

Week VI



### **Halloween (All-Hallows-Eve). Sunset Oct. 31 to Sunset Nov. 1.**

Roots: Gaelic (Ireland, Scotland) pagan festival of Samhain (sau:in) and the Christian holy day of All Saints.

Old Irish “summer’s end,” the end of the lighter half of the year and the beginning of “the darker half.”

Festival of the dead. Ancient Gaels: The border between this world and the otherworld became thin on Samhain, allowing spirits, both harmless and harmful, to pass through.

Some animals are being slaughtered and plants are dying.

**Bonfires:** People and livestock walk between them as a cleansing ritual; **bones of slaughtered animals** are cast into the flames.

**Costumes and masks** are worn to copy the spirits or placate them.

**Young men with masked,** veiled or blackened faces, dressed in white.

*Shamhnag*—**turnips** which were hollowed out and carved with faces to make lanterns—were also used to ward off harmful spirits.

Was also called **Feile Moingfhinne** (meaning “festival of Mongfhionn,” a goddess of the pagan Irish worshipped on Samhain).

In **medieval Ireland**, a principal festival celebrated with a great assembly at the royal court in Tara, lasting for three days.

**Places are set for the dead** at the Samhain feast and stories and tales of the dead are



***Snap-Apple Night*** by [Daniel Maclise](#) showing a Halloween party in [Blarney, Ireland](#), in 1832. The young children on the right [bob for apples](#). A couple in the center play a variant, which involves retrieving an apple hanging from a string. The couples at left play [divination](#) games

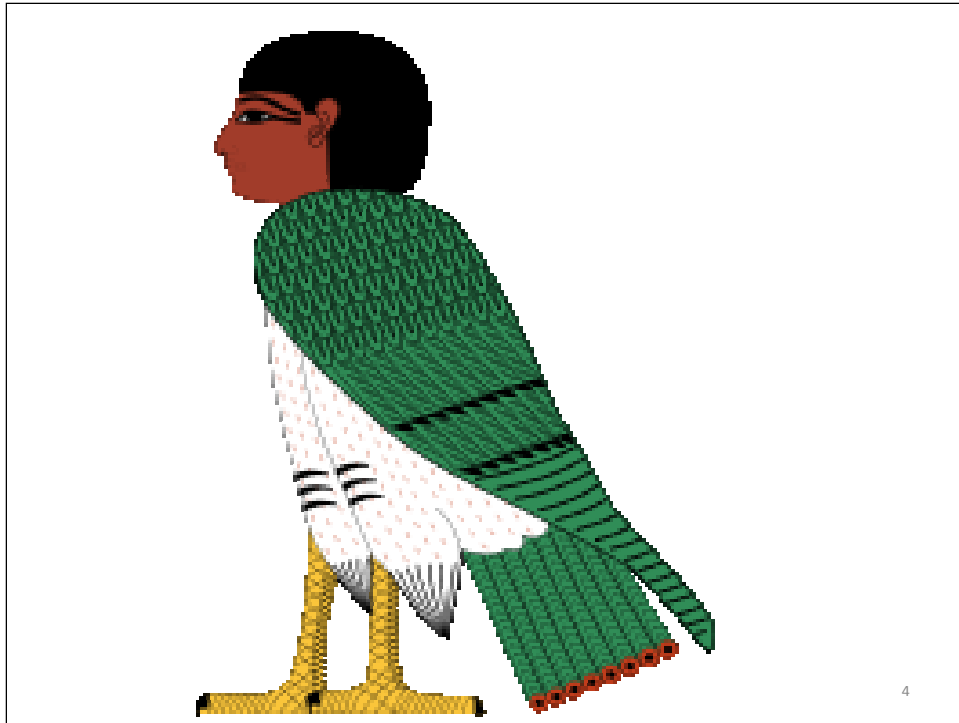
### **All Saints' Day, Nov. 1**

Halloween is a largely secular celebration, but some religions have expressed strong feelings given the tie to the November All Saints' Day.

In early **medieval times All Saints' Day** occurred May 13, going back in great antiquity to the pagan Feast of Lemures.

At Lemures malevolent and restless spirits of the dead were propitiated by the ancient Romans with offerings of beans.

It was a time to **appease or expel the evil spirits** by walking barefoot in or around the house, throwing **black beans, clashing bronze pots** and repeating the chant "Ghosts of my fathers and ancestors be gone" nine times.



Ba took the form of a bird with a human head.

### **Ancient Egyptian concept of the soul**

The Ancient Egyptians believed that a [human soul](#) was made up of five parts: the *Ren*, the *Ba*, the *Ka*, the *Sheut*, and the *Ib*

An important part of the Egyptian soul was thought to be the **Ib** (*jb*), or *heart*. The *Ib* or metaphysical heart was believed to be formed from one drop of blood from the child's mother's heart, taken at conception. To Ancient Egyptians, it was the heart and not the brain that was the seat of emotion, thought, will and intention.

A person's [shadow](#), **Sheut** (*šwt* in Egyptian), was always present. It was believed that a person could not exist without a shadow, nor a shadow without a person.

As a part of the soul, a person's **ren** ([rn](#) 'name') was given to them at birth and the Egyptians believed that it would live for as long as that name was spoken, which explains why efforts were made to protect it and the practice of placing it in numerous writings.

The '**Ba**' is in some regards the closest to the contemporary Western religious notion of a *soul*, but it also was everything that makes an individual unique, similar to the notion of 'personality'. Like a soul, the 'Ba' is an aspect of a person that the Egyptians believed would live after the body died, and it is sometimes depicted as a human-headed bird flying out of the tomb to join with the 'Ka' in the afterlife.

The **Ka** (*k3*) was the Egyptian concept of vital essence, that which distinguishes the difference between a living and a dead person, with death occurring when the *ka* left



The soul's **journey is often provisioned** by the living. For example, the Greek and Roman dead were given not only money to be ferried across the Styx, but also confectionary for Cerberus, the terrifying three-headed dog which guarded the entrance to Hades.

An ancient Etruscan vase from Caere (ca 525 BC) depicting Hercules presenting Cerberus (three headed hound that guards the gates of Hades) to Eurystheus.



The myths of ancient Egypt paint a vivid picture of the **soul being examined** by 42 judges in the throne room of Osiris, lord of the underworld.

**Those who fail** to prove that they have lived virtuous lives are **devoured by a monster**.

Whereas, the fortunate souls who **pass the test** when their hearts or consciences are **weighed against the feather** of the goddess Maat, deity of justice and truth, join the gods in their eternal battle against the serpent of chaos, Apep.

Egypt Old Kingdom (ca 2780-2250 BCE) Concept of truth, balance, order, law, morality, and justice. Maat was also personified as goddess regulating the stars, seasons, and the actions of both mortals and the deities, who set the order of the universe from chaos at the moment of creation





Egyptian Book of the Dead written on papyrus showing the weighing of the heart in the Duat (underworld) using the feather of Maat (goddess and the personification of truth and justice) as the measure in balance. Ostrich feather represents truth.

This detail scene, from the Papyrus of [Hunefer](#) (ca. 1275 B.C.), shows the scribe Hunefer's heart being weighed on the scale of [Maat](#) against the feather of truth, by the jackal-headed [Anubis](#). The Ibis-headed [Thoth](#), scribe of the gods, records the result. If his heart is lighter than the feather, Hunefer is allowed to pass into the afterlife. If not, he is eaten by the waiting chimeric devouring creature [Ammit](#) composed of the deadly crocodile, lion, and hippopotamus. Vignettes such as these were a common illustration in Egyptian books of the dead.



Tibetan Dragon, not a thread cross

### Shamans and Death

Centuries before Buddhism came to Tibet (around the early CE), a shamanistic culture held sway over both Tibet and Mongolia.

Only a **shaman in trance** had the ability to travel the three realms (special places on **earth, heavens and subterranean labyrinths**) and understand the intricate workings of the universe.

He could divine the causes of illness and misfortune, or **retrieve lost souls abducted by spirits**.

It was he who recommended the **appropriate sacrifice**, typically the weaving of a “thread cross” (*mdos*) and the presentation of a ransom to the offended or malicious spirit.

Under the influence of Buddhism, the chaotic forces of nature, variously feared and honored by the shamanic traditions, were made to fit harmoniously into the Indian cosmological model.

**Old shamanic rites were adopted by the Buddhist clergy and heavily overlaid with Buddhist liturgy and symbolism.**

Monks adorned their temples with such archaic paraphernalia as the shaman’s **divination arrow**, his magic mirror and precious pieces of fine rock crystal.

From the trimmings on the old shaman’s tunic were derived theatrical costumes for the Buddhist **dances** of the eagle, stag, snow lion and skeleton.

The **shaman eagle**, by which he once ascended to his **nest in the world tree**, became





Yama Dharmapala, the Lord of Death is revered in Tibet as a guardian of spiritual practice and was likely revered before the conversion of Tibet from Bon to Buddhism. Field Museum, Chicago. Considered to have been the first mortal who died and espied the way to the celestial abodes, and in the virtue of precedence he became ruler of the departed. Yama, is the wrathful Dharmapala who is Lord of the Hell Realm.



### **The Wheel of Life: Yama, Lord of the Underworld The Wrathful Dharmapala of Hell**

The creature holding the Wheel of Life in his hooves is Yama, the wrathful dharmapala who is Lord of the Hell Realm.

The terrible face of Yama, who represents death, peers over the top of the Wheel. In spite of his appearance, Yama is not evil. He is a wrathful [dharmapala](#), a creature devoted to protecting Buddhism and Buddhists. Although we may be frightened of death, it is not evil; just inevitable.

In legend, Yama was a holy man who believed he would realize enlightenment if he meditated in a cave for 50 years. In the 11th month of the 49th year, robbers entered the cave with a stolen bull and cut off the bull's head. When they realized the holy man had seen them, the robbers cut off his head also.

But the holy man put on the bull's head and assumed the terrible form of Yama. He killed the robbers, drank their blood, and threatened all of Tibet. He could not be stopped until Manjushri, Bodhisattva of Wisdom, manifested as the even more terrible dharmapala Yamantaka and defeated Yama. Yama then became a protector of Buddhism.

The fierce and bull-headed Yama stands on his buffalo mount, which tramples on a corpse. He is surrounded by flickering flames against a black background. He holds a noose and skull-crested club, with a string of severed heads hanging from his waist. Yama is the Indian god of death, who in Tibetan Buddhism was conquered by Manjushri and made a protector of the Buddhist *dharma* ('teachings'). One of the Tibetan protector deities or *dharmapalas*.



## Otherworld

The **Other World** may lie beyond an impenetrable forest on the other side of a fiery river, or beyond or below the sea, or above or below the earth.

To gain access to the “**thrice tenth kingdom**” (as it is termed in a East Slavonic folktale), it may be necessary to scale a precipitous mountain or descend into a cave or hole in the ground.

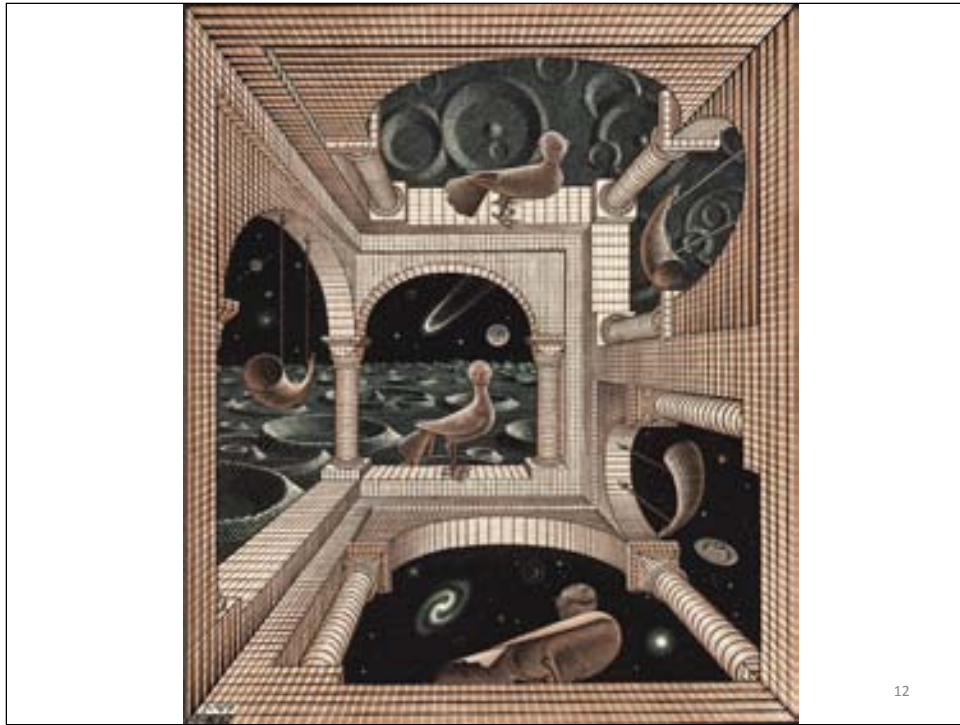
In his trance, the **soul of the shaman** was believed to fly to the world above or descend to **accompany the soul of a dead person**.

In other mythology, the **journey of the hero** represents the shaman’s magical journey **to the land of the dead** and his **return as a wiser and more powerful man**.

Another theory sees the source of journeys to an Other World in initiation rites, in which the initiate was believed to **die before being reborn** into a new stage of existence.

Certainly the hero must face terrifying danger before emerging from the Other World.

Furthermore, the belief in **death as a journey** involving a climb seems to have been preserved in parts of Russia in the custom of **saving one’s nail clippings** so they would turn into talons after death.



Otherworld modern



Yupik shaman exorcising evil spirits from a sick boy, Nushajak, Alaska 1890's

### Vision Quests and Guardian Spirits

**Direct contact** with the world of gods and spirits is of great importance to most traditional Native American cultures.

It is achieved principally through the “**vision quest**,” a process of solitary fasting and prayer in a remote place.

Those whose **visionary experience** occurs may go on to become **shamans, healer-priests**, who are the chief intermediaries between human beings and the sacred world.

While many may acquire power, only the most powerful will become full shamans, others without the full range of shamanistic attributes are usually termed “**medicine men**.”



Ojibwa medicine man preparing a herbal remedy.

The relationship between a **shaman and the spirit world** amounts almost to a personal religion, while the account of the first meeting with the spirits becomes the **shaman's personal myth**.

The power of this myth is important for establishing the shaman's credentials with the tribe, on behalf of which his or her skills are used to locate game, find lost objects and, above all, treat the sick.

Shamans can enter a **trance** at will and journey to the **sacred world**, the **land of the dead**.

Visible representations of the spirits are found in the shaman's "**medicine bundle**," a collection of artifacts of spiritual significance used in curing rituals.

Symbols of the spirits are also depicted on clothing and on ritual and spiritual objects.

The Ojibwa are one of larger groups of tribes in Canada and around the Great Lakes region.





Mongolian shaman with mythological powers to bring back the souls of those long deceased.

### Encounters with the Spirit World

**Mongolian shamans** have to this day woven into their costumes knowledge of light and darkness, of the **deities above and below** and of spirits both benevolent and malign.

While resting in the world tree, fledgling shamans learn **the way of sacrifice** to ensure harmony and order within the web of life.

They return to men with a knowledge of the five gods of wind, the five gods of lightning, the four gods of the corners, the five of the horizon, the five of entrance and the eight of borders.

They know the seven gods of steam and the seven of thunder and the **countless number of other gods**.

For Mongolian shamans, knowledge of the gods gives them great power.

Early shamans were apparently so powerful that they **could call back the souls of those long deceased**, so that the **lord of the dead** feared that his realm would be emptied around him.

In a fit of rage, the lord of the dead reduced the originally double-headed shamanic drum to its current single-headed style in order to protect his sovereignty.



The Pachacamac Shrine 40 km southeast of Lima in the Valley of the Lurin river. Several pyramids have been uncovered, at least 17 identified, Dates back to 800-1450 but early artifacts back to 200.

### **Spirits, Sacrifice and Sacred Journeys**

Willis notes that from the earliest times, the ancient South American civilizations shared common features in their religious outlook and mythic beliefs.

Sacred **journeys to mountains and temple-pyramid shrines** were evidently important in prehistoric times, and indeed continue to be so today.

The most famous ancient pilgrimage site was the shrine of Pachacamac on Peru's central coast.

Here a **priesthood** administered the worship of an earth and creator deity, made **human and animal sacrifices** and received oracular predictions in return.

Pachacamac was considered to be the supreme god by the coastal peoples. When the Incas conquered the area, they acknowledged his importance by permitting his shrine alongside a temple to their sun god, Inti

### **Inca Death**

Like many ancient Andean people before them, the Incas viewed death in two ways.

One was **biological death**, when the body ceased functionally and was cremated, buried, or mummified.

The other was **social death**, when certain privileged individuals remained active in the minds, souls, and daily lives of the living until they were forgotten or replaced by other prominent figures.



Statuette of Mictlantecuhtli in the [British Museum](#).

**Mictlantecuhtli** (Nahuatl pronunciation: [\[mikt͡ɬaːnˈtekʷt͡ɬi\]](#), meaning "Lord of Mictlan"), in [Aztec mythology](#), was a god of the dead and the king of [Mictlan](#) (Chicunauhmiclan), the lowest and northernmost section of the [underworld](#).

He was one of the principal gods of the [Aztecs](#) and was the most prominent of several gods and goddesses of death and the underworld. The worship of Mictlantecuhtli sometimes involved ritual [cannibalism](#), with human flesh being consumed in and around the temple.

He was often depicted wearing sandals as a symbol of his high rank as Lord of Mictlan.<sup>[8]</sup> His arms were frequently depicted raised in an aggressive gesture, showing that he was ready to tear apart the dead as they entered his presence.

He was one of only a few deities held to govern over all three types of souls identified by the Aztecs, who distinguished between the souls of people who died normal deaths (of old age, disease, etc.), heroic deaths (e.g. in battle, sacrifice or during childbirth), or non-heroic deaths.

When a person died, they were interred with grave goods, which they carried with them on the long and dangerous journey to the underworld. Upon arrival in Mictlan these goods were offered to Mictlantecuhtli and his wife.<sup>[5]</sup>



Cumulonimbus clouds are involved in thunderstorms, and can produce heavy rain and hail. It was believed that the movement of these clouds was directed by demons, who led them over fields to destroy crops.

### **Spirit Souls of the Departed: The Zduhac**

The idea that the **soul is separable from the body** and **can emerge during sleep** as well as death, is found among all Slavs.

Called Zduhac by the Serbs, souls gather on mountain tops and do battle with each other.

Victory in these battles bring prosperity to the sleeping owner, but if his soul perishes he will never awaken.

The zduhac was also a man with the inborn supernatural ability to chase away or destroy demons that brought bad weather.

While asleep his **soul would leave his body** and **confront the demons**, and thus **protect his estate**, village or region **from adverse weather** by moving it along to some other area.

The zduhaci (plural) of an area usually fought against the attacking zduaci of some other area who were bringing a **storm and hail clouds above their fields**.

The victorious zduhaci would loot the fertility from the fields and livestock of their defeated foes and take it to their own region.



Rusalka by Ivan Bilibin 1934

In [Slavic mythology](#), a **rusalka** (plural: *rusalki* or *rusalky*) was a female [ghost](#), water [nymph](#), [succubus](#) or [mermaid](#)-like [demon](#) that dwelled in a waterway. According to most traditions, the rusalki were fish-women, who lived at the bottom of rivers. In the middle of the night, they would walk out to the bank and dance in meadows. If they saw handsome men, they would fascinate them with songs and dancing, mesmerize them, then lead the man away to the river floor to his death. The stories about rusalki have parallels with those of [Hylas](#) and the [Nymphs](#), the Germanic [Nix](#), the [Irish Banshee](#), the [Scottish Bean Nighe](#) and the [Romanian Iele](#).

In most versions, the rusalka is an unquiet dead being, associated with the "unclean force". According to Zelenin, people who die violently and before their time, such as young women who commit suicide because they have been jilted by their lovers, or unmarried women who are pregnant, must live out their designated time on earth as a spirit

Rusalki like to have men and children join in their games. They can do so by enticing men with their singing and then drowning them, while the children were often lured with baskets of fruit. Men seduced by the rusalka could die in her arms, and in some versions hearing her laugh could also cause death. Alternatively, they would attract men, mainly bachelors, and tickle them to death.





The Vampire by Philip Burne-Jones 1897

Of all the mythical creatures familiar to the Slavs and their neighbors, none is better known than the vampire.

**Vampires** are essentially manifestations of the revenant (one who **returns after death** or after a long absence) unclean dead.

Certain categories of people become vampires after death, including **werewolves as well as sorcerers**, witches, sinners and the godless (which in Russia included heretics).

In some places (for example, Bulgaria) murderers, robbers, prostitutes and other socially undesirable people are also believed to turn into vampires.

Even non-miscreants who die normally may turn into vampires, particularly when **burial rites have not been read** over them, or when they have met an **untimely death** (for example, by suicide).

People **conceived or born on a holy day, the stillborn, or those born with a horny growth** at the bottom of their backbone or with teeth are marked as vampires.

At midnight they visit houses to suck the blood of or have sex with the sleepers, often their own relations, who then waste away and die.

Methods of combating vampires are numerous. Of sterner measures, the best known is the sharpened hawthorn or aspen stake driven into the body, or a stake or nail into the head.



# Immortality

- **Eternal life** is the concept of living in a physical or spiritual form for an infinite length of time.
- What form an unending human life would take, or **whether the soul exists and possesses immortality**, has been a major focus of religion and mythology.
- As we have seen, the *Epic of Gilgamesh*, one of the first literary works dating back to the 22<sup>nd</sup> century BCE, is primarily a quest of a hero seeking to become **immortal**.



Idun (1905) by Bernard Evans Ward, “ever young”, fertility, Prose Edda, 11 golden apples, Norse.

### **The Theft of the Golden Apples Asgard, Land of the Norse Gods**

One day when Odin, Loki and Hoenir tried to roast an ox, the meat would not cook properly.

A great eagle (actually the giant Thiazi) offered to help for a share of the meal. When the ox was finally roasted the bird carried off the greater part of the meat.

Loki in fury struck at him with a pole, but the eagle flew off with the pole fixed to his body and Loki still attached to the other end.

Loki was dragged along the ground, and Thiazi would not free him until he swore he would bring him the goddess Idun and the **golden apples of immortality**.

When Loki reached Asgard, he lured the goddess with the golden apples out into the forest.

Then the giant Thiazi in his eagle form swooped down and bore her off to the land of the giants.

**Deprived of the apples, the gods began to grow old and wrinkled**, and when they discovered Loki's part in the theft they threatened to kill him unless he brought Idun back.

So he flew as a falcon to Thiazi's hall, changed Idun into a nut and flew off with her in his claws.

The giant pursued but was singed by a fire built by the gods. He fell to the ground and the gods slew him.



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Tibetan Yaks mammals highest regions of the world, cannot live below 10,000 feet, large lungs, blood as medicine tradition.

### **The Severing of the Cord.**

The first Tibetan **king not to return to heaven** by a cord at the end of his reign was Gri-gum; his was the **first royal tomb of the land**.

Enraged by the **prophecy** of his shamanic soothsayer that **he was to die by the sword**, and determined to prove otherwise, Gri-gum challenged his ministers to a duel. The challenge was accepted by Lo-ngam, keeper of the king's horses.

For superstitious reasons, Gri-gum went into battle surrounded by a herd of **yaks with bags of soot upon their backs**.

Wearing a black turban fastened on his forehead with a shining mirror, Gri-gum had the corpses of a fox and a dog draped upon his shoulders.

As soon as combat began, the sharp horns of the yaks burst the bags of soot and the air was filled with a dense cloud of black dust.

Wildly waving his sword above his head, **Gri-gum severed the magic rope that connected him with heaven**, and inflicted no injury upon his opponent.

Deserted by his protector gods who felt aggrieved at the stinking corpses on his shoulders, Gri-gum was slain by Lo-ngam who carefully aimed an arrow at the only thing visible in all that cloud of gloom – the shining mirror on the king's forehead.



Papyrus perhaps the Egyptian Field of Reeds

### Life After Death

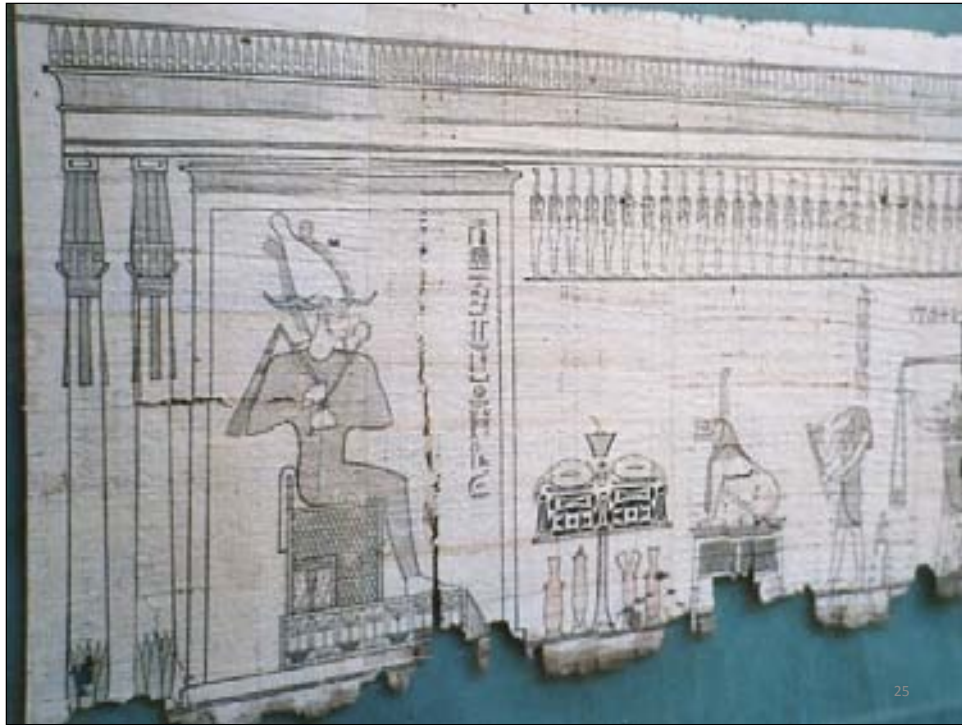
The Egyptian underworld was imagined as an elaborate landscape of rivers and islands, deserts and rivers of fire.

To find a way through it, and to **placate or overcome the gods** and demons who inhabited it, the soul had to become a hero-magician.

From the late 3<sup>rd</sup> millennium BCE, people of rank and wealth had **spells** inscribed on their **coffins**.

Later these spells were developed into the body of texts now known as the **Book of the Dead**, and papyrus rolls containing illustrated selections from the book were buried with wealthy Egyptians from the 16<sup>th</sup> century BCE on.

The deceased would be depicted overcoming such underworld dangers as the Four Crocodiles of the West (unknown as to meaning).



A section of the Egyptian Book of the Dead written on papyrus.



Late Jomon clay head, Shidanai Iwate Prefecture 1500-1000 BCE

### The Japanese Underworld

The subterranean **world of the dead** is known also as the **Land of Darkness** (Yomi-tsu-kuni).

The description on Yomi given in the Kojiki (Record of Ancient Matters and the oldest extant chronicle in Japan, dating from the early 8th century BCE) may reflect the late prehistoric Japanese practice of **burying the dead in stone-lined chambers deep** within large tumuli.

The expedient of **rolling a large boulder across the entrance to Yomi** perhaps reflects the **final sealing of such a tomb**. The boulder may also be a **metaphor for the insurmountable barrier between life and death**.





Noge-Otsuka Kofun timulus Tokyo, Early 5<sup>th</sup> Century



Persephone supervising Sisyphus in the Underworld, Attica black-figure amphora (vase, ca 530 BC, Staatliche Antikensammlungen museum).

### Grecian Underworld

The underworld is frequently encountered in Greek myth.

Sisyphus, a king of Corinth, who **tried to cheat death**, was condemned by the gods forever to push a rock to the top of a mountain; every time he almost reached the top, it rolled back down again.

An endless and unavailing labor.

The **maddening nature of the punishment** was reserved for Sisyphus due to his hubristic belief that his cleverness surpassed that of Zeus and for his greediness and deceit.

Tantalus was a king of Asia Minor, who in one account stole ambrosia and nectar from the gods; his internal punishment was to suffer **eternal thirst and hunger**, with food and drink always just beyond his reach – hence the word “tantalize.”



Tantalus initially known having been welcome to Zeus' table, misbehaved, stole ambrosia, nectar, and revealed secrets of the gods. Also other doings cannibalism, human sacrifice and infanticide.

The mythological **Grecian underworld** was where the **souls of dead mortals were judged and, if necessary, punished in the dark infernal regions of Erebus.**

**Erebus (the personification of darkness and shadow)** filled in all the corners and crannies of the world or Tartaros (a deep, gloomy place, a pit, or an abyss used as a **dungeon of torment and suffering**) that resides beneath the underworld.

However, Erebus also encompassed the **lands of the divine dead**, the **Elysian Fields** (the final resting place of the souls of the heroic and the virtuous) or Islands of the Blessed



One tradition followed by the legendary epic poet Homer, placed **Hades, god of the underworld**, in the sunless region beyond the great river Ocean which surrounded the earth.

But, as the Greeks discovered more of the world, a new tradition located it in the center of the earth, connected to the land of living by unfathomed caves and by rivers which flowed partly underground.

Acheron river of northwest Greece near the village of Glyki. River of pain or woe, one of five Greek infernal underground rivers. In the Homeric poems was described as a river of Hades.

But as we have also seen, to reach the **domain called Hades** (which was also the name of its divine ruler, a brother of Zeus), the newly departed souls have to be ferried across the infernal river Styx by Charon, the boatman.

Once there, as in Egypt, the Greek souls were judged and then **punished or rewarded** accordingly.



A 19<sup>th</sup>-century interpretation of Charon's crossing by Alexander Litovchenko.

The other infernal rivers were the Styx (**river of hate**), which surrounded the underworld, Lethe (**river of forgetfulness**), Cocytus (**river of wailing**) and Phelgethon or Puriphelgethon (**river of fire**). Charon, the boatman of the underworld, ferryman of Hades, ferried the souls of the dead across the Styx and also the Acheron (the dividing line between the world of the living and the dead).

A coin to pay Charon for passage, usually an obolus or danake, was sometimes placed in or on the **mouth of the dead person**.

Some authors say that those that **could not pay the fee** or those whose bodies were **left unburied**, had to wander the shores for one hundred years.

Roman poet Virgil on Charon:

There Charon stands, who rules the dreary coast-  
A sordid god: down from his hairy chin  
A length of beard descends, uncombed, unclean  
His eyes, like hollow furnaces on fire;  
A girdle, foul with grease, binds his obscene attire.





An 18<sup>th</sup> century Prose Edda manuscript illustration featuring Hermóðr upon Sleipnir (left), Baldr upper right and Hel lower right.

### Visits to the Underworld

In Viking belief, Odin, the All-Father, was ruler of Asgard, home of the gods.

His son Baldr, by Odin's wife Frigg, was killed by a mistletoe dart engineered by trickster god Loki. When the dart pierced Baldr, he fell down dead.

Odin and the other deities were plunged into mourning. The gods took up Baldr's body and laid it on a **funeral pyre built on his own ship**, alongside the body of his wife Nanna, who had died of grief, and his horse.

After Baldr's death Frigg begged that someone should **ride to Hel, the realm of the dead**, and seek to bring back her son.

It was Hermóðr the Bold, Baldr's brother, who volunteered.

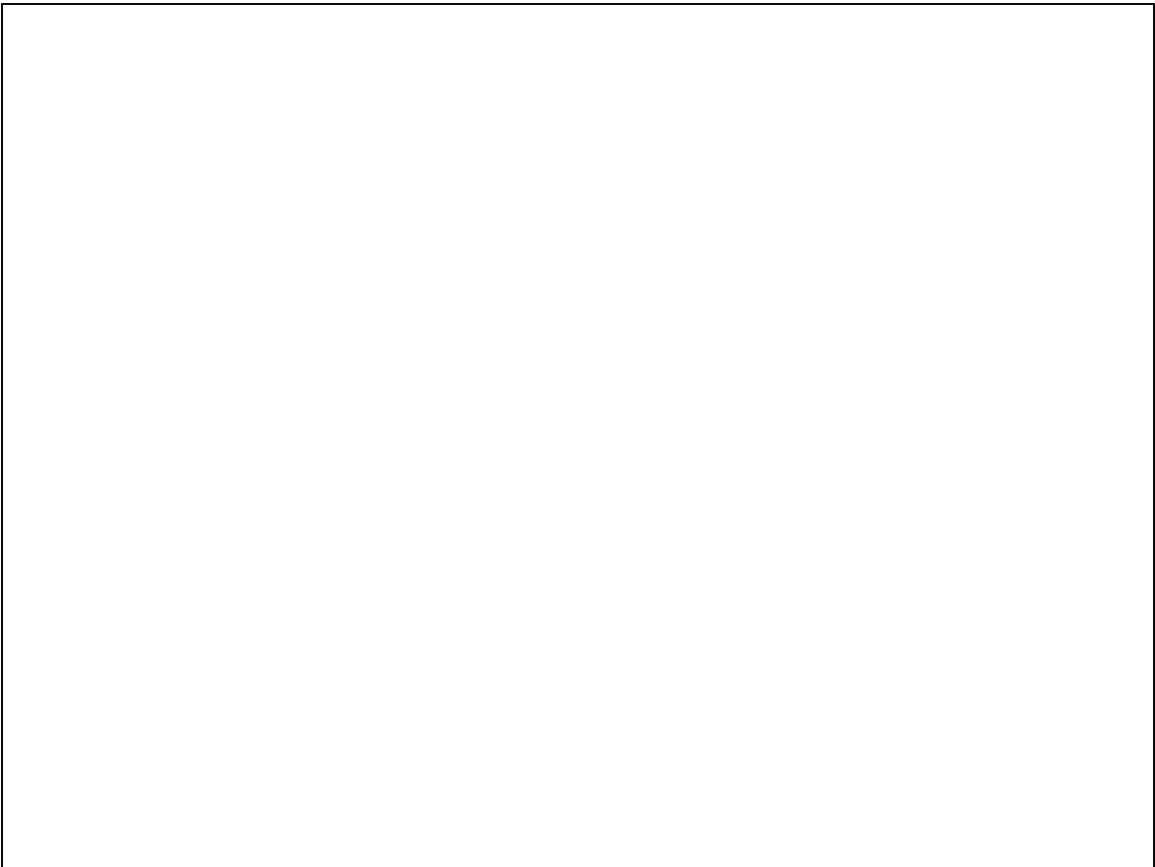
He rode away on Odin's horse Sleipnir, journeying for nine days and nine nights until he came to the golden bridge over the Echoing River.

He was directed down the road to Hel's gate, which Sleipnir cleared with an easy leap.

Hermóðr entered a hall where Baldr was sitting and stayed there three nights.

He begged Hel, the ruler of the realm which bore her name, to let Baldr return with him, but she replied that **only the weeping of all the people and all the things in the world could bring this about. So Baldr remained in Hel with impacts on the gods.**







“Freyer” (1901) by Johannes Gehrts

### Freyr and the Vanir: Funeral and Burial Myths

The main Scandinavian god of fertility and plenty was Freyr. He was one of the Vanir, a group of deities, male and female, mainly associated with the depths of the **earth and water**, as opposed to Aesir, the gods of the sky.

The Yngling kings of Uppsala in Sweden appear to have identified with Freyr after their deaths, and were thought to have brought prosperity to the land.

Gifts of **gold and silver** were placed on Freyr’s **burial mound**, and the image of the god was taken around Sweden in a wagon to bless the farms.

One Vanir symbol was the **golden boar**, which traveled across the sky and underneath the earth like the sun.

Another Vanir symbol was the ship, and Freyr had a special one of his own, in which he could travel whenever he wished; it could accommodate all the gods but would fold up into a pouch when not in use. **Ship-funeral** was practiced by royal families, as well as lesser folk, from the 7<sup>th</sup> century.



Didgeridoo Aboriginal ceremonial music.

Funeral Rites: Death and Mourning.

Australian Aboriginal myth treats **death** as the consequence of **human misdeeds**.

It **was not inevitable**; the heroic ancestral beings in the creation period had the opportunity to live forever.

However, through **spite, foolishness or greed**, the gift of immortality slipped beyond the grasp of humankind and was **retained only by the moon**, which waxes and wanes every month, and by the **crab**, which casts its old, battered shell to grow a new one.



In [Aboriginal mythology](#), the **Wondjina** (or **Wandjina**) were [cloud](#) and [rain](#) spirits who, during the [Dream time](#), created or influenced the landscape and its inhabitants. When they found the place they would die, they painted their images on [cave](#) walls and entered a nearby waterhole.

### **Wandjina**

According to the Worora of the Western Kimberlys, Australia, a certain Widjingara was the first person to die, killed in a battle against some *wandjina* beings.

They had wanted to steal a woman who had been promised in marriage to someone else and Widjingara had fought to ensure that the traditional marriage rules were upheld.

His body was wrapped in a bark coffin and his wife, the Black-Headed Python, began to mourn.

She shaved off her hair and rubbed ashes on her head and body, thereby founding the traditional Aboriginal way of showing mourning.

When Widjingara returned from the grave, his body renewed, the Black-Headed Python was angry: "Why have you come back?" she asked.

"Look at me, I've already shaved my head and made it black with ashes!"

Widjingara, angry in his turn at this poor welcome from his wife, indignantly returned to the grave: he later transformed into the native cat.

Since then, the **possibility of rejuvenation** has been lost.

**Everyone has to die**, and the python perpetually has the appearance of mourning.



Black-Headed Python **Widjingara's wife**





Reincarnation.

Reincarnation in [Hindu art](#)

**Reincarnation** describes the concept whereby the [soul](#) or [spirit](#), after the [death](#) of the body, is believed to return to live in a new human body, or, in some traditions, either as a human being, animal or plant. This doctrine is a central tenet within the majority of [Indian religious traditions](#), such as [Hinduism](#), [Jainism](#), and [Sikhism](#); the [Buddhist](#) concept of [rebirth](#) is also often referred to as reincarnation.<sup>[1]</sup> The idea was also fundamental to some [Greek philosophers](#) and religions as well as other religions, such as [Druidism](#), and later on, [Spiritism](#), and [Eckankar](#). It is also found in many small-scale societies around the world, in places such as Siberia, West Africa, North America, and Australia.<sup>[2]</sup>

Although the majority of sects within [Judaism](#), [Christianity](#) and [Islam](#) do not believe that individuals reincarnate, particular groups within these religions do refer to reincarnation.

In many mythical systems some form of **rejuvenation** followed the soul's sojourn into the realm of the dead.

In Africa it is usually supposed that **souls are reborn into the kin group or clan** to which they had belonged in the previous life.

In the Oriental civilizations influenced by Hindu and Buddhist philosophy, it is commonly believed that **reincarnation destiny** depends on the **person's conduct** in earlier lives: the good are rewarded with incarnation in **higher social castes** or groups, the wicked in **low-status groups**, or as animals.

Conversely it is held that particularly virtuous animals can be reincarnated as human beings.





One type of depiction of Ishtar/Inanna.

### Life-Death-Rebirth Deity

Wikipedia indicates a life-death-rebirth deity, also known as a **dying-rising or resurrection deity**, is a god who is born, suffers death or a death-like experience, passes through a phase in the underworld among the dead, and is subsequently reborn, either in a literal or symbolic sense.

Male examples include Osiris (Egyptian), Tammuz (Dumuzi) (Babylonian and Sumerian), Jesus (historical Galilean), Zalmoxis (Tracian Dacian), Dionysus (Greek) and Odin (Norse).

Female examples are Inanna (Sumerian), also known as Ishtar, whose cult dates to 4000 BCE and Persephone (Greek), the central figure in the Eleusinian Mysteries, whose cult may date to 1700 BCE as the unnamed goddess worshiped in Crete.

The term “life-death-rebirth deity” is associated with the works of James Frazer, Jane Ellen Harrison and their fellow Cambridge Ritualists.

In their seminal works, *The Golden Bough* and *Prolegomena of the Study of Greek Religion*, Frazer and Harrison argued that all myths are echoes of rituals, and that all rituals have their primordial purpose in the manipulation of natural phenomena by means of sympathetic magic.

Consequently, the rape and return of Persephone, the rending and repair of Osiris, and the travails and triumph of Baldr derive from primitive rites intended to renew the fertility of withered land and crops.

The Swiss psychoanalyst Carl Jung argued that processes such as **death and resurrection** were part of the **symbolism of the collective unconscious**, and could be utilized in the task of psychological integration.



Peragmon Museum Berlin Depiction of the eighth gate of Babylon 575 BC by order of King Nebuchadnezzar II on north side of the city. Tribute to Ishtar.