

***Guishen*: the Souls and Spirits**

The World of Change is not only populated by humans, but by various types of souls, the ghosts and spirits or *guishen*. “Between heaven and earth there is no place the *guishen* do not exist.” These spirits of heaven and earth are of many kinds and their identities are constantly changing like the shifting figures in dream, but they were all once souls and partake of the soul’s numinous quality, *ling*, a direct expression of the Way.

Varieties of Souls and Spirits

The varieties of *guishen* include the Sun Mother and Moon Mother, the bird-headed Fang or Directions, Mountain and River, Directors of Destinies, Lords of the Hearth, First Ancestors, heroes such as Yu the Great, Yi the Archer and Tang the Completer, the Horse Ancestor and a series of other totem or omen animals, a variety of demons and angry souls, the High Lord and his court in the Dipper, the Earth Lord at the Earth Altar, the Royal Ancestors and the Moon Goddesses. The boundaries between these spirits are permeable, as is the boundary between spirit and human.

These spirits are loosely divided into two types or appearances.

***Shen* are bright spirits**, spirits that vivify and inspire the heart, the spirits of Heaven that draw out and animate the Myriad Beings. They are stars, mountains and rivers. They make things appear and unfold. They inspire awe and wonder; cut across boundaries, combine categories, and “cannot be comprehended by the yin and the yang.” The *Shen* change things; their main characteristic is transformation.

***Gui*, souls or ghosts**, are darker spirits or yin-fixations who live in the tomb and the earth, representing the world of the dead. They are protectors, but

can be angered or offended. When they are mistreated or not offered no sustenance, they can turn into furies, plagues, haunting spirits of vengeance and hungry ghosts and demons (*li*). These angry *Gui* usually manifest as specific individuals who are trapped by their passions between the world of the living and the world of the dead (Figure 38).

Zong or Ancestors partake of both categories, living in the tomb and, at the same, time sitting at the court of the High Lord. They bestow blessings and act as intermediaries to heaven and all of the powerful *shen*. The ancestors are animating spirits, ensuring a continuous flow of blessings from the invisible world. The “worship” of ancestors, giving them the recognition they need in order to exercise their power, is an image of a creative relation to the figures of the psyche.