most consequential choice a reader makes. This piece argues that the choice is not dictated by the subject ("a question about money") but by the *exact point of inquiry* ("will I get this debt back from this particular person"). The two long enumerations in the original are reproduced here as a table; the remaining four of the Six Relations (Parents, Siblings, Offspring, and the Subject/Object lines) run the same way and the author defers them to other essays. The tone in the middle section is his usual: he does not soften it, and neither have we.

This question may surprise many students of the *Yijing*. But here is the objective fact: **in practice, at least 40% of wrong hexagram readings are wrong because the *yongshen* was chosen incorrectly.** Fewer than 10% fail because the reading theory itself is defective or the reasoning went astray.

Which means: whatever school of liuyao you have studied, if you can choose the *yongshen* correctly 100% of the time, your error rate drops by at least half, immediately.

Choosing the *yongshen* in divination is the same as a doctor locating the lesion. If you have located the wrong lesion, the most advanced medical technology in the world is wasted.

So how do you choose it?

1. First, fix what each of the Six Relations *means* in each kind of inquiry

The matter asked about	Wife–Wealth (*qicai*) represents	Officer–Ghost (*guangui*) represents
Borrowing, debt collection, trade	Money	Officials, organisations, superiors
Working for wages, earning with no capital	Money	The job; the customer
A man asking about marriage	A woman he has already been intimate with	—
A woman asking about marriage	—	A man she has already been intimate with
Lawsuits and litigation	The merits of the case; also money	The merits; also law enforcement
A job	Wages and benefits	The position itself
Official career	Whether others will extort money from you	Officialdom, the post, superiors
School admission	Not studying hard; weak ability	The school; people with power
An examination	Mistakes	Ability
Travel	Funds	Mishap, inauspiciousness, hardship
Signing a contract	Whether there is financial resistance	Traps, schemes, officialdom
Imprisonment	Whether money is being used to trade	Prison, punishment, the police and courts

The other four — Parents, Siblings, Offspring, and the Subject and Object lines — work the same way; the author treats them in other essays.

Only once you know what each of the Six Relations means in each specific type of inquiry can you analyse a hexagram against a clearly defined question — and only then can you deliver the verdict on the spot (*tiekou zhiduan*, literally "iron mouth, direct judgement": the old term for an answer given without hedging).

Work only from the stock meanings listed in traditional liuyao textbooks, and you will never get there.

2. Second, determine the *yongshen* from the querent's actual point of inquiry

When someone comes to you, you must establish what they are actually asking. Only a clearly defined point of inquiry lets you choose the right *yongshen*, and only the right *yongshen* lets you read accurately.

Take a student who has just sat the university entrance exam and asks whether he will get in this year. If you fail to establish his point of inquiry and simply take Officer–Ghost, Parents and the Subject line as the *yongshen*, your accuracy on that reading is about 30%.

Why?

Case one: he is a weak student. With Officer–Ghost, Parents and Subject, you have about a 50% chance of being right. Why only 50%? Because this student is in fact planning to pay his way into a private university — any university at all, as long as he can get in by paying. Under *that* point of inquiry, your accuracy is 100%. But if he has already decided he will pay his way into *one specific* university and will go nowhere else, then under *that* point of inquiry your accuracy is 50% — because what he is actually asking is "can I buy my way into *this* university," and under that reading the *yongshen* is primarily **the Subject line and the Object line**. Officer–Ghost and Parents have lost their function as *yongshen* entirely.

Under that point of inquiry, once you have worked out the relationship between Subject and Object against the month pillar, day pillar, moving lines and transformed lines, the conclusion — in or out — is unambiguous. And so is the *reason* for it, derived from those same relationships read through the meanings of the Six Relations.

Case two: he is an outstanding student. Now taking Officer–Ghost, Parents and Subject as *yongshen* is pure fabrication. Why? Because for this student, getting into *a* university was never in question. The question is *which* one. He appears to ask "will I get in"; he is actually asking "will I get into *this particular* university." Under that point of inquiry you need only Subject and Object. There is no reason whatever to take Officer–Ghost and Parents.

At this point some "master" will ask, with what he imagines is devastating logic: *so when you read for someone, do you have to interrogate them about their point of inquiry first?*

If you are the sort of person who asks that question, the answer is that you are not worth discussing and your thinking is pitiful. **Because you never need to ask.** What you do is tell the querent: "If what you are asking is 'any university, as long as I get in,' then this hexagram says yes (or no). If what you are asking is 'this one specific university,' then this hexagram says yes (or no)." You hand over both readings. It costs you one extra pass over the hexagram. As for the student, he knows what he was thinking when he shook the coins. You never have to ask him.

To do that, of course, the reader must know how many distinct points of inquiry exist within each kind of matter — otherwise accurate reading is impossible.

Take money. Someone asks about their finances. The possible points of inquiry: *Can I collect that debt from that person? Can I earn by taking a job? Can I get this loan approved? Can I get rich gambling or buying lottery tickets? Can I make money partnering with someone in business?* And so on.

If the querent does not tell you which, you have to run the hexagram through each point of inquiry in turn — different point, different *yongshen* — and then report each result.

And even when he *has* told you "I'm going to ask for a loan, or collect a debt," there is still the question of **from whom** — a parent, a sibling, a child, a financial institution, an official body. Borrowing from an elder makes Parents a *yongshen* too. Borrowing from a bank makes Officer–Ghost one. Borrowing from a junior makes Offspring one.

Even "I'm going out to work for wages" splits: has he already fixed on a particular place and employer (in which case the Object line is a major *yongshen*), or is he merely going out with no destination yet (in which case the Object line is irrelevant)?

Liuyao divination is therefore a precise science — a science of tight reasoning, and a science that requires the reader to understand how human affairs actually work.

Choose the *yongshen* by knowing what the Six Relations mean in each kind of inquiry, and by holding tightly to the actual point of inquiry. Grasp those two things and you will choose the *yongshen* correctly every time, raise your accuracy sharply, and reach the on-the-spot verdict quickly.

CHAPTER FIFTEEN

What Are the Movement Laws of the Harmonized Yin–Yang Qi in Feng Shui?

2020-02-20 · 951 words

> **Translator's note.** This is the theoretical floor of the author's feng shui system. Everything he says elsewhere about siting, dragon veins and "true dragon points" rests on the two movement laws stated here: energy arrives from above and settles, and it is pressed down by mountains and drawn upward by water. The middle section is a polemic — he argues from the descendants of history's most celebrated feng shui masters rather than from texts. We have kept the argument and trimmed the repetition.

If you study feng shui, you cannot find the *yin-yang chonghe zhi qi* — the harmonized yin–yang energy — until you know how it moves. And to use it, you must know where it comes from and which way it travels.

1. It comes from the cosmos — from the air above

Relative to the ground, this energy moves **from above downward**. You may object that the Earth is round. To the Earth as a whole, yes; but to a local point of origin, the ground is a plane.



If the Earth neither revolved nor rotated, it would capture far less of this energy. The entire solar system is in motion; the entire galaxy is in motion; the Earth is in motion — revolving and rotating at once — while the solar system itself both orbits the galaxy and spins. So the harmonized yin–yang qi on Earth is **captured in the course of that rotation and revolution.**

For a person standing on the ground, energy also arrives at the top of the head. Once this energy contacts objects on the ground and lands, it takes one of two states:

(a) It gathers along the surface, from higher to lower. (b) It seeps into the soil and accumulates along the strata, running from high ground toward low.

Those are the movement laws of feng shui's “harmonized yin–yang qi.” A person moving about on the surface draws this energy from two channels: what falls directly from above, and what moves across the surface.

Now consider the Ming Tombs and the Eastern Qing Tombs. They were sited by the finest feng shui masters of their day — not one man but teams working together — and the result was the destruction of the imperial house. Those same masters did not produce a single official of prefectural rank among their own descendants. What does that tell you? **That they did not know the movement laws of the qi in a dragon vein.**

If you understood what vein qi actually is, then even failing to find a site that yields high office, you should at minimum manage a civil-service post for your family. If you have studied feng shui your whole life and cannot produce one civil servant in your own house — cannot even manage to father a son or a daughter — then your theory is wrong, and wrong in a way that was built in from the start. Surely you would not let your descendants end up as addicts or gamblers. Surely not in prison. Surely not losing an arm or a leg.

If you cannot deliver even these plain, ordinary things, then ask yourself whether your feng shui theory has a fatal flaw. We are not asking for great wealth. We are already born; if we came off the line as a tractor, there is nothing to be done about that. But we can change the engine and change the tyres. At minimum, we should be able to guarantee that children born *after* we understood feng shui will live to seventy, stay out of prison, keep their limbs, have a happy marriage, and get the son or daughter they wanted. At minimum, food on the table if not comfort. If you fail on any one of those, your feng shui theory is **incomplete.**

We do not demand greatness. But look across three thousand years: which feng shui master ever delivered that for his own descendants? Not one. Which means every feng shui theory on record has a fatal defect. Men who practised feng shui buried their own sons. Men who practised feng shui died young themselves. It is a miserable record.

So you must understand the movement laws of this energy. Understand that, and even if you go looking for sites using traditional theory, your hit rate will rise sharply.



2. Mountains press it down; water draws it up

The energy of a dragon vein and the energy of the harmonized yin–yang qi share the same basic law of motion: **when it meets a mountain, it is pressed downward; when it meets water, it is drawn upward.** That is the fundamental pattern.

Once you see this, you can begin to see which directions deliver auspicious energy and which deliver the harmful kind. These are only the basic laws, of course. The Earth is also rotating; what we have described holds without factoring in rotation, gravity or weight.

With that in hand, we can say that the traditional rule "there must be a *mingtang* — a bright hall — in front of the point" is not entirely wrong. A bright hall *does* collect energy. Traditional feng shui got that much right.

But that is **surface** energy. Energy inside the strata has nothing to do with it. Which means: a true dragon point is **not** equivalent to "having a bright hall."

There are two kinds of true dragon point:

1. **The focal point** — where energy gathers in the bright hall.
2. **The vein-qi point** — where energy flows *within the strata*.

That is the movement law of the harmonized yin–yang qi. To talk about feng shui without understanding it is to talk nonsense.

CHAPTER SIXTEEN

Where Is the Truth in "Liuyao Prediction Theory"?

2017-11-12 · 2,818 words

> **Translator's note.** This essay is the companion to "How Do You Choose the *Yongshen* in Liuyao Divination?" — it supplies the test that the earlier piece assumes. The author's criterion is blunt: a divination theory may call itself scientific only if it survives two probes. Ask the same question a hundred times and the verdict must not change; hand the reader a heap of hexagrams and he must be able to sort them into the specific questions they answer. By that standard he acquits liuyao and convicts every "new liuyao" school currently on sale. The two classical texts he names — *Huangjin Ce* (《黄金策》, "Golden Policies," a Ming compendium attributed to Liu Bowen) and *Bushi Zhengzong* (《卜筮正宗》, "The Orthodox of Divination," Wang Hongxu's Qing manual) — remain the standard liuyao curriculum to this day. The original is deliberately rough, and several passages are personal attacks; we have kept the argument and cut the invective.

For more than a decade, a crowd of home-grown "swindler-masters" has made its living doing violence to the theory of traditional liuyao prediction — inventing "new liuyao theories" off the top of their heads and feeding them to students who do not know better. So I take up the scalpel again: objective, realistic, materialist, dialectical, scientific. Time to dissect these theories-for-fleecing.

Test one: repetition

If liuyao theory is genuinely scientific — objective, realistic, materialist, dialectical — then any single matter a querent asks about must survive being asked hundreds and thousands of times, and every one of those readings must return an absolutely identical verdict.

If you ask the same question a hundred times and get *auspicious* on this hexagram and *inauspicious* on that one, with no stable answer anywhere in the pile, then you may take it as proven: the theory is wrong, and it is a fraud.

So here is a challenge to every master who has ever invented a "new liuyao method." Suppose I ask about one matter and shake the coins a hundred times. Suppose I then, without telling you, send a hundred different people to you — different status, different trades, different walks of life — each carrying one of those hundred hexagrams. Will you guarantee that your "new liuyao theory" derives the same verdict from all one hundred?

Perhaps the master will say yes. Then let the students do it themselves. Shake the coins eight or ten times over one question. Then have different students, in different cities, at different hours, telephone these masters and ask for a reading. You will learn exactly how shamelessly these men boast. It is a certainty that they will read the same matter, from its different hexagrams, as flatly opposite outcomes.

Practice is the only test of truth. If you want to know whether your teacher is a swindler, that is the test to run. If, on the other hand, you believe in your heart that liuyao is not a science but a matter of intuition and felt sense, then do not bother testing — you have already been taken, and you have earned it.

Because if liuyao is a science and not a pseudoscience, it must withstand repeated testing. And the essential difference between science and

pseudoscience is exactly this: **science can reproduce the same result under the same conditions; pseudoscience never can.**

Test two: the heap of hexagrams

If liuyao theory is genuinely scientific, it must be able to solve every problem in real life that cannot be solved by arithmetic.

Take this case. A man is negotiating to go into business with three different partners at once. Before shaking the coins he does not tell you which hexagram refers to which partner. He shakes fifteen times — five per partner — and asks: with which of the three can I actually make money?

Can you, using liuyao, sort those fifteen hexagrams into three groups of five, such that each group is exactly the "will I make money with this particular partner" question?

Some students will think I am being unfair to liuyao. I am not. If the theory you are using is scientific and correct, this is trivial — a matter of turning your hand over. If the theory you are using is wrong, then it is harder than climbing to heaven.

Any "liuyao theory" whatsoever can be dissected to the bone with those two blades. Any swindler-master and any swindler-theory will stand exposed in five minutes. And if you dare not — or would rather not — apply those two blades to the theory you learned and the theory you teach, then you have only one road left: the road of the teacher who cheats, and you will never arrive anywhere.

So where is the truth?

Having said all that, some students will ask: then where *is* the true liuyao theory?

I can tell you with absolute certainty.

The true liuyao theory is *Golden Policies* and *The Orthodox of Divination*.

Of all the predictive traditions China has handed down over a thousand years, only liuyao has no congenital disability, no fatal flaw built in at birth. Only liuyao is, in this sense, complete.

Consider the alternatives.

Bazi. From the day it was born, bazi has been unable to account for the "five-fold identicals" — people born in the same year, month, day, hour *and* of the same sex, whose lives nonetheless differ. That is not a marginal objection. It is the first question anyone asks.

Feng shui. Apart from the sitting-direction and *fenjin* (分金, the fine graduation of the compass) method — whose practical value is real but narrow — every other feng shui theory has almost no operational grip. This, incidentally, is the real reason feng shui has circulated for a thousand years while its masters have produced nothing beyond *fenjin*. If the *fenjin* theory were as precise and as decisive as the masters claim, there would not be an unlucky person left on earth, because every house and every grave is built to the best available sitting-direction and *fenjin*. The facts slap the feng shui masters in the face daily. "Useful and true" feng shui theory is very thin on the ground — that is traditional feng shui's fatal flaw.

Qimen Dunjia. From the moment it was founded, qimen has carried an unresolved quarrel: whether to intercalate the leap month when setting up the chart (置润 *zhirun* versus 不置润 *buzhirun*), and whether to use the fixed-palace method (排宫 *paigong*) or the flying-palace method (飞宫 *feigong*). Four founding patriarchs could not settle it between them. A predictive theory whose own basic set-up is still in dispute also carries a fatal flaw.

These flaws have gone largely unaddressed for centuries, and few people are capable of addressing them.

Liuyao, put under the same scalpel, shows only a few blemishes. Remove those blemishes and what remains is a liuyao theory that is both luminous and astonishingly accurate.

The least useful parts of the tradition

1. The theory of flourishing and declining (旺衰 *wangshuai*).

In the genuine tradition, *wangshuai* is mentioned in passing. It exists as a concept; it functions as a background factor. In the whole body of traditional liuyao literature, discussion of *wangshuai* occupies under 4% of the text, while over 90% is devoted to **combinations and transformations** — how lines combine, clash, move and change one another.

Which tells you plainly: the ancients did not primarily weigh strength. They primarily weighed the combinatorial relationships among the lines. The ancients worked that way, and we moderns overrule them, doing violence to the old books and the old theory. That is how ignorant we have become.

You can throw *wangshuai* out entirely and still read with 100% accuracy — provided, of course, that you have first understood how the lines combine and transform.

2. The theory of spirit-killers (神煞 *shensha*).

The genuine tradition already states it plainly: *the transformations of the shensha are endless, and not worth the single principle of the five elements generating and controlling one another*. The ancients had already rejected *shensha*. They treated it as a background factor at most. We cling to what they discarded. In the authentic corpus, *shensha* occupies no more than 3% of the text — which tells you what the tradition thought it was worth.

Practice confirms it. *Shensha* alone cannot produce a reading. The five elements and the Six Relations alone, with no *shensha* whatever, produce 100% accurate readings.

3. Confucian-moral and folk-jianghu judgement formulas.

The tradition also contains verdicts evolved out of moral convention and marketplace lore. They amount to about 3% of the corpus, and they are the part that does the most damage to accuracy — the reason readings come out uncannily right on one hexagram and wildly off on the next. These formulas are treated at length in my *Complete Theory of Liuyao Prediction*, in the sections analysing the verdicts of *Golden Policies* and *The Orthodox of Divination*. I will not repeat that here.

The parts that block a student's progress

1. “Never a fourth hexagram” (卦不过三).

Traditional liuyao holds that the hexagram is a divine instrument, that the same matter may not be asked twice, and that a repeat inquiry will not be answered — *ask again and the spirit will not tell you.*

In fact, repeated readings disagree because the **reading theory contains errors**, not because the spirit has fallen silent. But because we were taught “never a fourth hexagram,” our thinking was fenced in. We assumed the fault lay with the spirit rather than with the theory, and so we lost every opportunity to discover which parts of the theory were wrong. That is why accuracy never reached 100%.

2. “Sincerity makes it work” (心诚则灵).

Traditional liuyao holds that the hexagram is accurate only if the querent shakes the coins with a sincere heart. In fact, all the querent needs to do is concentrate for a moment and hold the question in mind. **Whether the hexagram is accurate is decided by the reader's theory.**

When a reading fails, we blame the querent's sincerity. That is self-deception. If your skill were high and your theory correct, then before reading the querent's hexagram you would shake one yourself, sincerely, and ask *“was*

this querent sincere when he shook?" — and only then decide whether to proceed. Nobody does that. So let me say it without manners: **a failed reading is your theory's fault, not the querent's.**

When the querent shakes, it is the reader's job to keep reminding him to concentrate. If you did not remind him, what kind of reader are you? And if you did remind him and he was still distracted, why read the hexagram at all?

This "sincerity" doctrine has done real damage. It stopped us from studying the *principles* of the hexagram in depth, and that is why a man can study divination his whole life and still die unable to read with certainty. It is also why certain masters now drag out a "uncertainty principle" to excuse their own ignorance. (The uncertainty principle, properly understood, says that no predictive theory can ever resolve the finest details with perfect precision. It does not say that being wrong is correct and scientific. A theory that cannot even get the *direction* of an event right — is that still a theory?)

3. No sense of what to look at first.

Traditional liuyao, when analysing the combinations among lines, grabs everything at once — eyebrows and beard in the same fist — and never seizes the snake at the seven inches.

The habit is to look at the *yongshen*, then at the *yuanshen* (the line that generates it), then at the *jishen* and *choushen* (the lines that control and obstruct it). That is not a method. It is the absence of a method — a disordered mind dressed up as thoroughness.

Here is why. In a reading, the *yongshen* is the crux. Hold it and nothing else. Establish the relationship between the *yongshen* and **the one line that represents the actual querent**; then establish whether the month pillar, the day pillar, the moving lines and the transformed lines have damaged the closeness or distance between those two. Do that, and the verdict is out —

with certainty. There is no need to ask which line is the *yuanshen*, which the *jishen*, which the *choushen*.

It is like a battle. To know whether you will win, you first analyse the generating, controlling, combining and clashing relationship between **your army (the yongshen) and yourself**. Then you analyse the relationship between **your army and the other armies (the month pillar, the day pillar, the moving lines, the transformed lines)** — and whether those other armies have broken the link between your army and you.

For an auspicious matter: if the *yongshen* is combined with you, but the *yongshen* is itself damaged by the month pillar, day pillar, moving lines or transformed lines — through combination, clash, entombment in the storage vault, or transformation into something spoiled — then your good outcome is gone. Same if *you* are the one damaged.

Therefore, in a liuyao reading, the words *yuanshen*, *jishen* and *choushen* never need to enter your head at all. Work in this order: the relation of the *yongshen* to you; then whether the *yongshen* has been damaged by month, day, moving lines, transformed lines; then whether *you* have been damaged. The verdict falls out with certainty. The tradition's failure to prioritise is a serious drag on both simplicity and accuracy.

4. No clear active–passive relation.

Traditional liuyao never states who acts and who is acted upon. The result is that a student can never answer the basic question: *which line can affect which other line, and which cannot?*

Once you understand the rule, the questions dissolve. The rule is: **the month pillar and the day pillar can combine with, clash with, punish, harm, generate and control *any* line; no line can do any of those things to the month or day pillar. A moving line can do them to**

other moving lines and to any still line; a still line cannot do them to a moving line.

With that in hand, three questions answer themselves: What is the relation between the *yongshen* and me? Between the *yongshen* and the month, day, moving and transformed lines? Between me and the month, day, moving and transformed lines? Prediction becomes simple, and it becomes accurate.

And note: *Golden Policies* and *The Orthodox of Divination* already state the active–passive relation quite clearly. It is the students who have looked without seeing and listened without hearing.

5. The miraculous on-the-spot verdict, sorted by category.

The tradition's catalogues of "iron-mouth" verdicts (铁口直断) — one list for illness, one for lawsuits, one for travel — have badly obstructed students.

Because the power of an on-the-spot verdict does not come from the formula. It comes from knowing how the human matter actually works. If you know no medicine, you may recite the illness formulas backwards and you will still never call a diagnosis on the spot. If you do not understand the launch sequence and basic principles of a satellite, you may have the formulas at your fingertips and you will never say on the spot where in the launch the fault lies. If you know nothing of fishing, the formulas may be carved into your brain and you will never say on the spot what happened out on the water.

The formulas are **information markers**. The on-the-spot verdict is what you derive when those markers are bound tightly to the actual process of the human affair. The tradition's lists make students forget that principle — they learn the markers and skip the binding.

What remains

Apart from these errors, *Golden Policies* and *The Orthodox of Divination* are true word for word and true sentence for sentence.

And the swindler-masters, knowing nothing, unable to read accurately and desperate for money and fame, invent new liuyao theories — at the risk of the shortened life and crippled body that folk belief promises anyone who fabricates divination lore. It is a contemptible trade. It misleads students, and it does real damage to the inheritance and refinement of liuyao theory.

The truth of liuyao theory is in *Golden Policies* and *The Orthodox of Divination*.

Strip out the parts that cannot survive the scalpel — objective, realistic, materialist, dialectical, scientific — and every remaining sentence in those two books is predictive truth, accurate to the last degree.

With those true verdicts you can read with 100% accuracy. You can ask the same question hundreds and thousands of times and get the same answer every time. You can take fifteen hexagrams and sort them into three groups of five, each group answering for one specific partner. And if you also understand how human affairs work, then with those true methods you can deliver the verdict on the spot, every time.

CHAPTER SEVENTEEN

Where Is the Real Theory of Liuyao Prediction?

2023-10-19 · 1,615 words

> **Translator's note.** Published in 2023, six years after "Where Is the Truth in Liuyao Prediction Theory?", this essay is the author's own answer to the question his earlier piece raised. Where the earlier article cleared the ground — rejecting "new liuyao" schools and returning to *Golden Policies* and *The Orthodox of Divination* — this one names seven specific defects he believes have kept liuyao hovering between accurate and inaccurate for five millennia, and presents his own system as the repair. Two of the seven are technical terms he treats as proprietary: *shishi dongyao* (事实动爻, "the factual moving line") and *waiying* (外应, "external correspondence," the omen that arrives while the question is being asked). The original closes with enrolment details for his course; we have condensed that section to a note.

Liuyao reads heaven above, earth below, and human affairs in between. It is the great root method of the Chinese predictive tradition, and one of the techniques any professional reader is expected to command.

And yet for five thousand years hexagram divination has sat in the gap between accurate and inaccurate — never able to promise precision. Generation after generation of talented men studied and innovated, and in essence none of them solved the problem.

Why not? Why could five thousand years of the best minds, thinking as hard as men can think, not break through?

The plain answer is that they never settled the foundational question: **what is liuyao prediction actually made of?**

Here is why that question is decisive.

1. It has only ever worked in the time system

Five thousand years of hexagram divination has turned inside the *time* system alone. But every person, thing and event in this world, from arising to perishing, exists inside a **unified field of time and spatial environment.** Any predictive theory that hopes to reason precisely must fuse time with the thing and its environment. Walk on one leg and throw the spatial dimension away — how do you expect precision?

2. It is saturated with philosophy, when human affairs run on physics

Five thousand years of liuyao theory is stuffed with philosophical schematics. But things in this world do not arise, develop and change according to philosophical principles. The laws of physics and the laws of philosophy are not equivalent and not aligned. In fact **99% of how any given thing changes is physics, not philosophy.**

When you carry philosophical rhetoric — the kind designed to impress rather than to describe — into a predictive model whose real substrate is physical law, you have crippled its precision at the root. Put plainly: **philosophical principle is not physical law, and human affairs change by physical law, not by philosophical law.**

3. Nobody has understood the diviner's own energy field

Five thousand years of liuyao theory has never settled the question of **how far the diviner's own energy field reaches.**

Everyone agrees that "the hexagram can be asked about anything." Almost nobody grasps that **"the hexagram can be asked about anything" does not mean "the diviner can read anything."** A reader who has mastered wealth and career questions may still fail on a missing-person case.

Still fewer grasp this: **even with a theory that is 100% correct, a reader can read precisely only within the range his own energy field covers — never outside it.** You will never read the affairs of a country's president with accuracy. You will never read the fate of a person who has no connection to you at all.

4. Nobody has understood what "accuracy" means

Five thousand years of liuyao has never resolved this: **accuracy means predicting the state a matter will take under given conditions. It does not mean predicting the *second* result that appears after the querent learns the first prediction and deliberately changes the conditions.**

Because nobody grasped this, we inherited the famous paradox of Shao Kangjie and the bird. A transcendent being holds a small bird in his closed hand and asks Shao to predict whether the bird will live or die. Whatever Shao answers, the being can make it false — crush the bird, or open the hand and let it fly. Shao had no answer. For a thousand years, men who understood nothing have used "the immortal tested Shao Kangjie" as a stick to beat hexagram divination with. (The full reasoning is in my essay "What Is Prediction, Really?" on the *Shikong Zuobiao* account.)

The same confusion produces the common claim that "gambling is hard to predict." And it produces this absurdity: a querent asks whether a venture will succeed; the reading says yes; the venture does not happen; the querent announces that the prediction failed. But the venture did not fail — **he never**

did the thing. Ask about a thing and never do it, and where is success or failure to be found?

At this point some clever fellow will ask: *then why didn't you predict that he wouldn't do it?* A fair question. If you had asked that, it could be answered precisely. But under normal circumstances everyone assumes that a man who asks, and who receives an auspicious reading, will go and act. That is an error of business judgement, and it has nothing to do with whether the theory is sound.

5. Nobody has understood external correspondence

Five thousand years of liuyao has never settled the relation between the hexagram and **external correspondence** (*waiying*). Ninety-five percent of masters ignore it ninety-five percent of the time — they do not observe it, or do not know how. And once the root principle *heaven's omen outranks the hexagram* is thrown away, the standard result is exactly what practitioners complain of: "however I read this hexagram it comes out the same way, and the facts turn out otherwise."

Study hexagrams without mastering *waiying* and you will circle outside the gate forever.

6. Nobody has understood the factual moving line

Five thousand years of liuyao has never recognised **the factual moving line** (*shishi dongyao*) — what my school treats as the tradition's buried master key.

In a reading, the factual moving line decides the precision of the whole analysis, 100%. Its energy far exceeds that of any moving or transformed line in the hexagram, and indeed far exceeds that of the four governing time values. Once a factual moving line appears, the entire analysis reorganises around it. Whether you cast a moving hexagram or a still one, if the matter

asked about binds to the hexagram and produces a factual moving line, then that line is the hexagram's **president** — everything answers to it.

(The factual moving line is a theory transmitted privately within liuyao for five thousand years. It is taught only in person.)

7. Nobody has separated the verdict from the process

Five thousand years of liuyao has lumped together two different techniques: **predicting the outcome (auspicious or inauspicious, success or failure)**, and **predicting the detailed process by which the matter unfolds.** The consequence is that many masters reason in confusion and end up relying on experience or outright guesswork.

In fact, the reasoning that yields the **outcome** is different from the reasoning that yields the **process** about 90% of the time. Only when you hold those two modes of thought clearly apart can you do both — outcome *and* process — with full accuracy.

Otherwise you get the strange split every practitioner knows: the process is read correctly and the outcome is wrong; or the process is a mess of errors and the outcome is exactly right.

What follows

Those seven are the root reasons liuyao has never achieved precision in five thousand years, and the root reason it is “easy to enter and hard to master.” Any liuyao school that solves those seven theoretical obstacles will dominate. Any student who learns a liuyao theory that has genuinely solved them will sweep the field.

After thirty-eight years of research, the system I have built — the **Lü Wenyi Natural-Science Liuyao Prediction System** — resolves all seven at the root.

It has two halves.

The first is the reading of outcome — auspicious or inauspicious, success or failure. Will the matter be accomplished? Will the missing person be found? Will the illness be cured? Will there be a prison sentence? Will the person die?

The second is the reading of process detail — the specific things that will occur between the matter's arising and its result.

In both, the factual moving line and external correspondence are fused into the analysis at every step, so that precision does not slip and no conclusion is off. With this system, the same matter can be asked hundreds and thousands of times and produce the same outcome every time — while the different hexagrams fill in the process in greater and greater detail.

For a professional reader, command of an accurate liuyao technique matters, because **each predictive art has its proper range.** Bazi is poorly suited to the details of a single event's success or failure; liuyao excels at exactly that. Feng shui is worse still for single events. Liuyao, by contrast, can be asked about anything — and can also recover the important details of how the matter will unfold.

From the editor. The remainder of the original article is a course announcement: an online module on outcome reading, a three-day in-person module on process detail (including the factual moving line and external correspondence), held in Beijing or in Shijiazhuang, Hebei or Yuncheng, Shanxi in November 2023, with fees and a registration contact. We have omitted the commercial details; readers who want them can reach the author through the channels listed on this site.

CHAPTER EIGHTEEN

Shenbing Qimen Is the Real Qimen Dunjia — Every Other School Is a Jianghu Fake

2023-01-03 · 2,906 words

> **Translator's note.** *Shenbing Qimen* (神兵奇门, "Divine Troops Qimen") is the author's own school, which he traces through his maternal grandfather to a lineage he attributes to Zhuge Liang (181–234), the Three Kingdoms strategist to whom Chinese tradition also attributes the *Qimen Dunjia* corpus. This is the most promotional piece in the collection, and it makes a very large claim: that every other qimen school in circulation — including the various "Zhuge Qimen," "Yin-pan Qimen," "Numerical Qimen" and "Ritual Qimen" on the market — is a fake, because all of them cast only one chart. We have kept his technical distinction intact, since it is the substance of the argument, and condensed the sales passages. The family-lineage claim and the anecdotes below cannot be independently verified; they are recorded as the author tells them.

Shenbing Qimen Dunjia is a secret art of the Zhuge Liang line, transmitted in a single thread across a thousand years. Its theoretical system has **no relationship whatever** to the "Zhuge Qimen" now sold in the marketplace. What circulates under that name is no different in kind from "Yin-pan Qimen," "Numerical Qimen," "Ritual Qimen" and the rest: a jianghu fake wearing a qimen label to part the public from its money.

This system is the result of more than twenty years of work on two sources: the *Qimen Notebooks* left by my maternal grandfather — a record of cases, successes and failures, from the Zhuge line he carried — and the strange stories about his use of the art that still circulate in the Jin-Shaan-Meng

border country. I then rebuilt the theory on the *Lü school of time, space and person*, closing the technical defects that afflict *Shenbing Qimen* and every other qimen school alike.

Why is this the only real qimen?

1. Qimen without a fact chart is a corpse

The essential difference is this. *Shenbing Qimen* has flesh, blood and a soul. Every other school in circulation has no soul. They are corpses in qimen clothing.

Here is why. **A real qimen casting produces two charts, not one.** One is the **time chart** (*shijian ju*). The other is the **fact chart** (*shishi ju*), formerly called the **life-and-death chart** (*shengsiju*).

For two thousand years, every school in circulation has had only the time chart. None of them knows the fact chart exists.

And the whole secret of qimen lies in **the perfect fusion of the two.**

Only the Zhuge line casts both. The **time chart** is built purely from time — palaces, the Eight Gates, the Nine Stars, the spirits, the *qiyi* stems. The **fact chart** is built from the same components, **but it is cast from the actual state of existence of a specific person, event or object — not from time.**

Whatever you are asking about, you must fuse the time chart and the fact chart before the reading has any correspondence to the actual matter, and before the conclusion can be precise.

Shenbing Qimen is emphatically **not** what the corpse-schools do: stay inside the single time chart and rummage through its gates, stars, palaces, stems, instruments and spirits looking for a “host and guest,” a “useful god,” an “enemy god,” a “jealous god.” Take partnership: find the earth-plate Life Gate

for the party supplying capital, take the palace where the heaven-plate Life Gate lands for the working partner. Take friendship: the day stem's palace is you, the hour stem is the friend. Take marriage: *yi* is the woman, *geng* the man. Take a loan: the *zhifu* is the lender, the *tianyi* minor *zhifu* the borrower. Take litigation: *zhifu* the plaintiff, *tianyi* the defendant. Take illness: *tianrui* is the disease; the Life and Death gates give the outcome. Take a life reading: the birth-year stem and branch gives the subject's palace — or the time he walked in the door.

All of that is fantasy. It is self-pleasuring inside a sealed time system, analysing generation, control, clash, combination and storage vaults to produce a verdict. It is absurd, and it is why those schools cannot deliver.

I renamed the “life-and-death chart” the “fact chart” to take some of the drama out of it. **The name does not mean “life and death” literally.** It means the *fact chart* formed by the actual, objective, concrete combination of a person, an event and an object that will decide whether the matter succeeds or fails. It is not cast from time at all.

Its substance is the living factual element that plays the decisive role when qimen is used to predict — and the decisive factor in whether a remedy works. **The life-and-death chart is the soul of qimen. The time chart is only its corpse.**

Zhuge Liang's greatest secret was never the “yin dun, ninth round, yang dun, third round” business of setting up a chart by clock. That is only the analysis platform. **Any qimen school without the life-and-death chart is a eunuch qimen — gelded.**

The extraordinary accuracy of *Shenbing Qimen* readings, and the startling effect of its remedies, come from the fusion of the two.

How the fact chart is cast is a transmitted secret. It is not taught outside the lineage. Once cast, it too is a chart of palaces, gates, stars, stems, instruments

and spirits — **but it is not cast from time.**

A reading, and a remedy, is then a three-dimensional analysis of six factors fused together: **time, direction, person, manifest object, hidden object, and causal linkage.**

Students of qimen, remember this: **a school with only a time chart and no fact chart is congenitally brain-damaged.** It will not survive your own testing in practice. It is the trick by which a master who read a few more qimen books than you did a few years earlier collects your tuition.

To put it precisely: **the time chart is qimen's body.** It reflects the one specific state of existence that every person and thing on earth shares at that same moment. It has no targeting whatever. **The life-and-death chart is qimen's soul.** It reflects the state of existence peculiar to one specific person, one specific event, one specific object.

Only the fusion lets you predict the past, present and future state of *that* person, *that* event, *that* object — and then design a remedy that works on it specifically.

Every qimen school without the fact chart is a corpse. Only a school with it is a complete qimen: flesh, blood, soul, thought, substance.

Learn qimen without learning the fusion of body and soul, and you have learned a corpse.

My rule is this. Every qimen analysis begins from the same precondition: cast the time chart from the clock, then **cast a second, fact chart from the objective information corresponding to the actual situation**, and only then fuse the two and analyse.

The method on the market — cast one time chart and start predicting — is a cripple's con.

Take a football match. First cast the time chart for the kick-off. Then cast the fact chart for the match. (*The fact chart is a secret not transmitted for a thousand years; only the* Shenbing Qimen *line carries the technique. Masters of other schools have probably never heard the term.*) Only with the two fused can you read the result of the match.

With only a time chart, no master alive can reach 100% accuracy on the great questions of success and failure, and no remedy can be 100% effective — and even where a reading lands, and a remedy seems to work, it is the master's luck and the client's luck, nothing more.

2. The same technique reads every classic battle

With the fusion of time chart and fact chart, the outcome of every classic war in world history can be read with the same technique, at 100%. The results of every team at the 2022 Qatar World Cup can be read with the same technique, at 100%.

There is one precondition: the fact chart must be cast correctly — when each side moved, from which direction, in what environmental state, with what distinguishing features, toward what objective. Get the fact chart right, combine it with the time chart of the engagement, and you can read the outcome and the shape of the engagement precisely. The Russia–Ukraine crisis can be read the same way: the final outcome, and the character of the major turns along the way.

3. "Every step out the door is an encounter"

From the chart you can predict, for a person leaving a given place, what he will meet within 300 metres (500 in the countryside) in each of the eight — or twenty-four — directions: **what kind of event, auspicious or not; what sort of person; what sort of object.**

In October 2022 a student came to visit. As he was leaving I told him: within 300 metres east you will meet one or more leading cadres, saying strange things or doing strange things.

About two minutes after he left he telephoned. The moment he came out of the compound gate he had met a young man in the full dress of a first-rank Qing official, walking toward him down the street. Performance art.

That is the predictive power of *Shenbing Qimen*.

4. "The visitor needs no introduction"

From the chart you can predict in advance **what sort of person will come today, from what direction, to discuss what sort of matter.**

Every morning I cast a chart and then walk 300 metres in whatever direction takes me. From the people, events and objects I meet, read against the chart, I can say precisely who will come today, from where, and what they will want to talk about.

5. "Scatter beans, raise troops"

San dou cheng bing — "scatter beans and they become soldiers" — does not mean, as the words suggest, that a handful of beans turns into a company of men.

It means locating hidden energy through the chart, and then using that hidden energy — at a specific time, in a specific direction, in a specific environment — to strengthen your auspicious energy and weaken the inauspicious, so as to accomplish your objective. It is a method of fate adjustment.

In substance it is a key turning a lock — or a lock closing a door.

One day in June 2022 a friend from my home town telephoned. His younger brother's wife had apparently run off that morning with her lover. Was there

anything to be done?

I cast the chart and analysed it, then told him: get your brother to find a suitable spot southeast of the house and dump a tractor-load of earth or stone there, then go home and stay home. Then find a pretext to give the youngest child a beating — just enough to make the child cry.

If the pile is within 100 metres of the house, your sister-in-law will be back within three days. If it is between 100 and 500 metres, back within ten days at the latest.

On the fifth day he called. She was back. She and the lover had quarrelled over buying a gold ring, she had lost her temper and come home, and the lover had gone off to work elsewhere.

That is *Shenbing Qimen*.

6. "Borrowing years from heaven"

Xiang tian jie shou does not mean a person can live forever. It means that, by this method, the enormous physical and mental suffering of someone gravely ill can be substantially reduced, the progression of a malignant disease can be slowed, and life thereby indirectly extended. It can also buy a little time for an elderly person waiting for children or relatives to come and see them one last time.

The method is simply a rational, timely and effective use of the energy and information carried by things. It does not contradict modern medicine; in substance it is the same thing.

In the winter of 2015 my mother's health was failing by the day at home. She had not eaten for days and was close to death. Heavy snow had closed the roads and I could not get back in time. I cast the chart and analysed it, then asked a friend to take her to a hospital in the *xu* direction — the chart specifically ruled out her being taken by my elder brother or other close

relatives. She began eating the next day, and came home after a week in hospital.

In the spring of 2016 I sent her to stay with my sister in Baotou, also in the *xu* direction. She lived healthily for another year, and died in the summer of 2017.

That is "borrowing years from heaven." (This is only the directional application; the other methods are not convenient to describe here.)

7. Lifetime readings

With *Shenbing Qimen* one can read, for any person: whether there is wealth, and roughly what order of wealth; whether there is a career, and roughly what level; whether there is a prison disaster, and how severe; whether life will be short, and how short; whether children will be outstanding, and roughly how outstanding; whether emotional life will be happy, and roughly how happy; whether serious illness will strike before old age, and in which organ the body's weak point lies; what order of benefactors will appear across a lifetime.

8. Annual readings

For any given year: the state of finances; the state of career, including study, cultivation and skill; the state of position and authority; the state of emotional life; whether disaster will come, and how large — official trouble, traffic accident, serious illness, serious injury, major lawsuit, major scandal; how relatives will fare; which major events will occur.

9. Everything else

Any matter a person wants to ask about — given the conditions for casting a fact chart — can be read precisely.

Marriage, partnership, borrowing, lending, debt collection, buying and selling, illness, lost objects, missing persons, job applications, interviews,

examinations, tenders, childbirth, travel, investment, traffic accidents, lawsuits, prison, elections, competitions, war, weather, feng shui, job changes, benefactors and petty men, seeking medical advice, placing objects, buying and selling vehicles, seeking a teacher, disputes, giving away a pet, cosmetic surgery and tattoos, hosting guests, renovation, giving and receiving gifts, funerals, incense offerings, releasing living creatures, promotion and taking up a post, breaking ground, celebrations, laying a foundation stone, opening a business, raising a roof beam, seeking official favour, dealing with a villain, cohabitation, digging a well, cutting a wall, planting a large tree, digging a pond, piling up clutter, contacting an old friend, meeting someone new, renting, selling or buying a house, gambling, licences and certificates, donations, a drastic change of hairstyle.

The original lists some sixty items. All of them, and their associated detail, can be read.

10. Remedies

Shenbing Qimen has two remedial techniques. The first arranges time, direction and the energy-forms of things — the *time–space–person* layout. The second arranges time, direction, a specific person, a specific matter, a specific object and hidden energy — the *Eight Divisions of Heaven and Dragons* secret adjustment.

Applied together, they can intervene substantially in the process and outcome of what a person or an organisation is doing: the speed, the direction, the scale.

“Scattering beans” and “borrowing years” are two applications among many of the remedial method. **Remember: every remedy has preconditions and limits. No remedy raises the dead, turns a beggar into the richest man in the world, or turns a servant into an emperor.**

11. It answers what the other schools cannot even formulate

This system resolves, at the root, problems that the Yin-pan, Ritual, Zhuge and Numerical qimen schools have not dared to imagine for two thousand years.

Whatever your question about qimen, *Shenbing Qimen* returns an answer grounded in natural science, strict logic and objective fact.

In accuracy of prediction and in the power of remedial fate adjustment, it leaves every jianghu qimen school ten thousand miles behind.

12. It can be learned

It does not matter whether you have any qimen background. If you want to learn, this system will surprise you.

There is no "cannot learn it," no "cannot get it accurate," no bait-and-switch. Each part is learned complete and can be used independently and accurately. Not transmitting false theory and false technique is the floor I have set for public teaching.

13. Start with the walk

Perhaps you do not believe any of this. Then learn one technique — "every step out the door is an encounter" — and you will understand, at 100%, why this system leaves the others ten thousand miles behind.

Because this question — leaving the house and moving in one of twenty-four directions, what specific thing, what sort of person, what strange object will I meet within 500 metres — has been asked for two thousand years, and only *Shenbing Qimen* has ever answered it completely. The other schools tell a story and cannot do it.

Conquering others begins with the walk out the door. Becoming the master people travel to see also begins with the walk out the door.

Go deep enough and the accuracy of the readings and the effect of the remedies will convince you. *Shenbing Qimen* is a pearl in the crown of the Chinese predictive tradition. Let it appear, and the other schools fade into the ground.

Lü Wenyi, Beijing, 3 January 2023

CHAPTER NINETEEN

Is Qimen Dunjia the Feng Shui Master's Third Eye?

2018-01-07 · 783 words

> **Translator's note.** A short polemic from 2018, aimed at a specific claim made by a qimen master in a feng shui journal: that *Qimen Dunjia* is "the feng shui master's third eye." The author's answer is a distinction that recurs across this collection — a technique that can *diagnose* a site is not the same thing as a theory that *explains* it. The B-mode ultrasound analogy in the middle is his, not ours. Names of the master and the journal have been reduced to placeholders in the original and remain so here.

A certain qimen master published an article in a feng shui journal. He wrote that in years of studying and applying *Qimen Dunjia* he had come to feel deeply that "qimen is the feng shui master's third eye." He offered a case: using qimen he had read that a particular house plot "may have had a woman hang herself there, and perhaps a man died there too," and he advised the client, "whatever you do, do not buy this inauspicious plot."

The follow-up investigation, he said, found that the owner's mother had indeed hanged herself on the site, and the owner's elder brother had drowned himself in a river.

That qimen can read such things is not surprising. What surprises me is the inference: **does a death on a plot make the plot inauspicious? Is that how feng shui works?**

Caishikou in Beijing was the execution ground of successive dynasties. Nobody knows how many heads came off there. In the Nanjing Massacre

three hundred thousand people in the city were killed violently — in nearly every room. And yet Caishikou today is a prosperous, expensive district, and Nanjing is prosperous, with property at prices people can barely pay. Nor is every household that lives on the old execution ground, or anywhere in Nanjing, drowning in disaster. Among them are people who live to a hundred, people of great wealth and rank, people with children and grandchildren around them.

I would like to hear the qimen masters explain *that* with a "reasonable justification."

There is more. Qimen divides into two great factions — the fixed-palace method and the flying-palace method — and two ways of setting up the chart, intercalating the leap month or not. Four patriarchs, four schools. For the same double-hour they produce different charts, and therefore different verdicts on the same matter. All four have spent centuries insisting that they are correct and the other three are wrong. **On what basis do you declare that yours is the correct one?**

Qimen is qimen. Qimen can *predict* about feng shui. It is emphatically **not** feng shui theory. Reading feng shui with qimen is straightforward fraud.

What is feng shui, and what is good feng shui?

Two people born at the same point in space do not necessarily share a fate. If one person died here, must the next person die here too?

Was Mao Zedong's family feng shui good? Why was Mao an emperor in his own domain and long-lived, while others born in the very same room were neither? Was the feng shui of the Forbidden City good? Then why did some emperors live long there and preside over golden ages, while others died young and lost the dynasty?

Is the quality of a site to be judged by who died and who did not?

And then the pitch: *qimen is the feng shui master's third eye, his earth-penetrating eye, his X-ray eye, his clairvoyance. Study feng shui, then add qimen, and you grow wings — you become the highest grade of feng shui master.*

Clever fraud. Because "without qimen you cannot become a top-grade feng shui master" means, in plain language, **"without qimen you cannot extract money from clients."**

Qimen and feng shui have nothing to do with each other — exactly as liuyao can also be used to read a site and also has nothing to do with feng shui.

To recruit more students and collect more tuition, masters will look you in the eye and deny objective truth. They should remember the old saying: *three feet above your head, there are spirits watching*.

The ultrasound

Every predictive art in China can be used to read feng shui. But being able to read feng shui does not make a technique feng shui theory.

An ultrasound can show a pregnant woman the sex of the child in her belly. An ultrasound cannot make her pregnant, and cannot change the child's sex. Every predictive art that can read a site is doing the ultrasound's job. **None of them is doing feng shui's job.**

The masters should stop swapping one concept for another to fool people.

CHAPTER TWENTY

Shenbing Qimen in Practice: Three Cases

2024-06-05 · 1,340 words

> **Translator's note.** A guest piece by one of the author's students, Wang Xiuyin of Chongqing, written as testimony rather than argument. Its value is that all three cases were read *before* the event and reported afterwards, and the student shows his reasoning in full: the Four Ways of the Lü-school reading (the human way through the Eight Gates, the heaven way through the Nine Stars, the spirit way through the Eight Spirits, the ghost way through the stems). Three cases, three verdicts, all three borne out — including one that missed by half a mark. The original opens with a passage of personal gratitude and ends with the author's contact details; we have shortened both.

The Buddha said that it takes five hundred glances across five hundred lifetimes before two people pass each other in the street. My own connection with Mr Lü Wenyi must have taken rather more than that. What I have today — a seven-figure annual income among other things — came from it.

I am a person who takes a discipline seriously. To master a subject you must first be single-minded and focused, and only then can you be professional. Since I left school I have bought a great many books and journals on the *Yijing* arts. I remember 1998, when Mr Lü was working at the Li Hongcheng Qiaolu company in Hainan. The journal *Qiaolu Consulting* carried an article of his, “Reading the Annual Fortunes of the Twenty-Four Mountains,” and it shook me. In those years, theory that was both simple and able to survive live testing was very thin on the ground, and I knew I had found something rare. I sent a registered letter to the company to reach the author. By great good fortune it was Mr Lü himself who answered the correspondence. Every

invention he produced after that, every volume he published, every course he ran — I studied first and put into practice first. And every time it was accurate, without exception. It still is.

I had studied several qimen systems before. Whichever school it was, the verdict on whether a matter would succeed or fail always came out murky. Recently I began reading everything with the Lü-school *Shenbing Qimen* system, and it is both fast and completely accurate. What follows are cases I read personally. I record them for anyone who is interested, and I welcome correction where I have gone wrong.

Case one: the architect's exam

On 18 May at 9:10 in the morning a woman came to my studio in person and asked whether she would pass the architect's certification exam on the morning of the 24th. I cast a qimen chart: yang, round eight.

玄武 天心　丙 伤门 巽 4　癸	九地 天蓬　庚 杜门 离 9　己	九天 天任　戊 景门 坤 2　辛---丁
白虎〇 天柱　乙 生门 震 3　壬	丁	直符 天冲　壬 死门 兑 7　乙
六合〇 芮禽　辛---丁 休门 艮 8　戊	太阴 天英　己 开门 坎 1　庚	螣蛇　◇ 天辅　癸 惊门 乾 6　丙

公众号 · 时空坐标

Reading with *Shenbing Qimen*:

① The Open Gate (*kai men*) has arrived in the *kan* palace. From the human way, this is unfavourable to passing an examination.

② From the heaven-way energy: the *tianying* star belongs to fire and would ordinarily mean progress and development on every front. But *ying* fire is controlled by *kan* water, so the auspicious energy is weakened.

③ From the spirit-way energy: *taiyin* is metal and governs changes of feeling — a good change. But metal arriving in *kan* is drained by water, which again weakens the auspicious signal.

④ From the time: the *yi-si* hour falls in the *zhen* palace, also unfavourable to the exam. On the five-element relations, Open Gate is earth-and-water, and in

zhen it is both controlled and drained by *zhen* wood. From the human-way energy this too is unfavourable.

b) From the heaven way: *tianying* fire meets *tianzhu* water, which indicates loss of money and drain of resources, plus injury or illness of body and mind — unfavourable to the earlier progress.

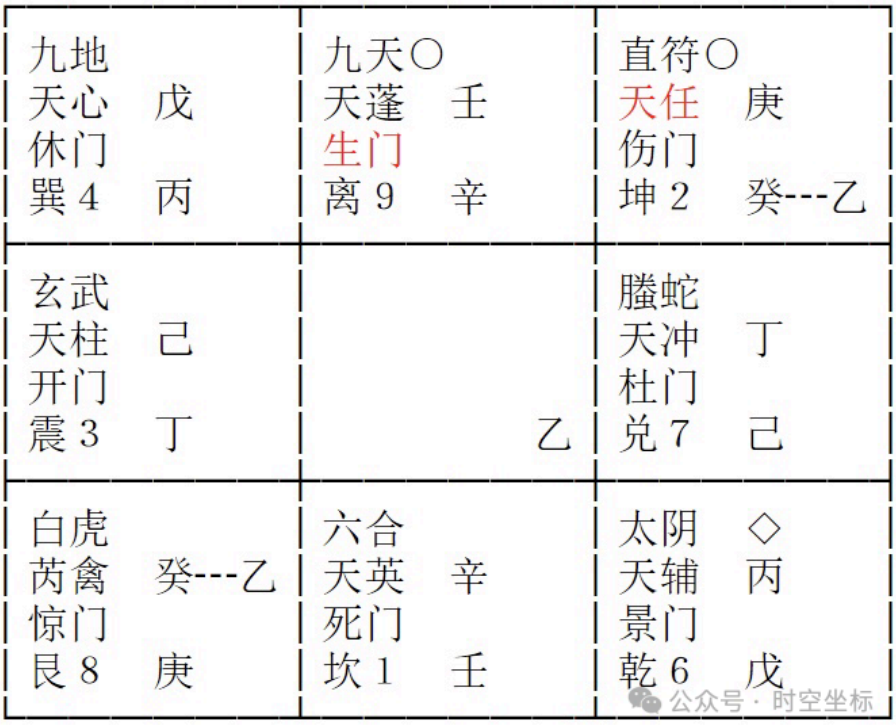
c) From the spirit way: *taiyin* metal in the *zhen* palace meets *baihu* metal in support — again a change of feeling, a good change.

Verdict: she will not pass. But in her career she will meet a benefactor, or a member of the opposite sex who is drawn to her, and there will be good developments there.

What happened: at about 11 a.m. on the 24th she messaged me. She had missed by half a mark.

Case two: the airport contract

On 21 May in the *you* hour the head of a construction company telephoned. He was flying to Beijing the next day to see a senior official — a friend had already bought the ticket — to ask whether he could get the contract for the Kunming airport works. I cast a chart: yang, round six.



Reading:

① The Life Gate (*sheng men*) palace has arrived in *li* and met emptiness. That is a clear signal that the contract cannot be obtained. Life Gate in *li* does drain some wood, but it turns and generates earth, which tells us the man's previous run of fortune was decent. From the heaven way, *tianzhu* water arriving in *li* fire is drained; the *tianzhu* formula reads: *for a period, there will be nothing to do*. From the spirit way, *xuanwu* water arriving in *li* is also drained by fire; the *xuanwu* formula reads: *because one party to the transaction is being excessively calculating, and fears the outcome will turn bad, matters change.*

② Beijing lies to the northeast of the man, so look at the *gen* palace. Life Gate in *gen* meets the Fear Gate (*jing men*), which is both controlled and drained — a signal of failure. From the heaven way, *tianzhu* water in *gen* meets *tianfu*

wood; the *tianfu* formula reads: *long journey, leisure, stability*. From the spirit way, *xuanwu* water in *gen* meets *taiyin* metal; the *xuanwu* formula reads again: *one party excessively calculating, fearing a bad outcome, matters change*.

③ From the time, on the human way: *yi* wood falls into the *kun* palace and again meets emptiness — another signal that the contract cannot be obtained. On the five-element relations, Life Gate's earth-wood in *kun* meets the Harm Gate (*shang men*) wood; earth is controlled by wood, and the reading carries a note of contention. From the heaven way, *tianzhu* water in *kun* meets *tianxin* fire; the *tianzhu* formula: *for a period, there will be nothing to do*. From the spirit way, *xuanwu* water in *kun* meets *jiudi* earth; the *jiudi* formula reads: *because one party to the transaction meets a disastrous event, matters change*.

Verdict: the contract absolutely cannot be obtained. Spend as little as possible.

What happened: he went on the 21st and was back on the 22nd. From the old leader's tone it was all deflection — *I'll let you know if there's news*. He was not hopeful.

Case three: the thesis defence

On 23 May in the *you* hour a woman telephoned to ask whether her son would pass his graduation thesis defence on the 25th. I cast immediately: yang, round eight.



Reading:

① First, the son's present state.

From the human way: the Harm Gate (*shang men*) has arrived in the *gen* palace, unfavourable to passing an examination — and it meets emptiness, which is worse.

From the heaven way: the *tianxin* formula reads, *a great change in emotional matters*.

From the spirit way: the *xuanwu* formula reads, *harmed physically or psychologically by another person*.

From the ghost way: the *wu* formula reads, *error, gap in knowledge, procedural mistake*.

② The Open Gate is the gate of passage. It has arrived in the *dui* palace, unfavourable to the exam.

From the heaven way: the *tianying* formula reads, *progress and development on every front*.

From the spirit way: the *taiyin* formula reads, *a change of feeling — a good change*.

From the ghost way: the *yi-ben* formula reads, *error*.

Verdict: he will not pass. And I told her not to blame the boy, because it would put him in a bad state of mind.

What happened: a little after two in the afternoon on the 25th she messaged. He had not passed. The thesis was rejected outright by the panel chairman.

Wang Xiuyin, Chongqing

CHAPTER TWENTY-ONE

What Exactly Is the "Taiji Halo"?

2017-11-14 · 3,004 words

> **Translator's note.** This is the most technically important article in the feng shui group, and the one that repays careful reading. Its subject, the *taiji yun* (太极晕, "taiji halo"), is the faint circular mark that traditional site-finding treats as the signature of a true dragon point. The whole argument turns on a preposition. The modern masters say the halo is found *inside* the grave pit, after you dig. The author says the halo is on the *open face* of the hill, before you dig — and that the point is selected *inside the halo*, so the question "is there a halo in the pit" is not merely wrong but meaningless. The long passage quoted from Yang Junsong's *Zangfa Daozhang* (《葬法倒杖》, "Burial Methods and the Upright Staff," attributed to the Tang master Yang Junsong, 杨筠松) is the textual basis, and we have translated it in full because the author's case rests on it. A few paragraphs naming living practitioners have been condensed; the technical content is intact.

Yang Junsong, Liao Jinjing, Zeng Wendi and Lai Buyi — the four patriarchs of traditional Chinese feng shui. What did *they* mean by the *taiji yun*, the taiji halo?

I do not need to hold forth on this myself. Let us first see how the self-declared "orthodox successors, umpteenth generation" of those four patriarchs explain it.

The stakes are not small. In traditional feng shui, if you do not know what the taiji halo is, then *xunlong dianxue* — "seeking the dragon, selecting the point" — cannot even be discussed. The halo is the most basic knowledge in the whole discipline. A site without a taiji halo is never a true dragon point. **A**

master who does not know what the taiji halo is cannot possibly know how to select a point.

What the modern books say

One book, titled *Xunlong Dianxue*, says:

> All things return to one taiji; each thing has its own taiji. The taiji is a solar halo; a halo is a blurred state. Every point has a taiji halo — it has shadow but no form, faintly swelling. Just outside the halo the ground rises slightly, like sand but not sand; just inside it sinks slightly, like water but not water. There are solar halos and lunar halos, full halos and half halos. At the centre of the halo the living qi is warm and moist — this is an auspicious site.

Having read that book cover to cover, I found that the author not only fails to explain how to seek the dragon and select the point, he cannot even explain what the taiji halo is. What he offers is copied out of the ancients. The book is assembled, not written.

A large volume titled *The Theory and Practice of Ancient Chinese Feng Shui* says:

> The "parent mountain" is roughly the entrance to the vein. First look at whether the vein twists and rises; then examine closely whether the ridge where the vein splits and rejoins has *lun* and *yun* — wheels and halos. Where it rises and falls with a halo, the vein carries living qi, and the site is generally auspicious. Without it, inauspicious… The halo is the indistinct outline around the point, and it is by means of it that the point can be fixed.

Several hundred pages, and the title promises both theory and practice. Read it and you find excerpts from the ancients and citations of contemporaries. The author's own view of feng shui theory is negligible, and there is no

substantive summary of practice anywhere in it. The contents have nothing to do with the title.

A third author, in books titled *Chenxi Kanyu* and *Chenxi Feng Shui*, writes:

> The taiji halo, also called the taiji ring or halo circle, refers to the dim, faintly damp ring formed by the misty water-vapour that coils around the centre of the point. Because it is indistinct like the ring around the sun or moon, it is called the solar halo.

Everything in that book apart from the author's account of himself is assembled from other people's work, Chinese and foreign, ancient and modern.

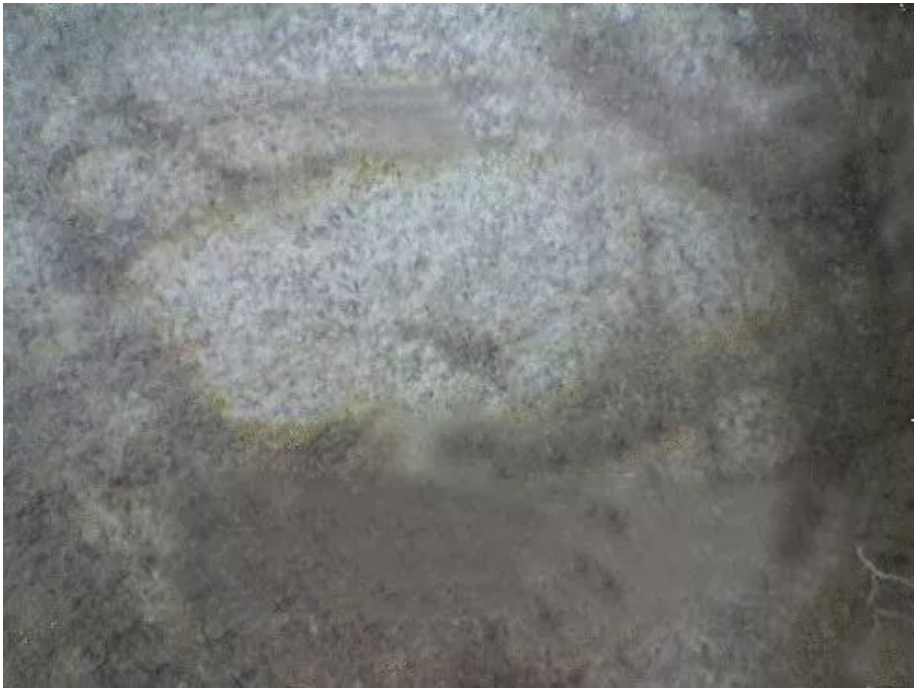
The list of self-declared “orthodox successors,” “professors,” “experts,” “authorities” and “world number one feng shui masters” is long, and I will not go through it one by one. Their books are one of two things, and I have read all of them.

The first kind is written by men who are clever, who have mastered the art of fraud, and who know nothing whatever about seeking the dragon and selecting the point. In their books they quote the ancients word for word and never dare to render the taiji halo in modern language. The quotation is the disguise; they are bluffing the reader.

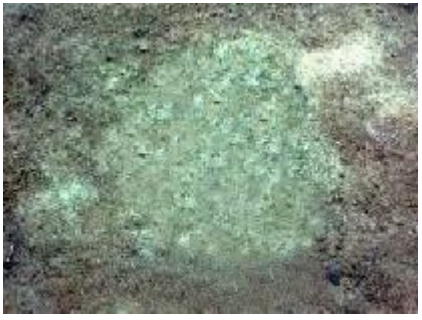
The second kind is written by men who half understand, cannot read the old books, do not know how to select a point, and are not even good at fraud. They render the taiji halo in modern Chinese as **“a circular halo inside the point, resembling the taiji diagram.”**

And then there are the pictures. The images below are what these masters present as the “taiji halo.” Their explanation: the kanyu practitioner identifies the place where the vein knots — the centre point — and this is called “selecting the point.” Dig three feet into a true point, and there the “taiji halo” (a ring like the taiji diagram) will appear.











If those changes in the soil layers *were* the taiji halo, then anywhere at all, using only four variables — **soil moisture, soil colour, soil horizon and soil texture** — and a little digging technique, I could produce the masters' "taiji halo" 100% of the time, on demand, in any field in China.

That is a jianghu trick with almost no connection to real feng shui. Do not be taken in by it.

The category error

Here is why the whole modern reading collapses. As a master who writes books and takes students, you claim on one hand to be an expert in seeking the dragon and selecting the point. On the other hand you do not understand the most basic concept in that discipline. And without it there is no point-selection at all — **because the point is selected *inside* the taiji halo.** If

you do not know what the halo is, you do not know where to place the point. And if you do not know where to place the point, what is the use of having found a true dragon?

So why do these men dare to write books, open schools, and select sites for clients?

Some readers will now ask: you have said all this, you have said every master alive misunderstands the taiji halo — are you the only one who understands it?

I am glad to be asked. Here is my answer. I have gone through every feng shui and *Yijing* website, blog and forum on the Chinese internet. Every explanation of the taiji halo given by every master who has a website or has ever posted under a name — every single one, without exception — is one of the two kinds above. I have gone through every contemporary book on feng shui in the market. Every single one, without exception, is one of the two kinds. I will not claim that I am the only person alive who has understood the question. But among all the masters who publish, teach and advertise, I am the one who understood it, and the first to explain it publicly.

Why put it that way? Because if you understood it and then explained it to your students wrongly — if your explanation cannot make the matter clear — then you did not understand it. And then you do not know how to select a point, and your practice is a con.

So what is it?

First, a historical claim. **Every master before the Republic who wrote books and taught students knew what the taiji halo was. Not one master from the Republic to today who publishes and teaches has genuinely understood it.**

Why? Because what the ancients wrote about the taiji halo is correct, without exception. And what has been written about it since the Republic is wrong, without exception. (Most of what is published in Hong Kong, Macao and Taiwan is wrong too. People there have a superstition about Hong Kong and Taiwan feng shui. In substance, what those places have is skill at operating on clients and extracting money. The real art is not there.)

Second, the explanation.

Yang Junsong's *Zangfa Daozhang* gives it in four stages.

Recognising the taiji

> The *xue* field is bounded by the goldfish-water line. The round halo lying in the indistinct, faint zone — that is the taiji. Above it the water divides, faintly; below it the water joins, faintly. Where they join is the small bright hall, big enough for a person to lie on his side — that is the *xue* field. Where this round halo exists, living qi gathers within, and therefore it is a true point; the marker and the alignment are set by it. Without it, it is not.

Dividing the two modes

> Within the halo, the sunken place is the yin point; the raised place is the yang point. These are the two modes. Where the point is made on the body of the vein itself, that is a yin dragon, and a yang point is appropriate. Where a separate star-peak rises and the point is made there, that is a yang dragon, and a yin point is appropriate. Both require reduction and addition. Sometimes the upper part is raised and the lower sunken; sometimes the lower raised and the upper sunken; sometimes left and right are raised and sunken in combination. In that case the two qi are felt together, and one takes the place where yin and yang copulate, where rising and descending meet — no reduction or addition is used.

Seeking the four images

> The four images are *mai*, *xi*, *wo* and *tu* — vein, breath, hollow, mound. *Mai* is a faint ridge within the halo: the image of lesser yin. *Xi* is a faint form within the halo: the image of lesser yang. *Wo* is a faint hollow within the halo: the image of greater yin. *Tu* is a faint blister within the halo: the image of greater yang. For each of the four there is a burial method: for a *mai* point, fix the base at the centre; for an *xi* point, split it open and fix the base; for a *wo* point, raise it and fix the base; for a *tu* point, cut it flat and fix the base.

Multiplying by the eight trigrams

> Where the vein is slow, use the Cover method: lift the coffin high, in the sense of covering over. Where the vein is urgent, use the Adhere method: place the coffin low, in the sense of sticking to it. Where the vein is straight, use the Lean method: place the coffin offset, in the sense of leaning against. Where the vein is neither urgent nor slow but transverse, use the Strike method: place the coffin straight in, in the sense of butting into it…

Read the text and the meaning is plain.

The taiji halo is a faint circular halo, roughly the shape of the taiji diagram, visible on the open face of the point-star hill where the dragon vein knots — seen by standing on the facing mountain opposite. That faintly visible ring is the taiji halo.

It has no fixed size. Large ones may be tens or even a hundred metres across; small ones may be one or two metres.

Within that halo, the sunken places are yin points and the raised places are yang points. Where the point is made on the body of the vein itself — a yin dragon — one should place the point at a raised yang position within the halo. Where a separate star-peak rises and the point is made there — a yang dragon — one should place it at a sunken yin position.

Where exactly within the yin or yang position to place it is then determined first by the four images — vein, breath, hollow, mound — which narrow the location, and then by the sixteen burial methods of the eight trigrams (cover, adhere, lean, strike; cut, intercept, drop, suspend; press close, merge, slant, insert; seek direct, prop, fold) which fix the precise spot.

That is the entire procedure of point selection. **The whole procedure takes place inside the taiji halo.** The true dragon point lies within the taiji halo — **not** the taiji halo within the point.

When the old books say "the taiji halo is the evidence of a true dragon point," they mean: *if the open face of the point-star hill carries a taiji halo, then the point made there is a true dragon point*. They never mean: *if there is a taiji halo inside the pit, then the point is a true dragon point*.

A master who reads the old books at that level — what face does he have left to write books and take students? What capital does he have to boast of knowing how to select a point?

What the other old books say

Xu Shanji, *Xuefa*:

> Turning back to look at the *xue* field, one sees a round halo between the faint and the visible; this is called the taiji halo — faint and slight, blurred and indistinct; looked at closely it has form, examined minutely it has none.

The sentence is a classical inversion: *turning back to look at the xue field, one sees*… It means: look back at the xue field — that is, look from the opposite direction toward the open face of the point-star — and a round halo appearing there between faint and visible is the taiji halo. It does **not** mean: look back into the pit and find a taiji halo there.

Xue field and *inside the pit* are two strictly different things. Today's masters cannot read classical Chinese. They take the words at face value, distort the old texts, mislead later students and do harm to their readers.

Kongshi Zhangzhe, *Wuxing Timai Zheng Bian Ming Tu*:

> Once the *xue* field is fixed, one must first distinguish its taiji round halo…

Unambiguous. Having fixed the xue field, you must first find the taiji halo, and only then can you select the point. A xue field without a taiji halo has no true dragon point in it. The ancients said it plainly. The modern masters distort it into their own "the taiji halo is a round halo inside the pit."

Liao Yu, *Sixiang Zangfa*:

> The round halo within the *xue* is where the living qi gathers and the numinous light shows itself. The grave should be opened within the halo and must not be broken by the hoe; otherwise the living qi leaks away, the numinous light disperses, insects and ants enter the chamber, spring water invades the coffin, and the descendants are poor and cold.

Liao is telling us plainly: **select the point and open the grave inside the taiji halo.** As for "within the *xue*" — read in context it means within the xue *field*, at the open face of the point-star, not inside the pit.

Huang Miaoying (Song dynasty), *Boshan Pian*:

> All the principles under heaven are yin and yang and the five elements, and yin and yang and the five elements never leave the circle. This circle is the aperture of life and death. Between heaven and earth there are small circles and large circles. Understand the circle and everywhere is a circle. The verse says: a round white jade circle, heaven turns and earth revolves of themselves; know the four flavours within the circle, and you are a walker of the earth among men.

“Know the four flavours within the circle and you are a walker of the earth among men” means: only one who understands the method of selecting a point by the four images — vein, breath, hollow, mound — within the taiji halo can be a true feng shui master.

Which is to say again: **the point is selected inside the taiji halo; the taiji halo is not inside the pit.**

The principle at stake

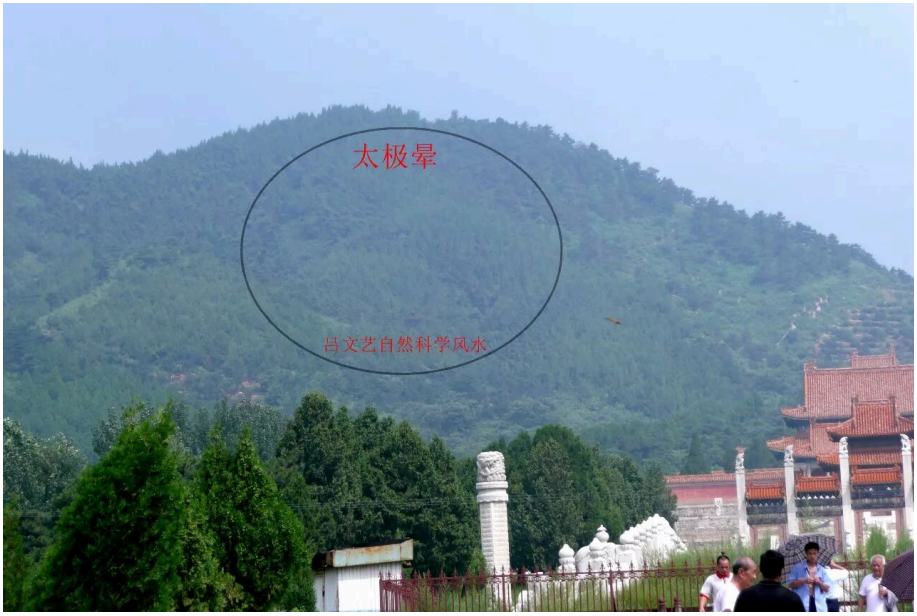
Read across the whole classical corpus and every old text says the same thing: **the point is selected within the taiji halo; only a xue field that has a taiji halo has a true dragon point in it.** No old text says: *having selected the point, if there is a taiji halo inside it, it is a true dragon point.*

This is a matter of principle in *xunlong dianxue*.

And the reverse claim is not merely unsupported, it is demonstrably false. A taiji halo inside the pit proves nothing, because **at least 70% of all feng shui points have one.** When you open a pit, you need only adjust your digging method and you can produce a “taiji halo” inside it 100% of the time. The halo in the pit is formed by four variables — **soil colour, soil density, soil moisture, soil structure** — and any one of them will produce it.

A true dragon point is **not** determined by soil colour, soil density, soil moisture or soil structure.

Understand that, and you understand: **the halo inside the pit has no direct relation to a true dragon point. The true dragon point is inside the taiji halo.**



If readers can grasp the essential meaning of the taiji halo, then the masters who publish, teach and cannot select a point may learn some humility and some ethics, and stop trading their descendants' prospects for fame and tuition money. And Yang, Liao, Zeng and Lai may close their eyes and rest.

CHAPTER TWENTY-TWO

Yin Dragons, Yang Dragons, the Open Face and the Taiji Halo

2020-05-03 · 1,276 words

> **Translator's note.** The practical companion to “What Exactly Is the Taiji Halo?” — same argument, this time walked through with reference to field photographs. The original is built around nine images: a yin dragon and a yang dragon, an open face, a taiji halo seen from the facing mountain, the sunken yin and raised yang positions within the halo, a halo in a pit (the error), the imperial tombs at the Eastern Qing tombs, and a diagram of the four images. Those photographs are reproduced at the points where the text refers to them. One passage of curses against plagiarists has been reduced to a note, per our usual practice.

Liao Yu's Sixteen Burial Methods pins down two things precisely.

First, the exact location of the point.

Second, the method of setting the orientation — and the orientation is set by the direction in which the vein qi runs.

The Sixteen Burial Methods does not look at where the head lies or where the feet point. It does not look at the facing mountain, the desk mountain, or the bright hall. And in the Three Cycles and Nine Periods cycle, we are now in Period Eight — but it is *not* the case that an orientation belonging to Period Eight brings great fortune.

Work through Liao Yu's Sixteen Burial Methods, believe it, apply it, and every other method of setting orientation in traditional feng shui turns out to be wrong. Because the Sixteen Burial Methods recognises one criterion and one

only: **set the orientation according to the direction in which the vein qi runs.** Liao held that only when the vein qi has run into the coffin, and the coffin has taken the maximum charge of it, is the site auspicious.

Think about it. If the ancients understood the vein qi as a line running along the ridge, then Liao's method is the only reasonable one, and all the others are unreasonable. And even if the others were reasonable, Liao's alone is *precise*; the others are vague.

The Sixteen Burial Methods is a complete procedure for selecting a point. It begins from the premise that the dragon is a true, living dragon, then divides that dragon into yin and yang, and then selects the point on the yin or the yang body.

Yin dragon and yang dragon

A yin dragon is one where the point is made on the body of the vein itself.



A yang dragon is one where a separate star-peak rises and the point is made there.



Why bother dividing them? Because point selection has to answer the question *where on the xue field, exactly, does the point go* — and if you do not know whether the dragon before you is yin or yang, you can make a fundamental error. Pure yin does not generate; pure yang does not grow. **A yin dragon takes a yang point. A yang dragon takes a yin point.**

The open face

Having settled yin and yang, where on the dragon's body do you place the point?

At the open face. Liao held that the point lies within the open face.

What is the open face? On the slope where the vein ends and knots, a patch of ground that is slightly concave or slightly flat — like the hollow of a palm.



The halo

Does an open face always contain a point? No. Liao held that you must then check whether the open face contains a **taiji halo**.

What is the taiji halo?

Stand on the desk mountain or facing mountain opposite the point-star, and look at the open face of the point-star where the vein knots. If a round halo roughly resembling the taiji diagram is faintly visible there, that faintly visible ring is the taiji halo.



It has no fixed size. The large ones may be tens or a hundred metres in diameter; the small ones one or two metres.

Within the halo, the sunken places are yin points and the raised places are yang points.





For a yin dragon, place the point at a raised yang position within the halo. For a yang dragon, place it at a sunken yin position.

Two ways a halo can form — and only one of them counts

A taiji halo can arise in two ways. One is from **changes in landform and topography**. The other is from **differences in soil texture and soil colour**.

These two have nothing to do with each other. In traditional feng shui, **only the halo formed by landform is a true taiji halo.**

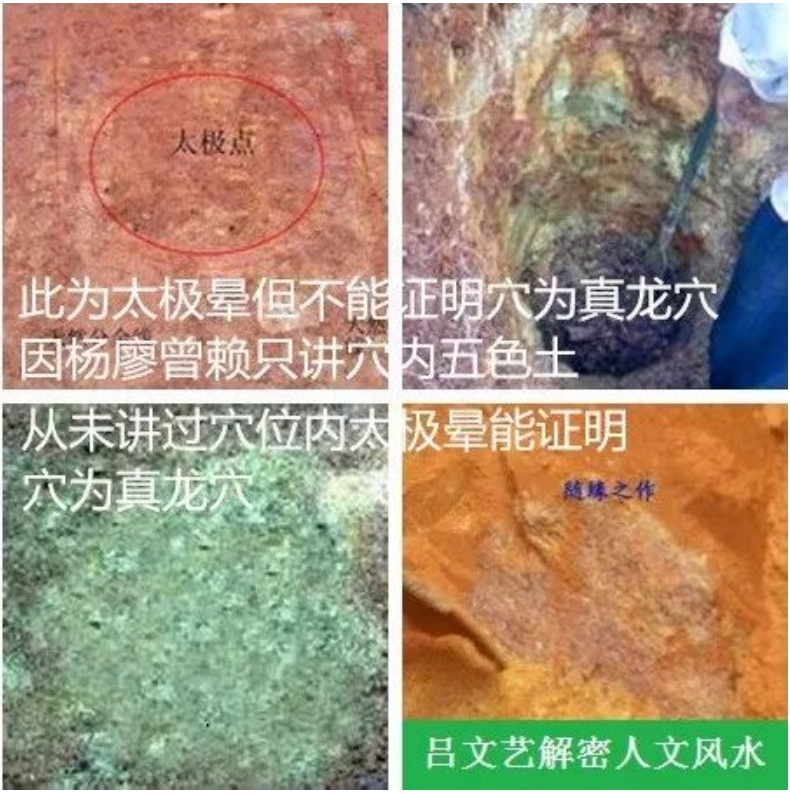
The taiji halo is the sole criterion for whether a true dragon's body carries a true point. Without a halo, no matter how living or how true the dragon, every point on its body is a false point — what the tradition calls a **"false flower point"** (*xuhua xue*).

(A note from the author: because plagiarism is endemic in this field, and for the protection of his own work, much of the core content is taught only in person. He asks that readers not reproduce the material.)

The error that will not die

There is another situation entirely: you select a point, dig the pit, and find a taiji halo *in the pit*.

A halo in the pit cannot prove that the site is a true dragon point. And yet from the Republic to this day, everyone in the feng shui trade has treated the halo in the pit as the proof of a true dragon point.



Yang, Liao, Zeng and Lai were not talking about a halo in a grave pit. Put it in plain words: **the coffin is inside the taiji halo — the taiji halo is not inside the pit.** We select the point *within* the halo; we do not select the point, dig the pit, and then look inside for a halo.

If those soil-layer changes in the pit were the taiji halo, then anywhere at all, using only four variables — **soil moisture, soil colour, soil horizon and soil texture** — and a little digging technique, anyone could produce a taiji halo 100% of the time.

The taiji halo of an imperial tomb: the Eastern Qing tombs.



Narrowing it down: vein, breath, hollow, mound

Suppose you now know that the point should be at a yin or yang position within the halo. Where within that yin or yang position does it go?

Working within that faintly visible landform, Liao identified four topographic features inside the yin or yang position: **vein (*mai*), breath (*xi*), hollow (*ku*), mound (*tu*).** They are not the same, and the coffin must be placed according to which one you have — which specific spot within the yin or yang position it should occupy.

That is why the Sixteen Burial Methods is the only genuinely precise method of point selection.

Vein (*mai*): very slightly raised, small in volume, elongated, and looking weak and limp.

Breath (*xi*): higher, looking strong and forceful, with an irregular base.

Hollow (*ku*): in plain words, a pit. Pits vary in size and depth; *ku* is the more accurate term for both regular and irregular ones.

Mound (*tu*): round in character, a raised half-dome of ground with a circular base.

Breath and mound are somewhat similar. Geometrically the difference is this: the base of *xi* is irregular, whereas *tu* is shaped like half a ping-pong ball with a circular base.

Vein, breath and mound are related and hard to tell apart. By volume, *xi* is the smallest. By shape, *tu* is the most perfect and *xi* the most irregular.



CHAPTER TWENTY-THREE

What Can Feng Shui and the Yijing Actually Predict?

2017-11-01 · 671 words

> **Translator's note.** A short, practical list from 2017: what a client can actually bring to a reader. The opening image — prediction as a road sign, not a steering wheel — is the clearest statement in this collection of how the author thinks prediction should be used, and it is worth reading before the list. The heading says "feng shui and the *Yijing*," but the scope is the whole predictive toolkit, with the technique appropriate to each item.

The purpose of prediction is to avoid risk. A prediction is exactly like the signs on a motorway: it warns you. If you do not believe the sign and keep accelerating, then the prediction was pointless.

To get any benefit from a reading you have to hold the result correctly. When the reading is bad, be doubly careful in everything, and withdraw when it is time to withdraw — do not linger. When the reading is good, press forward with everything you have and enlarge the gain — but do not lose your head.

Here is what can be read.

1. A person's lifetime prospects in official career, in wealth, in marriage, and in illness and injury. Also the choosing and changing of names.
1. Whether a business partner — or a subordinate — is loyal to you.
1. The true relationship between you and each of your superiors.
1. How a marriage or relationship will arise, develop, change, and end.

1. Whether a journey on business will be safe, and whether the business will go smoothly.

1. Whether a loan will be granted, or a debt collected — and when.

1. When a promotion or transfer will come.

1. Whether an examination, a place at a school, or a professional title will be obtained.

1. Whether an investment will make money.

1. Whether a business will succeed, and whether it will profit.

1. Whether a new product has a market, and in which direction the market is best developed.

1. The prospects of an organisation, and the choosing of its name.

1. A person's or an organisation's fortune for a given year, or for several years.

1. Before conception, choosing the living environment for the pregnancy, so as to secure a good fate for the child.

1. From the feng shui of the ancestral graves, an accurate reading of the fate grade and annual fortune of every descendant — wealth or poverty, rank or lowliness, fortune or misfortune, long life or early death.

1. From the feng shui of a dwelling, an accurate reading of the fate and annual fortune of every person living in it.

1. From the layout of a company's or institution's buildings — especially the position of the principal leaders and the finance office within the whole — an accurate reading of every aspect of the organisation's condition, including the condition of its leaders.

1. Selecting the site of an ancestral grave or a house, and designing the layout on feng shui principles, so as to take the favourable and avoid the harmful — for oneself and for one's descendants.

1. Choosing auspicious dates for laying a foundation stone, opening a business, a celebration, a wedding, or a move.

1. The direction in which an illness will develop.

1. Through remedies that satisfy the criteria of being materialist, dialectical, objective and realistic, changing one's fortune substantially on many fronts.

1. In truth, feng shui and the *Yijing* arts, once mastered, can be asked about anything concerning how a person or an event arises, develops, changes and ends. The twenty-one items above are only part of the range.

There are many methods. Whichever one is used, if it satisfies the criteria of being materialist, dialectical, objective and realistic, it is of benefit to the person asking. But do not be taken in by a master's patter and hand over large sums. There is nothing wrong with charging a fee for a consultation. What deserves suspicion is the setup: one demand for money after another, in a chain.

CHAPTER TWENTY-FOUR

What I Got From Studying the Lü School of Natural-Science Yixue

2023-10-06 · 932 words

> **Translator's note.** The last piece in this set is a student's account, written in 2023 from Shijiazhuang. It is useful as a portrait of the *market* the earlier essays are arguing against: a decade of accumulated technique — Human Design, astrology, Zi Wei Dou Shu, Eight Mansions feng shui, numerical energy, auspicious-date almanacs — a good deal of money spent, a WeChat avatar changed for the whole family, a child renamed, and then a serious reversal anyway. Her account of the bedroom she was moved into by Eight Mansions logic is the most concrete thing in the collection about what a wrong layout looks like in practice. Terms: *ren-water day master* (壬水日主) is the day stem of a Bazi chart, read as the person's core element; *life's weak plank* (生命短板) is the Lü-school term for the weakest point in a chart; *auspicious sand* (吉砂) is a mountain or raised form in a favourable position.

For as long as I can remember I have been drawn to Confucianism, Buddhism and Daoism. Over the years I met a good many teachers of the *Yijing*, and I was especially interested in reading fate. But I never met one I was fated to study with, and never stayed with anyone long.

After my child was born I began on Western systems — Human Design, astrology, the various arts of reading a life. Then in the second half of 2021 I saw an online course platform advertising introductions to Zi Wei Dou Shu and the *Yijing*, and signed up immediately. That was my way in. From zodiac placement to reading WeChat avatars, from Eight Mansions feng shui to numerical energy, I kept acquiring new pieces of the traditional *Yijing*

repertoire. I spent money that was, by my standards, far from trivial on rearranging my home. I spent several thousand yuan changing my own and my family's WeChat avatars, and had my child's name changed.

All that time I was also consulting the almanac for dates. I would not clean the house without choosing an auspicious day. I had worked myself into a state.

Then the reversal

I thought my life was trending upward. I had adjusted the house, the avatars, the numbers — adjusted until there was nothing left to adjust. And then, out of nowhere, a serious misfortune came down on me. It caused me a long stretch of mental and financial trouble. Alongside it came a run of things going wrong, and repeated setbacks in my academic work and career. It was a very dark period.

That was when a fellow student sent me the open-access courses on Bazi and feng shui by Mr Lü Wenyi. Looking for a way out, I began at once — listening day and night. Listening while driving, while eating, while doing housework, while lying in bed, while working during the day. His new way of seeing things was strange and riveting. Hearing him name the faults of traditional *yixue* so bluntly was a kind of relief.

From then on I studied the Lü school of natural-science *yixue*, and the deeper I went the more absorbed I became. I dropped all of the traditional material and focused on this alone. In daily life I stopped choosing auspicious dates for trivial things. A great deal of compulsive behaviour fell away, and with it a great deal of unnecessary friction at home.

What I studied

I went from the Bazi and feng shui courses on to date selection, the collected Bazi lectures, the 290-chart *Wanfa Guizong* system, and *Shenbing Qimen*

Dunjia — all online. With a job, a family and a small child, I could not yet attend the in-person courses. But the online material has helped me enormously.

Later I was lucky enough to make contact with Mr Men Jian'en. Whenever something would not resolve, I would ask him privately, and every time he answered patiently. It was a real gain. He is a generous, patient and responsible teacher.

The bedroom

Looking back at the way I arranged the house under the traditional system, I hardly know whether to laugh or cry.

On Eight Mansions logic we moved out of the bedroom with the best feng shui in the house and into the southeast bedroom, the worst room in the flat. On the north side of that southeast bedroom there are two bathrooms — powerful, inauspicious water. And my husband and I are both *ren*-water day masters. My child's *zi* water is the sitting branch, which is the weak plank in that chart.

If we had gone on sleeping in that room, I genuinely do not want to imagine what would have followed.

What changed

Working from the Lü-school layout, and with Mr Men's guidance, I rearranged the feng shui of the flat. Since then a number of things I had wanted for years have come about.

We had been trying for a second child without success. Through the layout, and through the *zhuke* — controlling-subject — method, the second pregnancy came when we hoped for it.

My own research and my work have benefited enormously. Only today I had a signal from my superiors that a promotion may be possible. Thinking about it, it is probably because the hour branch, which represents social position, has been laid out as a strong auspicious sand.

I am sharing this because the change in my own fortunes has been real to me, and because I would like to pass on something good. I hope more people benefit from it.

Hong Yu, Shijiazhuang, Hebei — 5 October 2023