

## The Four Pillars of Destiny - An Introduction

Ancient Chinese devised a method of reading the life of a person from his birth Year, Month, Day, and Hour. This information is displayed in the form of four columns each consisting of two characters. Each column is called a Pillar. The four pillars together will contain eight characters. This method of Life Reading is called "*The Four Pillars of Destiny*" or simply "*The Eight Characters*".

Ancient Chinese used the combinations of two sets of words to denote time. A year is represented by two words. So is a month, a day or an hour.

The first set of words is the set of the "*Ten Heavenly Stems*". They are the yin and yang components of the Five Elements: **Yang Wood**, **Yin Wood**, **Yang Fire**, **Yin Fire**, **Yang Earth**, **Yin Earth**, **Yang Metal**, **Yin Metal**, **Yang Water**, **Yin Water**.

The second set of words is the set of the "*Twelve Earthly Branches*". They are more popularly represented by the twelve animals of the Zodiac: **Rat**, **Ox**, **Tiger**, **Rabbit**, **Dragon**, **Snake**, **Horse**, **Goat**, **Monkey**, **Rooster**, **Dog**, **Pig**.

In the beginning, the Year Branch was used to represent the person. This is the animal sign of the person. Even today, when people talk about Chinese Astrology, they talk about your animal sign and describe your character according to the behavior of the animal. This is the primitive level of Chinese Astrology.

In the Song Dynasty (960-1279 AD), Xu Zi Ping made a revolutionary improvement on this method of reading lives. He used the Day Stem to represent the person. His work was collected in the book [Yuan Hai Zi Ping] compiled by Xu Xing.

### Solar Calendar

To plot the four pillars, most people correctly use the Solar Calendar. Some incorrectly use the Lunar Calendar. To support what I am saying, refer to a page of the book [Yuan Hai Zi Ping].

歲在 屠羊 亥門 小命 主  
 如生 初一日 午時 正  
 立春 若實 作正 時  
 月若 實時 未正 節  
 年十 二月 節上 節  
 推命 正月 初一 日  
 如正 月時 初上 一  
 日刻 子時 初上 一  
 四子 刻時 初上 一  
 年子 刻時 初上 一  
 下子 刻時 初上 一  
 正子 刻時 初上 一  
 神子 刻時 初上 一  
 子時 刻時 初上 一  
 小運 刻時 初上 一  
 三陽 刻時 初上 一  
 女從 刻時 初上 一  
 一從 刻時 初上 一  
 順年 刻時 初上 一  
 花甲 刻時 初上 一  
 數頭 刻時 初上 一

壬生人 羊刀在子 午飛 癸生人 羊刀在丑 未飛  
 羊刀在子 午飛 癸生人 羊刀在丑 未飛  
 論起大運法  
 凡起大運俱從所生之日。男陰女順行數至未來節。陽女陰男逆行數已過去節俱  
 折除三日。以為一歲。陽男陰女順運。假如甲子年甲己之年。丙作首。正月建丙寅。初  
 一日立春後。一日生男順數。至二月節驚蟄。且得三十日起。十歲達順行丁卯。如乙丑  
 年乙庚之歲。戊為頭。正月起。戊寅初。立春十八日生女。順數至二月驚蟄節止。得四  
 三十二日起。四歲運順行己卯。餘皆做此。陰男陽女逆運。假如乙丑年乙庚之歲。戊  
 為頭。正月起。戊寅初。一日立春後。十五日生男。逆數初。立春節止。得五三十五日起  
 五歲運逆行丁丑。如甲子年甲己之年。丙作首。正月丙寅初。立春後。十日生女。逆數  
 至初一日立春。小得九日。二三單九日起。三歲運逆行乙丑。餘皆做此。若多一日。減一  
 日。少一日。增一日。  
 輪行小運法  
 凡小運不問陰陽二命。男一命起丙寅。二歲丁卯。順行截法。十歲丙子。二十一歲丙戌。周  
 而復始。女一歲起壬申。二歲辛未。逆行截法。二歲壬申。十一歲壬戌。二十一歲壬子。周而  
 復始。

On top of the page, there is an annotation. It says, "If one is born on the first day of the first month at noon, and if the "Coming of Spring" is in the Mao (Rabbit) Hour, then he is born in the first month of the year. If he is born in the Yin (Tiger) Hour, then it is before the "Coming of Spring", and he is considered born in the previous year."

It is obvious that the year is supposed to begin on the "Coming of Spring" at the precise moment. A Lunar Year does not begin on the "Coming of Spring". Only the Solar Year begins on the "Coming of Spring". It is solid proof that the Solar Calendar is referred to. If you are not using the Solar Calendar, then it is **not** Zi Ping Ba Zi. If you are not using the "Coming of Spring" as the beginning of the year, then it is not Zi Ping Ba Zi.

## The Zi (Rat) Hour

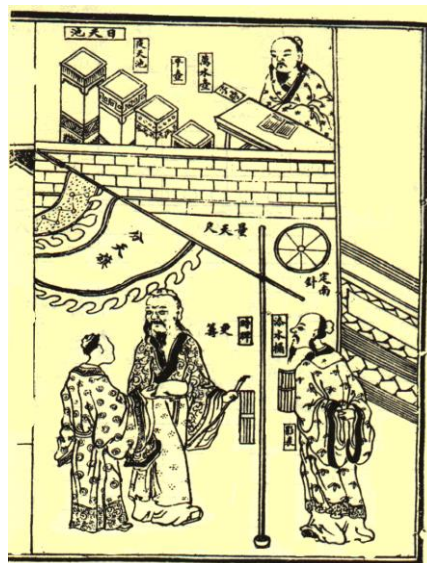
The Zi (Rat) Hour is from 11:00 p.m. to 1:00 a.m. It seems that the day begins at 11:00 p.m. However, please refer to the page from [Yuan Hai Zi Ping]. The annotation on top of the page says, "If one is born on the first day of the first month of a year during the upper four quarters of the Zi (Rat) Hour, then he is considered born on the previous day (the last day of the previous year). If he is born in the lower four quarters of the Zi (Rat) Hour, then he is considered born on the first day of the year. This shows that Xu Zi Ping was actually considering the day to begin at Twelve Midnight.

It is also obvious that Xu Zi Ping considered "Coming of Spring" as the beginning of a year. Some astrologers advocate that Winter Solstice is to be considered the beginning of a year. I explain why this is not true in my Four Pillars Correspondence Course. It is too complicated to elaborate here.

## Adjustment to Beijing Time?

Some astrologers convert the birth time of a person born in the West to Beijing Time before plotting the four pillars. The reason is that the Four Pillars of Destiny was invented in China and is true only with reference to Beijing Time. Some others say that in those days, Beijing was not the Capital of China and they teach people to convert to Loyang Time. All this is unfounded.

In the old days, the time was recorded locally by the length of the Sun's shadow. At night the water level in a graduated cylinder with water dripping into it at a regular rate was observed and the hour was read. This means that in the old days, local time was used in life reading. Various places in China have very different longitudes. There was no such thing as converting to Loyang Time or Beijing Time in the old days. Why must there be conversion now?



Instruments used in Chinese Astrology in the old days. (From [Yuan Hai Zi Ping])

In short, in Zi Ping Four Pillars, we have to observe the following rules:

1. The Year Pillar changes at precisely the moment of the "Coming of Spring" which is usually on the 4th February. The precise moment must be noted.
2. The Month Pillar changes at precisely the moment of the respective Jie (Seasonal Mark) of the month.
3. The Day Pillar changes at midnight.
4. Local standard time is to be used.

The Four Pillars of Destiny is a very powerful and accurate method to read one's life. It has a positive aspect. It does not say that your destiny cannot be changed. In fact, it deals with how to live your life to attain the best of life. To know how to keep your life under control, learn this art. You can also help others when they are at crossroads.

### **Plotting the Four Pillars**

To plot the four pillars, we can use what is known as a Ten Thousand Year Calendar. We can use mathematical formulas or we can even use a computer program. I advise my students to learn how to plot the four pillars from scratch to have a better understanding how the four pillars are constructed. The online calculator will serve the purpose to check your results.

In constructing the software, I have taken into account the desirable degree of accuracy. Since it is impossible to have an exact birth time, it is justified to assume that a solar year to be approximately 365.25 days, one day to be approximately 24 hours (although the actual time for a complete rotation of the earth about its axis varies from day to day).

Adjustment between the longitude of the birth place and that of the time zone is necessary. The calculator has precisely this valuable feature. Notice that we are using true local time and not Beijing Time or Loyang Time. The reasoning that we have to convert the time to China Time because the Four Pillars was used in China is just absurd.

For the Luck Pillars, we have corrected the beginning age at each Luck Period to two decimal places. If you multiply the number after the decimal by 360, you will get approximately the day when luck changes. This is demanded by some astrologers. Some others will round up the number by the rule of 0.5. It is up to you how to handle this.

The online calculator can be found at:

[Four Pillars Chart Calculator](#)



This article was published in Master Joseph's Yu website:

<https://www.astro-fengshui.com>

Check other articles and find valuable knowledge in the courses and seminars in our Feng Shui Research Center! Welcome and enjoy!

**Joseph Yu B.Sc. 余若愚** was born during the second world war in a small village in South China. He spent his childhood as a country boy and did not receive any formal education until he came to Hong Kong at the age of eleven. A lot of people suggest to him that he should create a story of learning Astrology and Feng Shui in early childhood from a monk as do many a famous Feng Shui Master. He prefers to tell the truth.

Yu studied Mathematics and Physics in the University of Hong Kong in the early 1960's. He abhorred all kinds of superstition and vowed to destroy such absurd beliefs of ignorant people. He then frequented libraries, trying to find fault with Astrology and Feng Shui from ancient books. The deeper he went into the subject, the more excited he became about the rich legacy of ancient Chinese culture.

Whether or not to become a professional astrologer and geomancer or continue in the fields of mathematics and physics, became a constant dilemma. Astrology and Feng Shui have been viewed as superstition by their skeptics. Astrologers and Feng Shui masters have been linked with fraud for centuries.

Someone wrote in his book, "If more knowledgeable men provide true Astrology and Feng Shui services, the ignorant and fake 'professionals' will vanish." Sharing the same view, Yu decided to provide useful services and correspondence courses at an affordable price.

While Joseph Yu was a mathematics teacher after his graduation, he was lucky to have as his neighbor one old Feng Shui master. This old master was very kind to disclose a lot of secrets of the five arts to him even though he was not one of the old master's apprentices.

In one Chinese New Year party at the old master's home, the master said to his disciples, "This young man, though not officially under my care, has learned more than most of you because he has a logical mind and dares to argue with me on various issues."

The old master passed away a few months later. Joseph Yu did not feel comfortable in the company of the disciples of this good master. He is grateful, but circumstances make it impossible to express his gratitude towards the master who passed on to him a lot of invaluable knowledge.