

# ***Tales of the Tiger***

## **Opening the Sacred Sickness Pathways**

Stephen Karcher, Ph.D.

In the world of Change, the Tiger is considered the lord or King of the Animal Powers and Body Energies. He presides over the North and its Hidden Wind, a sudden and focused yang energy hidden within the dark waters under the earth that springs out to defend against and devour corrupted yin-fixations in order to open and secure Ritual Space. These corrupted yin-fixations, demons or demoniacs, are called *chou*:

**Chou, demon, demoniac** is a symbol of corrupted yin made up of the graphs for soul and fermented liquor. It describes a malignant genius, something physically and morally deformed, vile, drunken, hideous, shameful, filthy, shady and detestable – all that is unclean. Its oldest meanings include making a human sacrifice and a bad omen indicating that something is vicious, dishonest, with evil intentions. It means to hate or detest, being irritated, excitable and carried away by what is morally and ritually unclean. It includes all sorts of strange and ominous occurrences that bode evil and is the word for an animal's anus. This *chou* is a direct expression of the fermenting *Gu* or Corruption described in Figure 18 that clusters around the Inner Father and Mother and blocks access to the energies and blessings of the Ancestors.

### **Gu or Corruption**

*Gu* or Corruption of the Ancestral Images is a kind of “False Face” or persona systematically rooted in our souls for a particular purpose: to cover up or cover over the real presence and values of the Ancestors within us so we might be manipulated for greedy or malicious purposes. It is a kind of cultural sickness.

*Gu* means poisonous acts done by or to fathers and mothers that become compulsively manifest in their children. It suggests hallucination, loss of reality, sexual debauch, the insects that appear in rotting or fermenting grain, miasma, sorcery and, most of all, the

curse of the ancestors, the false dreams and delusions they send when they are neglected or offended.

One of the traditional images of this Corruption is a vase containing the five poisonous insects (snake, scorpion, centipede, gecko and toad) that were put into a jar and left until one had killed and eaten the others. This became the *Gu*, a spirit venom capable of not only crazing and killing a victim but also securing his possessions and wealth for the perpetrator of the magic.



### ***Corruption/Renovating* 18**

**The old character shows insects or worms in rotting meat or grain, a sacrificial vessel and the Sacred Meal within it spoiled.**

#### **Demons of the Mind**

To understand how *Gu* works we have to cross over from normative psychology to the way that shamans see things. This is the world of the spirits, independent transcendental entities or “psyches” that inhabit us in various ways. These psyches may live in complex brains like ours but they are not simply products of our brains. They have an existence in the unseen world.

There is a complex interchange that takes place between these human, subhuman and superhuman beings as they pass through the Control Room we

call consciousness, the place where the Little Person who operates our bodies and observes the world through the flux of the senses usually lives.

Various psychic entities are always lounging around the Control Room, but the ones we are concerned with here we can call Mind Demons. These Mind Demons are destructive psychic particles that, like bacteria, feed on the breakdown products of a collapsing human psyche. They eat anguish, pain and heartbreak and they attempt to control their hosts so as to cause these states. Like any parasitic entity, they camouflage themselves as natives of the psychic ecology.

These Mind Demons are hidden agents of the Greedy Gods of a corrupted Culture who seek to manipulate us in order to “secure our spiritual and material possessions and wealth for the perpetrator of the magic”. They invade our psyche during childhood and adolescence when we feel angry, abused, betrayed, or deeply envious. They wrap themselves around the powerful bits of our parents’ shadows that we all carry inside us.

Now, unfortunately, the Little Person in the Control Room we depend on to keep our conscious identity in order doesn’t function all the time. When our consciousness is stunned, asleep, distracted or helpless the Mind Demons put on the sensory experience of our Mother or our Father and step into the driver’s seat. In Southeast Asia they call this running *amok*; we call it Inexplicable Behavior, like the nice man who every so often has to rape a little girl or the nice lady who destroys her children through her own greed and need. After running *amok* the hosts involved often feel much better, for it feels like a sort of catharsis. Of course it does, for their Mind Demons are well fed.

### **Shaking the Rattle**

The Tiger’s name is *Hu*. His character is made up of the sign for the *wen* or characteristic pattern of his coat and the sign for paws, thought to resemble human feet. He is a sign for all that is brave, courageous and ferocious, a vital and quite dangerous earth power also expressed through the scorpion.

The Tiger's seed syllable or cry calls up a range of other old characters: *hu* sudden or rapid; *hu* proclaim or give orders; *hu* to exhale or cry out; *hu* solidify or turn to ice; *hu* to effect a ritual offering asking for help or assistance from the spirits; *hu* the name of the white fox, synonym of *xia* to redden into life (the alchemical *rubedo*) and the yellow color of the center.

In the Universal Compass, the *Hu* Tiger is opposed to and connected with the *Lung* Dragon on the East-West or Spring-Fall Axis and their conflict and interaction drives the cycle of the Seasons. The Green Dragon rises in Spring, bringing the force of the Rouser who wakes all things to life; the White Tiger closes the gates in Fall, opening the way to the world of the Dead and the inner stillness of the Mountain where the "body of the past" is sacrificed and opened to reveal its Bright Omens. They change shape at the dark point of extreme yin, the longest night, and turn into each other.

The Tiger is the *jing* or essence hidden within the Kidneys and the Ghost River and opposed to the breath or *ji* that circulates through the lungs, governed by the Dragon. He is an arrow, piercing or penetrating energy hidden within the body as opposed to the winding spirit of the Dragon that weaves through the landscape and the Heavens.

### **The Tiger and the Engines of Change**

There are four Pairs or Sites within the Matrix of Change that generate Ritual Space. They act as *Engines of Change* or *Zones of Radical Transformation* that recharge our experience with meaning and energy. They are located at strategic points in the Matrix and are interconnected through their Nuclear Figures, the figure hidden in the four central lines of a hexagram that acts as its Core Theme or Hidden Drive.

The themes and interconnections of these Engines of Change tell us about the deep Ritual Dynamic that Change embodies and carries.

1:2 Dragon and Dark Animal Goddess is the “two-leafed gate of Change” through which all things enter the All-under-Heaven (*Tianxia*), the world we live in. These two Primal Powers act as the Core theme or Hidden Drive of:

27:28 Tiger’s Mouth and Great Transition. This Engine of Change is a sacrificial site and ritual process that eliminates inner corruption (*gu*) and fixated desires (*yu*) in order to create a true individual. It becomes the Core Theme or Hidden Drive of:

29:30 Ghost River and Bright Omens. This Engine of Change forms the Inner Axis of Change, the Liminal midpoint of the Matrix that opens the Second Half of Life. It sets up an imaginal circulation between the Ghost River or River of Souls and the Bright Omens of the Heart within the individual in order to actualize the Ancestral Potential in and through the individual heart-mind. Through its Core Theme or Hidden Drive (Tiger’s Mouth and Great Transition that in turn carry the Primal Powers at their core) it is directly linked with:

61:62 The Opened Heart and the Flying Bird. This Engine of Change brings the ideal form of a life fully lived to expression and sends it across the Burning Water as a Name or a Symbolic Name (*xiang*) to connect with and inspire generations to come.

### **The Tiger’s Birth: The Magic Square of the Thresholds**

All of these Transformative Sites are contained in potential by the Primal Pair 1:2 Dragon and Dark Animal Goddess and are projected into the Matrix by the Magic Squares produced by the Transformations of its Lines. One of these Magic Squares specifically projects the field of action of the Tiger. It is where his energy is born.

Line Positions 3 and 4 represent the Thresholds, a dangerous liminal position or initiation site that images an individual’s passage through the chaos that exists between states or stages of being. These lines are also traditionally thought to represent the human world, caught between the two lower lines of Earth and the two upper lines of Heaven.

The Transformation of both Lines 3 and 4 of the Pair 1:2 Dragon and Dark Animal Goddess directly produces 61:62 The Opened Heart and the Flying Bird that brings the ideal form of a life fully lived to expression and sends it across the Burning Water as a Symbolic Name (*xiang*). If we look at the omens or images

displayed on this Magic Square we get a sense of the inner workings of the Tiger's ritual path, the "open mouth turned to the Sky."

At 1.3 we see the *Junzi* or Noble One, our human potential, toiling on in the dark night of the soul surrounded by the flock of angry ghosts and hungry souls that haunt us as we enter the world of the All-under-Heaven.

At 2.4 we see this inversion of experience, this time when time flows backwards, mirrored or doubled as a return to the primal Chaos. This is the *hundun* state where everything exists "bundled in the bag."

At 1.4 we see a mysterious spirit Force "playing in the Primal Abyss", looping down and pulling the *Junzi* up through a continual process of inversion or chiasmus that mirrors the power of the Sun in its daily cycle through light and dark.

At 2.3 we see the object and goal of the process and the inversion: a "jade talisman held in the mouth" that allows the Dead to speak. This magic token mirrors the weaving and shuttling of the Moon as it passes through its mysterious monthly changes in the Dream World.

When these four Lines change individually they produce two other Pairs that show where this initiating activity presided over by the Tiger is particularly active, the places in the All-under-Heaven where it first manifests.

The direct action of the Tiger is seen in the Pair:

### **GATHERING THE GHOSTS AND TREADING OUT TO MEET THE TIGER**

9 Inspiration: ***Small Accumulates means at first they are few.***

10 Field of Realization: ***Treading means not abiding where you are.***

The Pair describes gathering and nurturing the Small, the ghosts that have passed through the underworld waters and are now ready to rejoin the human community, and stepping out to encounter the creative and destructive spirit of the Tiger to receive a destiny given by Heaven that will shape the life to come. It embodies a Zone of Radical Transformation at the thresholds of experience, a Tiger transformation where the Inspiring Force of the Dragon emerges into the Opened Heart, and acts as the Transition to the next stage of the symbolic life. *Core theme:* 38:37 > 64:63, confronting the ghosts that haunt the dwelling lets you prepare and make the Crossing.

The Pair connects the birth of the individual into culture with a vision of a new world that reflects the destiny of Heaven. It exchanges influence with by 57:58 (The Great Intermediaries, the Lady of Fates and the Joyous Dancer). Its inner

drive is 5:6 (The Temple and the Council), first experience of the power of the ritual and legal worlds. Center lines connect the transformative zone at thresholds, 1 Inspiring Force of the Dragon and 61 The Opened Heart, with 25:26 (Disentangling from Old Ghosts and Accumulating the new spirit) and 37:38 (Founding the Dwelling and the confronting the Ghosts that Haunt it).

Its echo in the individual is seen in the Pair:

### **ACTIVATING LIMINAL POWERS TO PREPARE THE FUTURE**

15 Inspiration: ***Humbling means becoming agile.***

16 Field of Realization: ***Providing For means a Joyous Response.***

This Pair describes a flow of energy into the unconscious world that prepares for a spontaneous and joyous response to a real call to action. It contains a Zone of Radical Transformation at the thresholds of experience, a Tiger Transformation where the Realizing Power of Earth and the Dark Animal Goddess expresses itself in the Opened Heart, and acts as the Royal Center of power in the second stage of the symbolic life, when we struggle with identity and its relation to society. *Core theme:* 40:39 > 63:64: Release bound energy and re-imagine the situation. Make the crossing and prepare the new.

The Pair connects the struggle for personal emergence with preparation for a great change in culture. It exchanges influence with 35:36 (Rising and Setting Sun, Recognition and the Difficult Journey). Its inner drive is 51:52 (The Great Operators, the Rouser and the Sacrificer who begin and end all cycles of life). Center lines connect the transformative zone at thresholds, 2 Field and 61 The Opened Heart, with 39:40 (the Comings and Goings that Release the spirit) and 45:46 (Gathering the People for a Great Project and Climbing the Sacred Mountain to connect with the higher spirits).

### **The Tiger in the Human World**

In our human world the Tiger represents Initiation and the dangerous middle space between Lines 3 and 4 of a Figure where we confront the corrupted screen memories of both power and failure and the bad blood in families and human communities that are passed from generation to generation. Technically the Tiger represents an “inversion” or splitting of the human, an eccentric rotation in a Pair where only the human position splits.

A particular voice emerges from this splitting - the repetition of the syllables *Qian Qian*, Force, Force (1.3) that portrays the *sonic driving* of an initiation ceremony inspired by the activities of the mysterious *huo* or “someone” continually looping down into the abyss (1.4) to pull up the *Junzi* as he/she faces *Li* adversity, the angry ghosts and hungry souls again and again (1.3).

*Huo*, “someone”, seems to be used in the oldest texts as a euphemism for what Jung and the alchemists called the *Deus Absconditus*, the hidden god who cannot be named. It is a particle that means perhaps, maybe, possibly and portrays a state of doubt or uncertainty. Its older meanings include a tribal area or a battlefield in the South, the “Demon Country.” An alternate old pronunciation *Ho* turns it into a sacrificial ritual that involved chants, performance and pantomime. It is a synonym for *yu* to have or possess, seen in the Name of Figure 14 Great Being or Great Possessions (*Da Yu*). It means to be astonished by something, the exclamation in face of an epiphany: *Huo!* Its circle of association links being blind or disordered and perplexed with both the brilliance of a fire bursting forth and consuming something and the sound of a bird’s wings flying through the air: *huo, huo, hou, hou*.

Repeated serially, the lines of this Magic Square that give birth to the Tiger activate and set in motion the energies of all the shamanic or Wu energies of the world of Change: The Operators *Zhen* Shake, the Rouser and *Gen* Mountain, the Sacrificer and the Intermediaries *Sun* The Lady of Fates who finds the hidden sickness and couples the beings with their fate and *Dui* the Joyous Dancer who gives the spirit a voice in the human community.

### **Tales of the Tiger**

All the appearances of the Tiger within the Human World of Change are intimately connected with language and its purification - the ability to find the hidden sickness and give the spirit a voice in the human community carried by the Intermediaries *Sun* The Lady of Fates and *Dui* the Joyous Dancer. His fearsome intervention first secures the inner space or *temenos*, turning us from acting-out to acting-in. Within this Sacred or Ritual Space his ruthless and ferocious energy is expressed as an analysis that cuts through the emotional corruption (the dark desires) of our language and the way we think, eliminating the inner corruption to make our mind an ally in the work of transformation.



I The Tiger appears in Figure 10 *Lu* Treading to empower “shamanistic” ways of seeing and acting. Here we identify with the Tiger:

履 **Treading/Meeting the Tiger 10**



**The old character shows a “corpse” or medium of a deceased ancestor at the sacred meal, a footstep of the spirit, three steps on the Way and a boat making a crossing.**

**This is a Realizing Figure, part of a Zone of Radical Transformation when the creative power of the Dragon appears in the Opened Heart. It is the beginning of the Sacred Sickness Pathways that connect personal disorders with cultural change and acts as a Transition from childhood to the stage of the Symbolic Life when we confront the problems of individual identity, sexuality and personal destiny.**

Treading is the center of a complex series of myths and rituals linking sexual intercourse, fertility, intercourse with spirits and the Wu or Intermediaries who facilitate it in the Hidden Temple and at the Earth Altar. It points at the Spring and Autumn River-Mountain festivals, exorcisms, the birth of medicine, the miraculous birth of First Ancestor and the origin of agriculture. The character also suggests grass, thus life, birth and sprouts. It is the Corpse-Embodier (*shi*) at high ancestral ritual and those who work with the dead and the spirits who control the “winds.” It is the dangerous process of directing a ritual invocation, waking the earth to open the fields in spring, and the *ge*-vine sandals of marriage. This whole complex of myths lies behind the birth of the Founding Ancestor described in the Odes:

... the birth of our people from Lady Yuan of Jiang.  
How did it happen? She made sacrifice at the Hidden Temple

to exorcize the childless demon. She trod on the big toe  
of Di's footprint. She conceived in awe.  
Good birth, she bore Prince Ji  
She bore Hou Ji, Ancestor Millet.

The site of this occurrence, the Mountain Shrine or Hidden Temple, is the hidden hollow of a high mountain, the "lower hidden" (*xiami*) below the summit where the Tiger Spirit dwells. It is a land of hidden shrines and retreats that have the power to enlighten and inseminate. Altars were founded here to make the *jiao*-sacrifice to the High Lord, sites of conception in the spirit. The ones who did this were the "Wu who Tread in the Footprints," walking in the steps of the God. Such a ritual opens the fields in the month of Hibernating Insects, when the King sacrifices the Red Bull and treads the fields, plowing the first furrows. It honors the birth of great souls with special destinies, bringing in the fates.

**II** The Tiger appears through Figure 27 *Yi* The Tiger's Mouth to clear the inner channels of spiritual nourishment. Here the Tiger becomes a metaphor for transformation:



### *Jaws/The Tiger's Mouth* **27**

**The old character shows the Tiger's open mouth and a person with a big head filled with spirit, an influx that purifies and illuminates.**

**This is an Inspiring Figure, an Engine and Nuclear or Core Theme of Change and a key site on the Sacred Sickness Pathways that connect personal disorders with**

**cultural change. It acts as a Mission of the stage of the Symbolic Life that centers on initiation, finding a relation to culture and the search for an image of the deeper Self.**

Jaws refers to the ritual meal and sacrifice offered on all important occasions through which we nourish and are nourished by the spirits, the world of the invisible. It is an ordeal, where the spirit of the Tiger eats away all that is corrupted (*gu*), whose time has passed, letting us feel the awesome presence of the spirit that both nourishes and destroys. To nourish the people, it was of first importance to see and seek the invisible presence that supports us and “fills our mouths.” This nourishes the Ancestor and ennobles his descendants. The word refers literally to the jaws and lower part of the head that allow us to eat and speak, supporting or bracing the activities that nourish us literally and spiritually. It means to take in and understand what is past in order to nourish the future, “eating ancient virtue.” It points at the great value of the words of the oracles, the spirit words that nourish us and connect us with Heaven and the necessity to make them a part of our lives. This figure is an important part of the Secret Sickness pathways that link personal and cultural disorders, representing the force of the Tiger that eats the corruption of the past within us.

**III** The Tiger appears through Figure 49 Ge Skinning to make the Inner Axis of Change, the Fire-Water or Kan-Li Axis (29:30) set up with the Great Individual (28) available to a great cultural change in the making. Here the Tiger constellates a field for further cultural transformation.



革

**Skinning/Revolution 49**

**The old character shows an animal skin with horns attached stretched on a frame of branches.**

**This is an Inspiring Figure, a key site on the Sacred Sickness Pathways that connect personal disorders with cultural change. It acts as a Transition from our empowerment in ritual and culture to the stage of the Symbolic Life when we must deal with the proper exercise of power and our responsibilities to the human community.**

Skinning shows a time of revolution: “Fire in the Lake: Change Heaven’s Mandates.” It includes animal transformations, such as a snake changing its skin or the annual changes of form all animals were thought to undergo, symbolized as the change from bird to fish. It focuses on ritual transformations that occur as the Wu, the technicians of the sacred, put on the animal masks to call the spirits and change the time. These sorts of dances occurred at Spring’s Beginning (New Year), when the *Fang-xiang* or exorcists, dressed in bear skin and wearing a bear mask with four golden metal eyes, would drive out the spirits of the old year, pushing them over the edge of the world into renewal and change. At this time the people, too, wore animal masks, men dressed as women, men and woman came together and the things of the old year were destroyed. Everything moved into the liminal state, the fertile chaos called Change. The Queen Mother, Lady of the Beasts, and the Moon Goddesses were called for the transformations. Perhaps the most dramatic and secret of these rituals were the dances and ceremonies that led up to melting the metals to cast the new Vessel or *Ding*, seen in the following figure. The Vessel is a ruling image, a sort of grail that establishes the time and the connection to all the various spirits. It is the founding sign of a king, a dynasty or a noble house.

The time of skinning is when the basic images of our lives go into flux and renewal through that mysterious quality called Change, a time when the world we experience is renewing itself. We cooperate with this by “making the time”, going through the imaginative preparations. We call on the animal powers and put on their masks, moving into their powerful, creative state. We skin away what is past and done with, challenge our old ideas and experiences, preparing to accept the new time.