

8.3 Poison Magic and Defenses to Ward Off Poison Magic

Hexagram 18: Gu. Decay



Figure 8.5 Protection Amulet to Ward Against Poison Magic

“Poison Magic” is the English translation for a tradition of black magic, or malevolent spell-crafting, found in Chinese witchcraft and Taoist sorcery, called Gǔ Dào (蠱道) or Gǔ Shù (蠱術) [Long form: 蠱道巫術 or Gǔ Dào Wū Shù]. You might also find it translated as Gu or Ku.

From a mystical perspective, Hexagram 18’s name, Gu, refers to Poison Magic. Craft is neither good nor evil, it’s not black or white. Craft is a modality, nothing more, but also nothing less. It is a form of technology, albeit occult technology.

However, craft can be expressed in the binary as either a creative or destructive force. Gu Dao is about destruction. It is the metaphor of the virus, the parasite, of causing something to rot, to spoil, and to disintegrate—to decay.

Gǔ means poison or venom. It’s pestilence—to plague, to cause disease, to infect with a virus. It also means to bewitch. So there’s a subtext of dark arts here, some modality of foul play at work. And Gǔ is a universal force of change in this universe; hence it is one of the sixty-four hexagrams of the Yi. Culturally, Gu Dao was linked to women from minority ethnic groups in southern China and the South China Seas, who became known to be masters of the craft.

Dào 道 is the same “Dào” that means the Tao, Taoism. Thus, perhaps Gǔ Dào is better translated as the Poison Path. Dào refers to a body of teachings. Dào is knowledge. It’s the path to acquiring knowledge. There’s an implication that the teachings and knowledge is philosophical, mystical, or spiritual in nature. Thus, the Poison Path has become recognized as one of the mystery paths of esoteric Taoism.

The first thing every adept of poison magic learns is the methodology for creating the most powerful poison. In the Poison Path, the most powerful poison is produced by sealing venomous creatures into a jar and forcing them to devour one another. Specifically, the Five Poisons (五毒, wǔ dú) are used: snakes, scorpions, centipedes, toads, or spiders.

A poison is then made from the last surviving creature.

The fifth day of the fifth lunar month (called “Double Five”) is considered the unluckiest day of the year, and so the most powerful Poison Path witchcraft would be cast on this day. Also, generally poison magic, curses, and hexes performed on the hour of 午 (wǔ), 11 am to 12:59 pm, as that ascendant hour is considered more potent.

The venomous creatures are left sealed in that jar and placed somewhere dark and remote until only the corpse of one creature is left. The poison or baneful magic is crafted from that remaining corpse. Alternatively, if that last remaining venomous creature remains alive, a sorcerer would summon a Gu demon to possess that creature. Then, once possessed by the Gu demon, the venom is extracted and used in spell-working. When the creature used is a snake, its bile and blood are also harvested. For frogs, its organs are used as ingredients.

Gu poison slowly infiltrates the victim’s body, attacking first the abdomen then the heart, and takes ten long days of pain and illness, causing the victim to vomit out liquified internal organs until, devouring from inside out. Gu Dao shares that same philosophy of attacking from inside out, causing internal, psychological, or psychic damage and mental illness first before ruining the victim’s livelihood, social relationships, and physical or material wellbeing.





Defenses Against Poison Magic | As a defensive antidote against poison magic, realger wine (雄黃酒, xiónghuángjiǔ) is used to counteract against curses.

Sprinkling realger wine around the perimeter of a home is a form of warding; in antiquity, this was done in the summer months not just to safeguard against evil spirits (especially during Ghost Month), but also to repel against poisonous insects and snakes.

Historically, realger wine was ingested, but we now know that realger wine itself is toxic, laced with arsenic. Thus, it should not be ingested and if used in Wu witchcraft, needs to be handled with care.

Red cinnabar is also used as a form of defense against poison magic.

The talisman pictured in Figure 8.5 is a Fu and a form of magical seal crafted into jewelry and worn. The words inscribed upon it are 富貴昌樂 (fù guì chāng lè), as follows:

Oracle bone script	Chinese character	Location on Seal	Pin Yin	Meaning
	富	Top	<i>Fù</i>	Wealth and riches
	貴	Bottom	<i>Guì</i>	Precious; valuables; honors bestowed
	昌	Right	<i>Chāng</i>	Light that brings prosperity
	樂	Left	<i>Lè</i>	Happiness; to be always flourishing

If you believe you have been cursed, then to remove it, burn these four ideograms in the form of a seal into a medallion-shaped piece of wood. Use ink made from red cinnabar or dragon’s blood resin to paint into the etchings. Then for seven consecutive days, every morning burn incense and place a cup of black tea onto the medallion, then recite “FÙ GUÌ CHĀNG LÈ” repeatedly until you intuit that the recitation has infused into and melded with the properties of the tea. A traditional approach would be 108 recitations, kept count with mala prayer beads