



Earth energies and the I ching of chess

by Mano Warren

When Paul and Broadhurst Hamish Miller were dowsing the Michael ley or Earth-dragon energy line near Glastonbury, the channel had been particularly wide when they were mapping it in the town of Shepton Mallet. Near the Parish Church there, the channel was twenty two paces wide and, with careful dowsing, they discovered that it was actually made up of 280 different bands which each had 64 streams of energy within it. Presumably, this configuration of 280 x 64 streams of energy was true for the Mary line as well.

My Earth Energy research into the dragon, serpent and snake symbolism in many ancient traditions had already led me to conclude that the electromagnetic energies in Ley Lines are directly related to the subtle powers which are often called the four Elements (Earth, Water, Fire and Air) or Winds in the European traditions. A study of Mediaeval Alchemy, Astrology and Jungian Psychotherapy had then led me to conclude that the powers or qualities of the four Elements are a kind of Lost Chord of understanding which connects the energies of the Earth with the human psyche, an ancient knowledge which was sometimes called the Mysteries of the Dark Goddess, a knowledge which, over several hundreds of years, Christianity managed to persecute more or less out of existence.

With this background, the numerology of the number of bands and streams of energy in the Michael and Mary ley lines was more than a little intriguing. Could they be related to the thousands of potential combinations, interactions and permutations of the Elemental energies which can occur within the human psyche and need to be mastered during the spiritual journey?

There seemed to be a qualitative, expressive or a behavioural link between the of the four Elemental powers and the various personality traits which are described in the systems shown in the table above. The Buddhist 8-fold path was particularly interesting because it suggested that each Element actually had two related functions within the psyche, an inner, reflective quality and an outer, more expressive function which can be related to the Jungian personality types of Introvert and Extrovert and the Chinese concepts of Yin and Yang. With this insight, it made sense to look for ancient number systems which are based on the numerology of eight because, in an 8

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X 8 grid, this gives the number 64 and this was the number of streams of energy within each of the 280 different channels. With this clue, I decided to look at the symbolism of 8 X 8 grids to see what I could discover.

The numerology of 64 in 8 X 8 grids is fundamental to the Chinese method of divination known as the I Ching or 'The Book of Changes'. It is also clearly present in the lay out of the chequered board on which Chess, 'the Royal Game of Life', is played. In my research, I was focused on looking for the spiritual purposes which lay behind the ways that these two systems had developed to what might be revealed about the interaction of the powers of the four Elements in the human psyche. Remarkably, both the I Ching and Chess have stood the test of time which suggests that they must be reflecting some of the fundamental truths about the archetypal energetic and behavioural dynamics within the human psyche.

The I Ching is a system of spiritual divination, created to be a method of connecting with information which usually belongs to the realms of awareness which are not usually fully conscious. The ancient Chinese culture had a particular concern with the concept of the divine or auspicious moment, which, if known, could be used to gauge the best time for making an action. The idea was that there was could be a potentially good or beneficial time to do something from the spiritual point of view together with the other possibility that there could also be a bad or potentially disastrous timing which, if predicted, might be avoided. The casting of the oracle was therefore used to see if the proposed action had the 'backing of the gods' or not.

The earliest recorded methods of divination in ancient China involved heating animal bones or tortoise shells in fire and it seems that the I Ching gradually evolved from this technique over many hundreds of years. If animal bones or tortoise shells are heated in a fire, they crack or fracture. This creates patterns of lines which can then be interpreted in terms of beneficial, auspicious or potentially negative influences. As this ancient system of interpreting the different kinds of cracks and lines developed, it was said to have inspired the system of writing which later became the ideogram characters of the Chinese language which we are familiar with today.

With this method of divination, physical Elemental fire is interacting directly with bones or shells which are symbolic representations of 'animated' aspects of the Earth Element. The Fire Element is traditionally understood as a spiritual power which mediates or connects the 'fire' of physical energy and vitality with the 'fire' of creative action or initiative. This means that the interaction of physical fire with a bone can be then understood as a way of creating an energetic link, an 'As Above, So Below' connection, between spiritual Fire and Earth, material existence, symbolised by the bone. A physical record of the actual dynamic of this connection would then be expressed symbolically by the lines which had been created in the bone by the action of the fire and the meaning of this pattern of cracks and fractures could be interpreted by referencing the ideograms and their known meanings.

In the early stages of its development, it seems likely that the I Ching was a kind of static system of divination in the sense that the energetic feedback or message from the spiritual realms was directly related to the time of putting the bones or shells into the fire but there wasn't a clear way of referencing the future possibilities of the potential action. In about 1000 BCE, a way of using yarrow stalks to cast the oracle

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was developed and this created a more sophisticated method of receiving spiritual feedback. It is thought that this change to using yarrow sticks coincided with the emergence of the 'changing lines', the current system of trigrams and hexagrams which created the highly sophisticated version of the I Ching, 'The Book of Changes', which is still in use today.

Each of the eight trigrams units in the I Ching is a set of three lines which describes or expresses a fundamental aspect of Tai Chi, Universal Substance. The trigrams can also be compared with the 'categories of human experience' which relate to the eight kinds of virtuous behaviour which come from the Buddhist tradition. Each line in a trigram can be either yin or yang, feminine or masculine, or 'changing' yin or yang, yin which will move to yang or yang which will move to yin. When these yin and yang lines are combined together in groups of three in the trigrams, they represent qualities of creativity which can also be compared with the triad aspects of the Goddess, Virgin, Mother and Crone, and the triple Indian gods, Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva, the 'Creator', the 'Preserver' and the 'Destroyer'.

The idea of movement and transformation, the way that one combination of masculine and feminine creative energies can change into another through the agent of time, is fundamental to both Indian and Chinese philosophy. In China, the yin/yang symbol most succinctly expresses this eternal dynamic, the constant exchange of energies between the masculine and feminine forces in the complex processes of creative evolution.

When the eight trigrams units are paired up together to make hexagrams of six lines, a set of sixty-four energy symbols are created from the various combinations of yin, yang and changing lines. The binary arrangement of the 64 hexagrams into the 8 X 8 Fu Xi Square is attributed to the philosopher Shao Yung (1011 – 1077 AD) who was said to have understood that the universal principle behind the I Ching and the esoteric meaning of the numerical progression of the lines of the hexagrams. The set of 64 hexagrams then becomes a way of symbolising all the possible yin/yang trigram permutations, the types of 'energy package' or potential actions of Tai Chi, Universal Substance. These creative potentials portray all the sixty-four possible dynamics between the feminine and masculine powers, yin and yang and 'changing yin and yang', expressed in a way which also indicates how these configurations can change as one hexagram or energy type evolves, develops or moves into another one.

Each hexagram can be seen as a symbolic pattern which represents the combination of the masculine and feminine influences in the current time before they move into the new configuration which will emerge at some point in the future. When the yarrow stalks are thrown or cast, the changing lines in the resulting hexagram then offers a energetic picture of the dynamics between the masculine and feminine Elemental energies in the current situation as well as an indication of how this energy pattern is going to evolve, change or develop.

This is an important idea because it offers a way of observing and understanding how the masculine and feminine energies behave within an individual personality. As internal moods shift and external influences change, the I Ching hexagrams can be used to give personal feedback of how one type or quality of energy can move, disintegrate and then transform into another outlook or course of action. This also

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strengthens the concept of human life and consciousness being a part of the processes of change and growth which are linked with celestial or divine intent as well as the Earth's natural, seasonal cycles of change – ideas which, in the West, became associated with the movements and influences of the planets in Astrology.

Each of the four Elemental powers has a masculine or feminine polarity so, when they are paired up together as masculine and feminine principles, their energies can be equated with Chinese concept of yang and yin. The Fu Xi Square can then be seen as a pictorial representation of the 64 permutations of energy configuration which can occur between the qualities or expressions of the four Elements in the personality. There is also the added implication that there is something numerically fundamental about this particular number of different energetic combinations in terms of the human experience. It seemed that my theory about the behavioural and psychological potentials of the numerous combinations of Elemental energies in the Michael and Mary Earth-dragon lines could have some validity. But what might the history of Chess reveal about ancient understandings of the four Elemental powers and their potential influences on human behaviour and spiritual consciousness?

The game of Chess changed many times as it evolved over the centuries but I was not interested in too many historical details about the specific rules or details. Instead, I was looking for the energetic patterns or systems which underpin the structure of the game to see if these might concur with the symbolic information which had come from the I Ching and the other ancient systems of spiritual philosophy.

It seems to be generally agreed [3] that early versions of a Chess-like game emerged in India in about 600AD. This game was called Chaturanga, a Sanskrit word which translates as 'four limbed' or 'four parts', terms which can be related to the various attributes of Shiva, one of the primary gods in the Indian tradition. Shiva is described as having four arms, four faces and three eyes, a description which could easily relate to the eight paired qualities of the four Elements and the way that they combine with the three 'triad' powers of creativity which are equivalent to the three Aspects of the Goddess, Virgin, Mother and Crone.

The structure of the game of Chaturanga was focused on four players who each had an 'army' of ten pieces which were moved on a board in a similar way to modern Chess. Each army of pieces was divided into four divisions of five foot soldiers, three cavalry, one chariot and one elephant. Another version of the game had an army of eight pieces, four infantry or pawns, one boatman in a ship, one horse rider or knight, one elephant (which probably was the origin of the rook or castle of today) and one rajah or king.

The 'numerology scanner' in my mind was immediately alerted. The four-fold symbolism in the meaning of the name Chaturanga and the way that the game was played with four players, suggested the idea of there being four different types of power or energy which can play or interact with each other. The link with the god, Shiva, also suggested the four Elemental powers which can oppose and re-combine as they come together to form a particular creative outcome or result.

Each of the four Elemental powers has an outer, active, extrovert expression and an inner, more subjective, introverted, counterpart in the personality. This can be seen

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with the behavioural qualities of the words which describe the Buddhist eight-fold path. The two behavioural qualities of the Fire Element, for example, are represented by the expressions, 'Right Action' and 'Right Concentration'. 'Right Action' is clearly the outward, extrovert or yang expression of the Fire Element. 'Right Concentration' is a way of describing the inner, subjective, yin or introverted quality which is also needed in order to make the outward action purposefully effective rather than a rash, random or pointless event.

The names of the ten or eight types of Chess pieces were obviously derived from the different sorts classes or grades of fighting skills in armies and this kind of hierarchical structure continues in a similar form in the modern game. Ten-fold systems could be seen as highlighting the process of developing the various levels of the skills of the five senses which have both an outer and an inner function, one which is related to the process of taking or initiating actions and the other, having the more introspective quality of assessing or evaluating the outcome of the action. It is this process of taking an action and then evaluating or judging its outcome or result which is fundamental to the actual process of learning from the Experience of Life on both practical and spiritual levels.

The games which have eight-fold systems or sets of Chess pieces were symbolically highlighting the learning of the numerous skills which are needed for successful warfare together with the ways that these different types of skill are linked with learning how to develop the eight different types of abilities and behaviours which are associated with the qualities and powers of the four Elements. The decision to shrike an enemy in combat, to take an action to try and kill him, will be much more effective if the action is made with an inner quality of concentration or purpose.

It seems as though the game of Chaturanga probably evolved from an even earlier game which was called Ashtapada, a word which has been variously translated as 'spider' or, 'a legendary being with eight legs'. Symbols of spiders and their webs have been used in many traditions as a way of describing or portraying the invisible, non-physical dynamics of Universal Energy or Chi. This includes the energetic dynamics of the spiritual aspects of the four Elements which constantly connect and link all life forms together as reflected in the Mercurial axiom of 'As above, So below'. In the China this Universal Energy web or field is called the Tao, in ancient Egypt it was Maat and in the Celtic tradition it was called the web or weave of the Wyrd. Again, with the symbolism of the spider which has eight legs, there is another symbolic reference to the eight types of Elemental skills or empowerments which weave or combine within human consciousness to create the learning potential of possible actions.

Ashtapada was played on a wooden board which was marked out into the familiar 8 x 8 set of squares like modern chess but the squares were not chequered with the black/white or red/white colouring which appeared later. In Ashtapada, each player moved their different pieces according to the number which appeared after they had rolled a dice. This meant that there was a non-controllable aspect to the game, a chance factor which energetically reflected the divine workings of the Universal Energy Field which we often call luck or fate. This way of moving the different pieces in response to the rolling of the dice was a very important aspect of the game but it

was later lost for religious reasons when games played with dice became regarded as a form of gambling and were subsequently outlawed.

Chess, as we now understand it, began to evolve when aspects of Chaturanga and Ashtapada were merged together. This initially created a game in which four players used a board with the 8 x 8 configuration of 64 squares. Each of the players started from one of the four corners of the board and they advanced their moves by rolling a dice. The earliest written description of this type of game [4] dates from roughly 300 to 600AD. The pieces which made up the four 'armies' were coloured as sets which were either black, red, green or yellow, colours which are traditionally associated with the four Elemental powers, especially in the ancient traditions of Tibet and northern India.

The writings explain how the players who sat opposite each other were loosely allied together as a pair against the other two players. This detail supports the idea that the four players, with their own coloured armies of pieces, were each representing one of the powers of the four Elements. As the players allied their armies of coloured pieces across the board in their masculine and feminine Elemental pairings, the outcome of their game would have been symbolic of four actor-players interacting and playing out their parts in a representation of the 'game of life'.

In this version of Chess, players made their moves in turn by rolling an oblong dice which had different numbers along its long sides. This created a system which determined which type of piece could be moved according to the number which appeared on the top of the dice. So, as each player rolled the dice in turn, the type of piece which could be moved was chosen by fate or chance, a way of introducing the divine or spiritual aspect to the game. The outcome of the game would then be partly a function of luck or fate and partly a function of the players' logical intelligence and tactical skills.

In her book 'An Illustrated Encyclopaedia of Traditional Symbols', J.C. Cooper tells that Chess was sometimes called 'the Royal Game of Life'. She also adds other details which clearly relate the structure of the game with the spiritual outlook of the Hindu religion which is still such a fundamental part of Indian understanding. The 8 x 8 grid of sixty four squares was also a representation of a mandala configuration which was associated with the god Shiva in his 'transforming' aspect. This mandala of light and dark squares represented the universal or cosmic energies in all the possible ways that these forces can operate together, the black/white or red/white coloration signifying, like the Chinese yin and yang, the polarity of the opposing forces of masculine and feminine duality as they are play out in the creative processes of manifestation which are mirrored by the outcome of the game.

Later on in the evolution of the game, when the movement of the pieces in accordance with the outcome of rolling a dice was lost, the intellectual aspects of human consciousness became emphasised. In modern Chess, the players decide to move their pieces by using the rational powers of logical choice and every move sets in motion another potential series of moves which are linked together by further sequences of cause and effect. This is a surprisingly accurate description of many life situations, especially from the perspective of the logical frameworks of the ego. When the dice rolling aspect of Chess was lost, the spiritual factor of chance or fate was diminished

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in the shift towards the development of the intellectual and rational aspects of the game, a rather poignant mirror of the collective shift in human consciousness over the last two thousand years or so.

As Chess evolved further, the number of players was reduced to two who played opposing each other. The rich complexity of the four Elemental energies interacting together was lost as the dynamic became simplified to the two opposing, masculine and feminine powers but other aspects of the game became more prominent instead. The individual pieces which made up each players 'army' went through many adaptations and changes. The idea of social position and hierarchy, that there are grades of learning and increasing levels of power and skill in the Royal Game of Life, became much more important. This was represented by classes of pieces which have differential powers and abilities in their possible movements and actions in relationship to one another. In some versions of the game, pieces with 'lowly' or relatively powerless 'game-plans' such as the pawns, would start off with limited abilities. In certain circumstances and with the right sequence of moves, they could 'earn' higher and more effective powers which resulted in the ability to climb up the hierarchical, power-structure ladder within the game.

A popular, German, thirteenth century version of the game was called Courier Chess. Each player had nine different pieces, a king, queen, sage, bishop, knight, rook, courier, jester and a pawn. Pawns could be promoted in stages up to the eighth rank but, before being promoted further, they had to 'leap' backwards to the sixth, then the fourth and the second ranks before moving up again to become more or less equivalent to a queen. In this version of the game, the numerology highlights a kind of hierarchical system which has nine different types of empowerment which can be related to the creative powers of the 'triad trinity', on the three octaves of being, the elixir fields of the Taoist tradition.

This way of grading the pieces into ranks with the lowest pawn being progressively able, with persistence and perseverance, to 'make the grade' and get almost to the top, made me think of the Alchemical concept of there being many levels to the spiritual journey which need to be achieved in stages and, when attained, brought a increasing sense of empowerment, expertise and mastery of both the spiritual and physical aspects of life.

It seemed that the spiritual aspects of life were certainly being represented as Chess evolved over many hundreds of years. This was partly as the powers or qualities of the four Elements and partly with the divine aspect of chance which was created by the throwing or rolling of the dice. When these aspects were lost or diminished, it became necessary to weave other ways of representing the spiritual dimensions of life into the game. This included pieces which have an obvious spiritual reference such as the bishops as well as the idea that the lowliest could make it to the top by developing various 'virtues' or talents which included the disciplines of persistence and perseverance as well as logical, deductive or tactical intelligence.

The history of the I Ching and Chess seemed to confirm my hunch that the complex energetic dynamics which connect the four Elemental powers with human consciousness, behaviour and creativity had been understood in both the Chinese and Indian cultures. In a sense, the I Ching and the early versions of Chess could be

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understood as spiritual tools which create an interactive mechanism of relating the powers of 'Above' with the powers of 'Below', the channel of communication and the method of carrying the message between the realms, a concept which is equivalent to Mercury's role in Alchemy. The number sixty four appeared to have fundamental role in this interaction because it provides the range of the combinations of the four Elemental powers and the possible ways that they can linked together in creative actions, something which had been recognised as being important in both the Indian and Chinese traditions.

With this information, I then decided to take another look at the 280 channels of energy found in the St. Michael dragon-line. If 64 was the number of possible energetic permutations and combinations of the ways that the powers or qualities of the four Elements could combine together, why were there 280 channels each having 64 bands? I decided to follow the idea behind the hierarchical structure of the pieces in Chess, particularly the idea of the pawns which would start off at the lowest level but, in certain circumstances, have the power to move up the grades. This seemed to reflect the symbolism of the Tree of Life which suggests that the backbone or trunk of the human body is like a ladder or pillar of subtle energy which has discrete stages or grades between the bottom and the top.

Paul Broadhurst and Hamish Miller dowsed 280 different channels of energy in the Michael line, the Earth-dragon line which carries both masculine Elemental polarities, Fire and Air. I assumed that half, 140, of these channels would belong to the Fire Element and the other 140 to the Air Element. If 140 is divided by 7, the number of the seven major Chakras, (subtle energy centres) of the human body, this would mean that there were 20 different potential levels of skill to be learnt for each of the Chakras. 20 is divisible by both 4, the Four Elemental qualities, and 5, the five senses. Is there an aspect of learning, a type of behavioural action, skill or ability, which links each Elemental power with one of the five senses? Each of these 20 types of skill would then have be mastered for each of the seven Chakras. It's no wonder that we need so many lifetimes to achieve complete spiritual mastery!

