AQUARIAN ALCHEMY · THE FIRE ELEMENT

FOUR WAYS OF LOOKING INTO FIRE

People have looked into fire for four different reasons. Here's how to tell them apart.

	PRACTICE	WHAT PEOPLE DO	WHAT THEY SEEK	EARLIEST SOLID RECORD	STATUS
1	**Reading omens in fire (pyromancy)**	Watch how an offering, bone or smoke behaves in fire	A sign or an answer	Shang dynasty China (c. 1250–1046 BCE): heated oracle bones, the earliest surviving body of Chinese writing [8]	**Historical practice; predictions are belief**
2	**Flame scrying**	Gaze into a lamp or flame until images or visions appear	A vision or a message	Greek and Egyptian magical papyri (3rd–4th century CE), with recipes for visions in a lamp's flame [7]	**Historical practice; images are real experiences, their meaning is belief**
3	**Flame concentration (trataka; fire kasina)**	Rest the gaze on a flame or point to steady the mind, then work with the afterimage	Concentration and absorption	Buddhist Visuddhimagga (c. 5th century CE), which lists fire among its meditation objects [6] [5]	**Living practice; small, early studies of attention**
4	**Sitting with sacred fire (dhuni, havan, temple and hearth fires)**	Tend, make offerings into, or simply sit beside a fire	Purification, presence, devotion	Ancient Vedic ritual; living traditions such as Haidakhan and Zoroastrian fire temples [16]	**Living devotional practice; belief**

Erik's practice sits between rows two and four: scrying in form, sitting with sacred fire in lineage.

WHY PEOPLE SEE IMAGES IN FIRE Fading, filling-in, pattern-finding. [9]

SOURCES

[5] Talwadkar et al. (2014); Swathi et al. (2021); Roj et al. (2025): trataka studies and review.
[6] Buddhaghosa, Visuddhimagga (Ñāṇamoli translation): fire kasina.
[7] Betz (ed.), The Greek Magical Papyri in Translation (1986): lamp divination.
[8] Keightley, Sources of Shang History (1978): oracle bones.
[9] Caputo (2010), Perception, and later reviews: the strange-face illusion.
[16] Haidakhandi Samaj: the fire ceremony.

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