

Chapter 1

# Yi Jing 易經

## THE CLASSIC OF CHANGES

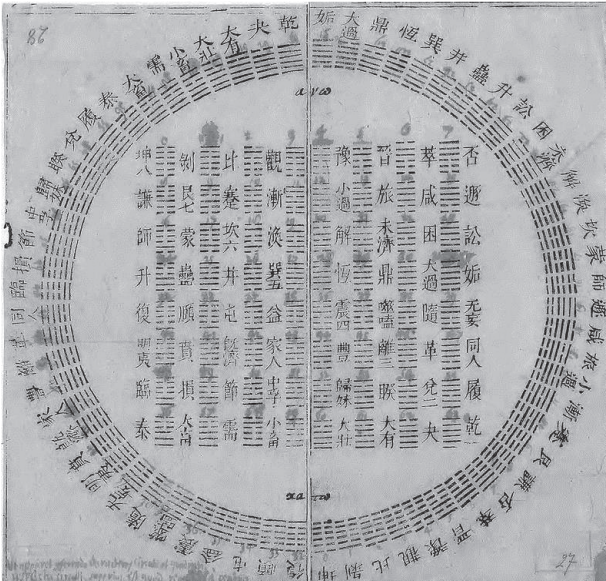


Figure 1.1 Diagram of Yi Jing hexagrams owned by Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz, 1701<sup>1</sup>

Source: commons.wikimedia.org

1 This diagram was sent to the mathematician Leibniz (co-inventor of calculus) by the French Jesuit Joachim Bouvet. The Arabic numerals written on the diagram were added by Leibniz.

The *Yi Jing* is historically one of China's oldest books. While it is not ordinarily considered to be a medical text, throughout the ages many commentators on Oriental medicine have seen in it the inspiration for much of Oriental medicine's subsequent development.<sup>2</sup> In the West, however, this book is primarily treated as a somewhat magical guide to divinatory practices. In the introduction to his highly respected translation of the *Yi Jing*, Richard Wilhelm noted that early on, Wang Pi, in the 3rd century, "wrote about the meaning of the Book of Changes as a book of wisdom, not as a book of divination" (Wilhelm and Baynes 1977, p.lx) and commented that it was the root of both Confucianism and Daoism (ibid., p.xlvii), each of which made significant contributions to the development of Oriental medicine. Perhaps the most perceptive comment that Wilhelm made was that the eight trigrams, which are fundamental components of the classical text, formed families of "father, mother, three sons and three daughters, not in the mythological sense in which the Greek gods peopled Olympus, but in what might be called an abstract sense, that is, they represented not objective entities but functions" (ibid., p.1). This sentence can be used to characterize the essential difference between Western

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2 See *The Book of Changes in Traditional Oriental Medicine* by this author for a detailed examination of how the *Yi Jing* underlies almost all the theoretical concepts in Oriental medicine (Eckman 1988). More recently, Alex Scrimgeour (2011) cited the following quotations from eminent Chinese physicians in his Bac. Dissertation on the *Yi Jing* and Chinese Medicine: 醫者易也, "Yi zhě yì yě—Real medicine is thoroughly based on *Yi Jing* science" (Zhāng Jièbīn), and "Medicine cannot be mastered until you have studied the *Yi Jing*" (Sun Si Miao). Lorraine Wilcox (2016) has translated other quotes from Zhāng Jièbīn: 醫易同原, "Medicine and the Changes have the same source," and 雖陰陽已備於(內經),而變化莫大乎(周易), "Although *Nèi Jīng* already possesses *yīn-yáng*, nothing is better for [understanding its] mutations and transformations than the *Zhōu Yì*." *Zhōu Yì* was the name of the *Yi Jing* prior to its addition of the commentaries known as the ten wings.

and Eastern modes of approaching medicine: the former from a structural viewpoint and the latter from a functional one. The famous psychoanalyst Carl Jung wrote the Foreword to Wilhelm's translation, and succinctly captured how this difference in viewpoint leads to a difference in attitude towards the practice of medicine by stating "nowhere else do we become more accustomed to adopting methods that work even though for a long time we may not know why they work. Unexpected cures may arise from questionable therapies and unexpected failures from allegedly reliable methods" (ibid., p.xxxiv). Close to 100 percent of my patients would identify that quotation as expressing the reason they have chosen acupuncture rather than pharmaceutical medicine to address their health concerns.

I chose the *Yi Jing* as the focus of Chapter 1 specifically because I see it as the fountainhead that led to the differing medical traditions in China and Korea,<sup>3</sup> a subject that has led to some confusion arising from terminological ambiguity. The structure of the *Yi Jing* is based on solid and broken lines, commonly referred to as yáng and yīn respectively.<sup>4</sup> As single lines these would be called monograms, as pairs of lines they are bigrams, as triplets they are referred to as trigrams, and as sextuplets they are known as the more familiar hexagrams. The trigrams form a very

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3 The unique approaches developed in Korea and China illustrate one of the reasons I have been using Oriental medicine rather than Chinese medicine to denote the generic group of practices I wish to contrast with Western medicine.

4 The oldest parts of the *Yi Jing* don't actually mention the terms yin and yang. Instead they refer to "yielding" and "solid." Yin and yang make their first appearance there in Section 1 of the *Great Commentary*, one of the later "wings" or appendices of the *Yi Jing*, in Chapter 5, "One yin, one yang is called the Dao: 一陰一陽之謂道." Chapter 11 states, "Therefore the Yi incorporates the Great Axis (Tai Ji) which produces the two primal forces. The two primal forces produce four images (xiang). The four images produce the eight trigrams: 易有太極, 是生兩儀, 兩儀生四象, 四象生八卦." Translation of *Yi Jing* by Wu (1991, pp.266 and 271).

important conceptual basis for two of the most characteristic theoretical concepts in Chinese medicine: the Five Elements doctrine and the Three Yin/Three Yang doctrine, each of which informs much of acupunctural and herbal medical theory and practice.<sup>5</sup> The bigrams, on the other hand, more commonly and literally translated as the Four Images (四象 *sì xiàng* in Chinese and *sa sang* in Korean) were chosen as the fundamental theoretical concept in many styles of Korean acupuncture and herbal medicine. The reason for confusion is that some of the same words are used to name the acupuncture meridians and the images (bigrams), but the meanings denoted are different in these two cases:

The Four Images are 太陽 *Tài Yáng* (Taeyang), 太陰 *Tài Yīn* (Taeum), 少陽 *Shǎo Yáng* (Soyang) and 少陰 *Shǎo Yīn* (Soeum) to give both their Chinese and Korean names. This grouping of four terms is the basis of both Sa Sang herbal medicine, and of several variants of Korean acupuncture, including Tae Guk (太極, *Tài Jí* in Chinese) Acupuncture and Korean Constitutional Acupuncture.<sup>6</sup> Had I chosen to

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5 Eckman (1988) *The Book of Changes in Traditional Oriental Medicine*. There is much controversy about the translation of the Chinese term 五行 *wǔ xíng* into English. As with many Chinese terms, there is no single definitive translation that covers all the connotations of *wǔ xíng*. Five Elements was the first to become popular in Western languages, thanks to the influential work of Soulié de Morant, and I have kept it because of its historical precedence and common usage. The style of acupuncture based on this doctrine, exemplified by the teachings of J.R. Worsley, retains this terminology of Five Elements, while practitioners of most other styles of acupuncture prefer alternative terms such as Five Phases or Five Movements, terms that are also preferred by most scholarly writers. I think all of these choices are acceptable, as long as the user realizes that each one captures only part of the multiple meanings conveyed by this important Chinese term.

6 These methodologies are discussed in some detail in the author's publication *The Compleat Acupuncturist* (Eckman 2014).

use only the Chinese characters for these terms, rather than their Romanized alphabetical names, there would have been no difference between the Korean and Chinese nomenclature; however, one significant feature of languages based on Chinese characters is that each character can have multiple meanings, and the appropriate one to choose is often governed by the context in which it is used. When discussing the Four Images, I prefer to translate them as Old Yang, Old Yin, Young Yang and Young Yin respectively.<sup>7</sup> On the other hand, when discussing the Three Yin/Three Yang nomenclature, I translate these very same characters as Greater Yang, Greater Yin, Lesser Yang and Lesser Yin respectively. The two missing terms in meridian nomenclature are Fading Yin (厥陰 Jué Yīn) and Bright Yang (陽明 Yáng Míng).

To illustrate the confusion that frequently arises, let us examine Tai Yang in both contexts. In Sa Sang usage, Tai Yang refers to a strong Lung together with a weak Liver conformation, while in the Three Yin/Three Yang usage, Tai Yang refers to the Meridians and their associated Fǔ Organs consisting of the Urinary Bladder and the Small Intestine. Obviously, without knowing the context, these terms can lead to a complete misunderstanding in using either written or spoken words. In order to minimize confusion, I present both systems in Table 1.1, using the standard Chinese terminology. In keeping with this book's theme of touch,

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7 Stephen Boyanton posted the following comment on Facebook Scholars of Chinese Medicine 8/7/16: "Dating of the various parts of the Yi Jing is tricky, but the 'four images (sixiang 四象)' appear at least as early as the Xici 繫辭 section of the text referred to as shaoyang 少陽, laoyang 老陽, shaoyin 少陰 and laoyin 老陰." As lao unambiguously means "old," my choice of young and old here has scholarly support.

I want to point out that both Sa Sang diagnosis and Three Yang/Three Yin diagnosis are best identified via pulse examination.<sup>8</sup>

TABLE 1.1 COMPARISON OF FOUR-FOLD AND SIX-FOLD TERMINOLOGIES

*Four Images/Si Xiàng (Sa Sang) theory*

Tai Yang	Strong Lung	Weak Liver
Tai Yin	Strong Liver	Weak Lung
Shao Yang	Strong Spleen	Weak Kidney
Shao Yin	Strong Kidney	Weak Spleen

*Three Yang/Three Yin theory*

Tai Yang	Urinary Bladder	Small Intestine
Yang Ming	Stomach	Large Intestine
Shao Yang	Gall Bladder	Triple Heater
Tai Yin	Spleen/Pancreas	Lung
Shao Yin	Kidney	Heart
Jue Yin	Liver	Pericardium

Most readers are more likely to be familiar with the Chinese, rather than the Korean, usages of these four terms in reference to Meridians and Organ systems. Thus, I would like to say a few words about the Korean Sa Sang approach, which are not detailed as such in any of its texts (to the best of my knowledge), but which I've developed to clarify this confusing terminology for those previously familiar only with the Chinese applications. What I will present is an allegorical interpretation of the usage of these four terms to represent the development of mental,

8 The pulse diagnostic methodology of both Sa Sang medicine and Korean Constitutional Acupuncture (based on Sa Sang theory) are explained in *The Compleat Acupuncturist*. One method of Three Yang/Three Yin pulse diagnosis is also introduced in that text, but a more comprehensive and probably earlier method is discussed in Chapter 5 of the present text.

emotional, and spiritual growth, which were important guiding concepts in the Confucian ideology that Lee (whose work was published in the late 1800s, and translated into English in 1966) used in his writing about Sa Sang theory. Although each of us has a constitutional relationship to one of the Four Image (Sa Sang) types, we all have the same possibility of developing our higher faculties through the same four stages, as in the following explanation.

Sa Sang medicine is based on the idea that there are four jiāo 焦, rather than the three of Chinese medicine.<sup>9</sup> They are pictured in Figure 1.2 as Lower, Lower Middle, Upper Middle and Upper jiāo, corresponding respectively to Kidney, Liver, Spleen and Lung. Roughly these correspond to the physical placement of the familiar anatomical structures associated with these names, but the placement of the two parts of the Middle jiāo are debatable even in the Chinese three-jiāo tradition. This difference of opinion explains why in Chinese medicine the Liver is sometimes associated with the Lower jiāo while the Spleen is always associated with the Middle jiāo.

If we think of the jiāo as potentially representing something like the Chakras of Ayurveda, there is a sense in which we start our lives centered in, and from, the first Chakra, and gradually work our spiritual development upwards (from Earth to Heaven). The lower jiāo is like the first Chakra, concerned with survival issues, and it resonates with the Kidney (fear, caution, the

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9 The ideal translation and meaning of the term jiāo 焦 is controversial. It is frequently rendered as “warmer,” “heater,” or “burner.” I have found in my clinical practice that individuals whose constitutions are either Young Yin or Young Yang frequently are distinctly colder in the lower jiāo, whereas those whose constitutions are either Old Yin or Old Yang are distinctly colder in the lower middle jiāo (see Figure 1.2). This is not only a useful diagnostic indicator, but serves to reinforce my contention that Oriental medicine’s theories are derived from “reality-based” observations, and merit classification as a branch of science.

unknown) as does the Water Element, with its responsibility for the original qì and the jīng. I call 少陰 in this case Young Yin as my translation of Soeum, and Lee (1966) identified this constitution as having a strong Kidney and a weak Spleen as its defining characteristic. In a circular depiction (Figure 1.3) it is at the bottom (North) because the Kidney is the Foundation and Origin of each individual life. The Kidney's spiritual correlate is the Zhì 志 (will, as in will to life).

Young Yin then evolves to Old Yin 太陰 (Taeum) which manifests constitutionally with a strong Liver and a weak Lung as its defining characteristic. On the circle it is in the East position, which corresponds to the Wood Element. In Chakra terms it is concerned with duality and sexuality (a major issue in planning and decision making), and the exploration of others as distinct from self, but the emphasis is on self more than on others, thus the rebelliousness and impetuosity as we mature from childhood to adolescence. One might say our Hún 魂 runs wild, with no real inherent constraint.

As we mature further, we progress upwards to the Young Yang stage 少陽 (Soyang), which is characterized constitutionally by a strong Spleen and a weak Kidney. Here, the "other" has more emphasis than the self, as we begin to recognize that we are not more important than all the other beings with whom we share resources (the Yì 意 is replacing the Hún 魂 as the spiritual focus). This is at the top of the circle (South), but because there is no Fire Element (which would normally be placed there) in Sa Sang theory, it is now replaced by the Earth Element with its focus on sympathy and empathy.<sup>10</sup> This spiritual progression explains why the Spleen is metaphorically located above the Liver.

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10 Kespi (2012) has noted that humans have two centers in acupuncture theory. Fire (the Heart) is the "center-source," while Earth (Spleen/Pancreas-Stomach) is the "center-site."