

An Introduction to  
The Yi-Jing  
by Jim Cleaver

Part One  
Basic Terms & Concepts

## The Chinese Character Yi

易

- This character is a pictograph/ideogram *Yi* meaning change.
- How would you picture the concept of change?
- Some scholars suggest it is a picture of a lizard (think chameleon).
- Others say it is composed of the character for the sun above the character for the moon (turned sideways).
- I say both are good and make sense.

# PRONUNCIATION

- It is pronounced: (Y)EE JING
- which literally means: CHANGE CLASSIC  
(changes/changing) (text, book, canon)
- usually translated as: THE BOOK of CHANGE(s)  
(characters can be interpreted as singular or plural)

# Spelling Chinese Sounds

- Pertinent to Yi Jing studies there are **three relevant systems** for Romanizing or transliterating Chinese sounds
- **Pin-yin** spells it **YI-JING**  
Pinyin is the current international standard for Romanizing Chinese and has been since 1976  
This is the one I will use (though I will sometimes include the Wade too)
- **Wade-Giles** spells it **I-CHING**  
This system was developed in the late 1800's by British linguists Thomas Wade and Lionel Giles  
(note, there is no apostrophe following the 'ch', therefore 'ch' is to be pronounced like a 'j')
- the old **Missionary system** spelled it **YI-KING**  
(‘K’ is a southern dialect pronunciation)

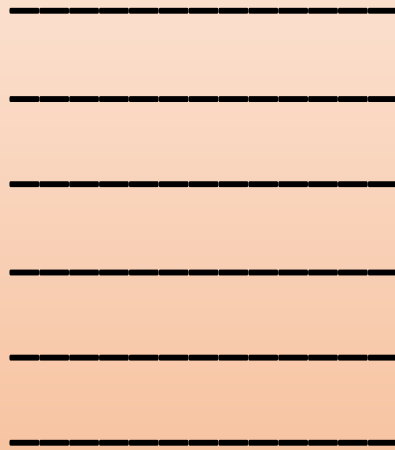
# Tones

## Chinese is a Tonal Language

- Mandarin Chinese uses four tones to distinguish sounds that are otherwise homonyms. The same syllable pronounced using a different tone completely changes the word.
- **Yi** is pronounced using the 4th tone, which starts high and falls sharply.  
(yi in the 1st tone means to cure or heal, and hence, a doctor. It is a completely different character 醫)
- **Jing** is pronounced using the 1st tone, which is a high, even pitched tone.
- **Pin-yin** indicates the tone with marks over the vowel  
(the tone marks provide a visual clue to intonation) **YÌ JĪNG**
- **Wade-Giles** uses superscript numbers **I<sup>4</sup> CHING<sup>1</sup>**

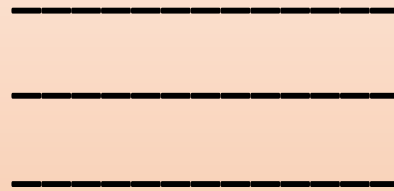
# Basic Terms

- **Hexagrams**, as their name implies, are graphic images comprised of 6 lines.



- There are **64** hexagrams

- Each Hexagram is composed of two, 3 line symbols called **Trigrams**.



- There are **8 trigrams**
- Collectively they are known as the **Ba Gua** (8 symbols)  
(In the Wade-Giles system this is spelled Pa Kua)
- *pronounce like 'B' and 'G' as the pinyin spelling suggests  
not 'p' and 'k' as one might think looking at the Wade spelling  
(the W-G spelling often leads to mispronunciations)*

- Both trigrams and hexagrams are called **gua** = image/symbol
- They are differentiated by the addition of a number qualifier
- Thus liu-shi-si **gua** = 64 gua (means it's a hexa-gram)
- *Whereas:* ba **gua** = 8 gua (must be a tri-gram)




- The individual **Lines** that compose both trigrams and hexagrams are of two types:

- one is a **solid line** 

the other is a **divided line** 

- the solid line is called a **yang line** 

(also referred to as a firm, decisive, strong, or bright line)

- the divided line is called a **yin line** 

(also called a yielding, receptive, weak, or dark line)

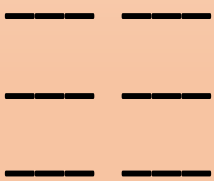
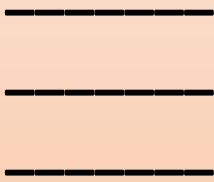
- The 8 Trigrams are all of the possible combinations of yin and yang lines in a three line figure.
- The 64 Hexagrams are all of the possible combinations of yin and yang lines in a six line figure.
- Thus these symbols constitute mathematically complete groups:  
yin & yang = 2  
trigrams =  $2^3 = 8$   
hexagrams =  $2^6 = 64$   
(by the way yin is pronounced yeen and yang is yahng)

# Introducing the Trigrams

I will present them in pairs

## Symbol

3 line graph



## Name

- Character
- Wade-Giles
- Pin-Yin

乾

Ch'ien

Qián

坤

K'un

Kūn

## Natural Image

The natural image is closely associated with the trigram and is smt. used as a substitute for its name

**Note: the WG and PY should be pronounced exactly the same, they are only spelled differently – PY is usually closer visually**

(this is pronounced cheein)

**Heaven**

(this is pronounced kwun)

**Earth**



離

(this is pronounced lee)



Li

**Fire**



**Lí**



坎

(this is pronounced khan)



K'an

**Water** (moving water)



**Kǎn**

(darkness)(a pit)(danger)

—— ——— 震 (this is pronounced Junn)

—— ——— Chen **Thunder**

————— Zhèn

————— 巽 (this is pronounced Shun)

————— Hsun/Sun **Wind/breeze**

—— ——— Xùn /Sùn (wood)



兌

(this is pronounced Dway)



Tui

**Lake**



Duì

marsh/wetlands



艮

(this is pronounced Gun)



Ken

**Mountain**



Gèn

## Memorizing the Trigrams (Ba Gua)

- I strongly recommend memorizing these 3 aspects of trigrams:
  - The **graphic** itself (there are only 8 and they are easily learned in pairs – only 4 pairs)
  - Its **name** (use the **pinyin**), but a good idea to ‘recognize’ the WG too
  - Its **natural image**

# Guide to Memorizing the Graphics

- Notice that 4 trigrams are **symmetrical**: (Qian, Kun; Li and Kan)  
(turn them upside down and they stay the same)
- 4 are **asymmetrical**: (Zhen, Xun; Gen and Dui)  
(turn these upside down and they become their opposite)
  
- The secret beyond the first two: **Qian** (all 3 lines yang) & **Kun** (all 3 lines yin),  
is to notice where the single odd line is located:  
(with only 3 lines, two will always be of one type, leaving a solitary line of the other polarity)
- Note its location: is the solo Yin or Yang line in the lowest, middle or uppermost position  
or stated another way first, second or third position. (always count up from bottom)  
This will account for the other six trigrams.



## Memorizing Graphs (continued)

- Yin as the odd line:
  - First/bottom = Xun/gentle wind(breeze)
  - Second/middle = Li/fire
  - Third/top = Dui/lake
- Yang as the odd line:
  - First/bottom = Zhen/thunder
  - Second/middle = Kan/water
  - Third/top = Gen/mt.