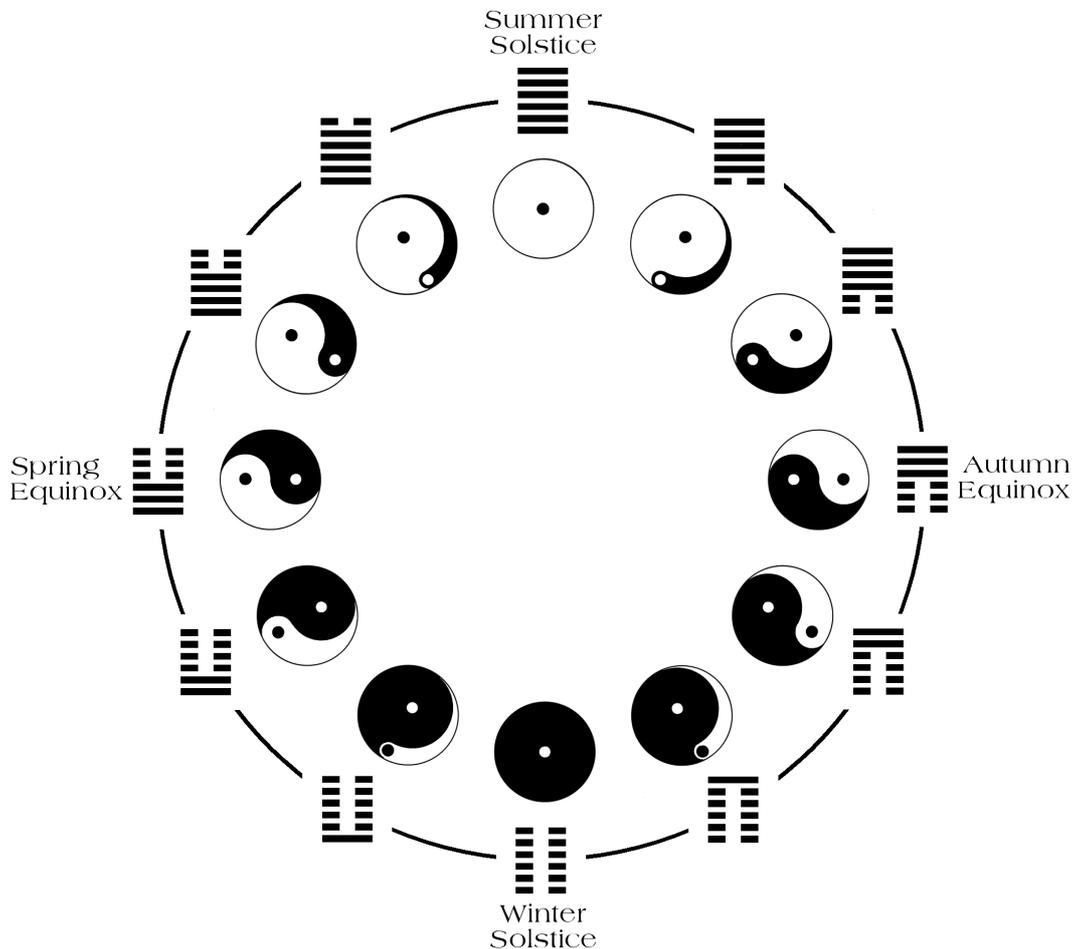


Waxing and Waning – Yin and Yang Throughout the Year

There are many different calendars in the world, many different ways of marking out the passage of the year. The calendar currently in use in the west is the Gregorian system; New Year, by definition, is the 1st of January and the current year is taken to be 2013. In the Chinese calendar, New Year is not until the Gregorian date 10th February 2013 – this is the second new moon after the winter solstice. In the Chinese system, by one reckoning, the approaching year is 4710!

With so many existing calendars to choose from it might seem silly to consider adding another, but over Christmas 2007 I found myself wondering what the result would be if I combined the contemporary astronomical view of the calendar, described in terms of the precise movements of the axis of the earth, with the traditional seasonal symbols from the Yijing (易經). There are four times in the year that are clearly defined in astronomical terms and which also held great importance to our ancestors. These are the summer solstice, when the day is longest – this is the peak of yang (陽); the winter solstice, when the day is shortest – the peak of yin (陰); and the spring and autumn equinoxes, when day and night are equal – yin and yang are balanced. The following diagram shows the place of these four reference points in the complete cycle:



The outer ring of hexagrams are traditionally known as the xiao xi gua (消息卦) or “waning and waxing symbols” (see Nielsen 2003, p275). These are the traditional symbols for the months of the year. However, the reader should be aware that the relationship between these symbols and the times of the year advanced in this note do not correspond with the traditional Chinese attributions. The inner ring of waxing and waning Taiji (太極) symbols in this figure is adapted from a table in Cheng (1983, p19).

If we now take the four quarter points of the year, and then evenly divide the resulting intervals we get twelve dates that can each be assigned to a hexagram symbol from the waxing and waning cycle. The following table shows the resulting calendar for 2012.

<i>Symbol</i>	<i>Date</i>	<i>Name</i>	<i>Comment</i>
	21 Dec 2012	<i>Receptive</i>	The winter solstice is the height of yin energy. Yang is in hibernation.
	20 Jan 2013	<i>Return</i>	The new year begins as the first spark of yang energy returns. It might not seem so, but the year has turned.
	18 Feb 2013	<i>Approach</i>	Yang energy strengthens, becoming more perceptible.
	20 Mar 2013	<i>Balance</i>	At the spring equinox yin and yang are balanced – yang is constantly increasing.
	20 Apr 2013	<i>Great Vigour</i>	Yang energy continues to build and the vigour of spring becomes ever more apparent.
	21 May 2013	<i>Breakthrough</i>	Yang is about to complete, only a single moment of yin remains.
	21 Jun 2013	<i>Creative</i>	The summer solstice brings yang to its peak. Now yin is dormant.
	22 Jul 2013	<i>Encroaching</i>	The peak of summer is past and the first touch of yin begins to be felt.
	22 Aug 2013	<i>Withdrawal</i>	Yang energy is clearly receding. It is already time to prepare for the coming winter.
	22 Sep 2013	<i>Separation</i>	At the autumn equinox yin and yang are balanced, but yang is decreasing.
	22 Oct 2013	<i>Contemplation</i>	As winter approaches again, it is time to contemplate the year that has passed and what fruits it has brought.
	21 Nov 2013	<i>Splitting</i>	The last yang is about split away and life awaits the depths of winter.
	21 Dec 2014	<i>Receptive</i>	The winter solstice returns.

Note that, in this presentation, the assignment of hexagrams to time points is based directly on the correspondence between the balance of yin and yang in the symbol and the balance of day and night. Further, each hexagram represents a single day and the months are the periods between those days. Thus, ☷ is the day of Winter Solstice and the next reference point, New Year's Day, is ☳. The month between these two days is the time it takes for the yin line in the first place of ☳ to become yang, completing the transformation to ☰. This corresponds with the metaphysics of the Yijing: everything is in constant change, and moments of stability are brief.

References

Cheng, Tin Hung, and D. J. Docherty. 1983.

Wutan Tai Chi Chuan. Published by D. J. Docherty. Hong Kong.

Nielsen, Bent. 2003.

A Companion to Yi Jing Numerology and Cosmology: Chinese Studies of Images and Numbers from Han (202 BCE – 220 CE) to Song (960 – 1279 CE). Published by Routledge Curzon, London.