



A Practitioner's Perspective

Year of the Metal Ox

by Christian Saint-Pierre, R.Ac.

For over 5,000 years, some version of the Chinese calendar has been used to track and analyze the effects of time on climate, health and behaviour. In the millennia since then, many different methods of analysis have been developed.

Each method places emphasis on different aspects or effects of heavenly Qi (timing), however all methods have their foundation in the Ba Zi (eight characters): the four pairs of heavenly stems and earthly branches that make up the actual calendar date and are derived from the sexagenary stem-branch cycle. [*See the winter 2020 issue of Medicinal Roots Magazine for more info.*](#)

Ba Zi analysis can take on many forms and has many uses. Applied to the time of someone's birth, it is used in the form of a natal chart to determine his or her prenatal heavenly Qi. By comparing a person's natal chart with the calendrical Qi of current and future dates, it can be used to determine the auspiciousness or inauspiciousness of particular activities—such as buying a house, traveling, asking for a raise or getting married—at a particular date or time.

When used as an almanac, it can also give insight into climate and health. The Huang Di Nei Jing Su Wen, one of Chinese medicine's classic texts, goes into great detail about how the stem and branch of

a particular year affect what are called the Wu Yun Liu Qi (five movements and six Qi), which determine both the qualities of elemental and climactic Qi for the year as a whole, as well as the qualities of Qi from month to month and season to season.

February 12th, 2021 marks the beginning of the yin metal ox year. By examining the qualities of the yin metal stem, the qualities of the Ox related branch, and the almanac derived from the Wu Yun Liu Qi theories of the Nei Jing Su Wen; we can analyze and forecast the general effects of the yin metal ox on health, climate and behaviour.

THE OX BRANCH

The Ox is associated with Chou, the second branch of the twelve branches. Known for its perseverance and its ability to plow perfectly straight furrows in the fields, the ox is a conservative, orthodox, unimaginative, yet willful animal.

The main element associated with the Ox is yin earth, which is strongly associated with the central direction, the last 18 days of each season, and dampness. From a five-element perspective, it corresponds to the spleen, the muscles and flesh, digestive fluids, taste and touch. Behaviourally, it is

Year	辛 xin (yin metal) 丑 chou (ox)										
Months	Month Stem	Month Branch	5 element Host	5 element Guest	6 Qi Host	6 Qi Guest	Year Stem	Year Branch	Annual 5 Element Quality	Annual 6 Qi Quality	2020 6 Qi Influence
February 庚寅	+ metal	+ wood	Deficient Wood	Deficient Water	Wind	Wind	- metal	- earth	Deficient Water	Damp	Dry
March 辛卯	- metal	- wood			Fire						
April 壬辰	+ water	+ earth	Deficient Earth	Deficient Fire	Heat						
May 癸巳	- water	+ fire	Excess Fire	Excess Wood	Heat	Damp	- metal 金剋木	- earth 冲刑			
June 甲午	+ wood	- fire	Deficient Earth	Deficient Fire	Damp	Heat					
July 乙未	- wood	- earth			Excess Metal	Excess Earth	Dry				- metal 火剋金
August 丙申	丙辛合水 + water	+ metal	Deficient Earth	Deficient Fire	Cold		- metal	- earth			
September 丁酉	- fire	- metal			Deficient Water	Deficient Metal					Wind
October 戊戌	+ earth	+ earth	Deficient Earth	Deficient Fire	Damp		- metal	- earth			
November 己亥	- earth	+ water			Wind	Damp					
December 庚子	+ metal	- water	Deficient Earth	Deficient Fire	Wind		- metal	- earth			
January 2022 辛丑	- metal	- earth			Wind	Damp					
Legend											
木 = wood 火 = fire 土 = earth 金 = metal 水 = water				“+” = yang “-” = yin 合 (He) = stems or branches harmonizing to transform into an element 剋 (Ke) = the element of one stem restraining the element of another stem 冲 (Chong) = clash/conflict between branches 刑 (Xing) = punishment/oppression between branches							

TABLE: Provided by Christian Saint-Pierre

associated with nourishment, thought, stability, and forming alliances. Yin earth branch years bring all of these correspondences to the forefront.

People born in Ox years often value tradition. They make good labourers, bureaucrats and caretakers. An appropriate proverb for the Ox is “if it ain’t broken, don’t fix it: but if it’s broken, then just make it work as best you can”. Oxen are generally responsible and financially successful due to the profits of consistent hard work, but stubbornly shy away from innovation, creativity, and critical thinking.

THE YIN METAL STEM

Like the Yang metal stem of 2020, the Yin metal stem of 2021 is strongly associated with the West, autumn, and sunset, however instead of corresponding to dryness it corresponds to coolness.

Physiologically, yin metal corresponds to the lungs in Chinese medicine, especially the physical aspect of the lungs. When the Qi of yin metal is present, it reduces symptoms of lung deficiency such as shortness of breath, asthma, and the frequent catching of colds.

Behaviourally, Yin metal corresponds to precision, refinement, maturity and acquisition. Yin metal years bring all of these aspects to the forefront as well.

COMBINED EFFECTS

People born in metal ox years are said to be strong and reliable, but over-promising. They are calm, conservative, and prone to mild illnesses. When looking at the larger, socio-economic effects of the metal ox, we should not expect any major social progress this year, such as changes in policy or governance, other than a restoration and renewal of old policies. No matter what promises get made,

most governments and organizations will feel that it is not the time for innovation, preferring instead to restore the socio-economic status quo with alliances, agreements and other familiar strategies, even though they may be flawed. The global theme of 2021 will be “righting the ship” rather than “charting a new course”.

CLIMATE

When looking at climate, it is important to take the Wu Yun Liu Qi of the Nei Jing Su Wen into account. Whereas each season will have its regular climate, the metal ox year as a whole will be one of heat, drought, dust and smoke.

This is because the metal ox year is also known as a “dried up flow” year and is considered to be a year of both deficient water and excess dampness.

We should expect unseasonably warm, muggy weather from March to August, with even Northern regions being susceptible to drought, fires and violent dust storms, including tornadoes.

COMBINED HEALTH

Health is likewise best interpreted by combining the stem and branch qualities with Wu Yun Liu Qi theory.

The deficient water of the year puts constitutions that have weak water at greater risk of experiencing significant Kidney deficiency patterns, including back pain, fatigue, and asthma.

Furthermore, the excess dampness, coupled with the lack of cold water Qi, is likely to cause significant

amounts of damp heat or even phlegm, increasing the risk of metabolic and cardiovascular diseases, certain cancers, and mental illness, especially in strong earth constitutions.

COMBINED BEHAVIOUR

This year, the earth aspect of the ox branch will reduce the tendency of weak earth constitutions to feel unstable and accident prone, however strong earth constitutions may suffer from overthinking and a lack of motivation. The yin metal aspect will improve the maturity and attention to detail in weak metal constitutions, but it may trigger materialistic greed and stinginess in strong metal constitutions. In weak water constitutions, the deficient water quality is likely to cause symptoms of fearfulness, lack of willpower, lack of stamina, and lack of awareness. The excess earth and dampness, which controls water in the five-element cycle, will exacerbate these symptoms. In strong earth constitutions, the excess earth and unrestrained fire creates a high likelihood of damp heat and phlegm affecting the mind, leading to deluded thoughts, muddled ideas, and a lack of critical thinking.

The additional energy of the ox may cause the backfire effect - the stubborn refusal to acknowledge flawed thinking even when faced with evidence of the flaw.

EVENTFUL MONTHS

Each year, there are three months that, by virtue of their branches conflicting with the branch of the year, prove more difficult than the rest.

JUNE (HORSE MONTH)

June 2021 is known as a harm month. This month will be marked by delays and missed deadlines. "Too little, too late" is the theme of this month. People born in horse years may experience this effect all year round.

JULY (GOAT MONTH)

July 2021 is a critical month, because not only is there a double conflict between the branches representing ox year and the goat month, but there is also a conflict between the yin metal stem of the year and the yin wood stem of the month. This month will be marked by the conflict of ideas, with the conventional, stubborn thoughts of the ox's earth Qi being challenged by the unconventional yet just as stubborn thinking of the goat's earth Qi. Yin Metal attacking yin Wood suggests that this conflict may manifest externally, with those on the side of the ox suppressing those on the side of the goat. There is also a high likelihood of the all of the health patterns mentioned above becoming severe. People born in goat years may experience these effects throughout the whole year.

OCTOBER (DOG MONTH)

October 2021 is known as a bullying month. The earth Qi of the Ox will firmly assert itself against

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what it sees as the loud earth opinions of the dog. An exacerbation of damp symptoms and mental illness is likely in people with excessive earth constitutions. People born in dog years may feel this bullying effect until 2022.

HARMONIZING WITH THE METAL OX

Although there are general recommendations to harmonize and balance the Qi of the metal ox, each individual is unique.

For more specific, personalized strategies, it is recommended that you consult a Ba Zi practitioner or study Ba Zi with an experienced teacher.

GENERAL RECOMMENDATIONS

The principal balancing strategy is to amplify water and its correspondences through Yang Sheng Fa, Feng Shui and Chinese medicine.

- Eat naturally salty foods that have a neutral or cold temperature on a daily basis such as miso, millet and seaweed. Drink plenty of water.
- Amplify water Qi in your environment by adding water features, such as fountains and aquariums, to your home and office.
- Spend more time in the Northern parts of your home and more time in the shade. Do not overheat.
- Do not stay up too late. Get plenty of restful sleep.
- Practice mindfulness, awareness and stillness meditation.
- Strengthen the kidneys and bladder, clear heat, eliminate dampness and transform phlegm through Chinese medicine and QiGong.

By doing so, the innate risks posed by the Qi of the metal ox can be greatly minimized, allowing you to enjoy a much smoother, healthier and successful year.

No matter what, remember that when times are tough, they won't always be tough; and when times are good, they won't always be good. So be grateful for the good times, and be grateful that the tough times don't last.

Best of luck to you all in the metal ox year!

- Christian Saint-Pierre



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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Christian is a partner and Acupuncturist at Access Acupuncture in Halifax, Nova Scotia and teaches Ba Zi for The Academy of Acupuncture in San Diego. While studying acupuncture, Bazi, Feng Shui, and Qi Gong with the late Dr. Richard Tan, Christian began to develop and integrate classical and cutting-edge concepts into his practice, including chrono-acupuncture, I Ching and Shen therapy.

He has continued his deep interest and development of these areas, offering a truly holistic and well-rounded treatment approach to his patients, and is actively developing an I Ching Ba Zi Balance Acupuncture technique. Christian received his certification from the Academy of Classical Oriental Sciences in Nelson, British Columbia.

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