

This paper contains a part from chapter nine of the Báihǔtōng 白虎通. The Báihǔtōng, 'The Comprehensive Discussions in the White Tiger Hall'¹, can be described as a manual 'Empire-ship for Dummies'. It contains basic information about rules and rituals for Emperors. This part deals with the *gānzhī* 干支 system, the Stems and Branches system used for time reckoning since the dawn of Chinese civilization. It describes the meaning of the Stems and Branches by relating them to words with similar pronunciation or radicals. This is an old way of linking words, which is often used to broaden the body of meanings a character has by itself.

In the footnotes I offer more meanings and explanations of certain characters in the text; references are Mathews' dictionary (M) and the electronic dictionary Wenlin (W).

Harmen Mesker.

harmen@i-tjingcentrum.nl

Ascendancy and decline of the yin and the yang

- a. The younger yang is visible in *yín* 寅; *yín* means *yǎn* 演² 'to extend'; its musical pitch-pipe *lǜ* 律 is exactly *tàicù* 太簇; *lǜ* means *shuài* 率³ 'to conduct'; with it the fluid [of the younger yang] is conducted to [its task of] stimulating life. [The younger yang] reaches its ascendancy in *mǎo* 卯; *mǎo* means *mào* 茂⁴ 'to flourish'; its musical pitch-pipe is exactly *láizhōng* 來鐘. [The younger yang] declines in *chén* 辰; *chén* means *zhèn* 震⁵ 'thunderclap'; its musical pitch-pipe is exactly *gūxǐ* 姑洗.

The days [of the younger yang are in the signs] *jiǎ* 甲 or *yǐ* 乙; *jiǎ* means that the ten thousand things [are about to emerge out of their] 'scales' *fújiǎ* 孚甲; *yǐ* means that the things which have been lying protected and bent, having served their term, wish to come out. The season [of the

¹ Po Hu T'ung, tr. Dr. Tjan Tjoe Som; published 1952 by Brill, Leiden

² W 571. ①develop; evolve ②drill; practice ③perform; play; act. From 演 (水 shuǐ) 'water' and 寅 yín phonetic.

Why 演 (水) water? 演 yǎn also means 'evolve', and used to mean 'wide, extensive'. It originally described a river getting wider and extending towards the sea. The phonetic part 寅 yín means 'reverence', and is the third of the twelve 地支 Earthly Branches.

³ W 880. lead; command ♦adj. ①cursory ②straightforward ♦adv. generally; mostly. Said (by 说文) to depict a net for catching birds (like 畢 bì), but the oldest forms of 率 are simply 𠂔 (yāo) 'silk cocoons' surrounded by short strokes (threads?). "Picture of a net; etymologically same word as 帅" --Karlgrén.

⁴ Also linked with Stem 戊, see e.

⁵ W 1114. ①shake; quake ②shock; strike by thunder ③be shocked/terrified ④ 〈slang〉 excel ♦n. ①thunderclap ②one of the Eight Trigrams. From 雨 (yǔ) 'rain' over 辰 chén phonetic. 震 zhèn is etymologically the same word as 振 zhèn.

younger yang] is 'spring' *chūn* 春; *chūn* means *chǔn* 椿, which means *dòng* 動 'to move'. Its position is in the eastern quarter, its colour is green, its musical tone is *júe* 角; *júe* means that the fluid is moving and jumping. Its emperor is *Tài-hào* 太皞¹; *tài-hào* means 'general rise'; then ten thousands things are stirring. Its genius is *Gōu-máng* 勾芒²; *gōu-máng* means that the things begin their life. *Máng* means *méng* 萌 'to sprout out'. Its essential spirit is the Green Dragon. It is caused by the yang [appearing] in the middle of the yin.

- b. The elder yang is visible in *sì* 巳; *sì* means that the [ten thousand] things have ended their [phase of] rising; its musical pitch-pipe is exactly *zhòng-lǚ* 仲呂. Its strength is fullest in *wǔ* 午; *wǔ* [means that] the [ten thousand] things are full and mature; its musical pitch-pipe is exactly *ruí-bīn* 蕤賓. It declines in *wèi* 未; *wèi* means *wèi* 味 'to taste'; its musical pitch-pipe is exactly *lín-zhōng* 林鐘.

The days [of the elder yang are in the signs] *bǐng* 丙 or *dīng* 丁; *bǐng* means that the things are 'luminous and clear' *bǐng-míng* 炳明; *dīng* means *qiáng* 強³ 'strong'. The season [of the elder yang] is 'summer' *xià* 夏; *xià* means *dà* 大 'great'. Its position is in the southern quarter, its colour is red; its musical tone is *zhǐ* 徵; *zhǐ* means *zhǐ* 止⁴ 'to stop'; the measure of the yang has reached its extremity. Its Emperor is *Yán-dì* 炎帝⁵; *yán-dì* means 'elder yang'. Its genius is *Zhù-róng* 祝融; *Zhù-róng* means *zhǔ-xù* 屬⁶續⁷ 'to connect and continue'. Its essential spirit is the Vermillion Bird. It is caused by its becoming a *luán* 鸞¹ [-bird] after leaving [its burning nest].

¹ M 2075. Dynastic title of the legendary emperor Fú-xī 伏羲 about 2953 B.C. 皞 also written as 皞.

² M 3409. 勾芒神: to worship an agricultural god at the beginning of spring.

³ W. The left side is 弓 gōng 'bow'. The right side 虽 is the modern simple form of 虽(雖) suī 'although'. A 弓 bow is strong, 虽 although it bends. The true explanation is obscure. An older form was 彊, with 畺 jiāng phonetic. "The character originally meant 'the larva of the corn-weevil' and was applied, as abbreviation for 彊, to the homophonous word 'strong'..." -- Karlgren. The form 強 (with 厶 rather than 口) is one stroke less, but perversely we call 強 the "simple" form and 彊 the "full" form, only because 强 is in the simple-form GB standard and 彊 is in the full-form Big5 standard. This is one of those absurd situations where the "simple" form has more strokes than the "full" form.

⁴ W. ①stop; halt; arrive at ②suppress; prohibit ③stay; detain. Picture of a left footprint. The toes were at the top, the heel at the bottom. 止 zhǐ now means 'stop' (hold the feet still). The original meaning 'foot' survives in 趾 zhǐ as in 脚趾 jiǎozhǐ 'toe'. Also, 址 zhǐ as in 地址 dìzhǐ 'address' is etymologically the same word.

⁵ M 7335. The dynastic title of Shén-nóng 神農, 2838 B.C. W : Divine Husbandman (legendary founder of Ch. agriculture)

⁶ W. ①be subordinate to ②belong to ◆n. ①category ② 〈bio.〉 genus ③family member; dependent. 尸 (shǐ) here stands for 尾 (wěi) 'tail': Tail --> appendage --> belong to. The full form 屬 contains 蜀 shǔ ('silkworm') phonetic, where the simple form 属 has 禹 yǔ. Both Wieger (page 696, middle) and Karlgren list the simple form character 属 as a variant of 屬.

⁷ W. ①be continuous/successive ②continue; extend; join ③add; supply more. 纆 (sī) 'silk thread' indicates the meaning of connection, continuity. The right side is not historically derived from 賣 mài 'sell', but from an obsolete character pro-

- c. The younger yin is visible in *shēn* 申; *shēn* means *shēn* 身² 'body'; its musical pitch-pipe is exactly *yí-zé* 夷則. It reaches its strength in *yǒu* 酉; *yǒu* means *lǎo* 老 'old'; the things are gathered and harvested; its musical pitch-pipe is exactly *nán-lǚ* 南呂. It declines in *xū* 戌; *xū* means *miè* 滅 'to extinguish'; its musical pitch-pipe is exactly *wú-shè* 無射; *wú-shè* means *wú-yàn* 無厭³ 'un-scathed'.

The days [of the younger yin are in the signs] *gēng* 庚 or *xīn* 辛; *gēng* means that the things 'change' *gèng* 更; *xīn* means that the yin begins its completion. The season [of the younger yin] is 'autumn' *qiū* 秋; *qiū* means *chóu* 愁⁴ 'afflicted by grief'. Its position is in the western quarter, its colour is white, its musical tone is *shāng* 商; *shāng* means *qiáng* 強⁵ 'strong'. Its Emperor is Shào-háo 少皞; *shǎo-háo* means *shǎo-liǎn* 少斂⁶ 'minor harvest'. Its genius is Rù-shōu 蓐收⁷; *rù-shōu* means *suō* 縮 'to shrink'. Its essential spirit is the White Tiger; 'tiger' *hǔ* 虎⁸ means 'to catch and chastise'.

- d. The elder yin is visible in *hài* 亥; *hài* means *hé* 核⁹ 'kernel'; its musical pitch-pipe is exactly *yìng-zhōng* 應鐘. It reaches its strength in [the zodiacal sign] *zǐ* 子; *zǐ* means *zī* 孳 'to engender'; its

nounced yù (无 over 𠂔 over 貝, which came to be written the same as 賈). It was a phonetic component in 讀, and also in 讀 dú 'read', 贖 shù 'redeem', etc.

¹ W. Phoenix-like mythical bird

² W. A human body with a big belly --- pregnant, says Wieger. Lindqvist also supports the theory that 身 represents a pregnant woman.

³W. 無 Not have; there is not ♦adj./adv. no; not; without ♦n. nothing; nil. Picture of a dancer with fancy sleeves or tassels in his or her hands. Now 'dance' is 舞 wǔ, with 舛 two feet added to the bottom. 無 was borrowed for the word wú 'without'. The simple form 无 has co-existed with 無 for thousands of years; 无 is apparently just a simpler depiction of the same dancer. 厭 W. ①detest; loathe ②be disgusted/bored with ③be surfeited/satiated. From 厂 (chǎng) 'cliff' and 犬 (quǎn) 'dog'. The full form 厭 also contains 日(甘 gān) 'sweet' over 月(肉 ròu) 'meat'. "Satiated; bored with; dislike, loathe -- the original character had only 甘 savory 犬 dog's 肉 meat; a later addition is 厂, the meaning of which is uncertain" --Karlsgren. 饜 yàn 'satiated' is etymologically the same word.

⁴ W. Worry; be anxious/grieved. From 秋 qiū phonetic and 心 (xīn) 'heart'.

⁵ Also linked with Stem 丁. See b.

⁶ W. 少 ①few; little ②less. 斂 ①hold back; restrain ②collect ③prepare body for coffin. From 僉 qiān phonetic and 攴(支 pī) 'beat'.

⁷ M 3157. The Spirit of Autumn, which inflicts punishment.

⁸ W. Tiger ♦v. ①bluff; intimidate ②deceive; cheat ♦adj. tiger-like; brave

⁹ W. ①nut; kernel ②nucleus ♦v. investigate; verify. hú n. 〈coll.〉 ①stone; pit; core ②sth. resembling a fruit stone

musical pitch-pipe is exactly *huáng-zhōng* 黃. It declines in [the zodiacal sign] *chǒu* 丑; *chǒu* means *niǔ* 紐¹ 'to knot'; its musical pitch-pipe is exactly *dà-lǚ* 大呂.

The days [of the elder yin are in the signs] *rén* 壬 or *guǐ* 癸; *rén* means that the yin is employed [by the yang] and 'serves' *rèn* 任² it; *guǐ* means *kuí-dù* 揆度³ 'to measure'. The season [of the elder yin] is 'winter' *dōng* 冬; *dōng* means *zhōng* 終⁴ 'to end'. Its position is in the northern quarter, its musical tone is *yǔ* 羽; *yǔ* means *shū* 舒⁵ 'repose'; the ten thousand things begin to produce. Its Emperor is Zhuān-xū 顓頊⁶; *zhuān-xū* means that the cold is shrinking. Its genius is Xuán-míng 玄冥⁷, *xuán-míng* means *dà-míng* 大冥 'great darkness'. Its essential spirit is the Black Tortoise, which rises from and quits [its hiding]; its body resembles that of a snake.

- e. The earth represents the middle palace. Its days are [in the signs] *wù* 戊 or *jǐ* 己; *wù* means *mào* 茂⁸ 'to flourish'; *jǐ* means to rise after having been pressed and bent down. Its musical tone is *gōng* 宮; *gōng* means *zhōng* 中 'the middle'. Its Emperor is Huáng-dì 黃帝⁹; its genius is Hòu-tǔ 后土¹⁰.

¹ W. ①handle; knob ②button ③pivot; key position ④bond; tie. From 𣪠 (糸 sī) 'silk' and 丑 chǒu phonetic. Etymologically the same word as 扭 niǔ 'turn, twist'; sometimes written 鈕 niǔ (as in 电钮 diànniǔ) with 钅 (金 jīn) 'metal' instead of 𣪠 (糸 sī) 'silk'. 丑 chǒu is phonetic ("with a curious alternance of initials" --Karlgren). Since 丑 chǒu is a picture of a tied hand, it also suggests the meaning.

² W. ①serve in a position ②appoint to a position ③allow ♦n. official post ♦m. term of office. Originally written 壬, a 丨 carrying pole supported in the middle with one object attached at each end: to carry weight on the shoulder. 亻 (人 rén) 'person' was added, making 任, while the original form 壬 was borrowed for 壬 rén the ninth heavenly stem.

³ M 3658. To estimate, to consider.

⁴ W. From 糸 (糸 sī) 'thread' and 冬 dōng 'winter'. Originally zhōng 'end' and dōng 'winter' (the end of the year) were both written with the same character, which represented a pair of legs with the heels (the ends) indicated (or a rope with knots at both ends); this has become 夂 in the modern writing. (冰 bīng) 'ice' was added for 冬 'winter'. Then 糸 'thread' was added for 終 'end'.

⁵ W. ①open up; relax; unfold ②be relaxed/leisurely

⁶ M 1433. A legendary ruler of China B.C. 2513-2435.

⁷ M 2881. Dark and mysterious – a water-spirit, the attendant on the ruler of winter.

⁸ Also linked with Branch 卯, see a.

⁹ M 2297. The Yellow Emperor or *Huangdi*, a legendary monarch – B.C. 2698.

¹⁰ M 2144. The God of the Earth; Earth personified as a god; a minister of Huang-di.