



I CHING

The Oracle

Chapter 10. The Yì, the Wū, and Shamanism

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Shamanistic-Historical Traditions

From Chapter 10: The Yì, the Wū, and Shamanism

SHAMANISM WAS PRACTICED IN ANCIENT CHINA as far back as 5000 BC. The Yangshao 仰韶 were a Yellow River civilization that existed between 5000 BC and 3000 BC. Neolithic art and gravesites confirm that Yangshao shamanism is one of the earliest examples of a rites and rituals system in China.¹ Chieftains who led the Yangshao were shamans or *wu* 巫 who would use effigies of animals as their spirit helpers, such as dragons, tigers, and deer, where the animals represented particular spirits assisting the shaman in communicating with the other realms.² It's speculated that the drums crafted by the Yangshao served the purpose of empowering a shaman's journeying to other realms and in spirit contacts. The invention of the drum is even attributed to the *wu*.³

A Jiahu burial site dated to the early or middle Neolithic Age of China unearthed pairs of turtle shells with pebbles placed in between the paired shells, as if forming rattles, and proto-characters inscribed on the shells.⁴ One burial of a shaman-chieftain had eight of such turtle shell and pebble relics placed on different parts of the body on the deceased. Archaeologists believe that these turtle shell rattles were either a divination tool or healing talisman.

¹ Robert E. Murowchick, *Cradles of Civilization: China*. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1994, 63.

² Li Liu, *The Chinese Neolithic Trajectories to Early States*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005, 155.

³ Ibid, 123.

⁴ Anne P. Underhill, ed. "Chapter 10: the Jiahu Site in the Huai River Area" in *A Companion to Chinese Archaeology*. Hoboken: Wiley-Blackwell, 2013, 194 – 212.

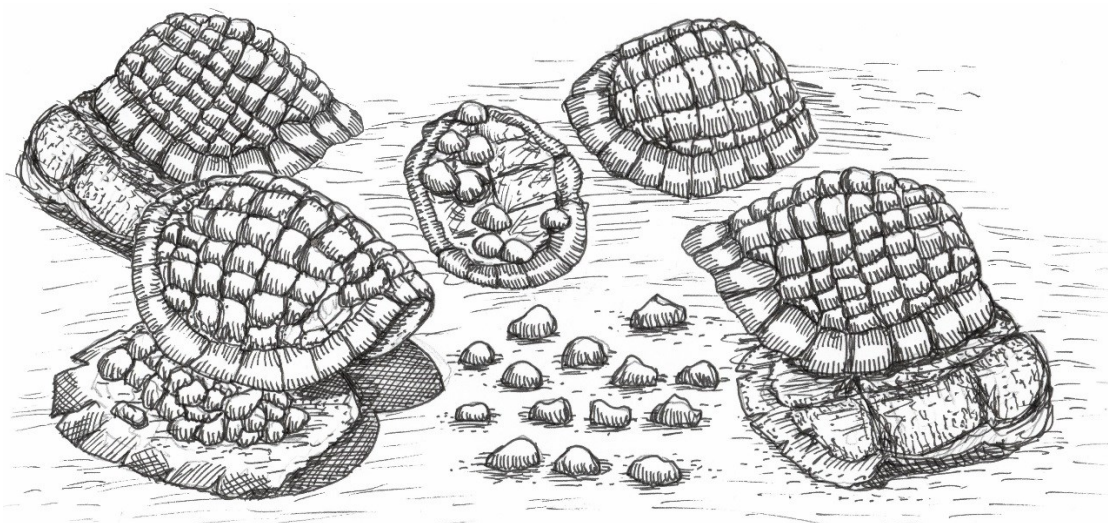


Figure 10.2 Illustration of the Jiahu Turtle Shells

Among the Hongshan 紅山, a Neolithic culture in northeast China between 4700 and 2900 BC, religious and military power was consolidated in a shaman king.⁵ It was not uncommon at all for military leaders and great warriors to be shamans, and vice versa. Hence, one of the archetypes of the mystic covered by the eight trigrams is the Warrior (corresponding with Lake). Even into the Shang, historic figures such as Fu Hao 婦好 served as both military general and high priestess or shaman.

Oracle bones further affirm the existence of a thriving shamanistic culture that was the religious backbone of ancient China, reaching its peak during the Shang and Zhou of the Bronze Age.⁶ Shang dynasty shamans (商巫 *Shāng wū*) held political authority because their connection to the gods and ancestors could validate the sovereign rights of a king or state.⁷ During the Shang, the king was the kingdom's chief shaman.⁸ Thus, since the Neolithic era, shamanism has played a central role in China's foundational political history.⁹

Beyond their political authority, the *wu* occupied a specialized class in society for one key reason: generally, humans and spirits should not and do not intermingle, with one exception—the *wu*. Thus, shamans were the only designated class of humans excepted from that rule. They were the ones with illuminated or specialized knowledge of the other worlds, above and below ours. They possessed a prescience that empowered them to divine the future. They can hear messages from gods, spirits, and ancestors. What's more, they can

⁵ Li, *Origins of Chinese Thought*, 30.

⁶ Robert E. Murowchick, *Cradles of Civilization: China*. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1994, 55.

⁷ Mayfair Yang 楊美惠, "Shamanism and Spirit Possession in Chinese Modernity: Some Preliminary Reflections on Gendered Religiosity of the Body," *Review of Religion and Chinese Society* 2 (2015): 53.

⁸ Li, *The Origins of Chinese Thought: From Shamanism to Ritual Regulations and Humaneness*, 15.

⁹ *Ibid*, 101.



understand and thus decipher the cryptic signs and omens of the spirits. During the Shang and Zhou, shamans were also mathematicians and geometers.¹⁰

A principal tenet of Shang shamanism was belief in the power of animal spirits. Animal spirits, mythical and real, such as dragons, scorpions, and toads, were venerated as manifestations or messengers of the gods. The Shang venerated the black crow as the ancestral animal spirit they descended from,¹¹ referenced in Hexagrams 5 and 12. Of particular note was a mythical beast called the Hànbá 旱魃, a scorpion-like flying creature with martial skills who could take the form of a goddess.¹² She wore blue robes and wielded the power to emit light and heat. However, the creature-goddess was also the cause of droughts and was therefore both feared and shunned.

It's unclear whether Hànbá is a mythical animal, goddess, demon, or all of the above. The Hànbá also came to be associated with death. She was the goddess who transformed into a raven to look after the corpses of the recently departed, guiding their souls to the afterlife. Female shamans 女巫 (*nǚ wū*) during the Shang would channel Hànbá,¹³ who in turn empowered the shamans with supernatural and magical abilities.

Perhaps what most defines the work of a shaman is astral journeying for the purpose of exchange with the spirit world or to rectify imbalances in the spirit world causing harm in the physical world. Asian shamanic traditions will vary. Some traditions conceptualize the journey as ascent vs. descent along an axis mundi, which is what you'll often hear from north Asian shamanism. In the south, journeying is conceptualized as lateral, "crossing over." A shaman becomes a vessel for gods or spirits to "cross over" laterally and mount. Mirrors become emblems of portals or keys to cross over liminal gateways between worlds.¹⁴

Another aspect of astral journeying is dreamwork, which can also serve as a form of divination, or oneiromancy. Dreamwork is the shamanistic practice of going to an underworld or netherworld while in a sleep state or as a lucid dream. A part of your soul

¹⁰ Ibid, 26.

¹¹ Chen Zhi, "A Study of the Bird Cult of the Shang People," *Monumental Serica* 47 (January 1999): 127–47. doi: 10.1080/02549948.1999.11731325.

¹² One of the early descriptions of the Hànbá 旱魃 comes from the Classic of Poetry 詩經, or Book of Songs, circa eleventh–seventh century BC, describing the creature as cruel and burning. *The Classic of Mountains and Seas* 山海經 (475–220 BC) describes the Hànbá as a scorpion. In volume 4 of *The Children's Book of Qionglin* 幼學瓊林, an ancient educational text for children, in the chapter on Taoist ghosts and demons 釋道鬼神類, the Hànbá is described as a demoness.

¹³ 陳夢家 (Chen Mengjia), 商代的神話與巫術 ("Myths and Wu Shamanism of the Shang Dynasty"), *Yenjing Journal* 20 (December, 1936), 525–526.

¹⁴ However, mirrors are also an essential shaman's tool in north Asian traditions, such as the *tolí* mirror of Buryat shamanic sorcerers. A *tolí* mirror can be used for healing and protection, but are themselves enlivened with a spirit. Kevin Turner, *Sky Shamans of Mongolia: Meetings with Remarkable Healers*. (Berkeley: North Atlantic Books, 2016), 133. Among the Khalkha, a subgroup in Mongolia, *tolí* mirrors are a shaman's or sorcerer's defensive weapon for protection, often decorated with the twelve animals of the lunisolar zodiac or the eight trigrams of the Ba Gua. Turner, *Sky Shamans*, 115; photographic essay insert between 178 – 179.

(recall the belief in soul dualism or multiple facets of soul covered in chapter 9) journeys to the realm of the dead, a realm of demons, hungry ghosts, dragon kings and dragon spirits under water, or a realm of fox spirits, among others spirit planes to mediate an adverse situation that is happening on earth in the physical plane.

By the late Zhou, however, the shaman's role changed to be more ceremonial than political. They presided over state-sponsored rites, prepared the sacrificial offerings, and looked after the temples. Well into the Han dynasty (202 BC – AD 9; AD 25 – 220), *wu* were appointed to the imperial court.¹⁵ They would oversee rituals, provide divination, and also serve as healers alongside court physicians.

Both Confucianism and Taoism are birthed from *wu* shamanistic-historical traditions, and to that end, the whole of the Chinese culture is built on the foundations of those traditions.¹⁶ China's clan society heavily emphasized the importance of ritual and music, a value sourced back to the Duke of Zhou. Ritual governs the body and music governs psychology.¹⁷ Ritual dance was also intended to be magical. A shaman's ceremonial shooting of an ox effigy during a dance was intended as a blessing to ensure a successful hunt of oxen the next day.¹⁸ It is also through leading ritual that the shaman is a historian—ritual is cultural history.

Shamanism is central to the cultural identity of Korea as well, as documented in the compilations in state history of shamanistic rituals, dating back to 375 AD under King Kunchogo of Paekche.¹⁹ The *kut* rituals of Korean shamanism is the most instructive for understanding the importance of rites. During a *kut* ritual, the *mansin* 萬神 shaman invokes a spirit entity and the spirit displaces the *mansin*'s personality to take over. The spirit, in the shaman's body, can drive away misfortune, increase prosperity, and give divinatory readings. Each movement in the ritual dance is deeply symbolic and is a way of modifying metaphysical energy that is creating changes in the earthly plane, in real time as the dance progresses.

The *kut* are typically performed in the shaman's altar room, or god hall 神堂 *sindang*, with the altar positioned along the north side of the hall, because guardian spirits descend down from the north.²⁰ This reminds me of the *Yili* 儀禮 (475 – 221 BC), noting that an I Ching diviner faces north,²¹ and the general belief that the north corresponds with ancestors,

¹⁵ Yang, "Shamanism and Spirit Possession in Chinese Modernity," 55.

¹⁶ Li, *The Origins of Chinese Thought: From Shamanism to Ritual Regulations and Humaneness*, 49.

¹⁷ Ibid, 45.

¹⁸ Ibid 103.

¹⁹ R. Guisso and Chai-Shin Yu, ed. *Shamanism: The Spirit World of Korea*. (Singapore: Asian Humanities Press, 1988), 14 – 15.

²⁰ John A. Grim. "Chaesu Kut: A Korean Shamanistic Performance," *Asian Folklore Studies*, Vol. 43 (1984): 236.

²¹ Zhu Xi. *The Original Meaning of the Yijing: Commentary on the Scripture of Change*. Translated by Joseph A. Adler. (New York: Columbia University Press, 2020), 319.



the afterlife, and the underworld. Likewise, when the Duke of Zhou petitioned the Zhou ancestors and divined for blessings, he built his altars facing north.²²

To guide the dead for a safe transition to the afterlife, a ritual called the *ogu* 誤鬼 *kut* is performed by the *mansin*. The *pyong* 病 *kut* heals the sick. There are also rites for venerating particular gods and spirits, such as the *yongsin* 龍神 *kut* for honoring the dragon spirit.

Implicit to the responsibility of rites and rituals is knowledge of astrology so that the shaman can pick auspicious calendar dates for state events and, most importantly, military activities.²³ You may have noticed that even in the I Ching, many of the lines are structured to prognosticate whether to advance a military campaign or launch an attack.²⁴

It was during the Han (202 BC – 220 AD) that the tension between the institution of Confucian scholars and the institution of the *wu* culminated.²⁵ Starting in the first century BC, the status of shamans in a Confucian-dominant society declined.²⁶ Specifically, Confucianism was a humanist and rationalist tradition of philosophy. The ecstatic dance and spirit mediumship of the *wu* stood in stark contrast to the rationalist Confucian thought. Confucians emphasized the I Ching's literary, aesthetic, and philosophical value. It cast a sharply skeptical eye at spirit mediumship with the Oracle.

During the Song (960 – 1279), the *wu* were differentiated from Taoist ceremonial magicians, and the ceremonial magicians denounced the *wu*.²⁷ The tension might be comparable to the present-day tensions between ceremonial magic and folk witchcraft—aren't they the same thing? And yet dare assert that in a room full of ceremonial magicians and witches. Likewise, shamans and Taoist priests both engage in divination, faith healing, astral journeying, sorcery or spellcasting, soul retrieval, and rituals while emphatically demanding to be seen as unrelated.

Thus, while Confucianism and Taoism both scorned *wu* shamanism, they both arose from *wu* shamanism.²⁸ Despite the aversion Taoist ceremonial magicians might have historically felt toward the *wu* shamans, *wu* shamanism indisputably cemented the

²² Sima Qian 司馬遷 (145 – 86 BC), *Records of the Grand Historian* (94 BC), also referred to as the *Shiji* 史記, noted that the Duke of Zhou petitioned to the Zhou ancestors for blessings to cure his nephew King Wu's illness, then performed a divination for the ancestor spirits' response. In doing so, he constructed three altars and performed the sacrificial rites facing north.

²³ Li, *The Origins of Chinese Thought: From Shamanism to Ritual Regulations and Humaneness*, 30.

²⁴ Line statements in the Zhouyi including the word “征” (zhēng) refer to omens on whether to go on a military expedition, whether to invade, attach, or conquer. For a few examples, see hexagram 15, line 6 (征邑國), hexagram 24, line 6 (...不克征), hexagram 27, line 2 (征凶), or hexagram 30, line 6 (王用出征). Those are just a few of dozens that recur in the text.

²⁵ Yang, “Shamanism and Spirit Possession in Chinese Modernity,” 55.

²⁶ Arthur Waley, *The Nine Songs: A Study of Shamanism in Ancient China* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1955), 11.

²⁷ Yang, “Shamanism and Spirit Possession in Chinese Modernity,” 55.

²⁸ Li, *The Origins of Chinese Thought: From Shamanism to Ritual Regulations and Humaneness*, 86.

foundation of Taoist magic.²⁹ The ceremonial magician's pacing rituals, astral projection techniques, and methods of petitioning gods and spirits through modes of magical writing come from the shamans that they denounce.

Most importantly, the fundamental cosmological basis of both the *fashi* 法師 Taoist methods master and the *wushi* 巫師 shaman is the I Ching, from the metaphysical theory of yin and yang to the eight trigrams. Today, both the Taoist ceremonial magician and the folk shaman craft magical talismans called *fu* 符, perform soul retrievals, channel spirits, and tell fortunes. They use magical mirrors and wield similar ritual tools. They face the same condemnation and censure from mainstream society.

Whether the *tāng ki* 乩童 of Taiwan are shamans is a matter of contention. In southern Taiwan, the *tāng ki* are spirit mediums who dance into an ecstatic frenzy, enter a trance-like state, and proceed to speak in tongues that mimic the speech of infants. The spirit mediums engage in religious self-flagellation with weapons until rivulets of blood stream down their heads and bodies. The self-flagellation purifies the body so that a god can enter and possess that body, and demonstrates the spirit medium's devotion to the god.

Channeling spirit entities is a prominent feature among the *tāng ki* 乩童. The spirit medium allows a god to take possession of the physical body and mind in a process called 上身 *shàng shēn*, meaning "mounting the body." The god then speaks through the possessed medium, sending its powers through the medium to heal the sick or give prophecies.

A similar question is raised as to whether the Hmong *txiv neeb* are considered shamans. I would say yes, absolutely. To heal an illness, the *txiv neeb* of the Hmong enter a trance-like state to journey into the spirit realm and converse with the person's spirit body or other knowledgeable spirits on that astral plane to determine what is wrong.

Often to achieve good, the *txiv neeb* has to broker a deal, a *puaj dab*,³⁰ with evil, and in general, concepts of "good" versus "evil" aren't clear-cut and don't have any equivalent concept in the Western Christianized lexicon. A spirit entity attaches to the afflicted or, if not attached then has stolen a fragment of soul from the afflicted, out of retaliation for some wrong that the spirit entity believes was perpetrated by the afflicted. Whether the spirit's actions are justified or not, now the *txiv neeb* must mediate, talk it out with the spirit, talk it out with the person, and figure out how to reach a settlement. In one sense, you could say a *txiv neeb* is practicing both law and medicine. The *puaj dab*, or settlement, might call for the exchange of spirit money *ntawv nyiaj* or the sacrifice of an animal in exchange for return or restoration of the afflicted person's soul fragment.

²⁹ Yang, "Shamanism and Spirit Possession in Chinese Modernity," 56.

³⁰ Gregory A. Plotnikoff, Charles Numrich, Chu Wu, Deu Yang, and Phua Xiong, "Hmong Shamanism: Animist Spiritual Healing in Minnesota," *Clinical & Health Affairs*, vol. 85, no. 6 (Minnesota Medical Association, June, 2002): 31.



Today, Taoist priests from the many ethnic groups across southern China and mainland Southeast Asia syncretize Taoism, Buddhism, and folk practices of magic, rites, divination, and faith healing. Each tradition has specialized names for their priests, be that a *hmxphī* หมอผี, a master of spirits in Thailand or a *thầy cúng* in Vietnam, which translates to shaman, and yet is often used interchangeably with *Đạo sĩ*, meaning a Taoist priest. Are they unambiguously distinct in cultural practice from each other and from the Tenger *böö* in Mongolia or the *mansin* 萬神 (*mudang* 巫堂) of Korean shamanism? Yes, absolutely.

Historically in Japanese shamanism, distinctions were made between the *echiko* 市子 blind woman³¹ who engaged in spirit possession and the *miko* 巫女 priestess in Japanese Shinto, though both are still described as shamans. The *miko* performed a ritual dance called the *kagura* 神樂, intended as an offering to the *kami* 神,³² similar to the dances performed by the *wu* 巫 shamans of China, with their foremost role as spell-crafters, casting talismans.³³ The *echiko* or *itako* イタコ were typically blind women who were spirit mediums channeling the voices of *kami* and the dead.³⁴

Whether these diverse and disparate traditions should all fall under the umbrella of shamanism and how fine a point to make distinguishing the Taoist priest from the shaman comes down to a matter of perspective. Do you want the label of *wu* 巫 to draw boundaries or to unify?

Shamanism is not a primitive archaic magico-religious practice that remains frozen in time, unchanged for millennia.³⁵ It is a dynamic living tradition. I define a shaman as one who navigates liminal spaces, treading where most people don't go, and can't go. Their purpose for navigating such spaces is to acquire knowledge that is otherwise inaccessible. Their functions of healing and divination are byproducts of that acquiring of knowledge. Just

³¹ Common across several East Asian cultures, such as Japan, blindness is associated with spiritual, psychic, or supernatural abilities.

³² Helen Hardacre, *Shinto: A History*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), 184.

³³ During the 18th century, a substantial source of the *miko*'s income was selling talismans. Gerald Groemer, "Female Shamans in Eastern Japan during the Edo Period," *Asian Folklore Studies*, vol. 66 (2007): 38.

³⁴ Training for *itako* involved ritual exposure to ice cold water over a series of days for three years, memorization of sutras, and a spiritual marriage between the shaman and a patron *kami* or spirit. During the 18th century, a substantial source of the *miko*'s income was selling talismans. Gerald Groemer, "Female Shamans in Eastern Japan during the Edo Period," *Asian Folklore Studies*, vol. 66 (2007): 46.

³⁵ In Homayun Sidky's "On the Antiquity of Shamanism and its Role in Human Religiosity," Sidky challenges the notion that Siberia and neighboring Uralic-Altaic indigenous religions are the *locus classicus* of shamanism, surviving unchanged for millennia. For example, the *jhākris* of Nepal, practicing a form of South Asian shamanism, are a dynamic and evolving practice. Shamanism is not "an ossified relic of an ancient and once universal religion. The idea that the belief systems of any people in any part of the world can persist unchanged over many millennia is simplistic and highly questionable. . . [T]here is an abundance of cross-cultural evidence demonstrating the fact that nowhere do magico-religious traditions remain unchanged." Homayun Sidky, "On the Antiquity of Shamanism and its Role in Human Religiosity." *Method and Theory in the Study of Religion* 22 (2010), 71 - 74.

as humans evolve and nature changes, gods and spirits, too, change. The relationship between spirits and the shaman evolve.

All of these traditions we've skimmed across in this chapter are modalities of shamanism. Their practitioners are shamans. The *wu* of 1046 BC may look very different from the Manchu *wu* of the 17th century, and certainly different from the present day *tâng ki* 乩童 spirit mediums of Taiwan, but that doesn't mean they're mutually exclusive from each other; it means there has been change. The Taoist priest is not mutually exclusive and separate from the shaman, and we see this in the immortal He Xian Gu 何仙姑, both a Taoist priestess (道姑, Dào gū) and a shamaness (女巫, nǚ wū).

The *miko* 巫女 performing the *kagura* 神樂, who approaches spirit work with a very different aesthetic from the *thầy cúng* or *txiv neeb* performing a soul retrieval share the same sensitivity for the unseen. A *mansin/mudang* from Korea has more in common with the *txiv neeb* from Laos than she does with the uninitiated profane of her own culture, because the *mansin* shares a spiritual heritage with the *txiv neeb*. The *jhakri* of Nepal and the *shén pó* 神婆 are both communicating with spirits through dancing and drumming, which the I Ching instructs as the way we communicate with spirits.³⁶

Thus, what remains the common axis that defines the shaman is one who navigates the thresholds between life and death.³⁷ The Korean *mansin* performs the *ogu* 誤鬼 *kut* to guide the recently departed, ensuring safe transition into the afterlife. The *tâng ki* 乩童 of Taiwan and *echiko* 市子 of Japan channel the dead so that the living might find closure. Even the shaman's role as healer is about decay, about knowing what has separated and disintegrated in the spirit realm, causing harm in the earthly counterpart.

Moreover, the shared non-use of the word "shaman" uniting the previous generation of Asian mystics is the same as the shared reclaiming of that word today by the up-and-coming generation of shamans now navigating the liminal spaces between globalization and the Digital Revolution.

³⁶ "Xi Ci I or The Great Treatise I 繫辭上" from the Ten Wings: 精氣為物，遊魂為變，是故知鬼神之情狀。

³⁷ One example of such shamanistic practices is necromancy. In *Haunted by the Archaic Shaman* (2008), anthropologist and ethnographer Homayun Sidky recounts a Nepalese shamanic ritual for raising the dead: The *jhākri* disciple began the ritual at midnight, playing thighbone and tiger bone trumpets to raise a *masān*, a spirit of the dead. A cock is sacrificed to raise a male spirit from the dead and a hen would be used to raise a female spirit from the dead. Blood is a required sacrifice. The *jhākri* must also be naked, smeared with ashes from a crematory. A ghost mantra is repeated, the bone trumpets are played. Once the spirit of the dead has risen, it can be controlled by the *jhākri* and questions can be asked of it. Homayun Sidky. *Haunted by the Archaic Shaman: Himalayan Jhakris and the Discourse on Shamanism*. Lanham: Lexington Books, 2008, 70.



An Ancestral Shaman Spirit's Blessing

Wuxian 巫賢 was a chief shaman 大巫 or grand high priest who served the Shang dynasty court. He lived some time during the 15th century BC. According to the *Book of Documents* 尚書 (Shàngshū), dated to the Shang and Zhou, "During the reign of King Zu Yi of Shang, the devoted and faithful Wuxian was the chief shaman 大巫 who served as the mediator between Shangdi 上帝 and the King of Shang."³⁸

A powerful diviner, astrologer, rainmaker, and healer, Wuxian is considered the great ancestor of the 商巫 *Shāng wū*, or Shang dynasty shamans. He is credited as having invented the drum 鼓 *gǔ* that *wu* shamans use in their rites, and a form of divination 筮 *shì* using stalks of grass. The *Liezi* 列子 (5th century BC) traces Wuxian's lineage back to the Yellow Emperor and from Wuxian came a long lineage of great *wu* 巫, shamans and healers.

The chief shaman was then deified 神化 *shén huà* and venerated as an ancestor spirit who can gift shamans with blessings.

An ancestor or deified shaman spirit who can bless present-day shamans is a recurring and unifying motif found across Asian cultures. The *txiv neeb* shamans of the Hmong spiritually descend from Siv Yis, the first shaman, a divine being with the knowledge of healing and defeating evil.³⁹ The *jhākri* of Nepal hold a similar belief, that the first and primordial shaman was Mahādev who created shamans and taught them the magical arts, *tantra-mantra*.⁴⁰ Mahādev gifted the descendant shamans with magical drums and knowledge of how to heal the sick and exorcise evil. Likewise, the *tāng ki* of the cultures by the Pacific Ocean venerate Matsu who was a shaman in her mortal life then deified as Wuxian was. Matsu is now a patron goddess that shamans pray to for blessings.

This practicum will call upon the ancestral spirit of Wuxian in prayer to receive a divine omen on how you might advance in your metaphysical and spiritual studies from where you are now. Using the yarrow stalk method instructed in Chapter 7, you'll be constructing a trigram of the Ba Gua, rather than the six-line hexagram.

For this divination ritual, opt for all-blue ceremonial wear. You do not need special articles of clothing; rather, from what you already have, go with an outfit that is predominantly a medium to dark blue. One common association I found among north Asian and southeast Asian shamanistic practices was the color blue in traditional ceremonial wear.

You'll also want to prepare three small dishes of offerings, such as uncooked grains, nuts, seeds, candies, fresh fruits, or pastries, and three cups (a small teacup size will suffice) of drinks, such as a good liquor, tea, and juice/nectar.

³⁸ Jun Shi 君奭 from the *Shangshu* 尚書 noting: "在祖乙時，則有若巫賢。可知巫賢是商王祖乙時期擔任上帝與商王之間媒介任務的大巫。"

³⁹ Pranee Liamputtong Rice and Pranee Liamputtong, *Hmong Women and Reproduction* (Westport: Bergin & Garvey, 2000), 47.

⁴⁰ Homayun Sidky, "On the Antiquity of Shamanism and its Role in Human Religiosity." *Method and Theory in the Study of Religion* 22 (2010), 72.

After the spirit has accepted the *qi* of these offerings, the spirit will replace that consumed *qi* with *shen* 神, meaning the offerings become blessed. When you consumer those offerings after the divination ritual, they will bless you with good health and prosperity.

Begin by washing your hands and rinsing your mouth thoroughly. This is symbolic of personal purification. Light one stick of incense. Next, tap a wood block instrument three times. Alternatively, in lieu of a wood block, you can beat a ritual drum or ring tingsha cymbals three times. You'll want to beat at about 40 bpm, or beats per minute.

Recite the following:

I call upon Ancestor Wuxian
and pray for your Great Blessing

Bài qǐng Wū Xián Zǔ
Qí shòu zī jiè fú

拜請巫賢祖
祈受茲介福

Then rap the instrument three more times to conclude, again at 40 bpm.







Proceed with the yarrow stalk divination where three operations of counting will yield a single *yao* line. However, you'll be stopping at three rounds of the counting operations to produce a three-line trigram rather than a six-line hexagram.

The Counting Operations

First Count	→	5 stalks	=	3
		9 stalks	=	2
Second Count	→	4 stalks	=	3
		8 stalks	=	2
Third Count	→	4 stalks	=	3
		8 stalks	=	2

Sum of Three Counts

Sum of Three Counts

6			X	Changing Yin
7				Unchanging Yang
8				Unchanging Yin
9			X	Changing Yang










If the resulting trigram had changing lines, cast a second transformed trigram in the same method you would cast a transformed hexagram. If the result of your trigram was all unchanging lines, for a locked trigram, then you will double the trigram, similar to receiving the “✕” result.

The primary trigram you received in the divination invoking Ancestor Wuxian will reveal to you what your greatest gift is as a metaphysician and what area of study or spiritual cultivation to advance. This is Ancestor Wuxian revealing to you what facet of the mystic you are growing into right now.

If, for example, the received primary trigram is Thunder, turn to the corresponding entry in Chapter 5. The trigram is interpreted as an omen from Ancestor Wuxian. Read through the entry for your primary trigram. What is the ancestral shaman spirit pointing you toward? Bridge the gap with your intuition.

The archetype of the mystic corresponding with your primary hexagram reveals your strongest talent or ability as a mystic. In the example of Thunder, the corresponding

archetype is the Spellcaster. This is someone with an innate above-average aptitude for spell-crafting. Ancestor Wuxian is advising to further hone that skill.

Received Primary Trigram				Transformed Hexagram
Third Operation	6	 	X	
Second Operation	8	 		 
First Operation	7			

If, for example, the primary trigram is Fire, then the corresponding archetype is the Philosopher. You probably apply academic rigor to metaphysics. You care deeply for the theoretical because you want to answer how and why. You also have the potential to become a leading luminary. Lean in more these next few months to book study of the occult arts.

The Warrior archetype in this context refers to activism in your community. Consider the metaphor of the military strategist, which was a key role of the Shang dynasty shaman. What social change or movement are you being called to contribute to?

The trigram Heaven, corresponding with the Virtuoso is an omen to embrace music and dance as forms of personal ritual and expressions of spirituality. Bring more music and dance into your life. You are probably one with a natural talent for choreography rites and ceremonies. Optimize that.

If the archetype of your received trigram is the Shaman, this is perhaps a most affirming sign. If your received archetype is The Healer, you probably would have made a great medical doctor, no matter what professional field you've ended up in. Consider serious dedication to study of the healing arts. Learn reiki, aromatherapy, or herbalism, etc.

The sign of the Alchemist appearing in such a divination ritual right now is the ancestral shaman spirit letting you know that you are on a defined, specialized path toward achieving a personal Great Work. Now, your focus should be entirely on completing that Great Work, an undertaking that is your *magnus opus*.

The Enchanter is one who understands the deeper and more profound value of aesthetics. This is one with innate charisma, which you can cultivate into gains of social influence. When you consume the blessed offerings, your charisma is going to be augmented, and the next chapter of your life path is about achieving heightened social influence.

Next, note the Wu Xing cycle correspondence for your primary trigram. In the example of Thunder, the governing Wu Xing phase of change is Wood.

Wood corresponds with spiritual cultivation, from the Five Mystical Arts of Taoist metaphysics. Thus, to advance in embodying the facet of the mystic that is the Spellcaster, dedicate the next three moon cycles (i.e., lunar months) to the mystical art corresponding with Wood, which is spiritual cultivation.

This is how you best solidify your own foundations so that you can be a more powerful, effective mystic.

Table 10.1 Eight Trigrams and Five Mystical Arts Correspondences

Trigrams		Wu Xing		The Five Mystical Arts
 Thunder	 Wind	木Wood	Spiritual Cultivation	
 Fire		火Fire	Divinatory Arts	
 Mountain	 Earth	土Earth	Study of Appearances	
 Heaven	 Lake	金Metal	Study of Fate	
 Water		水Water	Study of Healing Arts	

Assign the transformed hexagram as the upper trigram, and the received primary trigram as the lower trigram. If there were no changing lines in your divination, then double the trigram. For example, if none of the lines were changing in the primary trigram of Thunder, then the resulting hexagram would be Thunder over Thunder.

In the example of the top changing line in the trigram Thunder, the transformed hexagram is Fire. Thus, the hexagram result is Fire (the assigned upper trigram) over Thunder (the assigned lower trigram). This is hexagram 21.

Read the Oracle message for your resulting hexagram. This is the ancestral shaman spirit guiding you on what you most need to do next to advance in the most self-empowering way. To achieve that, the *qi* to cultivate and master now relates to the correspondences of your primary trigram.

After the divination ritual, bow your head to give thanks for the blessed food and drink. You may then consume the offerings you had given to the ancestral shaman spirit.

Anyone from any walk of life can call upon Ancestor Wuxian. If you feel a closer connection to the goddess Matsu, then invoke her by replacing the preceding invocation with the following:

I call upon Shamaness Matsu
and pray for your Great Blessing

Bài qǐng Wū Mā Zǔ
Qí shòu zī jiè fú

拜請巫媽祖
祈受茲介福

Of course, this divination ritual for receiving blessings from an ancestral shaman spirit can be modified to reflect your culture, heritage, or spiritual path. You're invited to invoke either Ancestor Wuxian or the goddess Matsu, but feel free to adjust any part of the instructions for invocation of your own tradition's ancestral shaman spirit. If you're of Hmong ancestry, for instance, that might be Siv Yis.

When approached with sincerity and earnest heart, you may find that any physical or emotional ailments you had been afflicted with will have improved. The ancestral shaman spirit has empowered you with what you need to advance faster in your metaphysical studies

and, what's more, no ancestor shaman is going to leave without a little bit of healing magic applied to what's been ailing you. It's just the nature of the shaman.

Practicum 10.2
from Chapter 10

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