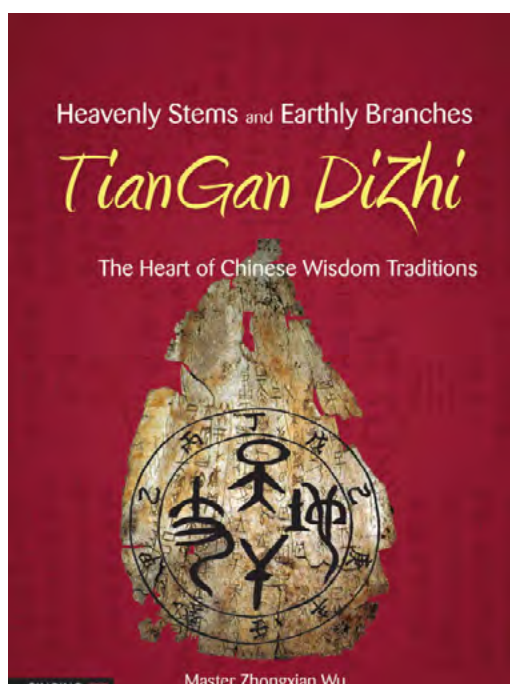




Zhongxian Wu (Master Wu) / Taylor Wu, K. Heavenly Stems and Earthly Branches - TianGan DiZhi



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Heavenly Stems and Earthly Branches

TianGan DiZhi

The Heart of Chinese Wisdom Traditions



SINGING
DRAGON



Master Zhongxian Wu
Dr. Karin Taylor Wu

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時照圖

人之元氣逐日發生子時復氣到尾閭丑時臨氣到背堂寅時泰氣到玄樞卯時大壯氣到夾脊辰時夬氣到陶道巳時乾氣到玉枕午時姤氣到泥丸未時遯氣到明堂申時否氣到臚中酉時觀氣到中浣戌時剝氣到乾闥亥時坤氣而歸於氣海矣



ShiZhaoTu 時照圖 *Illumination Timing Diagram*

TongTianShenShu 通天神樹

Mystical Tree of Heaven

In this chapter, we will introduce some background information and stress the basic principles that will bring context to *XiangShu* 象數, the symbolism and numerology of each Heavenly Stem and Earthly Branch. Please take your time to review this section before moving on to the rest of the book.



Figure 1: Paper rubbing of the Magic Tree from a Han Dynasty era stone carving

1.1 The Way of Heaven and Earth

TianGan 天干 (Heavenly Stems) and *DiZhi* 地支 (Earthly Branches) are commonly abbreviated *GanZhi* 干支. The *GanZhi* originated in the ancient Chinese cosmological sciences and a complex calendrical system created to codify the patterns of the universe. For thousands of years, small groups of Chinese shaman-kings, sages, scholars, doctors, astronomers, cosmologists, and politicians have used the *GanZhi* symbols as sacred tools that unlock the fundamental nature of reality. During the Shang Dynasty (1700–1027 BCE—one of the longest running dynasties in China’s history), which marked great advancements in agriculture, astronomy, bronze casting, music, sculpture, and written communication, the Emperors regarded themselves as the sons of

1.1.2 DiZhi 地支 *Earthly Branches*

Di 地 means earth, ground, terrain, and place; *Zhi* 支 means the branch or twig of a tree or a plant, support, supply, assist, treat with, defend, or forked area. *Zhi* 支 can be written as the character 枝, which also means the branch of a plant. *DiZhi* means “Earthly Branch” and draws to mind the intricate system of branches connected to the giant trunk of *TianGan*.

Similar to *TianGan*, *DiZhi* is a Chinese term that contains a collection of twelve specific Chinese characters: Zi 子, Chou 丑, Yin 寅, Mao 卯, Chen 辰, Si 巳, Wu 午, Wei 未, Shen 申, You 酉, Xu 戌, and Hai 亥. *DiZhi* represents *DiDao* 地道, the Way of Earth. *DiDao* means square, corner, stable, solid, keeping still, and without movement.



Figure 4: The Earthly Way of DiZhi

Given that the *Xiu* mark the daily position of the Moon during its monthly orbit around Earth, we find that the Moon resides in a different Lunar Mansion each night. Chinese astronomers observed each quadrant of the sky (found in the four cardinal directions) and found that every seven Mansions form a clear pattern—that of a spiritual animal.



Figure 12: Tang Dynasty bronze mirror with four spiritual animals

The four spiritual animals are *QingLong* 青龍, the Green Dragon on the eastern sky, *XuanWu* 玄武, the Mystical Warrior (turtle and snake) in the north, *BaiHu* 白虎, the White Tiger to the west, and *ZhuQue* 朱雀, the southern Red Bird. Table 1 lists the four spiritual animals with their associated Lunar Mansions.



Figure 17: Heavenly Stems Five Elements Diagram

The twelve Earthly Branches are grouped into YinYang pairs of Elements—Yin 寅 and Mao are Wood; Si and Wu 午 are Fire; Chen, Xü, Chou, and Wei are Earth; Shen and You are Metal; and Hai and Zi are Water.



Figure 18: Earthly Branches Five Elements Diagram

GanZhi HeHua 干支合化

Stems, Branches and Alchemical Transformation

We provided you with a great deal of the symbolic associations of the GanZhi in Chapters 2 and 3. In this chapter, we will first review the basic Five Elements birth and control principles and then move on to focus on the more complex GanZhi Five Elements alchemical transformation principles. After you give yourself some time to study these essential principles of alchemical processes, you may gain further insight into the information in the previous chapters.

4.1 *WuXingXiangSheng* 五行相生 **Birth Principle**

The generating or birth principle is one of the two main relationships that steer the movement of the Five Elements. Each Element is intimately bonded to just one other by this principle. In this cycle, Water nourishes Wood, Wood gives rise to (fuels) Fire, Fire begets (creates, through ash) Earth, Earth produces (bears) Metal, and Metal gives birth to (carries) Water.

The birth relationship between two Elements fluctuates, and can bring either helpful or detrimental effects. Generally speaking, in this “parent–child” dynamic, the child element will drain some amount of energy from its parent element. For example, if the child (Wood) is currently in need of support, the parent (Water) will pour forth its energy in a nourishing way. However, it may happen that the child is currently too strong (for example, an overindulged child) and will not benefit from a cossetting parent. It is also possible that the child is too weak (for example, an excessively timid child who needs to learn independence) to profit from a domineering parent. When Water burdens



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