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THE ASTRONOMICAL CHAPTERS OF
THE CHIN SHU

WITH AMENDMENTS

FULL TRANSLATION AND ANNOTATIONS

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Many of the errors in the text may be traced to misprints or wrong transcriptions. The most common ones appear among the dates. Fortunately these can be generally detected by textual comparison and through calculations. They usually occur in the following circumstances:-

- (a) The two 'celestial stems' (t'ien kan) 'i⁴, and 'chi⁵, are confused for each other. A day-cycle denoted by the combination of 'i' with one of the 'terrestrial branches' (ti cbih) precedes all coming day-cycles formed by combining 'chi' with the same 'terrestrial branch' by $(60n + 24)$ days, where n takes the values 0, 1, 2, 3, etc. On the other hand, a day-cycle formed by combining 'chi' with any of the possible 'terrestrial branches' precedes all coming days formed by combining 'i' with the same 'terrestrial branch' by $(60n + 36)$ days.

The day-cycles involved are:- i-ch'ou and chi-ch'ou,

i-bai and chi-hai,

i-yu and chi-yu,

i-sū and chi-sū, and

i-mao and chi-mao.

- (b) The 'terrestrial branches' 'tsū⁶, and 'wu⁷, are confused. A day-cycle formed by the combination of a 'celestial stem' with the former differs from that formed by combining the same 'celestial stem' with the latter by $(60n + 30)$ days, where n takes the values 0, 1, 2, 3, etc.

The day-cycles involved are:- chia-tzū and chia-wu,

ping-tzū and ping-wu,

wu-tzū and wu-wu,

kêng-tzū and kêng-wu, and

jên-tzū and jên-wu.

1. 晉書辭注

2. 宋書

3. 沈約

4. 乙

5. 己

6. 子

7. 午

(c) The 'terrestrial branches' 'wu'¹ and 'wei'² are easily confused.

This can be easily detected from the combination itself, since they cannot combine with the same 'celestial stems'.

To explain the above it has to be mentioned that the Chinese employed a 60-year cycle for the years and a 60-day cycle for the days (instead of the 7-day cycle of our modern calendar). Both the cycles are formed by the same 60 different possible combinations of a series of ten symbols, the 'celestial stems' (t'ien kan³), with another series of twelve symbols, the terrestrial branches' (ti chih⁴). By taking the symbols in each series one at a time in a cyclic order sixty different possible combinations are derived. The two series and the sexagesimal cycles are shown below:-

t'ien kan chia⁵, i⁶, ping⁷, ting⁸, wu⁹, chi¹⁰, k'eng¹¹, hsin¹², j'ên¹³,
kuei¹⁴.
ti chih tsü¹⁵, oh'ou¹⁶, yin¹⁷, mao¹⁸, ch'ên¹⁹, ssu²⁰, wu²¹, wei²²,
shên²³, yu²⁴, hsü²⁵, hai²⁶.

the sexagesimal cycle

1. chia-t'ü	11. ohia-hsü	21. ohia-shên
2. i-ch'ou	12. i-hai	22. i-yu
3. ping-yin	13. ping-tzü	23. ping-hsü
4. ting-mao	14. ting-oh'ou	24. ting-hai
5. wu-ch'ên	15. wu-yin	25. wu-tzü
6. chi-ssü	16. ohí-mao	26. chí-ch'ou
7. k'eng-wu	17. k'eng-oh'ên	27. k'eng-yin
8. hsin-wei	18. hsin-ssü	28. hsin-mao
9. j'ên-shên	19. j'ên-wu	29. j'ên-ch'ên
10. kuei-yu	20. kuei-wei	30. kuei-ssü

31. chia-wu	41. ohia-oh'ên	51. ohia-yin
32. i-wei	42. i-ssü	52. i-mao
33. ping-shên	43. ping-wu	53. ping-oh'ên
34. ting-yu	44. ting-wei	54. ting-ssü
35. wu-hsü	45. wu-shên	55. wu-wu
36. ohí-hai	46. ohí-yu	56. ohí-wei
37. k'eng-tzü	47. k'eng-hsü	57. k'eng-shên
38. hsin-ch'ou	48. hsin-hai	58. hsin-yu
39. j'ên-yin	49. j'ên-tzü	59. j'ên-hsü
40. kuei-mao	50. kuei-oh'ou	60. kuei-hai

1. 午	2. 未	3. 天干	4. 地支
5. 甲	6. 乙	7. 丙	8. 丁
9. 戊	10. 己	11. 庚	12. 辛
13. 壬	14. 癸	15. 子	16. 丑
17. 寅	18. 卯	19. 辰	20. 巳
21. 午	22. 未	23. 申	24. 酉
25. 戌	26. 亥		