

## Rites of Passage II: Night Fires

Night Fires is a nocturnal ritual that occurs at the crucial point in the Transition stage of a Rite of Passage. The Night Fire arises from the early Chinese character hidden in the family of classical characters that mean harmony or harmonizing. It represents a way to pacify or make peace in the soul that opens us to the Bright Omen that Heaven gave us as we entered this world. The ritual does this by making us aware of the thought demons that haunt our mind, the hidden patterns of past pain, sorrow rage and need, and the psycho-physical roots embedded in the body that power them, the *gu* or inner corruption in our inner images of Mother and Father. During the ritual these hidden roots coalesce into the experience of the wounded child within each of us and we see the network of frozen memories that spread out from it. These are the engines of our compulsive behavior. They offer an image of what the spirit-workers call our Sacred Sickness.



The **Night Fires** ritual was literally a lighting of fires in the night and a fire sacrifice on the threshing floor after the harvest. Its purpose is to release the

spirit of our disease, the deeply embodied cause of our suffering, to make peace with what afflicts us and keeps us trapped in the experience of the wounded child within us. The ritual process releases images from the literalization of the flesh, freeing the **Bright Omen** imprisoned in our embodied memories of pain and suffering. This is the healing of an ancestral wound, releasing the bright spirit from the Ghost River of past pain and integrating it into the Dream Body.

The process begins deep in the psyche, at the place where body and psyche intertwine. At the critical moment of the inner process, when the yin and the yang come into balance and the Tiger has cleared the pathways through which spirit flows in the body, the **animal powers** begin to drum up the inner fires. The creative and inspiring force of the **Dragon** activates the **ancestor spirit** that lies behind our suffering, the spirit at the core of the wound, who sets the process in motion. The **wounded child and the bright omen** it carries are released from the dark and murky prisons of the past.



Called by the **night fires**, the spirit held in the sufferings of the past emerges onto the **threshing floor of earth** and constellates its **Great Protector**.



The **mind demons** – the patterns of suffering that influence and corrupt or thinking and feeling – emerge on this inner field. The power of the **fire** enters the inner field as the rousing power of the **High Ancestor** who subjugates the Demon Country by cutting of the heads, cutting the connection between the thought patterns and the embodied clusters of pain and suffering that powers them.



Freed from the compulsive entanglements, the **scintillae**, the sparks of intelligence trapped in the old patterns, rise and cluster around the figure presiding over the ritual – the **Queen Mother of the West**, queen of the dead and Lady of the Beasts who has power over both the realm of the dead and the activation of the animal powers of the psyche.



They coalesce into a **Bright Omen**, sign of the radiance and clarity of our mind when it is cleared from the ghosts of the past. This **Bright Omen** reveals the hidden voice and image of our sickness, the being we are meant to be. It is the healing of the ancestral wound.



This healing of the heart-mind releases a flow of **invigorating strength** into the psyche as a whole. It represents **fully adult male power**, a clearing and focusing of both thinking and feeling.



At the culmination of the Night Fires ritual we make a divination that can give this liberated spirit a voice. The question is: What does the voice of my sickness have to say to me?