八字秘笈

ba

zi

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ji

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Introduction

"*Ba Zi*" (八字) simply means "The Eight Characters", and it is made up of the "*Si Zhu*" (四柱), which means "The Four Pillars of Destiny". The origin of this classical practice dates back to ancient Chinese mythology. After thousands of years of using the birth year as the main means of assessment, a person by the name of *Xu Zi Ping* (徐子平) who lived in the Song Dynasty reorganized and refined the traditional method into its present form, using the birth date to assess an individual's fortune. It therefore also acquired its present name: *Zi Ping's Eight Characters* (子平八字).

Ba Zi is a method of fortune-telling in which experts of the art will be able to describe with high degree of accuracy, a person's personality traits, behavior, family and social relationships, potentials which can be applied to career choices and future major decisions, achievements, physique and health and so on, by simply reading the data of the person's birth year, month, date and hour. The data are translated into 4 pairs of Chinese "numerical" character. Each pair is called a "pillar" with the 2 characters placed on top of each other. In each pair, the one on the top is a *Heavenly Stem* (天干) and the bottom one is an *Earthly Branch* (地支).

There are 10 Heavenly Stems, which are namely:

甲、乙、丙、丁、戊、己、庚、辛、壬、癸.

These are the *yin* and *yang* parts of the five elements.

There are 12 Earthly Branches, which are namely:

子、丑、寅、卯、辰、巳、午、未、申、酉、戌、亥.

These are more commonly known as the twelve animals of the zodiac.

They will then make up the 60 combinations of pairs of Heavenly Stems and Earthly Branches, which will be the basic building blocks of the formation of the Eight Characters.

Before going deeper into *Ba Zi*, we must first understand the **Yin-Yang** *(阴阳)* principle and the **five elements** (which are also known as *Wu Xing,* 五行) of the Chinese universe.
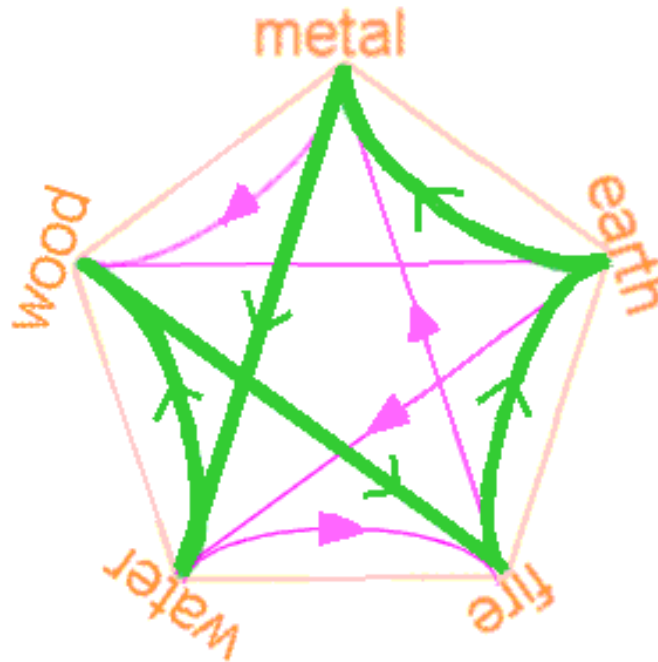
The Yin-Yang Principle

The *Yin-Yang* principle is the most basic ideology of the Chinese universe. In a nutshell, they represent the male and the female components in the universe. *Yin* originated from *Yang* and *Yang* originated from *Yin*, which means that they are closely linked to each other.

The Five Elements

The five elements represent changes or the evolution of all things on Earth. They are also the five elements representing Venus, Jupiter, Mars, Mercury, and Saturn. The five elements which are included in the *Wu Xing* are: **Wood, Fire, Earth, Metal,** and **Water**.

These five elements are further divided into *yin* and *yang* such that we will get Yang Wood, Yin Wood, Yang Fire, Yin Fire, Yang Earth, Yin Earth, Yang Metal, Yin Metal, Yang Water, and Yin Water. It has been widely believed that the interactions between the elements must be well balanced or else harmony will be broken. This can be seen in the theory of inter-livening and inter-conquering of the elements.

From the diagram, we can see that the thick lines (with "**>**" arrows) are connections that are *inter-livening*: Metal melts down to produce Water, which in turn provides water for the Wood. Wood is used to generate Fire which will produce ashes that is returned to the Earth. From the Earth, mines enable us to retrieve Metal. Thus, this is a nurturing cycle.

The thin lines (with "▶ " arrows) represent the *inter-conquering* relationships. Water is used to put out Fire. Fire will melt the Metal. Metal tools are used to cut Wood. Wood grows on Earth and held it with its roots. Earth absorbs the Water and thus stops the water flow. All these connections are deemed destructive. However the relationship between the elements is not as simple as it seems. Balance is very important as too much or too little of something is not constructive too. For example, metal conquers wood but at the same time, it livens water when it melts to form water, which is essential for wood. Thus, all have to depend on balance.

Origin of the Heavenly Stems and Earthly Branches

The 12 Earthly Branches not come accidentally as such. They make up the 12 revolutionary points of the **Jupiter** as it revolves around the Sun in its orbit. The Jupiter's single revolution around the Sun is about 11.8 years of the Earth and this is approximately 12 years. Thus, each of the Earthly Branches represent each of the 12 years of the Jupiter's revolution. The ten Heavenly Stems on the other hand is derived from the permutation of the five elements and the *yin-yang* relationships.

The Four Pillars

Now, let us go to the *Ba Zi* proper. As mentioned before, there are 4 pillars in the *Ba Zi* of a person. They are:

(1)   the Year Pillar (年柱 *Nian Zhu*)

(2)   the Month Pillar (月柱 *Yue Zhu*)

(3)   the Day Pillar (日柱 *Ri Zhu*)

(4)   the Hour Pillar (时柱 *Shi Zhu*)

As you can see, it is derived by obtaining the year, month, date of time of birth of a person.

In this project, we have tried as far as possible to derive the Heavenly Stems and Earthly Branches of each Pillar using mathematical calculations. Throughout our research project on *Ba Zi*, most resources relied on, and referred us to the *Wan Nian Li* (万年历), also known as the 10000-Year Calendar or the Chinese Almanac (通书, *Tong Shu*), to obtain one's *Ba Zi.*

However, our goal was to make it possible for anyone to be able to compute their very own *Ba Zi* off-hand, without the use of a *Wan Nian Li*. All they need to know some is simple mathematical knowledge, and the order of the 10 Heavenly Stems and 12 Earthly Branches.

Before that, we need to understand the Heavenly Stems and the Earthly Branches in a more detailed manner.

The Sexagenary Cycle (六十花甲子)

       The Sexagenary cycle is a combination of the 10 Heavenly Stems and the 12 Earthly Branches. They are listed below and we have included only the more commonly known and useful associations. Of course, they have many other associations, for example the Stems are also associated with the different parts of our body.

Heavenly Stem	天干	tiān gān	Element
1	甲	jiǎ	Wood
2	乙	yǐ	Wood
3	丙	bǐng	Fire
4	丁	dīng	Fire
5	戊	wù	Earth
6	己	jǐ	Earth
7	庚	gēng	Metal
8	辛	xīn	Metal
9	壬	rén	Water
10	癸	guǐ	Water

Earthly Branch	地支	dì zhī	Hours	Animal
1	子	zǐ	11pm-1am	Rat
2	丑	chǒu	1am-3am	Ox
3	寅	yín	3am-5am	Tiger
4	卯	mǎo	5am-7am	Rabbit
5	辰	chén	7am-9am	Dragon
6	巳	sì	9am-11am	Snake
7	午	wǔ	11am-1pm	Horse
8	未	wèi	1pm-3pm	Goat
9	申	shēn	3pm-5pm	Monkey
10	酉	yǒu	5pm-7pm	Rooster
11	戌	xū	7pm-9pm	Dog
12	亥	hài	9pm-11pm	Boar

We then continuously list out the Heavenly Stems and Earthly Branches next to each other, into pairs, with the Heavenly Stem is always before the Earthly Branch (please refer to table below). The result is the whole Sexagenary Cycle, which consists of 60 pairs of Stems and Branches. In our context of the Ba Zi, we call the pairs 'Pillars'.

Position	天干 Heavenly Stem		地支 Earthly Branch		柱 Pillar		Position	天干 Heavenly Stem		地支 Earthly Branch		柱 Pillar
1	1	甲 jia	1	子 zi	甲子		31	1	甲	7	午	甲午
2	2	乙 yi	2	丑 chou	乙丑		32	2	乙	8	未	乙未
3	3	丙 bing	3	寅 yin	丙寅		33	3	丙	9	申	丙申
4	4	丁 ding	4	卯 mao	丁卯		34	4	丁	10	酉	丁酉
5	5	戊 wu	5	辰 chen	戊辰		35	5	戊	11	戌	戊戌
6	6	己 ji	6	巳 si	己巳		36	6	己	12	亥	己亥
7	7	庚 geng	7	午 wu	庚午		37	7	庚	1	子	庚子
8	8	辛 xin	8	未 wei	辛未		38	8	辛	2	丑	辛丑
9	9	壬 ren	9	申 shen	壬申		39	9	壬	3	寅	壬寅
10	10	癸 gui	10	酉 you	癸酉		40	10	癸	4	卯	癸卯
11	1	甲	11	戌 xu	甲戌		41	1	甲	5	辰	甲辰
12	2	乙	12	亥 hai	乙亥		42	2	乙	6	巳	乙巳
13	3	丙	1	子	丙子		43	3	丙	7	午	丙午
14	4	丁	2	丑	丁丑		44	4	丁	8	未	丁未
15	5	戊	3	寅	戊寅		45	5	戊	9	申	戊申
16	6	己	4	卯	己卯		46	6	己	10	酉	己酉
17	7	庚	5	辰	庚辰		47	7	庚	11	戌	庚戌
18	8	辛	6	巳	辛巳		48	8	辛	12	亥	辛亥
19	9	壬	7	午	壬午		49	9	壬	1	子	壬子
20	10	癸	8	未	癸未		50	10	癸	2	丑	癸丑
21	1	甲	9	申	甲申		51	1	甲	3	寅	甲寅
22	2	乙	10	酉	乙酉		52	2	乙	4	卯	乙卯
23	3	丙	11	戌	丙戌		53	3	丙	5	辰	丙辰
24	4	丁	12	亥	丁亥		54	4	丁	6	巳	丁巳
25	5	戊	1	子	戊子		55	5	戊	7	午	戊午
26	6	己	2	丑	己丑		56	6	己	8	未	己未
27	7	庚	3	寅	庚寅		57	7	庚	9	申	庚申
28	8	辛	4	卯	辛卯		58	8	辛	10	酉	辛酉
29	9	壬	5	辰	壬辰		59	9	壬	11	戌	壬戌
30	10	癸	6	巳	癸巳		60	10	癸	12	亥	癸亥

The Year Pillar

Firstly, to understand the Year Pillar, think back on our earlier section which tells us that the Heavenly Stems and the Earthly Branches will form 60 combinations to give us a Sexagenary cycle. Since the *Ba Zi* was dated back to 2637 BC, that particular year is the first year of the first Sexagenary cycle. To derive the Year Pillar of any year, we have derived the mathematical formula below:

$$2637 + x = 60\,y$$

where x is the year of birth and y is the number of cycles that have passed since 2637 BC.

Let's have an example. For someone born in 1982, we substitute 1982 for x. So,

$$2637 + \boldsymbol{1982} = 60\,y$$
$$y = 76\,{}^{59}/_{60}$$

Therefore, we know that 76 cycles have passed. To locate the position of this year in the cycle, we multiply the fraction by 60. In this case, we get 59. Thus we can derive that 1982 is the 59th position of the next cycle (i.e. the 77th cycle since 2637 BC).

However, there may be exception cases.

1) *y* has no fraction

It is not difficult to understand that when *y* has no fraction, it means the particular year, i.e. *x*, is the **60th year** of a cycle.

We illustrate this with the example of 1983. Using our above formula,

$$2637 + \textbf{1983} = 60\,y$$
$$y = 77$$

Therefore, 77 cycles have passed, and because $77 = 76\,^{60}/_{60}$, when we multiply the fraction by 60, we can derive that 1983 is in the 60th position of the 77th cycle.

To confirm the accuracy of this result, refer to the earlier example of 1982, from which we have found the result that it is the 59th year, and thus it is correct that 1983 is in the 60th position.

The Month Pillar

To derive a person's Month Pillar, there are two methods.

1) The Table

丑 子 亥 戌 酉 申 未 午 巳 辰 卯 寅	月支 ╲ 年干
丁 丙 乙 甲 癸 壬 辛 庚 己 戊 丁 丙	甲,乙
己 戊 丁 丙 乙 甲 癸 壬 辛 庚 己 戊	丙,丁
辛 庚 己 戊 丁 丙 乙 甲 癸 壬 辛 庚	戊,己
癸 壬 辛 庚 己 戊 丁 丙 乙 甲 癸 壬	庚,辛
乙 甲 癸 壬 辛 庚 己 戊 丁 丙 乙 甲	壬,癸

The Earthly Branches for the first month of a year is always the 寅 (*yin*), according to our historical research on the *Wan Nian Li*. As such, to calculate the Month pillar, we will then use the Heavenly Stem of the year to match the Earthly Branches of the month using the table above.

For example, to find the Month Pillar of a person who is born in the third month of the year (辰) with the Year Heavenly Stem being 甲, according to the table, his Month Heavenly Stem will be 戊, and thus the Pillar will be 辰戊.

2) Mathematical Calculation without the table

We label each of the 月支, from 寅 to 丑, with a number, starting with '3' for 寅, '4' for 卯, so on and so forth, until '14' for 丑.

We do the same for each of the 年干. In this case, the 10 Heavenly Branches are divided into 2 groups, where the 6th to 10th Branches will tag on to the 1st to 5th Branches respectively. For the 1st pair, i.e. 甲 and the 6th Branch 乙, we give them a common label number, '1'. So both 丙 (2nd Branch) and 丁 (7th Branch) will be labeled '2'. So on and so forth.

To identify the Month Heavenly Stem (月干), we can make use of a pattern:

Step1) Add the label numbers of the 月支 and 年干 together.

Step2) If the 年干 falls in the number '1' pair, **-1** from the sum from Step1.

年干 falls in the number '2' pair, **keep** the sum from Step1.

年干 falls in the number '3' pair, **+1** from the sum from Step1.

年干 falls in the number '4' pair, **+2** from the sum from Step1.

年干 falls in the number '5' pair, **+3** from the sum from Step1.

Step3) If the result is a two-digit number, drop the 1st digit, i.e. 12 becomes 2, 20 becomes 10.

The end answer will be the position number of the 月干 in the line-up of the 10 Heavenly Stems. Combining this with the already-known 月支, we can then identify the Month Pillar.

The Day Pillar

Now, let's look at how we derive the pillar for a particular day in the year. To do this, we must have a reference point in the calendar.

We take the 1st January 1944 as a reference for the starting day of a Sexagenary cycle, i.e. the *Jia Zi* (甲子) day. We specifically used this day as it is an occasion on which the 1st day of the cycle falls on the 1st day of the year.

Why not use 2637 BC as a reference point?

From our calculations, we found out that 1st January of 2637 BC was not a *Jia Zi* day, and it would have been inaccurate if we had assumed that it was, and further used it as a reference point for our calculations of the Day Pillar.

Therefore, we concluded it was more relevant and accurate to refer to the *Wan Nian Li*, from where we obtained 1944 as the reference point.

1) Position of 1st January of x year (x after 1944)

To locate the position that 1st January of year x has in the Sexagenery cycle, we came up with the following formula:

$$\frac{[(x - 1944) \times 365 + (\text{number of leap years between } x \text{ and } 1944)]}{60}$$

Note:

To calculate the number of leap years in a range:

$$\text{Number of Leap Years} = \frac{\text{Total Number of Years in the range}}{4}$$

This does not include the year x, if x is a leap year. To know whether year x is a leap year, divide it by 4. If it is divisible by 4, x is a leap year. However, if x a century year (e.g. 400, 2000), which can be divided by 400, then it is not a leap year.

As an illustration of the formula, we use the year 1983.
When x = 1983,

$$\text{Number of Leap Years} = \frac{\mathbf{1983} - 1944}{4} = \mathbf{10}$$

We ignore the decimal place value of the quotient (i.e. 9.75). At the same time we take into account that 1944 is a leap year too, therefore getting 10 as an answer.

The calculation is then as follows:

$$\frac{[(\mathbf{1983} - 1944) \times 365 + \mathbf{10}]}{60} = 237 \; {}^{25}/_{60}$$

That will cause us to derive a numerical answer with a fraction as a remainder. We will then use the fraction, **multiplying it by 60**, to determine the position of the Heavenly Stem and Earthly Branch pair of 1st January of 1983 on the Sexagenary table. In this case, it is the 25th position, i.e. *Ji Chou*.

2) <u>Position of day y of x year (x after 1944)</u>

To calculate the position of another day in the year, y, for example the 7th day of March in 1983, we use the following formula.

$$\frac{[(x - 1944) \times 365 + (\text{number of leap years between } x \text{ and } 1944) + (\text{number of days that have passed in that year after } 1^{st} \text{ Jan till } y)]}{60}$$

In this case, 7th March is the 66th day of the year 1983. However, the number of days that have passed after 1st January is only 65 days. Therefore we calculate the position of 7th March 1983 as:

$$\frac{[(\mathbf{1983} - 1944) \times 365 + \mathbf{10} + \mathbf{65}]}{60} = 237 \; {}^{1}\!/_{2}$$

Multiplying ${}^{1}\!/_{2}$ by 60, we get 30, stating that 7th March falls on the 30th position in the Sexagenary cycle, i.e. *Jia Wu*.

3) <u>Position of 1st January of x year (x before 1944)</u>

However, if we were to find the day pillar of the 1st day of a year that precedes 1944, we will use this formula instead:

$$\frac{[(x - 1944) \times 365 - (\text{number of leap years between 1944 and } x)]}{60}$$

We use the example of 1936:

When x = 1936,

$$\text{Number of Leap Years} = \frac{1944 - \textbf{1936}}{4} = \textbf{2}$$

Thus the calculation follows:

$$\frac{[(\textbf{1936} - 1944) \times 365 - \textbf{2}]}{60} = -48 \; {}^{42}/_{60}$$

We will get a negative answer. Multiply the answer's fraction value by 60.

Then, subtract the result from 60 to find out the position of the day pillar from the Sexagenary table.

In this case, we multiply ${}^{42}/_{60}$ by 60 to get 42, and subtract it from 60 to get 18. This indicates that the position of 1st January 1936 falls on the 18th position on the Sexagenary cycle, i.e. *Ren Wu*.

The Hour Pillar

12 11 10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1 亥 戌 酉 申 未 午 巳 辰 卯 寅 丑 子	时支／日干
乙 甲 癸 壬 辛 庚 己 戊 丁 丙 乙 甲	甲, 己 1
丁 丙 乙 甲 癸 壬 辛 庚 己 戊 丁 丙	乙, 庚 2
己 戊 丁 丙 乙 甲 癸 壬 辛 庚 己 戊	丙, 辛 3
辛 庚 己 戊 丁 丙 乙 甲 癸 壬 辛 庚	丁, 壬 4
癸 壬 辛 庚 己 戊 丁 丙 乙 甲 癸 壬	戊, 癸 5

According the fixed rule of the *Wan Nian Li*, 11pm to 1 am is 子 hour, 1 am to 3 am is 丑 hour, and 3 am to 5 am is the 寅 hour, etc., until 亥 hour, which is from 9 pm to 11 pm. Therefore, to derive the Hour Pillar, the only tricky problem is to find the Heavenly Stem of the Hour Pillar. This is done with the help of the knowledge of the Earthly Branches of the Hour Pillar (时支) and the Heavenly Stems of the Day Pillar (日干).

For example, we want to find out the Heavenly Stem of the 子 hour in a 甲 day. We will add the numeral that represents the position of the Earthly Branch, 子, which is 1 to the numeral that represent the position of the Heavenly Stem of 甲 day, which is 1. (The sixth Heavenly Stem, 己, will take the first position and the seventh Heavenly Stem 庚 will take the second position and so on and forth)

After getting the sum of the two numerals, depending on the position on the Heavenly Stem of the Day Pillar, certain amount of adjustment in terms of addition and subtraction will then take place. If the position of the Heavenly Stem of the Day Pillar is 1, then we will adjust by subtracting 1, if it's 2, then we will add zero, if it's 3 then we will add 1, if it is 4 then we will add 2 and if it's 5 then we will add 3.

In the situation that the addition of the two numerals yields a result of more than 10, we will then drop the first digit after making the above adjustment.

The final number we get will represent the position of the Heavenly Stem of the Hour Pillar.

The table above provides quick easy reference for anyone who is incumbent to do up the mathematics.

Note:

The accuracy of the results of the calculations using the formulas that we derived was based on the reference materials that we obtained. For example, when we derived a day's position in the Sexagenary cycle, we compared the result to the *Wan Nian Li* we had, to conclude whether or not our formula worked well. We went through many trial and error processes in order to derive the best formula available. If there are any occasions where the results derived using our formulas differ from that of records or tables, it might be due to the difference in reference sources (as it is understandable that sources might have discrepancies between them), or it might be because of our shortcomings in mathematical knowledge.

Examples

(1) Bruce Lee, a legendary kung fu star, was born at 8am on 27th November 1940.

His pillars were as follows:

Hour	Day	Month	Year
戊 *wu* *yang* Earth 辰 *chen* *yang* Earth Wood	甲 *jia* *yang* Wood 戌 *shu* *yang* Earth Fire	丁 *ding* *yin* Fire 亥 *hai* *yin* Fire Fire	庚 *geng* *yang* Gold 辰 *chen* *yang* Earth Gold

His stem of birth shows that his nature is *yang* wood. He was born in the winter when there is ample water in the branch of the year which helps to nourish the wood. However, the water is surrounded by walls of earth in the branches of the year, day and time of birth. This obstructs the flow of water that is essential to the strengthening of his nature. Furthermore, the earth supports the gold in the essence of the year, hence threatening the safety of the wood. On the whole, this causes him to be a person of weak wood.

The fire in the month and in the essence of the day and month is an important element for the well being of the wood as it helps to provide warmth for the wood that is born in the winter and also helps to control gold (that is destructive to wood) and keep its threat at a distance. However, water can put out the fire even though it can help to nourish the wood. In order for this not to take place, he needs more wood to support the fire for it to guard against the gold. However, this fails to take place in 1973, the year of water, as he just left his luck pillar of wood. Thus, the fire could no longer guard against the gold in the essence of the year. This allows the metal to launch a fatal attack on the defenceless wood, causing the four pillars to tumble over and attributes to his death.

(2)　Mao Zedong, the first chairman of the People's Republic of China, was born between 7 to 9 am on 26th December 1893. The stems and branches of his birth are as follows:

Hour	Day	Month	Year
甲 *jia* yang Wood 辰 *chen* yang Earth Fire	丁 *ding* yin Fire 酉 *you* yin Gold Fire	甲 *jia* yang Wood 子 *zi* yang Water Gold	癸 *kui* yin Water 巳 *si* yin Fire Water

His nature is *yin* fire. Being born in the winter, his month and year pillar and the essence of year reflects strong water influence which can cause the fire to be weak. Nevertheless, the fire remains strong as it is supported by the wood on both sides of the day pillar. In addition, water helps to nourish wood for its growth and survival. This indirectly helps to support fire. Therefore, the equilibrium of power between fire and water in the pillars of destiny is maintained. The ability to counter the destructive element in his life enables him to possess great power and allows him to establish a dictatorship in China up till the point of his death.

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