

What is a Symbol?

Traditionally, the 64 Figures of the *Yijing* are called *xiang* or “symbols”. *Xiang* is both a symbol in a text and a kind of imaginative process that is continually producing symbolic awareness.

Symbol, *xiang*, is an image that has the power to connect things, to connect the visible world of your problem to the invisible world of the spirit. Change works through the symbols or *xiang*, which were created by the sages and shamans through a kind of imaginative induction that is also called *xiang*. We use *Change* to *xiang* something, to turn it into a symbol. A *xiang* is a magic spell, a figure or likeness that provides a pattern or model. It is an imaginative display of innate nature, a figure, form or mask that can be imitated, a character to be “put on.” It is a ritual vessel used to question the great spirits and the signs and omens they give that attract good fortune. As the Great Symbol (*da xiang*) it refers to the Way itself. We make the connection between the invisible world of the spirit and the visible world of our lives by playing with the symbols, by imitating them and acting them out. The symbol articulates and connects us to the efficacy of the moment, the *shi*.



XIANG, symbol or figure, is the sign for an elephant. It is an exchange character for HENG, the summer sacrifice and also suggests a pig-offering to the underworld powers.

A symbol is made up of a graphic diagram (*gua*, the hexagrams and trigrams), attached words, chains of mythic associations that flow through the words and interconnections to other symbols made through the extended Matrix. The fusion of these qualities forces us to use very different parts of our mind together in order to make sense of it. This effects a change in the way we perceive ourselves

and our world, putting the two halves of our intelligence, cognitive and imagistic, back together again.

Figure 16, Providing for the Joyous Response, gives us the image of how we can use these Elephant Symbols.



Advantageous to install helpers to move the legions.

Gather what is needed to meet and enjoy the future. Accumulate inner strength so you can respond spontaneously and joyously when the real call to action comes. Think things through. Establish and empower helpers. Think of this as riding an elephant, a creature of great grace and power that you have tamed.



16 Providing for

The old character shows a hand holding the shuttle of a loom, the hidden power of the symbols and a child riding an elephant who can act spontaneously. This inner preparation enables the return of the spirit (24).

Circle of Meanings

Arrange for, make ready, collect what you need to meet the future; enthusiasm, a spontaneous and direct response to a call; enjoy, take pleasure in; the Elephant, an animal ancestor that connects us with the great symbols that shape and transform experience. Heart Theme: 39 the Difficult comings and goings that prepare deliverance.

Myths for Change: The Story of the Time

The name of this figure “*yu*, providing” evokes the culture founder Yu the Great. It centers on building up the ability to respond directly, joyously, spontaneously and effectively to any situation, gathering reserves of energy and grace into a store of power and virtue (*de*) from which you can respond without thought. This sort of training is used in the martial arts and many performing arts, a kind of sub-cortical patterning whereby

a corrected or straightened response becomes simultaneous with stimulus, bypassing cerebral systems of rational choice. This ability to respond directly and correctly allows you to enjoy the moment, to take pleasure in life. It suggests the sets of great bronze bells that were used to wake the earth in spring and harmonize the reviving forces. The process is imaged as a child riding on an elephant, combining spontaneity with great power and grace in an emblem of the paradise state prior to the restrictions of culture. The elephant was an omen animal used to mean symbol (*xiang*), the term that describes the figures of Change and their power of storing and discharging spirit. As an emblem of the Shang Dynasty, it also shows how we can make use of the past, turning it into a symbol. It is the moment when a spirit power spontaneously triggers other forces into action, moving with the flow of the Way.

This is a Realizing Figure, part of the Sacred Sickness Pathway that connects personal disorders and cultural change. It is part of a Zone of Radical Transformation where the realizing power of Earth manifests as words that carry to a new generation. It acts as the experience of the Centers of Power in the stage of the Symbolic Life when we confront the problems of individual identity, sexuality and personal destiny.

The key insight is that all of the figures or hexagrams in Change are also Elephants, omen animals that store, carry and release the wisdom of the Ancestors. The greatest of these symbols is 50 Ding, the Sacred Vessel and the process of transformation, which is the symbol of Change itself.