









Li

The trigram that represents summer is Li or Fire. This is a clear choice for the season as we cycle through the year and its changes. The I Ching or Book of Changes and its symbols are a source for us both personally and in our interactions with others. It offers insight and wisdom for us to glean from during this season.

Li gua or Fire trigram is the third trigram in the Shao Yong sequence.

Heaven Qian	Lake Dui	Fire Li	Thunder Zhen	Wind Xun	Water Kan	Mountain Gen	Earth Kun
							
Du + Metal Early Winter Night 1	Lu - LI - Metal Fall Evening 2	Ht - SI Fire Mid Summer Mid Day 3	Pc - SJ + Wood Spring Mid Morning 4	GB - Liv - Wood Early Summer Late Morning 5	UB - Kid Water Mid Winter Mid Night 6	St - Sp - Earth Late Winter Early Morning 7	Ren + Earth Late Summer Afternoon 8

You can see the progression of the lines also called yao on the left Yang side of the sequence. Gua number 1, Qian, is firmly Yang with three solid lines. The Yin quality enters into the second gua. It appears in the top position which is considered the last since trigrams are read from the bottom up. Now, we come to our third gua which is Li or Fire. The Yin broken line has dropped down to the middle position, and we can see something interesting. It might seem odd that the first gua, Qian, in the first position would not be designated as Fire. Qian is named Heaven which is the full manifestation of Yang energy. Yet, it is Li with its central Yin line that displays an important quality for Fire and its meaning.

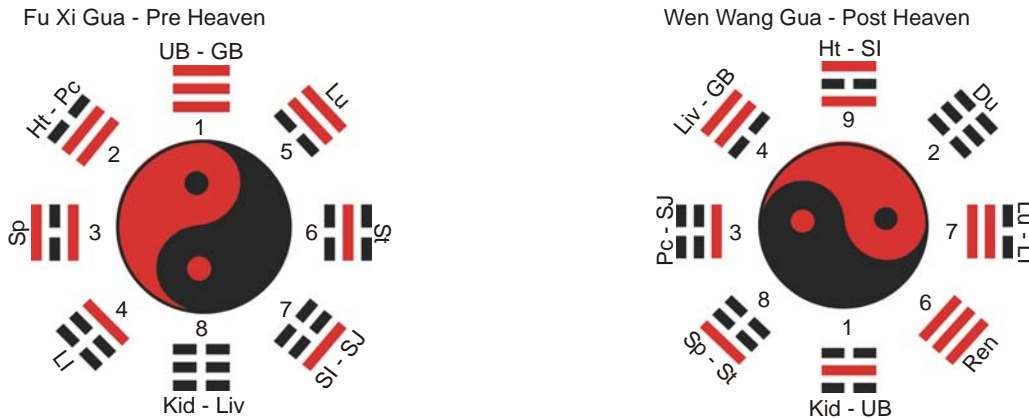
The nature of Fire is unique among the elements. It exists through the other elements. Water, Metal, Earth and Wood can exist in isolation. Fire cannot. It needs fuel to feed it. Wood provides this for Fire. Fire reduces Wood to ash onto the Earth. Fire intensifies in the Earth's interior and produces Metal. Water seeps down into the Earth and it collects above it. It as well as the other elements has the power to put out Fire. Fire is then dependent on the other elements for its existence. It is double Yang lines consuming a central Yin line.

The quality of Li or Fire in its season also shows how it depends on the other seasons. Summertime, the yearly marker for Fire, needs spring. Plants and newborns need the protection of the cooler spring to grow. Summer needs the fall as foliage drops its leaves to fertilize the earth and the winter as the earth rests and stores up reserves for the new beginning in spring.

In the I Ching, Fire is variously named. It is radiance, brilliance, light, clarity and intelligence. It is also clinging. It is dependent on and attached to others. The Heart is its Yin organ. The Heart is described as the emperor, the chief, the eye and the Shen which is our ability to recognize all other emotions. We diagnose a person's Shen by observing their eyes. The Heart both provides constant blood supply through its pumping and support through its energetic connections. It is also dependent on all other organs which perform their functions of extraction, transformation, circulation, purification, elimination and defense.

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When we apply the corresponding meridians and organs to the pre-heaven and post-heaven circular sequences, we can see more clearly the relationship of Li gua to the other gua or trigrams.



In the first sequence attributed to the legendary Fu Xi, Li gua at position number 3 is associated with the Spleen. On the opposite side, Stomach is associated with Kan or Water. We know from our medicinal tradition that Spleen dislikes damp and Stomach needs Yin fluids to moisten it. Spleen boughs down with dampness and cannot perform its function of transporting and transformation.

In the second sequence that King Wen put together, Li gua is in the top position at number 9 and given the designation of Ht and SI. We understand these normally under the Fire element. Kan or Water in the bottom position at number 1 is shown as Kidney and Urinary Bladder. Here we see the connection of the Heart and Kidneys, Fire and Water. Each trigram is the opposite image of the other.

So, what significance does this have for our practice of Oriental medicine? The ancient Daoists were interested in self cultivation. They not only sought out longevity but immortality. In their writings, you will come across the ideas of how Qian (Heaven) and Kun (Earth), and Li (Fire) and Kan (Water) form the pivotal markers for creating the Golden Elixir or the internal medicine that surpasses all others. It is particularly the exchange and interplay of Li (Fire) and Kan (Water) in their seasons that we find how the Golden Elixir can be created. This is what different Qi Gong and meditation practices are attempting to initiate, the creation of the Golden Elixir.

“The purpose of T’ai Chi Chuan is to seek stillness in motion. The aim of meditation is to seek action in inaction. This is experienced from the sense of their opposites within motion and within tranquility. It is possible with patience and persistence to feel, as if intuitively, very subtly, very delicately, the nature of time. By following this feeling we may move close enough to the border of the fourth dimensional world to get a glimpse of that reality. This is the first stage of enlightenment.” (Jou, Tsung Hwa. (June 2000) The Tao of Meditation – Way to Enlightenment.)

Li

So, how do we help our patients come closer to this reality? How can we create a healing environment where people can experience “stillness in motion” and “action in inaction”? These are questions for us to ponder. We come into other people’s lives for a reason.

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Additional References:

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Jou, Tsung Hwa – The Dao of TaiJiQuan – Way to Rejuvenation