



Culture and Leadership Assignment:

The Seven Riches of the Universal Monarch

Recommended reading:

Sun Tzu, *The Art of War*

Chögyam Trungpa Rinpoche, *Shambhala: The Sacred Path of the Warrior*

Sakyong Mipham Rinpoche, *Ruling Your World*

According to Sun Tzu, the idea of *shih* describes how a configuration of forces in the world can focus effective power. It is the potential energy in situations. It is finding advantage, recognizing when a situation is at the tipping point, seizing opportunity, and making use of the resources that exist all around us. Employing *shih* is how effective leaders find victory.

Now we will diverge a bit and look at another system for developing skillful leadership, the Seven Riches of the Universal Monarch. This system was developed in ancient India, even before Sun Tzu, but it corresponds elegantly with the concept of *shih*. It is another way of shaping our outlook and our lives so that we can exist in the center of a matrix of power.

This system was developed as a guide for kings, but it applies equally to us—we are the monarchs of our own lives. Your life may be very humble, but nevertheless, you are the ruler. Therefore, like any king or queen, we will be most effective if we have a court of loyal ministers, soldiers, and riches at our command. This is the *shih* of the ruler. So what is your personal court made up of? According to the Indian text, the ruler holds 7 riches:

1. **The Queen**—the queen represents decency and friendship. It doesn't matter if you are male or female, the queen principle is that one needs a close friend, a partner, someone you trust who will listen to you and accept both your wisdom and your neurosis. He or she doesn't need to be a romantic partner, but it is someone you can generally rely on.
2. **The Minister**—the minister represents counsel. This is another friend, but in this case the friend is an advisor, rather than someone who you have an intimate trust in. He or she is willing to give good advice and to tell you the truth, even if it might sting.
3. **The General**—the general represents fearlessness and protection. This is another friend, but the general's role is to look after your well-being. This is a friend who doesn't just give advice—he or she can get you out of a tight spot.



4. **The Steed**—the steed, or horse, represents exertion and industriousness. It's not a literal horse—it's the idea that the ruler doesn't get stuck in laziness, but fully relates to each situation.
5. **The Elephant**—the elephant represents steadiness, it doesn't get swayed by the breezes or every new idea, but walks forward with steadiness and power.
6. **The Wish-Granting Jewel**—the jewel represents generosity. A true monarch doesn't hoard their wealth, but exudes a sense of endless richness. Even if we are poor we can offer something, and this makes us wealthy.
7. **The Wheel of Command**—the wheel is a symbol of leadership. It represents being in command, being able to achieve what we wish to. It is having leadership skills and confidence.





The project:

You will make a chart of your life in relation to the 7 Riches. This is partially an opportunity to reflect on your life as it is, partially an exercise in planning how to strengthen your situation, and partially an art project. You will draw a large diagram that incorporates the following:

- In the center is your throne. It is you, the ruler of your world.
- In the first inner circle you should draw symbols of the 7 Riches.
- In the next circle, describe your current situation in relation to each of the 7. Does someone fill the role of queen in your life? Do you have a minister? Who would you call if you got lost in a scary neighborhood? That might be your general. Do you possess the steed principle of exertion, or do you tend to succumb to laziness or feel intimidated by challenges? Do you possess the elephant of steadiness, or do you feel indecisive and swayed by each new thing? Do you have jewel of generosity? This would be a situation that you give to on a regular basis, without getting anything in return, or it could just be a strong habit of offering your help as needed. Do you hold the wheel of command? What are your skills and strengths as a leader? Reflect on these areas of your life without judgment. You are young and can't be expected to have it all going on. Don't be upset if you don't see much "richness" in an area. Knowing what we might like to have is the first step towards bringing it into our lives.
- In the outer circle, write an aspiration or a plan. This is an area for ideas about how you can gather this richness, or how you can strengthen this part of your life. You should list numerous ideas, and they should be somewhat realistic—things you could actually see yourself doing. For example, in order to increase my Steed power, my industriousness, I could start taking martial arts lessons, I could cook my family a meal once/week, I could wake up 30 minutes earlier each day, etc. You may want to ask yourself some questions and contemplate this a bit. For example, for the Minister, "how do I gather friends whose intelligence I respect and who I trust to be truthful?"

Enjoy!