

Kan

The I Ching or the Book of Changes uses symbols to describe all phases in life and the constant change through time. The 64 hexagrams are formed with a set of 2 trigrams, made up of 3 lines or what are called yao. These trigrams or gua are the basis for interpreting the I Ching in the Confucian school of divination and in the Taoist school of numerology. Both systems have been and are still used in the practice of Oriental medicine. Let's consider the trigram that represents winter.



Kan is made up of two broken yin lines and one solid yang line. The top and bottom positions are yin and solid while the middle position is yang and moving. This is the nature of water. It has both yin and yang qualities. It is substantive and yet flowing, active and changing. It can be solid expanding through cracks, liquid flowing down crevasses or vapor dissipating into the atmosphere. Water that has no movement is nothing more than stagnation and death. However, when water is allowed to flow, it fills, nourishes and becomes the medium for life. Water is the most basic material on the planet and in our bodies.

Water can also have its destructive side. It is associated with the abysmal, danger and difficulty. Winter can be a difficult time. In temperate climates, the weather can be harsh and perilous. We need to protect ourselves from the extremes. Days are shorter leading to melancholy in spirit. The I Ching might describe situations of deception, loss and risk. This is truly a time to wade through.

Yet, the I Ching is a book that describes changes, cycles, relationships and phases. It never suggests that time is at a standstill or a completely lopsided station. The trigram, Kan, counsels that this is a time of concentration and toil. Why concentration? Picture yourself drawing up, storing and gathering inward your reserves. This requires work and toil. For when we toil at this time, one of danger and trouble, we can reap the benefits in the next phase when wood breaks out expansively.

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

Consider some of the transformations of water. In the Shao Yong linear sequence, Kan, number 6 is followed by number 7, Gen. From this sequence, we can see how the yang solid line rises to the top position. The quality of yang is breaking forward even through the stillness and mass of Gen or Mountain. Gen corresponds to late winter and is earth, a time of transition. This leads to gua number 4 which is Zhen or Thunder, a time when the wood element appears. The yang solid line is now at the bottom indicating a time of germination and growth. If all of the yao or lines in Kan are reversed this shows another

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transformation and connection. Li or Fire at number 3 is the complete opposite of Kan. It has a top and bottom solid yang line and a middle yin receptive line. In the post heaven Ba Gua sequence, Kan and Li occupy the polar opposite positions. The extremes form boundaries and help to define each other and all of the other seasons in between.



The following are other ideas associated with Kan:

- Blood, moon, endurance leading ultimately to success, middle son, the past, enveloping, penetrating, one ruler, two subjects and an auspicious rule, north, pig, the kidneys, heart disease, earaches and listening to gossip

Kan is only a phase. It is a beginning and shows how connections are made throughout the year. The images employed by the I Ching are a reflection of our life and world.

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