

# Merry Part

A Pagan Guide to Crafting Personal Funeral Rites



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## Foreword

I want to dedicate this work to **Cathy Watson**, whose memory still inspires me.

Our Pagan religious traditions teach us that death and life are linked together. A time will come when we have to bid our loved ones goodbye.

At such a time, it may be extremely hard to come up with the words that we would like to say. Words that not only pay honor to the person and their beliefs but also open the gates of healing for those left behind.

These pages are written by a Covenant of the Goddess minister primarily for clergy officiating at a Pagan funeral. However, anyone who feels the materials might prove useful is encouraged to look at them. This guide offers ideas that address the needs of the ever-growing Pagan community. It is divided into two parts. The first part is a set of ritual outlines and examples based on modern Pagan traditions. This section is inspired by my own Wiccan practices, with the hope that other Pagans will be encouraged to adapt them to their traditions. The second part is an overview of funeral rites performed by our Pagan ancestors, offering ideas on how we might adapt these practices for modern use. All materials are inspired by text found in available books; it is left to the reader to decide if they are comfortable with taking inspiration from a specific culture. I specifically did not include any African cultures or living indigenous cultures from what is now the United States of America out of respect for those cultures.

This document is an update of information that was hosted on the Covenant of the Goddess's website. I have made slight updates and corrections to that information and changed the subtitle to give a better idea of what you will find in these pages.

I expect that the ceremonies you will create will differ from the examples given here. Thus, I offer ideas and example ceremonies to adapt or use as you will.

Many Wiccans end their rituals with the words, 'Merry meet and merry part, and merry meet again.' I hope that these rites will provide comfort as you wish someone 'Merry part.'

## Dedication

I would like to acknowledge the following people for being there in this work, as in so many other parts of my life, I am truly grateful. Monica Di Franco, Jennifer Orff, Tom Henke, and Running Fox.

~ Andrea Joy Kendal

## How We View Grieving

The deities of old are shown as fully feeling grief and expressing it. Stories passed down show that, in particular, the Goddesses of our ancestors actively made their sorrows known. Inanna lamented for Tammuz, and the Sumerian civilization had an entire six-day holiday to remember his passing. The Egyptian Goddess Isis, upon finding out about the death of her consort Osiris, goes out and finds a way to restore him. The Goddess Demeter makes the earth barren when her daughter Persephone eats of the underworld fruit and is unable to return.

Pagan Gods are often shown as dying and being reborn. These traditions include the time-honored English figure ‘John Barleycorn,’ who dies so that we might live; the Nordic god Baldur, who is mistakenly shot by an arrow; and the Egyptian god Osiris, who is brought back to life by his consort Isis. The point here is that the deities of our Pagan ancestors are shown as understanding the pain of death. We can take comfort that the deities themselves understand our grief, having experienced it themselves. Thus, when creating a funeral ritual, it may be appropriate to mention specific deities, especially those whom the deceased felt especially close to.

You can also use these themes to offer comfort and give permission to grieve when appropriate.

## Your Wishes

I feel strongly that one of the best gifts that we can leave our loved ones is a document letting them know how we would like to be remembered. Leaving behind an Advanced Funeral Wishes Document will help ensure that our wishes are respected and help guide those left behind. We should provide both computerized and hard-copy versions of this document in a well-known place, so that it is accessible to our grieving loved ones. As Neo-Pagan clergy, you should urge every person in your community to write an Advanced Funeral Wishes Document—and follow your advice by making one for yourself. Many good resources exist that provide detailed information about what should be included in this document. Some of those resources are listed at the end of this section.

The next few pages include a form with important questions that you should consider when you begin drafting your own Advanced Funeral Wishes Document. I encourage you to fill this out and leave it with your loved ones.

## My Funeral Wishes

### General Considerations

Date Last Updated: \_\_\_\_\_

Legal Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Other Names Known By: \_\_\_\_\_

Date of Birth: \_\_\_\_\_

Notes (Anything you want people to know)

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

### Arrangements Made

(Example: Funeral Plot at Biofunerals, 1438 Green St., OK 97123. Paid in full.)

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

### Type of funeral

- Inside funeral followed by a graveside service
- Inside funeral
- Outside funeral
- Outside funeral Memorial Only

### Feel of Ceremony

- Somber
- Joyous
- Mixed

**Notes:** (Example: I want a celebration of my life)

\_\_\_\_\_

### Treatment of the Remains

Organ Donor

Representative: \_\_\_\_\_

### Internment:

- Cremation
- Burial
- Allow Embalming
- Donate to science: *details of doing this* \_\_\_\_\_
- Other: \_\_\_\_\_

Container (if applicable):

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Restrictions: Example would be do not cremateds

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Other Specifics:

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**Details About the Rite**

I do not want flowers

Donations should be sent to:

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Readings I want:

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Music I want played:

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Activities:

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Eulogizers:

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Avoid:

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## Neo-Pagan Specific Considerations

Tradition/s:

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Type of Rite:

Neo-Pagan

Mixed Neo-Pagan and Secular

Mixed Neo-Pagan and Other religion/s:

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Completely Secular/Humanistic

Specific Cultures to Honor:

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Specific Deities to Invoke:

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What do you want done with your tools? *\_You may want to consider a letter of intention that covers these*

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## Modern Ideas

### Preparations

If you are performing a funeral for someone else's family, you will want to meet with the family several days before the funeral. This gives you time to speak to them about their wishes and to select material that is appropriate to each situation.

First, you will want to find out more about the deceased. Ask the family for (and record) stories about the deceased, so that you can get a sense of who the person was. You may want to use some of these stories given to you in your ceremony. Be sure to ask them if there is anything that you should make sure is said about the deceased person—anything which, if not said, would make the funeral feel incomplete.

On the practical side, make sure to find out the following:

- The date, time, and location of the service.
- The length of the service.
- How long will you be there?
- Will you be needed before or after the formal service?
- The location of the service (and the cemetery, if a graveside service is planned).
- Contact information for the place where the service is being held.
- Any instructions left by the deceased for their funeral/memorial.
- The type of service.
  - Open Pagan
    - What is the Neo-Pagan tradition(s) of the deceased?
    - Should the service honor any specific pantheon of Gods or Goddesses?
    - Should you (or others) read any texts from ancient or Neo-Pagan sources?
    - Should the service honor any ancient Pagan traditions?
  - Mixed
    - What Neo-Pagan tradition(s) should the service include?
    - What non-Pagan tradition(s) should the service also represent?
    - Are there any texts from non-Pagan religions that the service should include?
    - Are there any non-Pagan ritual elements that the service should include?
    - Should any deities be invoked or honored?
  - Humanistic
    - Should there be any mention of Neo-Paganism or religion, or should only references to nature or other subjects?
- Format of the service
  - Preparation or washing of the body
    - Is this done by the clergy, family members, or someone else?
  - Indoor ritual followed by graveside service.
    - Casket or ashes?
  - Indoor memorial only.
  - Outdoor service only
- Tone of the service
  - Somber
  - Joyful
  - Mixed
- Are there any items the family would like to use for ritual activities?  
Examples include throwing coins into the grave, burying ritual tools with the deceased, shoveling dirt or placing stones on the grave, releasing balloons, or planting seeds or trees.

## Resources

The following books have been particularly helpful to me. They provide materials that are useful both for the creation of your own funeral rites and for Neo-Pagan clergy or families planning rites for their deceased.

### *Help with creating meaningful services*

- *The Pagan Book of Living and Dying: Practical Rituals, Prayers, Blessings, and Meditations on Crossing Over*, Starhawk, M. Macha NightMare & The Reclaiming Collective, Harper, San Francisco, 1997.  
Considered the Pagan omnibus on death, this book contains many rituals that are aimed at assisting the deceased to cross over into the afterlife.
- *Remembering Well: Rituals for Celebrating Life and Mourning Death*, Sarah York , Jossey-Bass, San Francisco, 2000.  
This book is my personal favorite. Written by a Unitarian-Universalist minister, this book is full of helpful advice and examples.
- *Funerals Without God: A Practical Guide to Non-Religious Funerals*, Jane Wynne Willson, Prometheus, New York, 1990.  
While this book deals with how to perform a funeral appropriate for an atheist, its advice and examples are useful to anyone who needs to perform a funeral. It is aimed at non-clergy.

## Sources for readings

- *Safe Passage: Words to Help the Grieving*, Molly Fumia, Conari, Boston, 2003.
- *Readings for Remembrance: A Collection for Funerals and Memorial Services*, Eleanor C. Munro, Penguin, New York, 2000.
- *Funerals and Memorial Service Readings, Poems and Tributes*, Edited by Rachel R. Baum, McFarland & Company, North Carolina, 1999.

## Details and Examples

Most funerals include both an indoor and a graveside ceremony. The indoor service provides a safe haven for the community to meet and mourn the dead without worrying about the weather. Neo-Pagans should not shun such practices, as we see many examples of such indoor rites in our Pagan past. Examples of these include the long barrows found in England, where the bones of the Blessed Dead were laid to rest, and the tents raised by the Athenians to honor fallen soldiers.

### *Decorations*

For many Neo-Pagans, it is more appropriate to decorate a hall or chapel with potted plants or small live trees than to cut flowers or wreaths that will die. In this way, the live plants and trees can become their own memorials to the dead, living on to represent that the cycle of life still goes on.

It can also be appropriate to incorporate the person's astrological sign into the decorations by utilizing associated colors or elements. For example, for a Water sign, you might display a bowl of water with the proper-colored floating candles in it and light the candles as part of the funeral.

Additionally, having representations of the four elements can be appropriate. Here is one set of items that could be used in any setting to represent the elements:

- Water      bowl of water with flower petals
- Earth      seeds, potted plants, and a potted tree
- Fire      yellow candles, stones like garnets, a bowl of sand with cinnamon sticks
- Air a quill feather or a pen

Place pictures of the deceased and objects that he or she cherished in life where they can be seen by those gathering for the funeral. You can also include "offerings to the dead," such as seeds to represent rebirth or other small objects that can be safely buried in the grave or given to the family.

## Outline and Examples for Services

The following is a set of ritual outlines meant to cover the most common situations. In a funeral or memorial service, it is appropriate to start with a safe place to grieve and then finish with a more hopeful tone. Check with the person closest to the deceased to see if the tone of the ritual should be a celebration of life or any other tone they want to set.

### *Indoor Funeral*

Generally, indoor services can be longer than outdoor services. The length of the service depends on how long you have the room it is being held in and the wishes of those most affected by the loss.

### Respects for the dead (optional)

This is a time during the service when family and friends may view the body or place flowers by a picture or casket. The family's wishes are key here. However, it is best if no one is forced to view the body. The viewing may happen before, during, or after the service.

### Gathering music

This is a time for people to gather and be seated. Good music sets the mood for a funeral.

### Opening remarks

One of the first things you should mention is the name of the deceased. Talk about gathering together to mourn or remember.

### Dedication of space

Here, the people move from their normal lives into the ceremonial space. You should explicitly acknowledge that everyone has permission to feel what they feel. In Neo-Pagan funerals, this is the time when the deities and the elements may be called. In a non-Pagan funeral, perhaps, this may be the time to pray or simply state that we are gathered together to remember the deceased

### Discussion of life and death

As clergy, this is the time for you to speak of life and death. Death and life are tied together. Death affects and changes us. Loss is common, and we gather together to gain strength and hope. You should mention that while we mourn the loss of someone that was special to us, we also gather today to celebrate that person's life.

Acknowledge that sorrow and happiness are not mutually exclusive. Also, do not be afraid to include humor in the ceremony, as long as the family approves.

### Music

A nice time to play a piece of music that meant a lot to the person who died or to the deceased's family. The music may be performed live or electronically. Make sure to check what equipment is available so you can have the music in the correct format.

### Readings

These normally short poems, read by clergy or family members, give comfort or express the depth of the grief felt.

### Eulogy

Webster's dictionary defines a eulogy as a "commendatory oration or writing especially in honor of one deceased." The thesaurus gives the words tribute, acclaim, homage, and praise as synonyms. Thus, the eulogy is a fitting tribute to the person and his or her life. A family member or members will usually give the eulogy.

### Sharing of memories

If time permits, other friends or family are called to share a memory of the deceased person and what he or she meant to them. If this takes too long, then it may be done at the reception with a few representatives speaking at the funeral.

One way to create a meaningful funeral is to keep the other portions of the funeral short and allow a lot of time for people to speak about the deceased.

### Closing words or prayer

You should consider a prayer that all can participate in, giving particular care if it is a mixed Neo-Pagan/other religion service. You can also encourage thoughts and prayers for the family that is left behind.

### Announcement of reception (optional)

If there is a reception, you should let people know the location. If there is a graveside memorial, mention that also. In addition, let people know if the family is receiving people somewhere else (like at their home).

### Indication that the ceremony is about to end

In a Neo-Pagan funeral, if the deities and elements have been invoked, very briefly release them. You then should inform the people that the rite is ended—or that it will now move to a graveside ceremony, if one is to take place.

In a more secular funeral, mention that the service is now complete.

### Departing music

Music provides a backdrop for people as they leave. If there are a lot of people, you might want to instruct people to leave starting with the family and then working your way back, each row. This lets people touch the family as they leave (and also manages traffic).

## *Graveside Service after Indoor Funeral*

A brief outside service may be held outside after an indoor funeral. This often occurs if a body is being buried or remains are being put in a container outside in a graveyard.

### *Gathering together of family and friends*

Depending on the number of people, you can ask those in attendance to either form a “circle” or to just link hands from row to row.

### *Prayer/statement of intent*

This prayer or statement indicates how the remains of the person will be handled

### *Graveside activity*

There are many activities that may be performed. People may shovel dirt, plant seeds, place coins by the vessel, or write down memories of the deceased. The key thing here is to allow everyone to participate in some way.

During this activity, chanting, playing music, or drumming is appropriate.

### *Final prayer/chant/song*

This can be powerful and solemn, allowing people to release the person from this life and allow them to move on to the next, in whatever spiritual tradition applies. Alternatively, this can be hopeful or even joyous, depending on the tone of the ceremony. For atheists, a poem or song about the body of the deceased feeding new life in nature might be appropriate.

### *Formal words of parting*

You should indicate that the family will stay for a private moment after the official ceremony. This gives the family time to grieve privately and also lets everyone else know that they should quietly depart.

Wiccan clergy may end the public service with these traditional words: “Merry meet, merry part, and merry meet again. Bright the cheek and warm the heart, and may the circle never end”.

### *Short circling with immediate family and close friends*

You should end with a private moment just for the family and close friends. This is the time for prayers and words of comfort and compassion. This should acknowledge their loss and give hope for the future.

**Example (Wiccan):** While we never get over the loss of those closest to us, we do move on with the rhythms of life. After mourning, the pain lessens, and we move into a new relationship with those who are no longer physically with us. May the Lady and Lord send you comfort and strength during this season, and know that the Wheel of Life will turn again.

## *Graveside/Outside Funeral*

If the entirety of the service will be held outside or by a graveside, then you should use an abbreviated version of the indoor service. Be sure that a place to sit is provided for those who cannot stand for long periods of time.

### *Gathering music*

Opening music can give people time to gather at the graveside or ritual space and settle down. Live music can be especially effective in an outdoor setting, but a portable music player works well.

### *Opening remarks*

As with the indoor service, one of the first things that you should mention is the name of the deceased. Talk about gathering together to mourn or remember.

### *Gathering together of family and friends*

Depending on the number of people, you can have them either form a “circle” or just link hands from row to row.

### *Opening prayer*

This serves to invoke the Lord and Lady (Wiccan) or other Neo-Pagan deities and to establish a zone of comfort and love for the soul that is moving on to a wonderful, loving place. (Depending, of course, on the family’s beliefs, this place could be “in our hearts and memories.” If you are not sure of the family’s beliefs, talk about how the person will be kept “in our memories.”)

### *Song/chant*

Singing or chanting can be an embrace or continuation of the opening prayer.

### *Second prayer or poem*

The purpose of this prayer or poem is to acknowledge and consecrate the earth (or vessel), to preserve what the deceased person’s life meant, and to establish a link between this world and the world of the afterlife.

### *Eulogy*

As with indoor services, a family member usually gives a tribute to the person and his or her life.

### *Sharing of memories*

If time permits, others are called to share a memory of the deceased and what he or she meant to that person. If this takes too long, then it may be done at the reception with a few representatives participating in the funeral.

As with indoor funerals, this can be the main part of the funeral. However, in general, outdoor funerals tend to be shorter.

### *Graveside activity*

Many graveside activities can be meaningful. Examples include placing dirt, coins, or flowers on or by the casket or urn. These activities are nicely accompanied by music or a chant.

### *Final prayer*

This prayer may be powerful and solemn to allow people to release their loved ones. Alternatively, it can be hopeful and joyful as a way to show that life continues.

## Formal words of parting

If a reception is being given by the family, you should inform people where it will be held. Mention that the family should stay for a private moment after the official ceremony.

## Short circling with immediate family and close friends

The graveside service should end with a private moment with just the family and close friends. Offer private words and prayers just for them.

## *Preparation of the Body*

Two forms of funerary practices are common: burial and cremation.

In the case of burial, the body should be washed in water<sup>1</sup> if possible, and thanked for housing the soul that no longer requires it. If the body is not going to be embalmed, this must be done with some haste, as the body begins to decay immediately. In addition, the body may have been damaged by the injury that was the cause of death. Handling a damaged or decomposing body may be traumatic for family or clergy not used to this practice.

In the case of cremation, or where washing the body is not possible or desired, then you may recommend the washing of some representation of the body, such as a stone. Check to see if any of the family members wish to be there during the preparation of the body.

## *Casket*

Depending on the condition of the body and the wishes of the family, if an open casket is used, it may be most appropriate to have an open-casket ceremony with the opening set away from the other mourners. This gives an opportunity for those who wish to view the body to do so privately and shields the open casket from those who do not want to see the body.

People require different expressions of grief to find closure. Some need to see the body and even touch it to ensure that the spirit of the person has left the body, while others wish to remember the person in life and are uncomfortable with seeing a dead body.

It is best to not embalm the body, unless this is done in accordance with the deceased's tradition. Embalming is a very unnatural process that replaces the bodily fluids with chemicals. Instead, family or clergy may want to check with the funeral home to see if the body can be kept at a low temperature.

As for the casket itself, you may want to recommend caskets with holes in them, such as those used in traditional Jewish burials. These caskets allow the body to decay naturally and thus return to the earth from which it came. Another appropriate option is to use eco-friendly caskets, which decay over time.

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<sup>1</sup> There is no archeological proof that I know of that ancient Pagans washed their dead. We do have extensive archeological evidence of various Pagan funerary practices, ranging from burial of the dead in a fetal position, cremation, embalming and housing bones in burrows.

Having said this, washing the deceased's body or a representation of the body can be healing as it helps us to deal with the reality that the person is no longer alive. If dealing with the actual body, this can be very effective, as loved ones observe the profound differences between a live and a dead body.

Additionally, it is a nice way to spend some time with the body and thank it for housing the person. Obviously, there may be many instances where this cannot be done. Since the body is so connected with the earth, a stone can be an appropriate substitute.

## *Cremation*

Cremation is also a popular choice for funereal rites. Many Pagan societies, including the ancient Greeks, Romans, and Scandinavians, used cremation.

One way to view cremation is as a separation of the body and the spirit, with the body being returned to dust.

## Example: Indoor Wiccan Ceremony

*Note:* The following uses a quarter system (i.e., North, South, East, and West) that is different from many Wiccan traditions. The quarters can easily be moved and should be adapted to the system that was favored by the deceased. Make sure to bring a compass so you can figure out the directions.

### *Respects to the dead (optional)*

You should instruct people as they enter about any permissible ways to pay respects to the dead. This may include leaving something by a picture or viewing the body.

### *Gathering music*

You should play music as people are seated. The music can be something that was special to the deceased or a piece such as “Partings” by Cynthia Smith or “The River is Flowing”.

### *Opening remarks*

#### *PriestX*

We gather together this day/night because each of us was touched in some way by \_\_\_\_\_. When someone dies, we know that it is important to gather together to acknowledge [pronoun's] passing. We recognize that this act of joining together as a community in the face of sorrow is a sacred act. We gather together this day/night because each of us was touched in some way by \_\_\_\_\_. When someone dies, we know that it is important to gather together to acknowledge [pronoun's] passing. We recognize that this act of joining together as a community in the face of sorrow is a sacred act. In the Wiccan tradition, we separate ourselves from our normal lives by casting a circle. We use the circle to create a sacred space that reminds us of the cycles of life and death. Today, we cast this circle in honor of \_\_\_\_\_, who has left our beloved earth.

### *Dedication of space*

#### *West (Water):*

WEST, the power of emotion and the traditional place of the dead.  
We call you to come and let us feel what we need to feel. We call on tears, we call on laughter, and most of all, we call on hope.  
Come then, oh great powers of WATER, and remain.

#### *North (Air):*

NORTH, the power of aspiration and ideas.  
We call upon you to help us forget what should be forgotten and remember what should be remembered. We call on memories from the past to guide us and dreams of the future to carry us onwards.  
Come then, oh great powers of the AIR, and remain.

#### *East (Fire):*

EAST, the power of energy and passion.  
We call upon you to give us the drive we need to carry on. We call on determination and strength. We call upon the flame of the candle and the light of the sun to remind us that life will continue.  
Come then, oh great powers of FIRE, and remain.

South (Earth):

SOUTH, the power of the very Earth itself.

We call upon you to give us grounding and healing through our daily tasks. We call on the beauty of the mountains and the bounty of the fields to inspire us as we return to our lives.

Come then, oh great powers of EARTH, and remain.

West (Spirit):

We seal the circle with SPIRIT, which always remains with us.

## *Clergy on Life and Death*

### **Reading:** *From Safe Passages* by Sabina C. Becker

The season of grief is our shutting-down time. We prepare the cottage of our hearts for the winter, securing our windows to the world, stocking the cupboards with that which will sustain us during the cold and dark.

Carefully, we rebuild our inner fire, and huddle in its warmth while the storms of winter pass, awaiting the Spring, which will come as surely as the steady passage of the days.

### **Reading:** *A Meditation on Death* by Sabina C. Becker

Death is a piece of Life, not its opposite, not even its end, but merely one station of a larger cycle. We are born, we die, we are reborn in a different shape. Our bodies decompose and feed the flowers that feed the soil that feeds the crops that feed the livestock that feeds us. These are the facts of Life and Death: when something dies, it becomes a part of something else that lives.

We who remain are left with the memories of \_\_\_to comfort us.

## *Music*

Play one or two appropriate songs. The music should be something that is meaningful to the mourners or the deceased.

Examples:

- “Where You Are,” by Josh Gorban
- “Turn, Turn, Turn,” by The Byrds
- “Wishing You Were Here Again,” from “Phantom of the Opera” by Andrew Lloyd Webber
- “Angel,” by Sarah McLachlan
- “Partings,” by Cyntia Smith
- “Let It Be,” by the Beatles

## *Readings: Praxilla of Sicyon*

Loveliest of what I leave behind is the sunlight, and loveliest after that the shining stars and the moon’s face, but also cucumbers that are ripe, and pears, and apples.

## *Eulogy*

[Relative or friend] \_\_\_\_\_ would like to share some thoughts about \_\_\_\_\_. (Eulogy is given)

### *Sharing of memories*

(Give people time to come and share a brief memory about the deceased.)

### *Final Prayer/Chant/Song*

Will you all join me in “We All Come From the Goddess?”  
We all come from the Goddess,  
And to Her we shall return  
Like a drop of rain  
Flowing to the ocean  
Hoof and Horn Hoof and Horn  
All that dies shall be reborn  
Corn and grain  
Corn and grain  
All that falls shall rise again

### *Closing Words or Prayer*

I would like to share this closing poem.  
Do not come when I am dead  
To sit beside a low green mound,  
or bring the first gay daffodils,  
Because I love them so,  
For I shall not be there,  
You cannot find me there.  
Where will I be?  
I will be reflected from the bright eyes of the children,  
In the smile of the bride and groom on their wedding day;  
In the flames of holiday candles;  
In the joy of a family gathering.  
I will warm your hands through the glow of the winter fire;  
I will soothe you with the drop of rain on the roof;  
And make your heart leap with the rhythm of the dance;  
I will flood your soul with the flaming radiance of the sunrise;  
And bring you peace in the tender rose and gold of the after sunset.  
All these have made me happy  
They are part of me;  
I shall become part of them

### *Announcement of Reception*

(If there is a graveside ceremony, you should give instructions on where it will be held. Additionally, if the family is having a reception, mention the time and place where it will be held.)

### *Indication that the ceremony is about to end*

We close this portion of the rite by taking down the circle that was cast.

(If there will be a graveside ceremony afterwards, state the following:) We shall meet to conclude this memorial at the graveside:

#### *West (West):*

WEST, the power of emotion, as we leave, help us to feel and heal.

Farewell WATER.

#### *South (Earth):*

SOUTH, the power of the earth, as we leave, help us take care of ourselves.

Farewell EARTH.

#### *East (Fire):*

EAST, the power of passion, as we leave, help us find new purpose. Farewell FIRE.

#### *North (Air):*

NORTH, the power of ideas, as we leave, help us to plan. Farewell AIR.

#### *West:*

We open this circle by invoking Spirit, which always remains with us.

### *Departing music*

(Give instructions to leave the sanctuary while appropriate music is played)

## Example: Graveside Service

### *Gathering together of family and friends*

PriestX

Let us gather together and give support each to the other. Join hand to hand to form a chain representing our connection to each other. Our willingness to be there for each other during this time.

### *Prayer/Statement of Intent*

PriestX

Our lovely earth gives us form and so to it do we return our remains. Let the body of \_\_once again become a part of the earth.

### *Graveside Activity*

(Stand near what you will use for the graveside activity — the shovel, a bowl of seeds, coins, rocks, etc).

PriestX

Gracious Lady who rules over both life and death,  
Your child \_\_\_ has crossed over to the Summerland.  
Please help us keep her/him/them in our hearts so  
she/he/they will find her/ his/their place among the honored ancestors.

Mighty Lord who experiences both life and death.  
Your child \_\_\_ has gone to the other world.  
Help those who remain find comfort in the natural cycles  
to keep in touch with that which never dies.

Fire, we thank you for the passion that \_\_\_ brought to life.  
The sparkle in her/his/their eyes, the energy in her/his/their step.  
May all these gifts return to thee to find another form.

Water, we thank you for the love that filled \_\_\_\_;  
the joy she/he/they brought the tears she/he/they shared.  
May all these gifts return to thee to find another form.

Air, we thank you for the ideas that \_\_\_\_ shared;  
the stories she/he/they told, the lessons she/he/they taught.  
May all these gifts return to thee to find another form.

Earth, we thank you for the body that \_\_\_ inhabited;  
the work she/he/they did, the legacy she/he/they left.  
May all these gifts return to thee to find another form.  
\_\_\_\_, we thank you for sharing your life with us.

May our love for you endure and find a new form to take in our lives.

PriestX

(Invite people to participate in an activity. This example uses giving seeds to the family to be planted. The immediate family stands behind a basket. Besides the basket is a bag of seeds.)

These seeds represent the continuation of life. We give these seeds as a promise that the memory of \_\_ will be kept alive.

Come forth and take a few seeds, state one thing you will remember about \_\_\_\_ and place the seeds in the basket.

### *Formal words of parting*

PriestX

As we leave this place, may we take with us memories of \_\_\_\_\_. I request that the immediate family stay for a few brief words.

“Merry, meet, merry part, and merry meet again. Bright the cheeks and warm the heart, and may the circle never end”.

### *Sort circling with immediate family*

PriestX

\_\_\_\_ is now among the blessed ancestors. While your relationship with her/him/them will never be the same, they will still influence your life. Remember them, especially at Samhain. And may our Lady and Lord give you the strength to mourn, and in time to find joy.  
So, mote it be.

### Example: Wiccan Graveside Funeral for Cremation

Make sure that chairs are available for those who cannot stand for long periods. Also, be sensitive to the weather. If it is raining, you may want a tented area or other covering.

Being outside presents challenges for setting the mood, as you cannot control either the weather or ambient noise. Do not hesitate to pause if outside influences make it hard to hear. On the other hand, being outside is both comforting and allows more flexibility for the time you have for the rite.

Make sure that the immediate family is closest to you, so they will not have any problems hearing. For a large number of people, you may require an outdoor microphone and speakers to make sure that everyone can hear.

The following example is especially appropriate for a cremation. It is suggested that the readings be altered if another form of funeral rite is being used.

### *Gathering Music*

If music is being used it should be loud enough to hear but not so loud that people cannot speak to each other or hear you. Instruct people as they arrive as how and where to stand/sit. You may use a circle, a semi-circle, or rows of people.

Examples of music that could be used are:

- “The river is flowing,” by Lindie Lila
- “Dante’s Prayer,” by Loreena McKennit
- “Autumn Time,” by Libana
- “When we are Gone,” on Reclaiming’s Second Chant album
- “Partings,” on The Heart is the Only Nation album by Ruth Barrett and Cytia Smith

### *Opening Remarks*

PriestX

We gather together today to honor the memory of \_\_\_\_\_, who left our beloved Earth on \_\_\_\_\_. We know that \_\_\_\_\_ would appreciate that we gather together out of doors and allow this to be our sacred space.

### *Gathering together of family and friends*

PriestX

Let us take each other’s hand to symbolize that we know that we come together as a community to share in this rite. To give each other comfort and to remember our connections to \_\_\_\_\_.

## *Opening Prayer*

PriestX

Mother of us all, gather us in your arms. You, who know the grief of losing a loved one, send us comfort. Father and protector stand by our side. You, who know life and death, send us guidance.

We your children, call you forth to join us as we remember \_\_\_\_\_. Let us feel our sorrow and remember our joys.

You may let go of your hands.

## *Song/ Chant*

PriestX (Sing 3 – 4 times):

In acknowledgement that we all return to our basic elements, let us sing “The earth, the air, the fire, the water”.

The earth, the air, the fire, the water, return, return, return, return

The earth, the air, the fire, the water, return, return, return, return

I-A, I-A, I A, IA, I-O, I-O, I-O, I-O

I-A, I-A, I A, IA, I-O, I-O, I-O, I-O

PriestX

\_\_\_\_\_ we return your ashes to the earth

\_\_\_\_\_ we hear your memories on the wind

\_\_\_\_\_ we see your passion in the flame

\_\_\_\_\_ we feel your love in the rain

\_\_\_\_\_ your essence in memory remains. Travel now to the Summerland, rest, and return again.

## *Second Prayer or Poem*

PriestX

Take me to some high place  
Of heather, rock and ling.  
Scatter my dust and ashes,  
Feed me to the wind.  
So that I will be  
Part of all you see,  
The air you are breathing.  
I'll be part of the curlew's cry  
And the soaring hawk,  
The blue milkwort  
And the sundew hung with diamonds.  
I'll be riding the gentle wind  
That blows through your hair,  
Reminding you how we shared  
In the joy of living.

## *Eulogy*

PriestX

\_\_\_\_\_ would like to share some thoughts about \_\_\_\_\_.

## *Sharing of memories*

PriestX

We each have memories of \_\_\_\_\_. If anyone one would like to share such memories now would be the time to do so.

## *Graveside Activity*

### *PriestX*

(Stand next to the plant that will be given to the family to take home.)

We each wish to keep the memory of \_\_\_\_\_ alive within us. We thus add our energies to this plant to symbolize our wish to keep alive our remembrances.

(Tell each person to come up to the plant and add a little dirt to the pot)

### *Final Prayer*

#### *PriestX*

Adapted Isha Upanishad 17 of the Hindu faith.

Now my breath and spirit goes to the Immortal,  
and this body ends in ashes;

OM. O Mind! remember. Remember the deeds.

Remember the actions.

(Added for Wiccan ceremony)

Now I must go forth to the Summerlands

and this life leaves only memories;

Remember me at Samahin. Remember the joys.

Remember the love.

So Be It

### *Formal words of parting*

#### *PriestX*

We now close this formal time together. I request that the immediate family stay for a few brief words.

(If a reception is being held, instructions about where and when the reception will be are given.)

Let us leave with the knowledge that the wheel of life will continue to turn, giving us strength and comfort as we say “merry part.” “Merry, meet, merry part, and merry meet again. Bright the cheeks and warm the heart, and may the circle never end.”

## Short circling with immediate family

PriestX

\_\_\_\_\_ is now among the blessed ancestors. While your relationship with him/her will never be the same they will still influence your life. Remember them and keep them close to your heart.

(Anoint each person with a bit of water)

May our Lady and Lord give you the strength to mourn and in time to find joy.

(After you have blessed everyone)

May gentle rains join your tears

May the breezes stir your memories

May sparks of fire inspire your actions

May the earth bring you healing

May our gracious lady and noble lord

be with you always.

Blessed be!

### Example: Funeral for an Animal

In most Neo-Pagan practices, a beloved animal is seen as a part of the family. Given our view of animals as sentient beings who share this Earth with us, many of us may want to hold a service for an animal. While the rituals here focus on humans, they can also provide inspiration for funerals for animals. There is some wisdom in making a ritual for an animal be of shorter duration than for a human. As an example of a ritual that was written to be given to a mixed religious audience, I am including a ritual I wrote in honor of a dog. I have changed the names to protect the privacy of those who remember her. The animal, Hazel, was cremated and a part of the ashes was kept by the family to wear in lockets while the rest was buried under a tree.

#### *Items*

- Bell
- Bucket or two of water depending on number of people attending
- Ladle (placed in one of the buckets)
- Wand
- Hazel tree, ashes and paw print
- Picture of Hazel on an easel placed near the bush
- Chairs facing the front towards tree
- Boxes of tissue on TV Trays
- Watering can
- TV Tray and covering

#### *Preparation*

A hole should be dug and ashes added. Next, plant the tree and pat the soil around it. Finally, put the cement paw print near the bush.

Place a bucket of water with a ladle in it near the tree. A second bucket can be included if needed. Make sure to remind family to bring the ashes that they are keeping. Tell the family that you will spend some private time with them after the ritual is finished.

## *Gathering*

### *PriestX*

(Explain that everyone should stand or sit comfortably facing the front.)

(Explain the ritual act as follows: Pointing to the Hazel tree)

This plant is a Hazel tree. It has been planted in remembrance of its namesake.

As part of this ritual, you will be invited to water this plant. In addition, you may also share a short memory of Hazel after you water it.

The family will be the first to water this tree and say something if they wish. After they are done, I will ask anyone else who wishes to participate to raise a hand. I will indicate the next person to participate. If you have problems standing but would like to participate, let me know and I will come to you. You will then pour the water into this watering can and also say some words if you would like to.

### *Main Ritual*

I ring this bell to formally start this rite. (Ring the bell.)

We come together to honor the memory of Hazel.

We begin by creating a space safe to be with our feelings.

Within this circle, grief, anger, joy, and compassion may be shared without judgment.

(Turn around, cast a circle with a wand. Make sure it is big enough to include everyone and the tree.)

Our ancestors were wise enough to leave us stories that give us permission to grieve. From the oldest civilization comes the story of Ishtar. When the goddess lost her love Tammuz, she let out a loud cry that was heard throughout the land. Her lament was said to contain enough sorrow to mourn every living thing that ever will be lost.

In the Abrahamic traditions, we are told that when the plant that was shading Jonah died, he was so upset that he stated that he wanted to die also. The Greeks told us of Demeter, who makes the world barren in winter, even knowing that her daughter Kore will return from the underworld in spring. Thus, no matter our views of death, we know that it is ok to grieve.

## *Speak about Hazel*

(Share some stories as gotten from the family and from your own life.)

## *Graveside activity: Water the Tree*

Priest/ess:

*(Stand in front of the tree and say)*

John Galsworthy wrote, “Not the least hard thing to bear when they go from us, these quiet friends, is that they carry away with them so many years of our own lives.”

Let this tree be a reminder of our time spent with Hazel. A living symbol that her influence on our lives remains.

Let us give this tree water as a promise to remember her. Hazel’s family come forth and give water to this tree.

*(Hand the ladle to one of the members of the family.)*

Would you like to say a few words?

(After each family member has finished, they return to their place. Repeat until each family member has watered the tree.)

Indicate that you would like to add water to this tree by raising your hand.

(If you have an assistant, have them go to a person with their hand up. If not, indicate who should come forward. Hand the ladle to that person. Have them water the tree.)

Would you like to say a few words?

(After everyone is done, water the bush yourself, and if you knew the animal, add a personal memory.)

## *Move to healing*

PriestX

Hazel brought joy to all who saw her. She had a way to make you smile by the way she walked, or panted, or snored. These memories of joy remain with us, and new joy shall be added to them. Feeling this joy is the best tribute to Hazel that we can make.

We come to the end of this rite. After I dismiss the circle, I will spend a private moment with the family. During this time, feel free to recall a joyous memory of Hazel.

## *Dismiss Circle*

PriestX

(Using the wand, push the circle down by turning to each quarter while saying)

This circle | of sacred space | that was created | is now open.

*(Using your hands, push the circle apart to indicate it is open)*

As you go forth from this rite, take what you need from it to move from grief to joy.

## *Talk to the family in private*

PriestX

(Go to the family and hold the container of ashes that will be kept)

The tree symbolizes how you shared Hazel with the public, and we have honored that relationship today in public.

However, you have a unique private bond that is represented by these ashes, which you will keep with you. May both of these symbols bring you comfort.

So Be It.

## Ancient Practices

When creating funerals that speak to us, we may find inspiration from the practices of our Pagan ancestors.

Below are samples of burial practices that were performed by past Pagan civilizations. Each section follows the same format. First, a brief sample of common practices is presented. Second, deity names and concepts that are relevant are listed. This is followed by suggestions of how we might adapt some of the practices to modern-day ceremonies or find modern representations that point to the ancient practices. Next are some translations of text from that culture for use in a funeral and finally, a list of resources is provided.

### Ideas organized by Civilizations

The following is ordered from the oldest known civilizations to the newest.

## Indus (Harappan Civilization)

### Practices

Over fifty-five burial sites have been found in the Indus Valley. The burials are interpreted primarily as reflections of social structure and hierarchy, partially because of the strong DNA affinities among the female population.

Burials were in brick or stone-lined rectangular or oval pits. The body was usually interred clothed, shrouded, or in a wooden coffin in the north-south direction, with the head to the north. From the use of clothing and/or a coffin, it is believed that it was considered important that the body did not come into contact with the ground.

Grave goods included pottery, with the earlier burials including a cup and a plate, which seemed to be indispensable.<sup>2</sup> Later bodies of the individuals were usually buried with their jewelry, women being buried with bangles and men with earrings. Copper mirrors have also been found in the graves of females.<sup>3</sup>

Later burial practices also included cremation, where the ashes were placed in burial urns.<sup>4</sup> Also, unlike other civilizations, the Harappan did not bury riches with their dead.<sup>5</sup>

The abundance of water facilities and the existence of the bath at Mohenjo-daro suggest that water played an important part in religious rites. Water was most likely used for ritual purification and iconography suggest that terrestrial waters, with their fish, were closely related in belief to the waters of the heavens where swam the stars.<sup>6</sup>

### Deities and Important Concepts

Evidence exists that the Harappan worshiped a mother goddess and a male god, shown wearing a buffalo-horned head-dress, sitting in a yogic posture, surrounded by animals.

They also venerated the natural world, especially trees, principally the pipal (Buddha tree) and powerful animals, particularly the bull/water buffalo and the tiger.<sup>7</sup>

### Modern Adaptations

- Burial in a coffin and/or shroud.
- Raise a pitcher or large bowl of water while saying the following:
  - Water cleanses and purifies everything it touches.  
This water represents the heavens wherein swim the stars.  
Say the following as you pour the water on each participant's hands: "May your heart be free to look at the stars and remember \_\_\_".
- Planting of a tree.
- Lighting a fire at the funeral site.
- Speaking of the spirit animals of the person. (Either a physical animal or a spiritual being that the

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<sup>2</sup> The Language of the Harappans: From Akkadian to Sanskrit, by Malti J Shendge; pg. 31

<sup>3</sup> <http://jeyakumar1962.blogspot.com/2011/11/harappan-burial-practices-krishnapriya.html>

<sup>4</sup> <http://www.timemaps.com/civilization-ancient-india2>

<sup>5</sup> <http://wondersofpakistan.wordpress.com/2009/03/04/indus-valley-civilisation-the-genesis-of-pakistan/>

<sup>6</sup> The Ancient Indus Valley: New Perspectives, by Dr Jane McIntosh; pg. 297

<sup>7</sup> Ibid. pg. 297

person thought of as helping them on their spiritual journey.)

### Sample Readings

While 417 distinct signs have been identified, no deciphering of the Harappan language currently exists. Thus, we have no direct readings that can be quoted.

### Resources

- The Language of the Harappans: From Akkadian to Sanskrit  
By Malti J Shendge
- The Harappan Civilization: Module 1

## Sumer (Mesopotamia)

### Practices

The kings of Sumer were buried alongside treasure and scores of other richly dressed people. Those buried with the king ranged from musicians, soldiers, to ox cart drivers. Those accompanying the king were first sacrificed, most likely using a blunt icepick-like weapon. The bodies were then heated to 200 degrees Celsius and finally dressed in finery.<sup>8</sup>

The harp or lyre was one of the most common features in the royal graves.<sup>9</sup> Other people were buried according to what a family could afford. However, many practices were common:

- The body was wrapped in reed matting or occasionally placed in a coffin. However, in some city states (Surghal, El-Hibba, pre-Sargonic Nippur) cremations were common.
- The corpse was laid on its side with a bowl of water between the hands near the mouth.
- Some treasured belongings might go into the grave.
- Vessels filled with food and water were placed near the body so the spirit wouldn't be hungry and return for food.
- The tombs were furnished according to what the family could afford...so the royal tombs were filled with treasures.<sup>10</sup>

### Deities and Important Concepts

- An-ki  
Universe. The combination of the god AN and the goddess KI.
- Ninhursag  
Universe. The combination of the god AN and the goddess KI.
- Dumuzi  
Shepherd god. Consort of Inanna. Life-death-rebirth deity.
- Life was lived to serve the gods who gave you everything.

### Modern Adaptations

- The body can be cremated.
- Dress the deceased in their finest clothes and place them in a coffin, laying the body on its side. Place a small bowl of water near its mouth.
- Bury items that were treasured by the person.
- Bury favorite foods/drinks with the person.
- Hold a feast using their favorite foods/drinks of the person in their honor.
- The use of a tombstone can be likened to the chapels that were often placed on top of the burial chambers when they were completed.
- Bury pictures of loved ones and friends or statues to represent these people.
- Have someone play a harp at the burial ceremony.

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<sup>8</sup> <http://suite101.com/article/farout-revelations-on-the-great-deathpit-at-ur-a86021>

<sup>9</sup> <http://suite101.com/article/farout-revelations-on-the-great-deathpit-at-ur-a86021>

<sup>10</sup> <http://www.dl.ket.org/humanities/connections/class/ancient/mesopreligion.htm>

## Sample Readings

Gilgamesh praying to the gods of the Netherworld as he names the gifts he is burying with Enkidu <sup>11</sup>  
He displayed to the Sun God a flask of lapis lazuli for Ereshkigal, the queen of the Netherworld:

“May Ereshkigal, the queen of the teeming Netherworld, accept this, may she welcome my friend and walk by his side!”

He displayed to the Sun God a flute of carnelian for Dumuzi, the shepherd beloved of Ishtar:

“May Dumuzi, the shepherd beloved of Ishtar, accept this, may he welcome my friend and walk by his side!”

Sumerian tablet from Nippur (Ni 4486) <sup>12</sup>

She can make the lament for you, my Dumuzid, the lament for you, the lament, the lamentation, reach the desert — she can make it reach the house Arali; she can make it reach Bad-tibira; she can make it reach Dul- šuba; she can make it reach the shepherding country, the sheepfold of Dumuzid

“O Dumuzid of the fair-spoken mouth, of the ever-kind eyes,” she sobs tearfully, “O you of the fair-spoken mouth, of the ever kind eyes,” she sobs tearfully. “Lad, husband, lord, sweet as the date, [...] O Dumuzid!” she sobs, she sobs tearfully. From *The Messenger and the Maiden* <sup>13</sup>

I placed bread and rubbed it; from a bowl whose strap had not been opened, from a dish of which the rim had not been soiled I poured water, I poured to the ground, and he drank it. With my good oil I anointed the figure. With my new garment, I dressed the chair. The spirit has entered, the spirit has departed. My messenger in the Mountain; in the midst of the Mountain he was whirling; he is lying (now in rest).

## Resources

- Ancient Mesopotamian Funerals, Tombs and Burials  
<https://africame.factsanddetails.com/article/entry-55.html>

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<sup>11</sup> [George-AR 1999] Andrew R. George. “What’s new in the Gilgamesh Epic?”, *Bulletin of the Canadian Society for Mesopotamian Studies*, Volume 34, 1999, pages 51–58.

<sup>12</sup> Inana and Bilulu: an ulila to Inana, from Black, J.A., Cunningham, G., Robson, E., and Zólyomi, G., *The Electronic Text Corpus of Sumerian Literature* (Oxford)

<sup>13</sup>. “Performing Death: Social Analyses of Funerary Traditions in the Ancient Near East and Mediterranean.” Ed. Nicola Laneri. N.p., n.d. Web. 16 Aug. 2013.

## *Egypt*

### Practices

Ancient Egyptian culture flourished for thousands of years, from around 3000 to 30 BC. Egyptian rites for the dead were constantly evolving and changing. But some practices were so significant and overarching that we can use them as inspiration for an Egyptian-themed Pagan funeral.

Archaeologists found the earliest Egyptian graves in the desert, dated at 4000 BC. They were small, oval, or rectangular pits dug in the sand. The Egyptians placed the deceased's body in a tight position, on its left side. They buried food and drink alongside the deceased, as well as slate palettes covered with magical religious spells.<sup>14</sup> The Egyptians also included other goods that they thought necessary for life after death, such as bowls, combs, and other trinkets.

The ancient Egyptians later replaced these simple graves with brick "mastaba." These oblong graves with sloping sides and flat roofs were popular during the Memphite dynasties. In time, the Egyptians began to create elaborate step pyramids. Eventually, these step pyramids evolved into the grand pyramids we see today at Giza. But the Egyptians built these enormous pyramids for kings, not commoners, not even wealthy ones.

However, one could still easily determine a person's social status and wealth by the size and cost of his or her tomb.

Later evidence demonstrates that processions to the tomb were a fairly common part of Egyptian funeral rites. These processions included musicians and professional wailing mourners, including two priestesses who represented the Goddesses Isis and Nephthys. Once the procession reached the tomb, a priest anointed the mummy with various oils.

Anyone who could afford it had his or her body mummified. This practice preserved the dead body by treating it with special oils and other preservative ingredients and wrapping it in strips of cloth. However, before the priests wrapped a mummy, they removed symbolically important internal organs, such as the heart, and placed them in special canopic jars, which were buried alongside the deceased. The mummification process was carried out by a group of specialized priests and took around 70 days. One of the most important parts of the mummification process was the Opening of the Mouth. The ancient Egyptians believed that this ritual allowed the deceased to use his or her eyes and mouth in the afterworld. This rite also allowed the deceased to receive offerings. A priest performed the secret rite of the Opening of the Mouth. He touched the mouth, eyes, ears, and nose (in this order) with an adze (a heavy hand tool with a steel-cutting blade attached at right angles to a wooden handle, similar to a hatchet) in order to awaken the senses of the deceased.<sup>15</sup> The priest also recited prayers as this was done. Once the body was properly prepared, it was placed in a coffin or sarcophagus and sealed in the tomb. This ritual was originally performed on statues, so that they could sustain the ka of the dead. Later, it was depicted as being performed four times during the mummification process.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> "Ancient Egyptian Burial Customs." Wikipedia. Wikimedia Foundation, n.d. Web. 15 Apr. 2015.  
<[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ancient\\_Egyptian\\_burial\\_customs](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ancient_Egyptian_burial_customs)>

<sup>15</sup> "Death Rituals." N.p., n.d. Web. 15 Apr. 2015.  
<<http://www.historyembalmed.org/egyptian-mummies/death-rituals.htm>>

<sup>16</sup> "Tour Egypt :: Egypt: Opening of the Mouth Ritual, A Feature Tour Egypt Story." N.p., n.d. Web. 07 Apr. 2015.

Ancient Egyptian death rituals often ended with a feast and celebration, as they believed that the deceased had started his or her journey to Duat - the afterlife.

The underworld was a reflection of the real world, with skies that were always blue, rivers and boats for travel, Gods and Goddesses to worship, and fields and crops that needed to be ploughed and harvested. Small statues, called shabtis, could perform any work needed and thus were a common feature of Egyptian tombs.

The deceased reached the afterlife, a semi-paradise, after two main trials. The first was standing before the 42 divine judges and pleading innocence of any wrongdoing during his or her lifetime. The second was having your heart weighed against the feather of Ma'at to show that you had indeed been virtuous in life.<sup>17</sup>

### Deities and Important Concepts

- Ka  
A symbol of the reception of the life powers from the gods to each person. The ka was the source of these powers and was the spiritual double that resides within every person. The ka as a spiritual double, was born with every person and lived on after he or she died, as long as it had a place to live, like a tomb or statue.
- Osiris  
A God who died, but then rose from the dead, after being brought back to life by his consort, the Goddess Isis. Osiris was the God of the afterlife, the underworld, and the dead. He opened the door to the afterlife for the deceased.
- Isis  
Along with her sister Nephthys, the Goddess Isis aided the deceased on his or her path to the afterlife.
- Nephthys  
Sister to Isis. Sister-wife of Set. One of the roles shared by Isis and Nephthys was as protectors of the mummy and the god Osiris. She is a protective goddess who symbolizes the death experience, just as Isis represented the (re)birth experience.
- Ptah  
The “Self-Created One”, who was believed to have created the universe either by the wish of his heart or by speaking. He was depicted as a bearded mummy-formed man. He crafted the boats that the dead used to travel to Duat – the realm of the dead. He was also associated rebirth. The Egyptians called him the “Lord of Eternity.”
- Anubis  
This God, shaped like a jackal, dealt with mummification. He protected the dead during their journey into the afterlife.

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<sup>17</sup> “The Underworld and the Afterlife in Ancient Egypt – Australian Museum.” N.p., n.d. Web. 07 Apr. 2015.

<<http://australianmuseum.net.au/the-underworld-and-the-afterlife-in-ancient-egypt>>

- Ma'at  
The is the Goddess of truth, balance, order, law, morality, and justice. Ma'at was responsible for judging a person's deeds at death by weighing the deceased's heart against a feather, and meting out the appropriate awards or punishments.

### Modern Adaptations

- Clergy or the family of the deceased may wish to wrap the body in linen and anoint it with sacred oils or ointments, such as frankincense, myrrh, or cedar oil. Perform the opening of the mouth ritual as follows:
  1. *Touch the mouth*  
You shall eat of the fruits of the afterlife in Duat—the Land of the Two Fields.
  2. *Touch the eyes*  
You shall be open to experience that which lies beyond the veil.
  3. *Touch the ears*  
You shall hear the prayers of those still living.
  4. *Touch the nose*  
You shall breathe in the sweet smell of all you need to learn.
  5. *Hold the adze (you can use a hatchet) to the sky*  
You shall move on with the knowledge that we who are left behind shall not forget you.
- Tell people to solemnly proceed to the burial site. If musicians are a part of the rite, you might have them play during the procession.
- Talk about the ancient Egyptian custom of wailing to mourn the dead and how it is okay to feel the pain of loss. Allow people to cry, pray, wail, and shout—if they feel comfortable doing so.
- Talk about all of the good that the person did in life and how he or she will be able to stand before Ma'at, the Goddess of Truth. Discuss how the deceased will be rewarded for good deeds, before moving on to the afterlife.
- Bury some everyday items with the deceased. You might ensure that you have enough small items so that everyone who wishes to can add an item to the grave. You might also bury religious objects, such as small statues of Egyptian Gods and Goddesses or amulets to give the deceased luck in the afterlife. These items may include ancient Egyptian symbols of life after death, like the “ankh” (a cross-like symbol in which the top arm is a loop) or the scarab beetle (which the Egyptians believed to magically arise to life from nothing).
- Make a small step pyramid using bricks on top of the grave.
- Make copies of Egyptian funeral texts and bury them with the deceased.
- Invoke Osiris to open the door to the realm of the dead.

## Sample Readings

Ptah performing the first Opening of the Mouth ceremony <sup>18</sup>

May Ptah open my mouth, and may the god of my town loose the swathings, even the swathings which are over my mouth. Moreover, may Thoth, being filled and furnished with charms, come and loose the bandages, the bandages of Set which fetter my mouth; and may the god Tmu hurl them at those who would fetter [me] with them, and drive them back. May my mouth be opened, may my mouth be unclosed by Shu with his iron knife, wherewith he opened the mouth of the gods. I am Sekhet, and I sit upon the great western side of heaven. I am the great goddess Sah among the souls of Annu.

Speech of the Dweller in the Embalment Chamber (Anubis) <sup>19</sup>

Pay good heed, O righteous Judge, to the Balance to support [the testimony] thereof. Pay good heed to the weighing in the Balance of the heart of the Osiris, the singing-woman of Amen, Anhai, whose word is truth, and place thou her heart in the seat of truth in the presence of the Great God.

## Resources

- Wikipedia article on Egyptian burial customs  
[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ancient\\_Egyptian\\_burial\\_customs](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ancient_Egyptian_burial_customs)
- Burial customs in ancient Egypt
- Egyptian afterlife <http://www.crystalinks.com/egyptafterlife.html>
- The Egyptian Book of the Dead [http://www.thenazareneway.com/index\\_egyptain\\_book\\_dead.htm](http://www.thenazareneway.com/index_egyptain_book_dead.htm)

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<sup>18</sup> “Ptah.” – New World Encyclopedia. N.p., n.d. Web. 15 Apr. 2015.

<<http://www.newworldencyclopedia.org/entry/Ptah>>

<sup>19</sup> “The Egyptian Book of the Dead.” EBD Book 2. N.p., n.d. Web. 15 Apr. 2015.

<[http://www.thenazareneway.com/ebd\\_book\\_2.htm](http://www.thenazareneway.com/ebd_book_2.htm)>

## Minoan

### Practices

Because of the lack of written material, little is known about the specific mortuary rituals of the Minoans. However, the use of burials is well documented, starting with the practice of Cave burials. There were many types of Minoan burials on Crete, including Cave burials, Chamber tombs or tholos (Beehive) tombs, all being popular in different parts of the island.

Burial was a reflection of life. Bodies were interred with their everyday possessions as well as special funerary items. Some burials were individual, but it was more common for ancient Cretan tombs to be communal. These communal tombs could be for the dead of whole communities or for particular clans. The dead of ancient Crete were commonly interred in groups rather than individual graves. In the very early Minoan period, it was common for generation after generation to be added to the same tomb.<sup>20</sup> Some funerary items seemed to have been made specifically for funerary rites. These included stone vases, so small that they were impractical for everyday use, and vessels shaped like animals or people. However, most funerary items show use and were not specifically created for these rites.<sup>21</sup> Additionally, it should be noted that horns and double-headed axes continue to be favorite themes of funerary art throughout Minoan history.<sup>22</sup>

Additionally, a terracotta model found at Kamilari and the Hagia Triada sarcophagus represent instances of a special service for, tendance of, or more likely a cult of the dead. Specially, a terracotta model showing the statue-like main figure of the dead being offered various gifts. The extended festival, which is depicted on the sarcophagus, includes sacrifice in honor of the dead, gifts, and libations. All of those were common on such occasions from the early funerary cults about the tombs in the Mesara. Underlying the 'celebration' of death with its elaborate ritual, which also included communal meals, is the expectation of renewal. The recurring rites depicted as honoring the dead seemed to focus on the tomb rather than on one individual among the many dead who were buried there.<sup>23</sup> This reflected the communal view held by the Minoans.

### Deities and Important Concepts

- A-sa-sa-ra<sup>24</sup> “The snake goddess”  
Though found only in house sanctuaries, the imagery of the snakes may be interpreted as symbols of the underworld and point to her being a chthonic deity.<sup>25</sup> However, it is important to note that enough archaeological evidence does not exist to be sure of these attributes. Having said that, the common appearance of this figure in Minoan society makes her appropriate for invocation at a funerary rite.

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<sup>20</sup> <http://suite101.com/article/minoan-burial-types-and-tombs-a148364>

<sup>21</sup> [http://www.dartmouth.edu/~prehistory/aegean/?page\\_id=569](http://www.dartmouth.edu/~prehistory/aegean/?page_id=569)

<sup>22</sup> Ibid.

<sup>23</sup> <http://kemos.revues.org/pdf/643>

<sup>24</sup> [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Snake\\_Goddess](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Snake_Goddess)

<sup>25</sup> [http://www.pantheon.org/articles/m/minoan\\_snake\\_goddess.html](http://www.pantheon.org/articles/m/minoan_snake_goddess.html)

## Modern Adaptations

- Speak of the deceased as part of the family that they belong to.
- Speak of how they join all those of their family that has passed before them. How death is an experience shared by all.
- Ritually toast the dead with mead.  
Archaeological evidence shows that the Minoans drank mead.<sup>7</sup> This, along with the findings of drinking vessels at funerary sites, makes this a very appropriate gesture.
- Hold a communal feast.

## Sample Readings

Linear A has never been successfully translated, and Linear B texts deal with economic matters. Thus, no text survives to provide us with materials that we can directly quote.

## Resources

- Aegean Prehistoric Archaeology <https://sites.dartmouth.edu/aegean-prehistory/>
- Death and Afterlife in Minoan Religion – Kernos <http://kernos.revues.org/pdf/643/>

## India (Hinduism)

### Practices

It is important to note that many Hindus do not consider their religion to be pagan. I include Hinduism here because many Neo-Pagans have been influenced by their beliefs and may want to incorporate some of their practices.

For most Hindus, cremation is the ideal method for dealing with the dead, although many groups practice burial instead; infants are buried rather than cremated. Preparation of the body usually entails bathing, anointing with a mixture of water and sandalwood, and daubing with turmeric powder and water.<sup>26</sup> Puffed rice is also offered to the deceased by the women of the family. The body is displayed in an open casket, and everyone is expected to quietly view it. Cremation is done after the funeral itself. The closest relative of the deceased (usually the eldest son) takes charge of the final rites.<sup>27</sup> If a body is cremated, the ashes are collected and are dispersed in a sacred body of water or other place of importance to the deceased. If a body is cremated, the ashes are collected and are dispersed in a sacred body of water or other place of importance to the deceased.

As mentioned, the actual cremation of the body is traditionally performed by the eldest son and only males attend this rite. During the cremation, the mourners walk counter-clockwise to show that all is backwards. Prior to the body being cremated, puffed rice is again offered to it by the males, symbolizing giving strength for the soul's journey.

When the funeral is over, the family returns home and bathes, then cleans the house.<sup>28</sup> Then, an eleven-day rite to ensure the passage during its voyage to the Otherworld is performed. Shradha consists of daily offerings of rice balls, called pindas, which provide a symbolic, transitional body for the dead.<sup>29</sup> At the end of this eleven-day mourning period, during which the family is considered unclean and does not leave the house (though others may come to visit them), a meal is held with close family.

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<sup>26</sup> Hindu Funeral Traditions <http://www.nytimes.com/1984/11/01/world/hindu-funeral-traditions-hindu-belief-reincarnation-provides-basis-for-its.html>

<sup>27</sup> Hindu Rites & Rituals : Death & Funeral [http://hinduism.about.com/od/basics/a/rites\\_rituals\\_5.htm](http://hinduism.about.com/od/basics/a/rites_rituals_5.htm)

<sup>28</sup> Hindu Death Rituals and Beliefs <http://mailerindia.com/hindu/veda/index.php?death>

<sup>29</sup> Ibid.

## Deities and Important Concepts

- Brahma  
The ultimate force. The All. G-d.
- Vishnu  
The supreme being of the Vaishnava sect. The God of gods.
- Devi  
The Mother Goddess. See <http://www.religionfacts.com/hinduism/deities/devi.htm>.
- Yama  
The first human to die. He is called King Yama and welcomes the soul to a kind of paradise or a place of suffering, depending on its deeds.
- Agni  
Fire god invoked to carry the spirit to the realm of Yama.
- Pitrs  
Benefic beings, including the deceased relatives of the living often worshiped during the dark times (in the afternoon, during nighttime, during a dark moon, during an eclipse, etc.).<sup>30</sup>
- Atman  
The innermost essence of each individual.
- Reincarnation  
The belief that the soul of a person is immortal and will come back in another life until it reaches the understanding that it is one with the divine, at which time it will become one with Brahma.
- Believe that there is no way of transmitting conscious memory from one life to another, because its domain belongs to the world of illusions and dissolves at death.
- Hindu scriptures encourage viewing death as a joyous release and discourage excessive lamentation. A true Hindu is encouraged to love death as he loves this life.
- Offerings of water and rice were given to the deceased by placing them in a fire. Ritual offerings to the dead were made from the remains of the food offered to Vishnu.

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<sup>30</sup> Hindu Funeral Rites and Ancestor Worship [http://www.finaljourneyseminars.com/?page\\_id=438](http://www.finaljourneyseminars.com/?page_id=438)

## Modern Adaptations

- Place the body wrapped in white on a cot. Cover in flowers, making sure that the head is not covered. Have the body cremated after the funeral.
- Walk around the body in a counterclockwise fashion. Talking about how death reverses everything.
- Walk around the body in a counterclockwise fashion. Talking about how death reverses everything.
- Talk about how the deceased will become a Pitrs helping those who are still on this plane and in their time reincarnate.
- Talk about the wish that the deceased will become one with the All, obtaining the end of their soul's journey.
- Place a lit lantern by the head of the deceased while saying the "Prayer for the dead".
- Follow the funeral with a meal at the house of the relatives of the deceased, where guests bring offerings of fruit.
- Sprinkle attendants of the funeral as they leave. Sprinkle the hands, feet, and head to cleanse them.

Traditionally, this was done as everything associated with death and dying is considered ritually polluting. It can be interpreted as cleansing the person so that they may start the healing process of grief.

Say something like:

"May you be cleansed so you may properly mourn and in time heal."

## Sample Readings

### Passage on death from the Riga Veda

When he goes on the path that leads away the breath of life. Then he will be led by the will of the gods  
May your eye go to the sun, your life's breath to the wind  
Go to the sky or the earth, as is your nature

Mann, vi. 76–8.

As a tree leaves the bank of a river, when it falls in, or as a bird leaves the branch of a tree at his pleasure, thus he, who leaves his body by necessity or by legal choice, is delivered from the ravaging shark, or crocodile, of the world.

## Prayer for the dead

O Supreme light, lead us from untruth to truth, from darkness to light, and from death to immortality.

## Conversation between a father and son in The Vedas

**(Note:** Use to talk about the portion of the person that never dies. That the body is like the banyan tree but that the Atman is never destroyed.)

“Fetch me a fruit of the banyan tree.”

“Here is one, sir.”

“Break it.”

“I have broken it, sir.”

“What do you see?”

“Very tiny seeds, sir.”

“Break one.”

“I have broken it, sir.”

“Now what do you see?”

“Nothing sir.”

“My son,” the father said, “what you do not perceive is essence, and in that essence the mighty banyan tree exists. Believe me, my son, in that essence is the self of all that is. That is the True, that is the Self. And you are that Self, ... ”

## Resources

- Hindu Funeral Rites and Ancestor Worship [http://www.finaljourneyseminars.com/?page\\_id=438](http://www.finaljourneyseminars.com/?page_id=438)
- The Garuda Purana  
Considered the authoritative text on funeral rites for Hindus. The text was written after the advent of Christianity, which might account for the imagery of both heaven-like and hell-like afterlife between rebirths.  
<http://www.sacred-texts.com/hin/gpu/gpu00.htm>

## India (Jainism)

### Practices

Jainism is not a Pagan religion; however, some ideas from Jainism have been adopted by many Pagans. Specifically, the notion that the memories associated with a person somehow survives reincarnation is held by many Neo-Pagans. Additionally, many Neo-Pagans see the purpose of human life as recognizing their own natural divinity.

The great philosophers of Jainism evolved a view of the universe as material and permanent, in contrast to the Buddhist idea of the illusory nature of the world.

One of the distinct aspects of Jainism is the five vows of non-injury or nonviolence; speaking the truth; taking only that which is given; chastity; and detachment from place, persons, and things. In Jainism, death leads ultimately to the liberation of the soul into an individual state of total knowledge and bliss, although this process may take several cycles of death and rebirth. The aim of Jain spiritual endeavor is to liberate the soul (jiva), which is believed to leave the physical body with one's karmic matter.<sup>31</sup>

Upon death, a Jain's body is cremated and not buried. However, in the case of stillbirth, the child is buried. Cremation is to be done as early as possible, preferably within twenty-four hours. The body should be placed with the head pointed towards the North and cremated after the ceremony. A lit lamp known as a Deeva should be placed on the right side of the head and kept burning until the body is taken for cremation. The lamp has a cotton wick that is soaked in clarified butter (ghee), symbolizing divinity. For Jains, an independent Soul resides in each and every living things; therefore as much as possible, try not to make use of live flowers.

Those attending the ritual should dress in simple black attire. After paying respects to the dead the men and women sit separately.

Often at the beginning of the funeral, after the opening words, the "Namokar Mantra" is recited 3 to 5 times. (A version of this can be found at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=F3GBg60rUOI>). This mantra is considered the most sacred Jainism prayer and pays respect to those humans who have reached the stage of religious progress above that of the layperson.

A traditional part of the funeral is the Confession of Sins or Mistakes. Sins are considered mistakes made in ignorance that cause harm to another. Traditionally the Kshamaapanaa Sutra (forgiveness mantra) is recited.

When the funeral is finished a meal may be served either at the funeral home or at another location. As much as possible, food/vegetables grown underground and serving the food at night should be avoided. When visiting the family it is appropriate to dress in white.

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<sup>31</sup> What's a Jainism Funeral Like [http://wiki.answers.com/Q/What\\_is\\_a\\_Jainism\\_funeral\\_like](http://wiki.answers.com/Q/What_is_a_Jainism_funeral_like)

After the funeral close family members and close friends who have handled the body should not participate in any religious ceremony at the temple altar (vedi in Gabhara) for three days. They should also delay auspicious events like marriages. They may, however, arrange for religious ceremonies to be.

### Deities and Important Concepts

- Jains do not have gods or goddesses as we might traditionally think of them. Instead there are liberated souls that can be described as supreme souls — paramatman.
- Jina means ‘spiritual victor’ while Tirthankara means ‘maker of a ford’. The first term describes how a person has successfully battled his natural attachment to the world to achieve enlightenment. The second term highlights how the enlightened person has built a ford across the river of rebirth so others can follow him to liberation.<sup>32</sup>

### Modern Adaptations

- Use rose petals or other things that have fallen naturally from a plant without killing the plant.
- Display the body with the head pointed North. The body should be cremated after the rite.
- Display a lit oil lamp near the right-hand side of the deceased's head. Explain that the lamp represents the divine spark that exists after death.
- Talk about the journey to recognize the divine in ourselves. How death is a part of this journey.
- Share a meal during daylight hours that does not use any food that is grown underground.
- Visit the family of the deceased dressed in white.
- Donate money to an organization that saves the lives of animals.
- Pay homage to all great spiritual teachers.

### Sample Readings

#### Namokar Mantra

(These five salutations evaporate and eradicate negative influences. This is the most sacred and auspicious prayer of all Jaina prayers.

With some versions, 'Om' is recited at the beginning of the first four lines. Notes on pronunciation:

- ‘A’ is pronounced as ‘u’ as in ‘but’
- ‘AA’ is a long ‘aw’ sound as in ‘saw’

#### (OM) NAMO ARIHANTAANA

I bow to the Jinas (Arhants), the Perfected, yet Embodied Souls, possessed of Infinite Consciousness, Energy, and Happiness;

#### (OM) NAMO SIDDHAANAM

I bow to the Perfect, Pure (Free of Karmic Attachments), Liberated Souls (Siddhas), those who have attained Moksha,;

#### (OM) NAMO AAYARIYAANAM

I bow to the Ascetic Leaders (Aacharyas) of the Jaina Order.

#### (OM) NAMO UVAJJHAAYAANAM

I bow to the Ascetic Preceptors/Teachers (Upadhyayas);

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<sup>32</sup> Jainism FAQs <http://beta.jainpedia.org/resources/jainism-faqs/contentpage/1.html>

## NAMO LOAE SAVVA SAAHUUNAM

I bow to all the Jaina Ascetics (Monks/Nuns) in the world devoted to Purification of Soul/Self.  
ESO PANCHA NAMOKAARO SAVVA PAAVA PANAASANO MANGALANAM CHA  
SAVVESIM PADHAMAM HAVAI MANGALAM

### Kshamaapanaa Sutra

KHAAMEMII SAVVE JIVAA SAVVE JIVAA KHAMANTU ME METTI ME SAVVE BHUESUU  
VERAM MAJJHAM NA KENAI |

I grant forgiveness to all living beings;  
and may all of them forgive me.  
I have friendship with all living beings;  
and hostility toward none.

### Words of Assurance

Anyone who recognizes their divine self is a new creation.  
The old life has gone; a new life has begun.  
Friends, believe in the truth and nature of the indestructible, pure Soul; and be at peace.

### Prayer for Sending Forth

Living beings are comprised of two substances: material particles and Soul.  
The bodies of living beings are mortal, formed from particles of matter.  
And to particles of matter, these bodies must return.  
This is an inescapable law of nature (or 'of the universe').  
The Soul is immortal.  
Thus, even in death, we recognize that life continues, with opportunity for continued and increased happiness.

May the Soul of \_\_\_ be now in a place where there is neither pain nor sorrow nor dying. Where it can continue to make progress toward Moksha/Liberation; when there is eternal bliss and forevermore freedom from the suffering of the cycle of birth, death and rebirth.

Shuddha A<sup>tm</sup>a, Shuddha A<sup>tm</sup>a, Shuddha A<sup>tm</sup>. Pure Soul, Pure Soul, Pure Soul

### Resources

- Jain Funeral Practices & Observances  
This is an excellent guide with useful tips for anyone dealing with a funeral.  
[Jain Funeral Procedures Salgia Final.doc](#)

## India (Buddhism)

### Practices

Buddhism has no ultimate being or God. It is therefore more of a philosophy than a religion. However, major sects of Buddhism believe that praying to people who have attained enlightenment will help in their path to enlightenment.

Some Pagans adopt Buddhist practices and ideas into their path. Thus, it may be fitting to honor Buddhist funeral practices for the deceased.

Family members clean and dress the body of the deceased. The clothes should be kept simple, as the body is considered to be just an empty vessel. The body is then placed in a coffin and surrounded with wreaths, candles, and sticks of incense. In modern times, the coffin is decorated with colored lights. A small altar can be set up with a photo of the deceased, a picture of the Buddha, and offerings such as flowers, fruits, candles, and incense.

Funeral practices should not be over elaborate. Instead, it is encouraged that monies be donated to worthy causes. The choice of burial or cremation is left as a purely personal choice for the family. Also, weeping is discouraged as it is seen as neither helping the mourners nor the deceased. Instead, a somber and meditative attitude is considered appropriate.

Monks are often invited to perform the funerary rite and provide chanting. Food called Matakabhatta (one who is dead) is offered to the monks. The formula for the presentation of the food is as follows: "Reverend Sirs, we humbly beg to present this mataka food and these various gifts to the Sangha. May the Sangha receive this food and these gifts of ours so that benefits and happiness may come to us to the end of time."

Pamsukula robe(s) or white cloth are often presented to the officiates. Another custom often seen in Thailand is a broad ribbon that is tied to the coffin and held by the monks.

At the end of the service, the "Transferring of Merits/ Thanksgiving" is recited (see Sample Readings). Then, water of dedication is poured on the ground by a lay leader.

Donations to good works are given in order to transfer the merits of these acts to the deceased.

### Deities and Important Concepts

- **Buddha**  
An individual whose teachings formed the basis of Buddhism. The Buddha's teachings concern the quest for liberation from suffering.<sup>33</sup> Buddha is also a title that means awakened. It is given to one who has discovered the way to Nirvana.
- **Green Tara "mother of liberation"**  
She was a princess who wished to remain in the world until every single being is fully liberated. Mother Tara is associated with the qualities of action and protection (as a mother who is willing to give her life to protect her children), kindness and caring, and a strong connection to the earth. She also clearly rejected the idea that one had to be male to achieve enlightenment.

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<sup>33</sup> Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy: Buddha <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/buddha/>

- Kwan Yin (Guanyin)  
Bodhisattva, usually shown as a female. She is associated with compassion and forgiveness.

One tale of Kwan Yin tells of her incarnation as a young woman who becomes a nun rather than marry an uncaring man. She is killed by her father. In one version of this legend, when Guanyin was executed, a supernatural tiger took her to one of the more hell-like realms of the dead. However, instead of being punished like the other spirits of the dead, Guanyin played music, and flowers blossomed around her. This completely surprised the hell guardian. The story says that Guanyin, by merely being in that Naraka (hell), turned it into a paradise. Also, after seeing the suffering of souls, she vows to be reincarnated until all souls are freed.

- Amitabha Buddha  
He resides over the Western Pure Land according to some schools of Mahayana Buddhism. Devotees call upon his name for entrance to this heavenly realm, where, once there, enlightenment will be easier to attain.
- Jizo-bosatsu  
One of the most beloved Japanese deities. He works to ease the suffering and shorten the sentence of those serving time in hell and to deliver the faithful into Amida's western paradise. This deity is often also worshiped by Taoists and the followers of Shintoism.<sup>34</sup>

### Modern Adaptations

- Sprinkle water on the coffin to help the deceased go pure to the next lifetime.
- Donate the flowers from the funeral. For example, give them to a hospital and dedicate them to the deceased, obtaining a Precious Human Rebirth.<sup>35</sup>
- Each person can bless flowers/leaves and place them in a hole with a new tree planted on top (i.e., representing Rebirth.)<sup>36</sup>
- Pour water in a vessel until it overflows. Talk about how the water is a blessing for the happiness and release of the deceased.

### Sample Readings

#### On the impermanence of life

Lord Buddha Said:

This existence of ours is as transient as autumn clouds

To watch the birth and death of beings is like looking at the movements of a dance.

A lifetime is like a flash of lightning in the sky,

Rushing by, like a torrent down a steep mountain.

What is born will die;

What has been gathered will be dispersed;

What has been accumulated will be exhausted;

What has been built up will collapse

And what has been high will be brought low.

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<sup>34</sup> "Jizo Bodhisattva (Bosatsu)." Jizo Bodhisattva (Bosatsu). N.p., n.d. Web. 04 Feb. 2013.

<http://www.onmarkproductions.com/html/jizo1.shtml>

<sup>35</sup> Western Buddhist Funerals [http://hayagriva.org.au/?page\\_id=118](http://hayagriva.org.au/?page_id=118)

<sup>36</sup> Ibid.

### Thoughts about death<sup>37</sup>

Aciram vat āyam kāyo pathavim adhisessati Chuddo apetavinn āno niratt ham va kalingaram Annicā vata sankh ārā, uppādavayadhammino Uppajjitvā nirujjhanti, tesam vupassamo sukho.

Before long, alas! This body will be laid on the earth, discarded, devoid of consciousness, and useless like a log of wood.

Transient, alas! are all component things, subject are they to birth and decay; having gained birth to death, the life flux swings — bliss truly dawns when unrest dies away.

### The Buddha, Anguttara Nikaya<sup>38</sup>

Short, alas, is the life of man, limited and fleeting, full of pain and torment. One should wisely understand this, do good deeds, and lead a holy life, for no mortals ever escape death.

Just as the dewdrop, at the point of the grass blade at sunrise, very soon vanishes and does not remain for long: just so is the dew drop–like life of men very short and fleeting.

Just as at the pouring down of a mighty rain, the bubbles on the water very soon vanish and do not remain for long: just so is the bubble–like life of men very short and fleeting.

Just as a furrow drawn with a stick in the water very soon vanishes and does not remain for long, just so is the furrow-like life of men very short and fleeting.

Just as the cattle for slaughter, whatever their footing, stand on the brink of death, just so is the life of men very short and fleeting.

One should wisely understand this, do good deeds, and lead a holy life, for no mortal ever escapes death.

### Transferring of Merits/ Thanksgiving

#### *Mourners*

Idam me nātinam hotu, sukhita hontu nātayo.

Idam me nātinam hotu, sukhitā hontu nātayo.

Idam me nātinam hotu, sukhita hontu natayo

#### *Monks*

Yatha vārivah ā purā paripurenti sāgaram. Evameva ito dinnam petānam upakappati. Icchitam patt hitam tumham khippameva sam? jhatu. Sabbe purentu sankapp ā cando pannaraso yath ā mani jotiraso yath ā.

Just as the full-flowing rivers fill the ocean, even so, what is given from here accrues to the departed. Whatever you wished or wanted may it quickly be. May all your wishes be fulfilled

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<sup>37</sup> A Guide to Proper Buddhist Funeral, pg 10. [http://hayagriva.org.au/?page\\_id=118](http://hayagriva.org.au/?page_id=118)

<sup>38</sup> Ibid. pg 15.

as the moon upon the fifteenth day, or as  
the wish-fulfilling gem.

### Dedication of Merit<sup>39</sup>

May quickly attain a new rebirth

And may all living beings, without exception,

Be led to a state of happiness.

May they be happy, May they be free of suffering, may they live in harmony with one another and may they find a spiritual path in this lifetime and follow it until they come to enlightenment.

May the desire to help others be developed

In all who are here and may it never fade away but increase more and more.

### Resources

- A Guide to Proper Buddhist Funeral [http://www.urbandharma.org/pdf/buddhist\\_funeral.pdf](http://www.urbandharma.org/pdf/buddhist_funeral.pdf)
- Buddhist Funeral Rites in Thailand & other South East Asian Countries  
<https://www.buddhanet.net/bfuneral/>
- Buddhist Funerals <https://www.dignityfunerals.co.uk/arranging-a-funeral/types-of-funeral/religious-funerals/buddhist-funerals/>

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<sup>39</sup> Western Buddhist Funerals [http://hayagriva.org.au/?page\\_id=118](http://hayagriva.org.au/?page_id=118)

## China (Ancient China)

### Practices

Evidence of burial practices has been dated to as early as 5000 BCE. Additionally, since the beginning of recorded Chinese history (Xia Dynasty—circa 2000 BCE), ancestor worship has been a large part of Chinese religious belief.

Early burials show a remarkable amount of care and ritual in burial practices. Some of the common attributes found in ancient burials were:

- Consistency of orientation and posture – the dead of the northwest were given a westerly orientation and those of the east an easterly one.
- Segregation of the dead into what appear to be kinship groupings.
- Graveside ritual offerings of liquids, pig skulls, and pig jaws.
- Collective secondary burial, in which the bones of up to 70 or 80 corpses were stripped of their flesh and reburied together.<sup>40</sup>
- 

Ancient tombs have also been found with elaborate funerary objects set up to provide for the continuing worship of the ancestors. Tombs were arranged with the objects that people would need in the afterlife - weapons, ritual vessels, musical instruments, and personal ornaments.

The first tombs were reserved for important nobility who were buried along with their servants. Jade tubes and disks were often found atop and alongside the body.

Sites also included linings of stone slabs and pebbles, and also included painted fragments, suggesting that the chambers were decorated.

Funerary feasts were also an important part of the rites performed, with evidence of such feasts going back to Neolithic times.<sup>41</sup> The most famous of these feasts, found at Shijiahe, Tianmen included pottery that was made specifically for the feast and then ritualistically smashed.

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<sup>40</sup> History of Chinese Religion [http://www.religionfacts.com/chinese\\_religion/history.htm](http://www.religionfacts.com/chinese_religion/history.htm)

<sup>41</sup> Social integration of religion and ritual in prehistoric China pg 719  
[http://www.clas.ufl.edu/users/krigbaum/6930/lec%26zhu\\_antiquity\\_2002.pdf](http://www.clas.ufl.edu/users/krigbaum/6930/lec%26zhu_antiquity_2002.pdf)

## Deities and Important Concepts

- Ti (“Deity Above” or “the Lord on High”)  
One of the most important deities of ancient China. Ti was in charge of all the gods and spirits of the pantheon and ruled with the help of the worthy ancestors.<sup>42</sup>
- P’an Ku  
The God of Creation. Born of chaos, he was both male and female. When he died, he split into a number of parts. These included the Sun, the Moon, rivers, seas, forests, rain, wind, and thunder. It is said that his fleas became the ancestors of man.<sup>43</sup>
- Xi Wangmu (Queen Mother of the West)  
She cosmic forces of time and space. She ordains life and death, disease and healing, and determines the life spans of all living beings. Her palace is a meeting place for the gods and humans.<sup>44</sup>

## Modern Adaptations

- Each person brings a clay bowl or cup. A ritual feast is held with the deceased, and then the cups and plates are broken and buried with the corpse. **Note:** You might want to use a small hammer to make sure that these break cleanly.
- Music is played in honor of the dead.
- Bury a musical instrument to soothe the dead. Bury a weapon to protect them. Bury an incense bowl and incense to show that the person will continue to be honored. Bury a bit of Jade to show that the person is now an honored ancestor worthy of such adornments.
- Burn a copy of a favorite piece of art so that the person can continue to enjoy and be inspired by it.
- Glue a picture of Xi Wangmu to the back of a bronze mirror and bury it with the deceased.
- Speak of how an ancestor’s altar will be created to honor the deceased.

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<sup>42</sup> Ancient Chinese Religion <http://blue.butler.edu/~jfmccgrat/china/religion1.htm>

<sup>43</sup> History of P’an Ku <http://www.broward.edu/studentlife/publications/panku/Pages/History-of-Pan-Ku.aspx>

<sup>44</sup> Xi Wangmu, the shamanic great goddess of China  
<http://www.suppressedhistories.net/goddess/xiawangmu.html>

## Sample Readings

Poem calling back the soul of the dead, 3rd century BC (300 BC)<sup>45</sup>

O Soul, go not to the West  
Where level wastes of sand stretch on and on;  
And demons rage, swine-headed, hairy-skinned,  
With bulging eyes;  
Who in wild laughter gnash projecting fangs.  
O Soul, go not to the West  
Where many perils wait!  
O Soul, come back to idleness and peace.  
In quietude enjoy  
The lands of Jing and Chu.  
There work your will and follow your desire  
Till sorrow is forgot,  
And carelessness shall bring you length of days.  
O Soul, come back to joys beyond all telling!

## Resources

- The Past, China unearthed: A hidden history of tombs and offerings  
<https://the-past.com/feature/china-unearthed-a-hidden-history-of-tombs-and-offerings/>
- National Geographic, Chinese Religions and Philosophies  
<https://education.nationalgeographic.org/resource/chinese-religions-and-philosophies/>
- A Complete Guide to Traditional Chinese Funeral Customs  
<https://www.dignitymemorial.com/memorial-services/funeral-traditions/chinese-funeral-traditions>

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<sup>45</sup> Burial customs in China <http://www.vam.ac.uk/content/articles/b/burial-customs-china/>

## China (Confucianism)

### Practices

Confucianism is sometimes considered a philosophy rather than a religion. Its emphasis is on secular ethics and morality. Additionally, it had no priesthood nor specific deities.

Older funerary practices were commonly used alongside Confucianist practices. It is not unusual to see a combination of Buddhist, Taoist, and Confucian practices at a funeral. One of the older practices commonly practiced in ancient times was termed *pungjang*, literally ‘wind burial,’ which involved wrapping the body in a straw mat and tying it to the branches of a tree; after the flesh had decomposed, the bones were gathered and buried or scattered. High-ranking members of society were interred in stone chambers (K. *seoksil*). However, many still opted to bury their dead in pit-style graves; normally in the form of stone-lined graves (K. *seokgwangmyo*) or earthen pit graves (K. *ogwangmyo*). The stone-lined graves are earthen pits lined with roughly cut stones, while the latter are simple rectangular earthen pits. Funeral rites did, however, evolve to specifically reflect Confucianist beliefs. Today, funerals often start at death, when the relatives cry out aloud to inform the neighbors. Mourning garments are worn as prescribed by a person’s relationship to the deceased. The site of the burial is selected using Feng Shui principles so that it is auspicious. A reflection of the importance of selecting the correct site is the belief that “If ancestors are buried in an auspicious site, their descendants will prosper in this world.”<sup>46</sup> When the coffin is interred, friends and family follow the coffin to the cemetery, holding a willow branch, which symbolizes the soul of the person who has died.<sup>47</sup> Ancient practices followed the *Jia li* (Book of Family Rituals) by using graves with a bottom layer of charcoal that were then cement-lined.<sup>48</sup> These graves were created out of the belief that the bones of the deceased deserved to be treated with respect. Bodies were found in wooden coffins, and niches were carved in which were placed miniature burial goods. Burial goods typically included ceramic vessels, bronze spoons, and miniature replicates of everyday items. Precious items were not buried as they were considered a burden to the deceased.<sup>49</sup>

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<sup>46</sup> Bryant, Clifton D., and Dennis L. Peck, eds. “Confucian Beliefs and Traditions.” *Encyclopedia of Death and the Human Experience*. N.p.: n.p., n.d. 222-23. <http://books.google.com/books?id=LFOn7rpkVdQC>

<sup>47</sup> “Confucianism Practices.” *Confucianism Practices*. N.p., n.d. Web. 16 Jan. 2013.

<http://www.shangrila.org/father/RELIGIONS/7Confucianism/Practices.html>

<sup>48</sup> Horlyck, Charlotte. *Confucian Burial Practices in the Late Goryeo and Early Joseon Period*. N.p.: n.p., n.d.42. Web. 10 Jan. 2013. <http://tinyurl.com/atzmkjt>

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.* pg 48.

## Deities and Important Concepts

- Reliance on the concept of family to deal with death. That the ancestor will be honored and the family will survive.
- Death is seen as being out of the control of the individual and part of Heaven's mandate. Thus, it is not seen as proper to over mourn someone's death, but to accept it as part of a natural passage.
- The best way of achieving immortality is by establishing moral virtues, the next best is to accomplish magnificent feats, and the least is to hand down classic writings, lasting and unfading. The most practical way to achieve immortality is to hand down classic writings, since this is something, everyone can do.

## Modern Adaptations

- Start the ceremony by crying out that the loved one is dead and that you honor his/her memory with your tears.
- Speak of how the physical remains of our dead are as precious as an antique. They serve as a reminder of the person to whom they belonged.
- Bury a small, inexpensive representation of everyday things. You might use items for doll houses for this purpose.
- Have everyone carry a willow branch as the coffin is taken to the burial site. Explain that the branch symbolizes the soul of the person who died. Explain that each of us carries the memory of that soul with us, just as we carry the willow branch.
- Hand out a small book of Confucius sayings dedicated to the deceased.

## Sample Readings

- Death and life have their determined appointments; riches and honors depend upon heaven.
- In the ceremonies of mourning, it is better that there be deep sorrow than a minute attention to observances. (Analects, bk. iii., c. iv., v. 3.)
- On remembering your dead parents:  
When early dawn unseals my eyes, before my mind, my parents rise. (Shi King, "the Book of Odes")

## Resources

- Korean Funeral Rites [http://www.asianinfo.org/asianinfo/korea/cel/funeral\\_rites.htm](http://www.asianinfo.org/asianinfo/korea/cel/funeral_rites.htm)

## China (Shinto)

### Practices

Shinto is the indigenous religion of Japan. It is animistic in nature and emphasizes purity as the heart of its understanding of good and evil. Since death is considered to be impure, funerals are conducted by the lay people away from the shrines.<sup>50</sup>

Preparation is the key to Shinto funerals. Each stage in a burial is precisely performed according to centuries-old protocols. Four of the most interesting of these protocols are:

- Kichu–fuda

A period of intense mourning, which lasts for one day. Mourners wear solid black, and some may carry a rosary. A Shinto priest is needed to perform the rituals of chanting, singing, and praying to begin and end this day.

- Kodan

Giving an obituary gift. Friends and family of the deceased give monetary gifts to the family to help with the cost of the funeral. Kodan occurs on the same day as Kichu-fuda.

- Kotsuage

Gathering of a person's ashes. Care is taken that no bones are left in the ashes. Some of the ashes are placed in an urn that is placed at a shrine for the services of the priest. The urn is then buried.

- Bunkotsu

Some of the deceased's ashes are given to the family. The ashes are placed in a small urn that is then used at the family's home shrine.<sup>51</sup>

Wakes are normally held at the family shrine of the deceased and precede the burial of the ashes at a grave site. Mourners wash their hands and mouths prior to entering the wake. Mourners also lay branches of sakaki, a variety of camellia flowers, on the altar of the family shrine. As part of the wake, a portion of the spirit of the deceased is transferred to a memorial tablet, which is known as sensei sai. The ceremony typically lasts for one hour and may conclude with a small meal, consisting of either sake or dishes without meat, or tea and cakes. The dishes must be either made or bought outside of where the wake is occurring.

Similar to the wake, the mourners wash their mouths and hands before entering the funeral area. If a new grave site is being created, an earth purification ceremony is first performed to pacify the earth gods. After the grave has been made, another purification ceremony is performed. The area to be purified is marked off with a bamboo rope. One Shinto priest waves a purification wand (*ônusa*), and another sprinkles salted hot water (*ento*) over the area.<sup>52</sup>

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<sup>50</sup> “BBC Religions: Rites of Life: Funerals - Shinto.” BBC News. BBC, 16 Sept. 2009. Web. 25 Jan. 2013.

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/religion/religions/shinto/beliefs/purity.shtml>

<sup>51</sup> “Shinto Funerals.” N.p., n.d. Web. 25 Jan. 2013.

[http://www.worldclass.net/TeachingGlobally/WorldReligions/shinto\\_funerals.htm](http://www.worldclass.net/TeachingGlobally/WorldReligions/shinto_funerals.htm)

<sup>52</sup> Kenney, Elizabeth. “Shintō Mortuary Rites in Contemporary Japan.” *Cahiers D'Extrême–Asie* 9.1

Shinto grave sites are often elaborately decorated. A picture of the deceased is placed to the left of the grave marker. Incense is lit at the start of a visit to the grave, and flowers are left on weekly visits.<sup>53</sup>

### Deities and Important Concepts

- Amaterasu – Goddess of the sun and of the universe Prime goddess of the Shinto faith.
- Emma-hoo and Oni  
Emma-hoo is the lord of the dead. He judges the male souls of the dead, and his sister, Oni, judges the female souls.
- Shinsōsai  
Purely Shinto funerary rites. Created as being distinct from Buddhist funeral rites that were prevalent at the time of their creation.
- Yomi  
Land of the dead, which lies under the ground. It has a river separating the living from the dead. Yomi is similar to Hades in that it is seen as a gloomy place where the dead lead a shadowy existence.
- Kami  
The ancestral beings. A primary goal in Shintoism is to obtain immortality among these ancestral beings. You can think of the Kami as the part of the soul of a person that can experience a deep affinity with the Divine.
- Ujigami  
A family spirit. After death a person is considered to become a Ujigami if they were included in a list at birth. The adding of the name at birth, or when someone moves is makes them a ujiko or family child and is seen as the person being welcomed by the local Kami.

### Modern Adaptations

- Have a bowl of water by the entrance to the funeral area. Explain that each person should rinse their mouth and wash their hands to purify themselves.
- Have a separate wake portion of the funeral where a portion of the spirit of the deceased is invited to reside. Give this tablet to the family of the deceased. A photo of the deceased can also be used instead of the tablet.
- Walk to the funeral site in procession. The procession should have (in this order), a guide, a leader, two torch-bearers, two broom-bearers, participants, and one person to mark the end of the procession. **Note:** This is a simplified version of the typical procession. See Shintō Mortuary Rites in Contemporary Japan, pg 418 – 419 for the full procession order.
- Start and end the funeral portion with the officiant bowing and then the attendees bowing.
- Purify the grave site for the urn or cremation urn itself at the start of the funeral, asking the ground (or urn) honoring the ground/urn for its part in the ceremony.
- Offer the deceased some of their favorite foods.
- Pray that the deceased becomes a guardian deity and add a title to the deceased's name.

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(1996): 408. Print.

<sup>53</sup> Norman, Jeffrey. "Shinto Funeral Beliefs and Rituals." EHow. Demand Media, 21 Aug. 2011. Web. 25 Jan. 2013.

[http://www.ehow.com/info\\_11403129\\_shinto-funeral-beliefs-rituals.html](http://www.ehow.com/info_11403129_shinto-funeral-beliefs-rituals.html)

- Toward the end of the funeral, mark off the grave area with a rope (if you can find one, use a bamboo rope). One person uses a purification wand (ônusa), and another sprinkles salted hot water (onto) over the area to purify the grave/cremation urn. Cleansing it of any negativity caused by the death of the person.

### Sample Readings

(Number 174, Anonymous) <sup>54</sup>

Does the weaver wait for autumn so that she  
can span the river of heaven  
with a red bridge of maple leaves?

(Number 949, Anonymous) <sup>55</sup>

The dew's resting on every leaf are the tears of your sorrow.  
They remind you of sad things that happened in the years past.

(Number 941, Anonymous) <sup>56</sup>

So sad and so forlorn is this world, that only tears can console its grief.

(Number 240, by Princess Shikishi) <sup>57</sup>

Yearning for bygone days, I lie in bed.  
To my pillow  
comes the scent of orange flowers.

(Number 792, by Fujiwara no Snaeiye) <sup>58</sup>

The mattress where we lay and talked on autumn nights remains as before.  
But the one I loved is gone like a fleeting dream.

### Resources

- Shintō Mortuary Rites in Contemporary Japan  
[http://www.persee.fr/web/revues/home/prescript/article/asia\\_0766-1177\\_1996\\_num\\_9\\_1\\_1124](http://www.persee.fr/web/revues/home/prescript/article/asia_0766-1177_1996_num_9_1_1124)
- Shinto Funeral Beliefs and Rituals | eCondolence  
<https://www.econdolence.com/learning-center/religion-and-culture/shinto/shinto-funeral--burial-customs>
- Life after death – Shintoism  
<http://death.findyourfate.com/life-after-death/shinto.html>
- Shinsōsai (Shinto Funeral Rites)  
<https://d-museum.kokugakuin.ac.jp/eos/detail/id=8905>

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<sup>54</sup> Picken, Stuart D. B. Sourcebook in Shinto: Selected Documents. Westport, CT: Praeger, 2004. pg 28

<sup>55</sup> Ibid. pg 30

<sup>56</sup> Ibid. pg 30

<sup>57</sup> Ibid. pg 34

<sup>58</sup> Ibid. pg 35

- Appreciating The Intricacies Of Shinto Funerals With Daken And Wolverine (20 steps)  
<https://yamatomagazine.home.blog/2021/11/25/appreciating-the-intricacies-of-shinto-funerals-with-daken-and-wolverine/>

## Babylonian

### Practices

The dead were often buried in simple tombs. The oldest graves seem to be simple mounds of dirt that covered the body. From later fragments of royal burials, it is believed that the corpse was preserved by means of milk, honey oil, and salt and swathed in linen strewn with spices and then laid on a stone bier. The dead body, which was often covered with palm wood, was placed generally on the side, though occasionally on the back, on a board of wood, or wrapped in a mat of reeds or palm fibers, and covered with a tub-shaped clay dish. On the dish, there was frequently an ornamental design. The body was frequently pressed together in order to be brought within the compass of the dish. Sometimes a jar was used instead of a coffin. A seal cylinder that acted as the signature of the deceased was often interned with them. Additionally, items ranging from ornaments, rings, necklaces, and toys were often found. These seemed to be included because it was believed that the deceased would enjoy them (rather than need them). One good thing that was always included was a water jar. It, along with remains of food and text from the Gilgamesh epic, seems to reflect that food was required by the dead. Animal sacrifice, as well as offerings of food to the dead, was another common practice, with the son performing the office of pouring out water to the memory of his father.

A bronze tablet has been found that indicates some of the rites that were most likely performed at funerals. The dead were placed on a bier and wrapped in some kind of a cover. Priests were called in to perform rites of purification. One of the priests acting as Ea, the god of the deep, dresses in a fish costume and burns incense and sprinkles water. This purification was done to protect the dead from evil spirits that were believed to infest the grave.

The formal lament for the dead was another ceremony upon which stress was laid. It lasted from three to seven days. During this time, male and female professional wailers were employed to mourn the dead by singing lamentations and playing the flute.<sup>59</sup> It was also common for mourners to rent their garments.

### Deities and Important Concept

- Enlil (lord wind)  
The god of air, wind and storms. Enlil is the foremost god of the Mesopotamian pantheon.
- Ninlil (queen wind)  
The goddess of heaven, earth, and air, and consort to Enlil. She shows compassion to the unfortunate.
- Marduk (god the Early Sun and of the Spring Sun)  
The compassionate one whose joy is in raising the dead or the raiser of the dead.
- Aralû  
The land of the dead. A gloomy place situated deep down in the earth. Known as the “Land without return”, “land of the dead”, and “the far-off land”.

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<sup>59</sup> Jastrow, Morris. “The Tombs and the Burial Customs: Dead, Babylonian, Sheol, Period, Babylonians, Body.” *The Tombs and the Burial Customs*. N.p., n.d. Web. 13 Mar. 2013. <http://encyclobooks.com/The-Religion-of-Babylonia-and-Assyria/TOMBS- BURIAL-CUSTOMS-DEAD.htm>

- Nergal  
Represents the sun of noontime and of the summer solstice that brings destruction, high summer being the dead season in the Mesopotamian annual cycle. Nergal was the netherworld and stood at the head of the special pantheon assigned to the government of the dead.
- Gilgamesh  
A hero who also acted as a ferryman for the souls of the dead.

### Modern Adaptations

- Anoint the body of the deceased with a mixture of honey oil and salt. Wrap the body in linen that has been treated with spices.
- Pour water on the grave to symbolize that the dead shall be remembered. That this remembrance shall be like food and water to keep the dead alive in our memories.
- Hire a flute player to play and ask people to express their sorrow by wailing.
- When speaking of the dead, speak of how we sorrow because someone we love is now in “the far off land from which none return,” and while we will hold their memory dear in our hearts, we will miss their physical presence.
- Pin a ribbon with a slight cut in it to each mourner. During the ritual, have people tear the ribbon to represent the sorrow we feel when someone we love dies.
- Invoke Marduk in compassion to allow our loved ones to have another life.
- Place a copy of the signature of the person along with them in the grave.
- Bury a water jar with the deceased.
- Have a torchlight ceremony to honor the deceased.<sup>60</sup>
- Hold wrestling matches as part of a memorial. This might be especially appropriate for someone who was an athlete.<sup>61</sup>

### Sample Readings

*Note:* Words shown in parentheses represent words that have been lost in the original text. The word shown is my suggestion for a word to use.

#### Death goddess mourning <sup>62</sup>

Instead of bread, earth will I eat instead of wine (tears) will I drink the men will I weep who leave their wives the women will I weep who turn from the loins of their husbands the little children will I weep who before their time make an end. Watchman open to her the gate according to the laws of old.

#### Gilgamesh ferries the souls into the underworld <sup>63</sup>

O Gilgames, who dwells in Hades,  
the ferryman of Hubur, who travels  
the traveller to Hades you (ferry across)  
he that descends to the Netherworld is under your control

<sup>60</sup> George, A. R. “The Babylonian Gilgamesh Epic:.” Google Books. N.p., n.d. Web. 06 May 2013. p. 127  
[http://books.google.com/books?id=21xxZ\\_gUy\\_wC](http://books.google.com/books?id=21xxZ_gUy_wC)

<sup>61</sup> Ibid. p. 126

<sup>62</sup> Jreemias, Alfred. “The Babylonian Conception of Heaven and Hell.” Google Books. N.p., n.d. Web. 19 Mar. 2013. p. 7  
<http://books.google.com/books?id=MGkLAQAAIAAJ>

<sup>63</sup> “The Babylonian Gilgamesh Epic:.” Google Books. N.p., n.d. Web. 18 Apr. 2013 p. 131  
[http://books.google.com/books?id=21xxZ\\_gUy\\_wC](http://books.google.com/books?id=21xxZ_gUy_wC)

you receive the (soul) at the ferry crossing.

### HYMNS TO NINISINA AND NERGAL (Segment B)<sup>64</sup>

Lord Nergal was given the underworld, the E-meslam by Enlil and Ninlil. They made him the great lord of the netherworld ...

To see that the netherworld where the sun sets, where there is no light, is entrusted to Biti, to prolong the life of the black-headed people of Sumer where the divine powers are utterly cleansed, to fill their life with happiness, to make them reach an old age, to see that after their death they gather to the place where one is called by his personal god (i.e., to the place of death), to the netherworld, and to see that the precious and lasting cultic ordinances are performed befitting the netherworld, Nergal, the king of sunset, was entrusted by Enlil and Ninlil. Because of this, they gave him the underworld, where numerous perished people as a dwelling place.

August Nibru, no god excels like your lord and lady! In your midst, they have bestowed the divine powers on lord Nergal. I, I me-Dagan, have put this (composition) in everyone's mouth for all time. Young woman Inana, Suen's daughter, who achieves everything, even the great divine powers which exceed all other divine powers.

### A Hymn to Nergal<sup>65</sup>

the mighty one, what is he?

the mighty one, what is he?

the ancient one, he who is mighty. the ancient one, he who is mighty. the ancient one, he who is mighty.

the ancient one, he who is mighty. the ancient one, he who is mighty. the ancient one, he who is mighty.

Lord of the decree of Erech; the ancient one, he who is mighty. |

The mighty one, the dust divider; the net he fashioneth;

As a double garment (a garment for his city, etc.) the net he setteth.

What is like unto thee? What is like unto thee?

O my lord of glory! He is the one who overthroweth.

....

Truly mighty with judgment he goeth; a father (?) who goeth forth. The mighty one, the strong lord, when he overthroweth, what is it that he saith?

For weeping he is clothed; with evil fire for weeping he is clothed.

For weeping, for lamentation he is clothed; for weeping he is clothed.

The leader who shineth; with justice he is clothed; for weeping he is clothed.

Verily he is mighty; a strong god, with a fiery surrounding he is enveloped; for weeping he is clothed.

Powerful one who verily is a prince of wisdom; leader who has wrought wisely.

Verily he is mighty; a strong god, surrounded by fire; a prince of wisdom; leader who hath wrought wisely.

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<sup>64</sup> "The Hymns to Ninisina and Nergal on the Tablets Ash 1911.235 and Ni 9672" Web. 14 Mar. 2013

[http://www.academia.edu/618207/Hymns\\_to\\_Ninisina\\_and\\_Nergal\\_on\\_the\\_Tablets\\_Ash\\_1911.235\\_and\\_Ni\\_9672](http://www.academia.edu/618207/Hymns_to_Ninisina_and_Nergal_on_the_Tablets_Ash_1911.235_and_Ni_9672)

<sup>65</sup> Prince, Dyneley J. "A Hymn to Nergal." JSTOR, n.d. Web. 14 Mar. 2013.

<http://www.jstor.org/stable/592769?seq=7>

## Resources

- The Babylonian Conception of Heaven and Hell  
[https://en.wikisource.org/wiki/The\\_Babylonian\\_Conception\\_of\\_Heaven\\_and\\_Hell/The\\_World\\_of\\_the\\_Dead](https://en.wikisource.org/wiki/The_Babylonian_Conception_of_Heaven_and_Hell/The_World_of_the_Dead)

## *Assyria*

### Practices

Assyria shared beliefs and religious literature with the Babylonians. The major distinctions were that the Assyrians were more militaristic and headed their pantheon with Assur. Also, it is believed that the Assyrians were more animistic in their beliefs.

Practices used by the Babylonians are thus appropriately used as Assyrian practices. However, it would be appropriate to invoke Assur when conducting such rites.

### Deities and Important Concepts

- Assur  
Head of the Assyrian pantheon. His other epithets include êlu rabû “great lord”, ab il âni "father of gods", šadû rabû “great mountain”, and il aššurî "god of Ashur".

See Babylonian for more ideas.

## Kassite

### Practices

The Kassites filled a power vacuum that occurred with the fall of Old Babylon. Their dynasty was the longest-lasting in all of Babylonian history.<sup>66</sup> These people were known for their religious tolerance and adopted the gods of the people they conquered into their own religious practices.

As rules of Babylon, they outwardly took on the customs of the Babylonian peoples and actively promoted the cult of the great Mesopotamian deities.

Regretfully, little is known of the Kassite religion as their native language was never written down. The Kassites brought the use of chariots as weapons of war and honored the horse as a sacred animal. They also introduced the use of kudurrus or boundary marker stones, which contained legal inscriptions such as land grants, peace treaties, and proclamations by kings.<sup>67</sup>

Since we do not have archeological evidence of what the specific Kassite religion was like, the best we can do is to invoke the deities that we do have names for. Additionally, it would be appropriate to combine elements of Babylonia's funeral rites with these deities.

### Deities and Important Concepts

- Dur(a), Duri, Tura <sup>68</sup>  
The god of the underworld.
- Harbe  
The lord of the pantheon. Depicted as a bird with a back-turned head.
- Kaššu or Gal-zu Eponymous ancestor god.
- Shuqamuna and Shumaliya  
The god and goddess whose shrines were used for the investiture of new kings during the Kassite rule. Shuqamuna is the symbolized by a bird on a perch.

### Modern Adaptations

- Erect a kudurrus or boundary marker stone near or on the grave of the deceased as a proclamation that the person was honored.
- Incorporate the image of a chariot or a horse for a fallen soldier. Perhaps saying something like ‘May you be received in the other world as a warrior who rides their chariot to glory.’

### Sample Readings

Nonavailable.

### Resources

- Kassites <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kassites>

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<sup>66</sup> “The Babylonians:.” Google Books. N.p., n.d. Web. 07 May 2013. p. 44 <http://tinyurl.com/c3fp4u6>

<sup>67</sup> “Kassite Gods.” Kassite Gods. N.p., n.d. Web. 07 May 2013. <http://piereigion.org/kassite.html>

<sup>68</sup> “Kassite Deities.” Wikipedia. Wikimedia Foundation, 05 May 2013. Web. 07 May 2013.

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kassite\\_deities](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kassite_deities)

## Hittite

### Practices

The religion of the Hittites was a mixture of religions. It incorporated popular elements of indigenous central Anatolia with some external influences largely of Hurrian origin.

Cremation was the preferred practice, especially for the King or Queen. However the ordinary people were either buried or cremated. Funerary offerings for the common people were small, often coming from a funeral feast.

In Hittite rituals the body is burnt on a funeral pyre that is quenched with a liquid such as wine or beer. The bones are picked out of the fire and then dipped in oil or fat, then wrapped in a linen cloth or fine garment. The wrapped bones are placed on a chair or stool. The bones are often interned in a stone chamber. Then a feast is held.<sup>69</sup>

12 thick breads are placed around the fire pits and those who assisted with picking out the bones are fed with this bread.<sup>70</sup>

Most of the funeral rites we know about were for kings and queens. In these, we see offerings presented to the deceased as well as the gods at various points. The dead were also symbolically outfitted for what they would need in the next life. Additionally, the spirit of the dead was appeased of any anger that he may have had towards those who remained alive. The conception seems to be that life after death continues in a way similar to life during mortality.

The netherworld figured significantly in the Hittite cosmology; caves, springs, dug pits, and tombs provided passageways to the underworld. The sun traversed the sky during the day and crossed the underworld at night, and therefore was the chief god of the netherworld. The netherworld (or deep sea) was seen as the place where impurities were banished through elimination rituals.<sup>71</sup>

### Deities and Important Concepts

- Teshub / Tara / Tarhun  
Storm/Weather god who is chief among the gods. His symbol is the bull and he is known as ‘The Conqueror’, ‘The king of Kummiya’, ‘King of Heaven’, ‘Lord of the land of Hatti’.<sup>72</sup>
- Hebat / Hepi / Hepatu  
The matronly wife of the Storm-god. She is sometimes depicted standing on her sacred animal, the lion.<sup>73</sup>

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<sup>69</sup> “Of the Hittites and Homeric Rituals.” Common Points in Burial Customs... N.p., n.d. Web. 08 May 2013.

<http://www.aai.freeservers.com/Common%20Points%20in%20Burial%20Customs%20of%20the%20Hittites%20and%20Homeric%20Rituals.htm>

<sup>70</sup> “Royal Funerary Rituals.” Royal Funerary Rituals. N.p., n.d. Web. 9 May 2013.

<http://www.hittites.info/translations.aspx?text=translations/rituals%2ffunerary+Rituals.html>

<sup>71</sup> “Religions of the Ancient World.” Google Books. N.p., n.d. Web. 08 May 2013. p. 196.

<http://tinyurl.com/cb7lo2z>

<sup>72</sup> Siren, Christopher B. “Hittite/Hurrian Mythology REF 1.2.” Hittite/Hurrian Mythology REF 1.2. N.p., n.d. Web. 08 May 2013. <http://tinyurl.com/d84t2bs>

<sup>73</sup> Ibid.

- Lelwani  
Goddess of the underworld.<sup>74</sup>

### Modern Adaptations

- Pour wine or beer on some lit charcoal. Say something like ‘We extinguish these sparks, which represent the life that \_\_\_\_ shared with us. We do so to honor their passing from this life to the netherworld.’
- Place the urn of cremated remains on a chair for a man or on a stool for a woman. Speak of how the deceased is now seated with the ancestors.
- Have a table of 12 loaves of bread. Share the bread with those present to strengthen them in their time of grieving.
- Speak of death as being a sea that purifies the deceased, releasing them from things they left undone and removing any impurities.
- Ask the deceased to let go of all anger and thus ascend to their divine fate.
- Have a feast at which a portion of the food is offered to the dead.

### Sample Readings

#### King’s prayer addressed to the Sungod<sup>75</sup>

Sungod of Heaven, my Lord, what have I done that you have taken from me (my) th[rone] and given it to someone else?... You have summoned me to the (ghosts of the) dead and, be[hold], (here) I am among the (ghost of the) dead. I have shown myself to the Sungod of Heaven, my Lord, so let me ascend to my divine fate, to the gods of Heav[en] and [free] me from among the (ghosts of the) dead.

#### Said at the interment of the cremated remains into a tomb<sup>76</sup>

And have this meadow duly made for him, O Sun–god! Let no one wrest it from him or contest it with him! Let cows, sheep, horses, (and) mules graze for him on this meadow.

### Resources

- Life and Society in the Hittite World  
<http://www.ling.upenn.edu/~rnoyer/courses/51/BryceHittiteSociety.pdf>

While this does not specifically address Hittite funerals, it has a wealth of information about the Hittite religion.

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<sup>74</sup> “Hittite Mythology.” Wikipedia. Wikimedia Foundation, 20 Apr. 2013. Web. 08 May 2013.  
[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hittite\\_mythology](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hittite_mythology)

<sup>75</sup> Collins, Billie Jean. “The Hittites and Their World.” Google Books. N.p., n.d. Web. 15 May 2013.  
<http://tinyurl.com/b6ptwdb>

<sup>76</sup> Ibid.

## *Mycenaean*

### Practices

Most of what we know of Mycenaean Greek funerary practices comes from burial practices for aristocrats. While less is known about burials for ordinary people, we can take inspiration from the practices that are known.

The body of the deceased was prepared to lie in state, where it could be viewed by the grieving population. This was followed by a procession to the resting place, either a single grave or a family tomb, accompanied by laments, as depicted on larnakes (burial chest). Grave goods such as jewelry, weapons, and vessels were arranged around the body on the floor of the tomb. Graveside rituals probably included libations and a meal.

The Mycenaean seems to have practiced secondary burial, when the deceased and associated grave goods were rearranged in the tomb to make room for new burials.<sup>77</sup>

Rituals shown on larnakes (small box coffins) showed the important role played by women in the ceremony as mourners and perhaps participants in a ritual dance. The women are shown with short hair that has been shorn as a sign of mourning and red marks, which might be self-inflicted wounds. Several type of tombs were used during the Mycenaean period. Often, the dead were buried with elaborate grave goods including jewelry, weapons, and serviceable vessels.<sup>78</sup> Gold masks, rhyta (ritual sprinkling vessels) and other elaborate grave goods were also found.

- Shaft Graves

Each of which was dug between 3 and 4 meters into the earth. Pebbles covered the floor of the shaft and wooden roofs sat on rubble ledges lining the long sides of the tomb. These roofs were then covered by dirt and a marker was set up. In some cases to denote the graves, which, in most cases, served from 2 to 5 people thought to be from the same family..

- Pits and cists

Graves that are simply dug into the earth and then filled in after the deceased has been deposited. The cist, derived from the Greek word for “box” or “chest,” is also dug into the earth or soft rock, but then walled on all sides, either by individual slabs or a building up of rubble; graves were constructed from the materials at hand. These are usually roofed or covered, as well. These were used for individual burials.

- Chamber tomb

Rock-cut irregularly into an incline, rather than built up from stone or mud-brick, with a long open passageway, or dromos, leading down to the chamber itself. The walls of the dromos usually angle inward toward the top of the passage. Often, the transition between the dromos and the chamber

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<sup>77</sup> “Ancient Greek Funeral and Burial Practices.” Wikipedia. Wikimedia Foundation, 05 July 2013. Web. 24 May 2013.

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ancient\\_Greek\\_funeral\\_and\\_burial\\_practices](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ancient_Greek_funeral_and_burial_practices)

<sup>78</sup> Bennett, Matt. Burial Customs and the Reconstruction of Mycenaean Social Structure. N.p.: n.p., 2008  
[http://www.galleryofwriting.org/uploads\\_converted/KEY\\_2523212/2523212.pdf](http://www.galleryofwriting.org/uploads_converted/KEY_2523212/2523212.pdf)

proper would be a narrower entranceway, or stomion, which could be walled up to seal the chamber. Again, these were most likely family vaults.

- Tholos tomb

Similar to Chamber tombs, these had dromos (open passageways), stomion (transition between the dromos and the burial chambers), and a burial chamber. The Tholos tomb, however, were built up through corbelling like a beehive, so that each layer of stone slightly overlaps the previous until reaching the apex of the vault where a single stone can cover the gap. The stomion was often elaborately decorated. These were also often used as family tombs.

- Burials in settlements, pithoi (large jars), or under sherds of large, broken vases. Often used for children and less often for adults.

### Deities and Important Concepts

- Poseidon (PO-SE-DO-O)

One of the main Mycenaean deities mentioned in the Linear B text that later evolved into the Greek pantheon. A chthonic deity, connected with earthquakes. He also represented the river spirit of the underworld.

- Minoan “Mother Goddess”
- The Mycenaean adopted the Minoan deities into their religion. Both frescos of the Minoan goddess and terracotta figures have been found.

### Modern Adaptations

- Have the body lie in state. Have people walk in two rows with the body leading the way from the car to the gravesite.
- Have people express something they will miss about the person. Use this as a lamentation. Perhaps making a chant of what will be missed.
- Have a short ritual dance given in honor of the deceased. Consider allowing participation in a simple ritualized spiral dance.
- Place a gold-colored mask on the face of the deceased.
- Use ritual sprinkling vessels to bless the deceased.
- Bury grave goods that were meaningful to the deceased with them.
- Offer a libation and some food (cakes, or something easily and quickly shared) at the gravesite.

### Sample Readings

While the Mycenaean created a new writing system, Linear B, this text was reserved for record-keeping. Thus, no ancient funerary text exists.

## Resources

- Mycenaean Burial Practices | Tombs & Beliefs about Death  
<https://study.com/academy/lesson/mycenaean-civilization-funerary-beliefs-practices-tombs.html>
- “The Mycenaean.” Google Books. N.p., n.d. Web. 29 May 2013.  
<http://tinyurl.com/p2gd9vw>

## Israel

### Practices

Evidence points towards the existence of a Pagan Yahwism in ancient Israel. During the time of the ancient Israelites, it was not uncommon for individual cities to identify themselves as the subjects of a chief divinity. For the ancient Israelites, this divinity was Yahweh. However, El, Ahserah, and Baal-Hadad were also worshiped.

Two types of burials were commonly practiced by the ancient Israelites. The first, found along the coast, was an agglomeration of burial types which included pit, cist, and jar burials. In which typically one to three clothed and cloaked individuals were buried together. These burials were typically equipped with pottery from local surrounding cultures (Mycenean and Cypriot pottery during the twelfth and eleventh centuries B.C.E, and Phoenician, Cypro- Phoenician and Assyrian pottery during the tenth and eleventh centuries B.C.E.). Earlier burials contained a wide range of provisions, including amuletic jewelry, pendants, bangles, rings, eyes of Horus, scarabs, and Bes figurines, as well as tools.<sup>79</sup>

The second burial practices reflected influence from the Amorites and Canaanites' burial practices, which consisted largely of family tombs dug into the bedrock, often constructed below the house or cut into a hillside adjacent to the city. Such large communal tombs, which are known to have served extended patrimonial households, functioned for many generations. Similarly, the Israelis built a central subterranean tomb complex intended for an extended family, featuring a central room off which smaller chambers opened to accommodate individual family members. Due to physical restrictions, most tombs were built on the adjoining hillsides.

There is no direct evidence of feasting associated with early funerals. However, it was common practice that following the deposition and decomposition of the body, the bones were gathered within special repositories within the tomb, often below the benches upon which bodies could be laid. Additionally, the burials commonly included ceramic vessels (presumably with their contents), amulets, and other items, suggesting a range of interpretations from the preparation and adornment of the body after death.

Nourishment in the afterlife seems to have been of paramount importance. Undisturbed tombs yielded bowls of foodstuffs, jugs for liquid, lamps for light, and jars and juglets for scented oils, perfumes, spices, and oil for lamps. Additionally, it was common practice to give food to the dead who were viewed as deified beings.<sup>80</sup>

During the end of the Middle, and throughout the Late Bronze Age, pendants adorned the bodies of buried females. They consistently depicted a female goddess, not unlike the ceramic figurines commonly found during this same period, with emphasis on breasts and the pubic area (adopting Egyptian artistic tradition associated with Hathor), suggesting the identification of the goddess with Asherah or Astarte.<sup>81</sup>

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<sup>79</sup> Bloch-Smith, Elizabeth M. "The Cult of the Dead in Judah: Interpreting the Material Remains." Web. 7 June 2013.

<http://cnes.cla.umn.edu/courses/pdfs/3070%20Web%20files/Web13.pdf>

<sup>80</sup> Ibid.

<sup>81</sup> "The Archaeology of Ritual and Religion in Ancient Israel and the Levant and the Origins of Judaism |

## Deities and Important Concepts

- Yahweh

A typical ancient Near Eastern “divine warrior” who leads the heavenly army against Israel’s enemies. He and Israel are bound by a covenant (a feature unique in ancient Near Eastern religion) under which Yahweh will protect Israel, and Israel, in turn, will not worship other gods. The name translates into “he causes to be” or “he creates.”<sup>82</sup> (*Note:* Modern studies suggest that originally, Yahweh stated no other deity representations could share a worship place with him. )

- El

The supreme God, the Father of humankind and all creatures, and the husband of the Goddess Asherah.

- Baal-Hadad

The Syrian god of storms and thunder, called “lord of thunder,” was worshiped in the Levant region. His symbol is the bull. Evidence of his worship is found in monumental temples and the royal mortuary cult during the Amorite dynasties.

- Asherah or Astarte

“Queen of Heaven”. Mother goddess and female consort to Yahweh. Originally, the wife of El.

## Modern Adaptations

- Bury the person wrapped in a cloak, which represents the experiences of their life.

- Bury offerings of food such as grain with the deceased, with the idea that the deceased memory will be cared for by speaking of them not only at Samhain, but when friends and family gather together. Say something like the following.

We offer this food as a token that you shall be remembered.

We will speak of you at the feast for the dead.

We will share stories of you when we gather together. We will raise a glass in your name.

We will feast and reminisce.

- Either include an amulet depicting Asherah or an amulet depicting El.

## Sample Readings

### Inscription on a tomb <sup>83</sup>

“Blessed will be Ariyahu to Yahweh and his Asherah.”

This blessing was found in a tomb. It demonstrates the inclusion of pagan elements in ancient Israeli worship.

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<sup>82</sup> “Yahweh.” Wikipedia. Wikimedia Foundation, 06 Jan. 2013. Web. 05 June 2013.

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Yahweh>

<sup>83</sup> Stern, Ephraim. “Pagan Yahwism: The Folk Religion of Ancient Israel.” Pagan Yahwism: The Folk Religion of Ancient Israel. Web. 5 June 2013. <http://members.bib-arch.org/publication.asp?PubID=BSBA&Volume=27&Issue=3&ArticleID=1>

## Resources

- The Archaeology of Ritual and Religion in Ancient Israel and the Levant and the Origins of Judaism  
[http://www.academia.edu/1074403/The\\_Archaeology\\_of\\_Ritual\\_and\\_Religion\\_in\\_Ancient\\_Israel\\_and\\_the\\_Levant\\_and\\_the\\_Origins\\_of\\_Judaism](http://www.academia.edu/1074403/The_Archaeology_of_Ritual_and_Religion_in_Ancient_Israel_and_the_Levant_and_the_Origins_of_Judaism)
- The cult of the dead in Judah: Interpreting the material remains  
<https://scholarlypublishingcollective.org/sblpress/jbl/article-abstract/111/2/213/184932/The-Cult-of-the-Dead-in-Judah-Interpreting-the?redirectedFrom=fulltext>

## *Olmec*

### *Practices*

There is no surviving direct account of the Olmec's religious beliefs. However, it is theorized that many later Mesoamerican beliefs had their foundation in the Olmec belief system. What we do know is that the Olmec religious activities were performed by a combination of rulers, full-time priests, and shamans. The rulers seem to have been the most important religious figures, with their links to the Olmec deities or supernaturals providing legitimacy for their rule.<sup>84</sup>

Additionally, evidence suggests that the Olmec believed in three tiers of existence: the physical realm they inhabited, an underworld, and a sky realm, home of most of the gods. Their world was bound together by the four cardinal points and natural boundaries such as rivers, the ocean, and mountains. The most important aspect of Olmec life was agriculture.<sup>85</sup>

Burials that have been found seem to be for the elite class. The deceased were often buried with lavish jade objects and mirrors. Jade was used not only because of its material value and its luxurious symbolism, but also its color. The color green is seen as the center of the directional points in many Mesoamerican cultures.<sup>86</sup>

The elite were laid to rest in a special burial mound in the middle of a ceremonial court. The individual was placed in the mound adorned with earrings, beads, and necklaces made of jade. Over the body, a layer of thick cinnabar red putty shaped like an oval was spread over the body with thirty-seven serpentine and jade celts. This site was then decorated on top with jewels and other decor. However, only traces of human remains have been found. It has been theorized that the Olmecs believed that the human body, itself, and especially that of the ruler, divided itself and represented the three cosmic levels: the celestial or heavenly, the terrestrial, the earth's surface, and the watery underworld, reachable through caves and sacred accesses.<sup>87</sup>

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<sup>84</sup> Olmec Religion. Wikipedia, n.d. Web. 23 June 2013. [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Olmec\\_religion](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Olmec_religion)

<sup>85</sup> Minster, Christopher. Olmec Religion – The First Mesoamerican Civilization. About.com, n.d. Web. 23 June 2013. <http://latinamericanhistory.about.com/od/thehistoryofmexico/a/Olmec-Religion.htm>

<sup>86</sup> Mortuary Rituals In Mesoamerica. N.p., n.d. Web. 23 June 2013. <http://mesoamericablog.wordpress.com/category/olmecs/>

<sup>87</sup> “The Olmecs: A Mesoamerican Wonder.” The Olmecs: A Mesoamerican Wonder. N.p., n.d. Web. 24 June 2013. <http://facweb.stvincent.edu/academics/religiousstu/writings/lavin1.htm>

## Deities and Important Concepts

- The Jaguar  
Considered the most powerful earthly predator. It navigated well on earth, air and in the water – the three vital divisions of the Olmec world. According to the Olmec religion, in early times, a human woman and a jaguar bred, creating a were-jaguar, or a creature both human and jaguar, who was the ancestor of all Olmecs.

The Jaguar was the most common animal spirit that shamans transformed themselves into.<sup>88</sup>

- Olmec Dragon  
Also called the Earth Monster, the Olmec Dragon has “flaming eyebrows,” which are believed to be crest feathers of the harpy eagle, a pear-shaped nose, and a forked tongue. She was one of the most depicted Gods in the Olmec Religion. Believed to evolve into the Fire God of later civilizations, specifically associated with royal lineage and dynastic succession.<sup>89</sup>
- Man of Crops / Maize God  
Depicted as a man growing corn from his cleft (the cleft is taken as a symbol of divinity) with the snarling face associated with the jaguar. He was also a human hero who gave his life so that his people might grow food.<sup>90</sup>

## Modern Adaptations

- Speak of the spirit of the Jaguar as guiding the dead to the underworld. Use the idea that the Jaguar, with great power and sureness, leads the dead to the underworld, protecting them from all harm.
- Speak of how the body of the deceased can be thought of as residing in three places. Their spirit in the heavenly afterlife, their body given back to the earth, and their memory felt in our tears.
- Bury a Jade cleft to invoke the blessings of the directional points. Speak of how we are placing the deceased in the center of the four points and thus invoking the blessings of the directions.

## Sample Readings

The following were found on bricks that had both Mayan and Olmec writing. Additionally, they may speak of a person who felt as though they were dead and needed to make restitution. I include them here because they could be adapted for use in a funeral.

### Translation/Transliteration Olmec Plain Signs<sup>91</sup>

Thou exist incomplete.

He is the manifestation of life, a talisman in this proximity. Give birth to this [funerary] habitation.

### Translation/Transliteration of Olmec Signs inside Mayan Glyphs<sup>92</sup>

The person of considerable dignity is void of breath. [He goes to me, the] Jaguar God.

[He] is no longer alive / or Powerful Righteousness! [His] Place of rest exists here.

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<sup>88</sup> Olmec Culture. Gale Student Resources, n.d. Web. 24 June 2013. <http://tinyurl.com/mlmbgdn>

<sup>89</sup> “Regional Perspectives on the Olmec.” Google Books. N.p., n.d. Web. 27 June 2013. <http://tinyurl.com/nodf6uy>

<sup>90</sup> “Olmec Mythology.” Olmec Mythology. N.p., n.d. Web. 27 June 2013

<http://atlantisonline.smfforfree2.com/index.php?topic=1467.0;wap2>

<sup>91</sup> “Bilingual Mayan-Olmec Text.” Bilingual Mayan-Olmec Text. N.p., n.d. Web. 28 June 2013.

<http://saturniancosmology.org/files/winters/bilingomy.htm>

<sup>92</sup> Ibid.

## Resources

- The Gods of the Olmec  
[http://latinamericanhistory.about.com/od/The\\_Olmec/a/The-Gods-Of-The-Olmec.htm](http://latinamericanhistory.about.com/od/The_Olmec/a/The-Gods-Of-The-Olmec.htm)

## Phrygia

### Practices

The people of Phrygia lived in the area of modern-day Turkey. The legend of King Midas stems from an actual king who ruled in Phrygia.

Three types of burial were found in Phrygia. They correspond to different periods and different social levels. The first two types, tumulus (a mound of earth and stones raised over a grave) and rock-cut tombs, imply that the deceased was wealthy. Though few examples have been found, the third type was cremation, which could have been used by poorer persons.<sup>93</sup> Few funerary objects have been found with the burials.

The remains of the burial of King Midas have been found. The remains of the body were dressed in a bronze-studded leather outfit and laid out in state on a thick pile of dyed textiles inside a unique log coffin. The coffin was accompanied by 14 pieces of wooden furniture, often intricately inlaid. Most likely, these tables were used for a funerary banquet that had been recreated in the tomb. Besides the tables were found 150 bronze drinking vessels, 3 large vats or cauldrons used to serve the beverage, and three jars which once had contained food.<sup>94</sup> Modern analysis shows that a stew made of lentils, barbecued lamb or and imported olive oil was served. The beverage was a brew of wine and beer mixed with mead.<sup>95</sup>

Many other tombs have been found in the same area. All show the presence of a door, real or merely represented.

### Deities and Important Concepts

- Cybele / Matar  
The “Great Mother” / “Mountain Mother”. A mother goddess, goddess of the mountains and wild nature. She was a mediator between the "boundaries of the known and unknown:" the civilized and the wild, the worlds of the living and the dead.<sup>96</sup> She welcomes the dead to her earthly breast.<sup>97</sup>
- Sabazios  
A sky and father god, depicted on horseback. There is evidence of early conflict between his followers and the indigenous mother goddess Cybele. However, a compromise similar to the other mythic adjustments throughout Aegean culture seems to have been reached, and both gods were thus honored.<sup>98</sup>

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<sup>93</sup> “Funerary Use.” Phrygians.com. N.p., n.d. Web. 4 July 2013. <http://phrygians.org/funerary.html>

<sup>94</sup> McGovern, Patrick E. “The Funerary Banquet of King Midas.” N.p., n.d. Web. 6 July 2013  
<http://www.penn.museum/documents/publications/expedition/PDFs/42-1/The%20Funerary.pdf>

<sup>95</sup> Rosof, Libby. “A Phrygian Feast Fit for King Midas.” Penn: University of Pennsylvania. N.p., n.d. Web. 06 July 2013.  
<http://www.upenn.edu/pennnews/current/node/1057>

<sup>96</sup> “Cybele.” Wikipedia. Wikimedia Foundation, n.d. Web. 04 July 2013 <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cybele#Anatolia>

<sup>97</sup> “Religion in Phrygia – Cybele, Phrygians N.p., n.d. Web. 04 July 2013. <http://phrygians.org/religion.htm>

<sup>98</sup> “Sabazios.” Wikipedia. Wikimedia Foundation, 19 June 2013. Web. 04 July 2013. <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sabazio>

- Attis (or Atys)  
Mythical consort of Cybele. As he was about to be married, his hermaphroditic parent, Agdistis struck him with frenzy so that he castrated himself and died. He was fundamentally a vegetation god, and his death reflects the death of the fruits of the earth, which die in winter only to rise again in the spring.<sup>99</sup>

### Modern Adaptations

- Hold a feast serving Mediterranean Lamb and Lentil Stew. You can find recipes for this on the web.
- Drink a small toast to the deceased using a mixture of beer and wine. **Note:** This may not taste good, and some people report getting worse hangovers, so keep the amount really small.
- Have each person get a stone, tell a quick memory of the deceased, and place the stone on top of the coffin. You can also have a later memorial after the person is buried, so that the stones are on top of the grave, but check with the funeral home to clear this.
- Invoke Matar to open the door to the afterlife and welcome the deceased.
- Invoke Attis as a reminder that that which dies shall rise again, though it be in a different form.
- Place a picture of a door either on the coffin or the cremation urn. Explain that the door reminds us that we can always ‘visit’ the deceased in our memories.

### Sample Readings

Very few examples of Phrygian text survive. The writings we do have are found on rock cuts, seals, and graffiti. The following text is an example of a translation of such a text.

#### Protective curse <sup>100</sup>

Whoever brings damage to this ossuary/skeleton of him, let him be damned by Attis

### Resources

No one resource provided a good overview of Phrygian funeral rites. I recommend looking at the footnotes for resources.

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<sup>99</sup> “Attis (Phrygian Deity).” Encyclopedia Britannica Online. Encyclopedia Britannica, n.d. Web. 04 July 2013. <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/42255/Attis>

<sup>100</sup> “Palaeolexicon – Phrygian.” Palaeolexicon – Phrygian. N.p., n.d. Web. 11 July 2013. [http://www.palaeolexicon.com/default.aspx?static=14&Language\\_ID=2](http://www.palaeolexicon.com/default.aspx?static=14&Language_ID=2)

## Chavin

### Practices

The first civilization in Peru dates back to around 1000 BC. The religion of the Chavin was animistic and polytheistic. Starting in pre-Chavin culture, we see the beginnings of ancestor worship, where the deceased chief became a god. Offerings of bone thought to bear representations of deity were left in the tomb of a chief.

From the evidence, animistic belief charged into worship of ancestral spirits, giving rise to the feline cult that is evident in Chavin.<sup>101</sup>

Tombs for the elite have been found with precious metals and colorful textiles. The majority of burials, however, were found in shallow pits with only a simple cotton cloth and the tools they used in everyday chores.<sup>102</sup>

Chavin, was both a ritual and residential site. Evidence has been found that the oracles / shaman used conch shells as part of their rituals.

### Deities and Important Concepts

- Main deity  
Showed with long fangs and long hair made of snakes. This deity was responsible for balancing opposing forces.<sup>103</sup>
- The deity of the underworld, represented by anacondas.
- Shape-shifting into a jaguar  
Shamanic experience is most likely aided by the use of hallucinogenic drugs. The shaman in Chavin was an elite class, and the use of these drugs may have been limited to this class.
- Eagles and hawk  
The most represented animal depicted in Chavin art.<sup>104</sup>

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<sup>101</sup> Kano, Chiaki. *The Origins of The Chavin Culture*. Washington DC: Dumbarton Oaks, 1979.p 37. Web. 31 July 2013. <http://tinyurl.com/ln323os>

<sup>102</sup> Chavin Culture . Photos.” Chavin Culture. N.p., n.d. Web. 31 July 2013. <http://www.huaraz.com/culturachavin/>

<sup>103</sup> “Saylor.org's Ancient Civilizations of the World/The Chavin.” – Wikibooks, Open Books for an Open World. N.p., n.d. Web. 31 July 2013.

[http://en.wikibooks.org/wiki/Saylor.org%27s\\_Ancient\\_Civilizations\\_of\\_the\\_World/The\\_Chavin](http://en.wikibooks.org/wiki/Saylor.org%27s_Ancient_Civilizations_of_the_World/The_Chavin)

<sup>104</sup> Howland Rowe, John. “Sixth Emeritus Faculty Lecture Honoring John Howland Rowe.” N.p., n.d. Web. 08 Aug. 2013. <http://www.lib.berkeley.edu/ANTH/emeritus/rowe/pub/chavin/>

## Modern Adaptations

- Bury the person in a simple cotton cloth, along with the tools they would have used frequently.
- Play a conch shell to call the spirit of the deceased to transition to the other world.
- Place a representation of an anaconda to represent the god of death. Speak of this as a protective and regenerative force.
- Invoke the eagle and the hawk as guides for the newly deceased.
- Speak of the dead as one who will be like the jaguar, effective with dealing with their habitat. Agile, strong, and fierce.

## Sample Readings

The Chavin civilization left behind no writings.

## Resources

- World History Encyclopedia: Chavin Civilization  
[https://www.worldhistory.org/Chavin\\_Civilization/](https://www.worldhistory.org/Chavin_Civilization/)

## Phoenicia

### Practices

Phoenicia was an ancient Semitic civilization situated on the western, coastal part of the Fertile Crescent and centered on the coastline of modern Lebanon. One of the most important contributions of these seafaring peoples was the invention of syllabic writing. The Phoenicians were polytheistic, and the pantheon of gods was presided over by the father of the gods. However, the goddess was the principal figure in the pantheon. |

Additionally, Phoenicia was separated into independent city-states, each often with its own set of deities.

Funeral rites were one of the major religious activities of the Phoenicians. Burial of an intact body was the preferred method for dealing with the dead. The wealthiest Phoenicians and members of royal families received elaborately decorated stone sarcophagi, which were placed in tombs cut directly out of rock.<sup>105</sup>

There is also evidence that at least in some burials, the bodies were burned, most likely on a funeral pyre, before being buried in a tomb. Additionally, in the tombs found in Mount Sirai, two superposed bodies were often found buried together.<sup>106</sup>

Another form of funeral practice was cremation. Large jars have been found with the bones of the dead. Alongside these jars have been found smaller empty jars, which are thought to have been created to contain the souls of the departed.<sup>107</sup>

Few burial goods were found alongside the deceased. Those found included tools, jewelry, ritual items (such as razors, masks, and painted ostrich eggs), and the adoption of symbols such as the ankh and the lotus. In one tomb, a set of two owl claws was found, while we do not know the exact significance of these, most likely they represented night or death. Scenes on tombs also show survivors sniffing a lotus. It is assumed that this has a similar meaning to the same rite followed by Egyptians, to ensure the rebirth of the soul into the afterlife.<sup>108</sup>

Scenes on the Ahriam sarcophagus show females performing ceremonial acts of lamentation, such as wearing sackcloth, tearing of hair, and beating of the breast. Other funerary activities seemed to include a ritual meal, pouring a libation, and/or burning incense.<sup>109</sup>

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<sup>105</sup> “Funeral Rites & Burial Among the Ancient Phoenicians.” About.com Agnosticism / Atheism. N.p., n.d. Web. 12 Aug. 2013. <http://atheism.about.com/od/ancientmythologyreligion/ig/Lebanon-Phoenician-Photos/Sarcophagus-Ahram-Byblos.htm>

<sup>106</sup> Piga, G., M. Guirguis, P. Bartonlin, A. Malgosa, and S. Enzo. “A Funerary Rite Study of the Phoenician–Punic Necropolis of Mount Sirai (Sardinia, Italy) | Michele Guirguis – Academia.edu.” N.p., n.d. Web. 12 Aug. 2013.

[http://www.academia.edu/585743/A\\_funerary\\_rite\\_study\\_of\\_the\\_Phoenician\\_Punic\\_necropolis\\_of\\_Mount\\_Sirai\\_Sardinia\\_Italy](http://www.academia.edu/585743/A_funerary_rite_study_of_the_Phoenician_Punic_necropolis_of_Mount_Sirai_Sardinia_Italy)

<sup>107</sup> “3,000 Year Old Phoenician Burial Jars Unearthed.” N.p., n.d. Web. 15 Aug. 2013.

<http://www.sliceofscifi.com/2008/11/12/3000-year-old-phoenician-burial-jars-unearthed/>

<sup>108</sup> Markoe, Glenn E. “Phoenicians.” Google Books. p 138, n.d. Web. 15 Aug. 2013. <http://tinyurl.com/lmaymbh>

<sup>109</sup> Ibid. p 138

The preparations of the body varied according to social class but included ritual washing, dousing with oil, and wrapping in cloth. Members of the royalty were often buried with a gold death mask. Tombs were sometimes sealed by the smashing of plates.

### Deities and Important Concepts

- Baal<sup>110</sup>  
Functional head of the Phoenician pantheon. Storm god.
- Melqart (King of the City)<sup>111</sup>  
Chief male deity at Tyre, associated with death and rebirth. Melqart was said to have been resurrected after his cremation. Dynastic deity of Tyre. His divine characteristics also encompassed agriculture, maritime, civic, and the underworld.
- Astarte<sup>112</sup>  
Queen of heaven. Chief goddess. She is said to have helped in the resurrection of Melqart. She also had an aggressive warrior aspect.
- Rephaim<sup>113</sup>  
The dead were called this. It refers to a divine ancestor.
- Môt or Muth<sup>114</sup>  
The personification of death. He tried to kill Ball and was in turn killed, only to return.

### Modern Adaptations

- Pass around a lotus and have everyone smell it while envisioning the deceased moving on to the afterlife.
- Bury a representation of two owl claws with the person. To represent death as a restful place in the night.
- Light a fire made of herbaceous and woody plants, also olive, lime, and pine.<sup>115</sup>
- Break a small ceramic jug with oil in it to mark the close of the funeral.<sup>116</sup>

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<sup>110</sup> Markoe, Glenn E. "Phoenicians." Google Books. p 118, n.d. Web. 15 Aug. 2013. <http://tinyurl.com/lmaymbh>

<sup>111</sup> Ibid. p. 118

<sup>112</sup> Ibid. p. 118

<sup>113</sup> Ibid. p. 137

<sup>114</sup> "Mot (Semitic God)." Wikipedia. Wikimedia Foundation, 08 July 2013. Web. 16 Aug. 2013.

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mot\\_%28Semitic\\_god%29](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mot_%28Semitic_god%29)

<sup>115</sup> Ridgway, David, and Francesca Romana Serra Ridgway. "Across Frontiers – Etruscans, Greeks, Phoenicians & Cypriots." N.p., n.d p 45. Web. 16 Aug. 2013. [http://www.upf.edu/larq/\\_pdf/AubtRidgw.pdf](http://www.upf.edu/larq/_pdf/AubtRidgw.pdf)

<sup>116</sup> Ibid. p. 46

## Sample Readings

### Burial epitaph of King Tabnit of Sidon <sup>117</sup>

Whosoever thou be, each man who finds this coffin, open not the lid and disturb me not, because with me there is no money, no gold, nor anything worth plundering, except myself who lie in this coffin. Open not my lid and disturb me not, because is an abuse of Astarte. And if thou dost open my lid and disturb me, there will be no descendants for thee in thy life under the sun, nor rest with the dead.

### From The Inscription on the Sarcophagus of the Phoenician King Eshmunazar

I am carried away, the time of my non–existence has come, my spirit has disappeared, like the day, from whence I am silent, since which I became mute.

And I am lying in this coffin, and in this tomb, in the place which I have built.

...

For graced by the gods, I am carried away, the time of my non–existence has come, my spirit has disappeared, like the day, from whence I am silent, since which I became mute. <sup>118</sup>

## Resources

- Phoenicians by Gleen E Markoe <http://tinyurl.com/lmaymbh>
- Phoenician Burial Rites  
<https://www.travelingtemplar.com/2015/09/phoenician-burial-rites.html>

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<sup>117</sup> Ridgway, David, and Francesca Romana Serra Ridgway. “Across Frontiers – Etruscans, Greeks, Phoenicians & Cypriots.” N.p., n.d p. 139. Web. 16 Aug. 2013. [http://www.upf.edu/larq/\\_pdf/AubtRidgw.pdf](http://www.upf.edu/larq/_pdf/AubtRidgw.pdf)

<sup>118</sup> “The Inscription on the Sarcophagus of the Phoenician King Eshmunazar.” N.p., n.d. Web. 16 Aug. 2013. [http://www.shsu.edu/~his\\_ncp/Eshmun.html](http://www.shsu.edu/~his_ncp/Eshmun.html)

## *Roman*

### *Practices*

Both cremation and burial were practiced by the Romans. The Romans maintained a very systematic approach when tending to the dead. First, relatives would close the deceased's eyes while calling out the name of their dearly departed three times. The body was then washed, and a coin was placed in the mouth. The coin was payment to Charon, who ferried the dead across the rivers of the underworld.

If a married man was dying, his wife would stay close to him and, when he died, would kiss him. This was done because it was believed that the soul left with the last breath. By kissing her husband, the wife took the soul into herself and could protect it.

The dead were then put on display, laid out in their finest garb and jewels: the length of this ancient “wake” depended upon the departed person’s position in society. Upper-class individuals, such as the nobility, were often put on display for as long as a week, while lower-class individuals might only be put on display for a day. Paid female mourners might also be hired to mourn a death by wailing and pulling out their hair.

After the display, a funerary procession followed. Roman funerals were typically held at night. Hired musicians led the parade, followed by mourners and relatives who often carried portrait sculptures or wax masks of the ancestors of the deceased. The procession would end outside of town (it was forbidden to bury anyone within the city limits). If the person was being cremated, a pyre, or cremation fire, was built. As the fire burned, a eulogy, oration, and/or chants were given in honor of the deceased. After the pyre was extinguished, a family member (usually the deceased's mother or wife) would gather the ashes and place them in an urn. Whether the body was buried or cremated, there were three ceremonial necessities: the consecration of the resting place, the casting of earth upon the remains, and the purification of all polluted by the death. In ancient times, the body, if buried, was lowered into the grave either upon the couch on which it had been brought to the spot or in a coffin of burnt clay or stone. Eulogies, orations, and chats were also performed when the deceased was buried.

The tombs of the Romans were often decorated with both inscriptions and ornamental depictions, but rarely directly represented death. One of the most common depictions was a horse head, representing departure.

Many poorer Romans belonged to funeral societies, called *collegia*, to ensure proper burial. They would pay monthly dues, which would be used to cover the cost of funerals for members.

After the burial or cremation, the immediate family solemnly observed the “Nine Days of Sorrow”. During this time, funeral games were sometimes held. Lastly, the deceased was remembered during the annual memorial festivals held from February 13th to the 25th.

Children were buried without ceremony, as were slaves.

## Deities and Important Concepts

- Pluto  
Ruler of the underworld. He was said to have an invisible helmet and a golden chariot.
- Proserpina  
Queen of the underworld. She lived six months in the underworld with Pluto because she ate six pomegranate seeds in the land of the dead.
- Ceres  
Mother of Proserpina. Each spring, she makes sure all the flowers bloom in welcome when her daughter comes back. Each fall, when Proserpina returns to Pluto, she lets all the crops die as she mourns being separated from her daughter.
- Cerberus  
The three-headed dog that guards the underworld.
- Libitina  
Goddess of funerals and burials. Undertakers were called *libitinarii*. Her grove was located at Esquiline Hill.
- Nenia Dea<sup>119</sup>  
Ancient funeral deity who had a sanctuary outside of the Porta Viminalis. She was the personification of the funerary lament's protective power. She was therefore a goddess also connected to the end of a person's life.
- Mana Genita  
Goddess who determined if a child was born alive or dead. Her name means "flux and birth" or "flowing birth." Especially appropriate to call on if the funeral is for a child.
- Charon  
Ferryman god who takes the deceased across the River Acheron Styx. A coin is placed in the mouth of the deceased to pay for this service.
- Manea / Mania Goddess of the dead.  
Mother of ghosts, the undead, other spirits of the night, the Lares (guardian deities who may have been hero-ancestors), and the Manes (chthonic deities sometimes thought to represent souls of deceased loved ones).

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<sup>119</sup> "Nenia Dea." Wikipedia. Wikimedia Foundation, 17 Sept. 2013. Web. 08 Oct. 2013.

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nenia\\_Dea](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nenia_Dea)

## Modern Adaptations

- State something like ‘It is good to remember our dead. We thus start this ceremony by all of us calling out the name of our beloved deceased three times. \_\_\_\_\_ (3x)’.
- Place a coin either in the urn or coffin. Stating that it is an offering to Charon to smooth the transition of the dead to the underworld.
- Have a procession to the grave site led by musicians.
- Give out pictures of the ancestors of the deceased to be carried in the procession to the grave. Put the pictures by the coffin/urn as a reminder that the deceased will be joining their ancestors.
- Have athletic games or activities in honor of the deceased. This is especially appropriate if the person was athletic in life. For example, have people go on a nature hike in a place that the deceased liked to go in life.
- Place a picture or sculpture of a horse head in the grave of the deceased as a symbol that they will travel swiftly and with ease to the underworld.
- Conduct chants and eulogies to the dead.
- Create a website or social media page dedicated to the memory of the deceased.
- Fulfill the three obligations of a funeral as follows:
  - Consecrate the resting place using salt water, incense, and/or prayers
  - Cast earth upon the remains. If in an urn, add some earth to the urn.
  - Have people wash their hands when leaving the grave site.
- Call on the Lares, the honored ancestors who protect us in life and death.
- Call on the Manes, to represent the soul of the newly departed in its new form.

## Sample Readings

### Common Epitaph

non fui, non sum, non curo, “I did not exist, I do not exist, I’m not concerned about it.”

From Seneca's collection of letters 120

Life is like a play – it doesn’t matter how long the action is drawn out, but how good the acting is. It makes no difference at what point you stop. Stop whenever you choose; but make sure your conclusion’s a good one.

Poetry: mid 1st c AD. <sup>121</sup>

Men restrained their lamentations, and a deep, silent grief overtook the people. Just as the moment of death a household is shocked and speechless before the body is lamented over and laid out, and before the mother with disheveled hair calls her maids to beat their breasts with cruel arms; the mother still clings to the limbs stiff with loss of life and the face with eyes fierce in death. She feels no fear, but not yet grief; not thinking, she wonders at her loss.

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<sup>120</sup> “Death in Ancient Rome.” Google Books. N.p., n.d. Web. 03 Oct. 2013. <http://tinyurl.com/kc6kmcs>

<sup>121</sup> “Death in Ancient Rome: A Sourcebook.” Google Books. N.p., n.d. Web. 03 Oct. 2013. p. 96  
<http://tinyurl.com/og3hs9n>

## Resources

- Roman Burial Practices  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GnXHcZ2Z1DU>
- A Roman Funeral  
[https://exhibitions.kelsey.lsa.umich.edu/galleries/Exhibits/Death\\_on\\_Display/Cremation\\_Group/funeral.html](https://exhibitions.kelsey.lsa.umich.edu/galleries/Exhibits/Death_on_Display/Cremation_Group/funeral.html)
- The Private Life of The Romans, Chapter XII  
<https://www.gutenberg.org/files/40549/40549-h/40549-h.htm#chap12>
- A Dictionary of Greek and Roman Antiquities, John Murray, London, 1875 – Funus.  
<https://archive.org/details/adictionarygree00marigoog/mode/1up?view=theater>

Has lots of details about the specifics of the rites performed. Such as women wearing their hair disheveled and men covering their hair during the procession.

## Carthage

### Practices

Carthage was founded by Canaanite-speaking Phoenician colonists from Tyre in North Africa and became a stable and important republic. As the Carthaginians expanded their influence, they broadened their civilization with influences from neighboring North African peoples, Egypt, and the Greek world.

The Carthaginians worshiped a wide range of deities while keeping the gods of their Phoenician heritage.

Belief in a mortal person's life after death is suggested by the food and drink utensils often placed in tombs to accompany the dead, and again, though not very specifically, by the tomb paintings at Kerkouane's Jebel Mlezza. One depicts a bird like a rooster – perhaps the deceased person's soul.<sup>122</sup>

One of the unique features of Carthaginian worship was the 'tophet' (urn burials), the cremation-cemetery for infants. Scientific studies have revealed the ashes and bones of very young children: infants, stillbirths, and some fetuses, in some cases accompanied by bones of animals (mostly young sheep and goats). These urns were dedicated to Tanit and Ball and accompanied by dedicatory stele. While some of the remains might have been from child sacrifices, the current belief is that most of them were buried to honor their young dead.

### Deities and Important Concepts

- Baal Hammon (“Ruler of a Crowd or Multitude”)  
Chief god of Carthage. He was a deity of sky and vegetation, depicted as a bearded older man with curling ram's horns.

Baal Iddir, Baal Marqod, Baal Oz, Baal Qarnem, Baal Sapon and Baal Shamim were sometimes seen as aspects of Baal Hammon and sometimes viewed as distinct deities.

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<sup>122</sup> Hoyos, Dexter. “The Carthaginians.” *The Carthaginians*. p. 100, n.d. Web. 6 Nov. 2013.  
<http://historiantigua.cl/wp-content/uploads/2011/08/The-Carthaginians-Peoples-of-the-Ancient-World.pdf>

- **Tanit**

Consort of Baal Hammon, a heavenly goddess of war, a virginal (not married) mother goddess and nurse, and, less specifically, a symbol of fertility. She was worshiped alongside Baal Hammon and was given the epithet pene baal (“face of Baal”) and the title rabat, the female form of rab (chief).

In later times, she was most likely the city's paramount deity. Her symbols include doves, a palm tree, grapes, and a crescent moon.

*Tanit's Symbol*



- **Astarte**

Queen of heaven. Chief goddess. She is said to have helped in the resurrection of Melqart. She also had an aggressive warrior aspect.

- **Melqart**

Chief male deity at Tyre, associated with death and rebirth, he was also worshiped at Carthage. Melqart, was said to have been resurrected after his cremation. Dynastic deity of Tyre. His divine characteristics also encompassed agriculture, maritime, civic, and the underworld.

- **Eshmun**

Healing god and protector of Sidon. His ancient temple was an important place of pilgrimage.

Eshmun started as a young man from Beirut who was hunting in the woods when Astarte saw him and was stricken by his beauty. She harassed him with her amorous pursuit until he emasculated himself with an axe and died. The grieving goddess revived Eshmun and transported him to the heavens, where she made him into a celestial god.

- **Hawot**

Goddess of the dead.

- **Demeter and her daughter Kore**

Demeter was the goddess of the earth, whose grief causes winter when Kore must spend her time in the underworld.

## Modern Adaptations

- The use of the Carthage pantheon seems especially appropriate when a young child dies, is still born or is aborted.

Have the remains of the child cremated and placed in an urn. Say something like the following.

“To you, strong Hammon Baal and lovely Tanit, I give this child whose potential must remained un-actualized.

May their spirit fly to you to and be given sanctuary.

May their souls’ journey be guided by you as a benevolent ruler guides their people, towards happiness.”

- Mark the grave of the deceased with the symbol of Tanit and other markings found on the stele that commonly accompanied Carthaginian tombs. You can temporarily mark the resting place using a stone with the symbol painted on it.
- Bury eating utensils and cups with the idea that the soul will be nourished in the afterlife by the memories of those left behind.

## Sample Readings

While many steles have been found with pictures on them, I was unable to find any funerary text. The most common symbols represented Baal and Tanit.

## Resources

- The Carthaginians by Dexter Hoyos  
<https://archive.org/details/carthaginians0000hoyo>
- Carthage DID NOT sacrifice infants – a Pittsburgh study reveals  
<http://www.twcenter.net/forums/showthread.php?333600-Carthage-DID-NOT-sacrifice-infants-a-Pittsburgh-study-reveals>

## Greece

### Practices

Proper burials—along with appropriate rituals—were very important in order for the soul to go into the afterlife. A typical burial had three parts.

1. The prosthesis (wake/laying out of the body)

The first thing that occurs is that the eyes and mouth are closed. Coins were placed either in the eyes or the mouth to pay Charon for ferrying the soul of the dead across the river Styx. The women of the household would wash the body, normally using seawater, and then dress the person in a plain white or gray ankle-length shroud. If the deceased was a soldier, he would be dressed in a traditional military cloak. If it were a woman, she was adorned with modest earrings and a necklace. Most bodies were also adorned with a diadem or crown on the head.

The body was laid out on a bed with its feet facing the entryway. The body remained in the house for 48 hours so that respect could be paid to it.

During this time, the friends and family of the deceased would take part in a lamenting song and dance called the threnos. The threnos is an improvised lament that is started by a professional mourner and then finished by the family.

2. The ekphora (procession)

The body was transported to the grave site by either horse drawn carriage or pall-bearers. The funeral procession to the burial site was always led by men and with women in the back.

The funeral party would make many stops along the way to cry out in order to attract attention and while walking, women would tear at their hair and clothes as an expression of their grief.

3. The cremation/internment

Once the body was interred, a simple ceremony was performed over the grave to sow the earth with the fruits of its bounty, thus assuring the deceased a peaceful rest and allowing them to return to the land of the living.

Following the actual burial, friends and family would be invited to leave offerings of food and other gifts either in the grave or beside it. The women would leave the site first in order to prepare the large banquet held in honor of the deceased. The men would complete the funeral by placing a large slab, rock, or a stele over the grave.

## Deities and Important Concepts

- Hades



The lord of the dead and ruler of the nether world.

The son of Cronus and Rhea. Brother to Zeus and Poseidon. His queen is Persephone.

Hades sits on a throne made of ebony and carries a scepter. He also has a helmet, given to him by the Cyclopes, which can make him invisible.

Hades rules the dead and is thus the least liked of the gods.

People avoided speaking his name, lest they attract his attention.

When they prayed to him, they would bang their hands on the ground. The narcissus and the cypress are sacred to him.

Hades possesses the riches of the earth and is thus referred to as ‘the Rich One.’<sup>123</sup>

- Persephone



The daughter of Zeus and Demeter. She was so beautiful that everyone loved her, even Hades.

One day, when she was collecting flowers, Hades opened the earth and abducted her. This caused her mother, Demeter, to go into mourning and refuse to allow anything to grow.

Zues demanded Persephone’s release, and Hades reluctantly agreed. However, he gave Persephone a Pomegranate from which she ate some seeds, and was thus bound to the underworld, where she rules with Hades 1/3 of the year.

Her name can be loosely translated as “she who destroys the light.”

- Hecate

Goddess of the crossroads who rescued Persephone from the underworld. She also has associations with ghosts, infernal spirits, the dead, and sorcery. Shrines to Hecate were placed at doorways to both homes and cities with the belief that it would protect from the restless dead and other spirits.

Yew was considered especially sacred to her.

- Charon

The ferryman who brings the souls of the deceased who had the proper rites performed across the river Archeron. Part of the rites for the deceased was a coin to pay Charon for his service.

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<sup>123</sup> “Hades.” N.p., n.d. Web. 08 Dec. 2013. <http://www.pantheon.org/articles/h/hades.html>

- Hermes  
As the messenger of the gods, it was his duty to guide the souls of the dead down to the underworld.
- Cerberus  
The three-headed watchdog who guards the entrance to the lower world, Hades.

Originally depicted with fifty or a hundred heads, Cerberus permitted new spirits to enter the realm of the dead but allowed none of them to leave.

### Modern Adaptations

- As a part of the ceremony, cry out an announcement to let people and the gods know that the deceased has crossed into Hades.
- Sprinkle salt water on the body of the deceased to purify it.
- Place a diadem or crown on the deceased to show the high regard held for the deceased. You can make the crown/diadem or buy a costume crown. A wreath makes a good diadem.
- Create a threnos as follows:
  - Use a simple dance step or have anyone who is able walk slowly around the coffin or cremation urn.
  - Sing a song (create a chant) with words like “When I remember \_\_, I think of ”. Give an example. Then either let people use the same phrase, filling in words, or sing “When I remember \_\_, I think of \_\_\_\_\_” and let a person fill in a phrase or word.
- Have people plant seeds of a food plant on the grave, or if an urn is being used in pots.
- Have fruit that each person can leave at the grave site or put in a basket for the grieving family.
- Invoke Persephone as one who has seen the underworld and returned.

### Sample Readings

#### Poem by Praxilla of Sicyon

Loveliest of what I leave behind is the sunlight,  
and loveliest after that, the shining stars and the moon’s face,  
but also cucumbers that are ripe, and pears, and apples.

#### Lament of Thetis and her sisters Nereides for Achilles : Homer, Iliad, XVIII, 52 – 64

Listen, sisters, daughters of Nereus, that you may hear the burden of my sorrows. Alas, woe is me, woe in that I have borne the most glorious of offspring. I bore him fair and strong, hero among heroes, and he shot up as a sapling; I tended him as a plant in a goodly garden, and sent him with his ships to Ilion to fight the Trojans, but never shall I welcome him back to the house of Peleus. So long as he lives to look upon the light of the sun, he is in heaviness, and though I go to him, I cannot help him. Nevertheless, I will go, that I may see my dear son and learn what sorrow has befallen him, though he is still holding aloof from battle.

Oh slowly, oh mournfully, I will begin lamenting, shouting out your sorrows mother—one by one!  
Oh slowly, oh mournfully I will begin lamenting  
Singing about your sorrows, mother, crying for them,  
Because at the prime of your youth, you clothed yourself in black  
And then the darkness of your heart matched that of your dress;  
Because at the prime of your youth fate had written  
That you should lose our father, you should become a widow . . .  
Ah how many times at midnight, after the roosters had crowed  
Wouldn't you be coming down the road—pale and tired out! . . .  
How many times at midnight, on nights steeped in darkness  
Wouldn't you come home from the road—lips saddened and embittered!  
There is no one else who knows your sorrows, the plight of your life.  
I, alone, am left here, mother, to stand up by your side.  
Women of Dzermiathes come, decked out in your best clothes |  
And give her your forgiveness now, from inside your heart.

I'll go to Argolia no more. Whom should I visit there?  
My mother has traveled far away. To whom can I call out?

Eustathios : Hysmine and Hysminias

My son Hysminias was a welcome harbor to me, and I, like a ship in port, enjoyed calm, and was unruffled by the waves. But now the harbor is nowhere to be seen, and I, the ship, am driven out into the ocean— and overwhelmed by the waves.

#### Resources

- Ancient Greek funeral and burial practices  
[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ancient\\_Greek\\_funeral\\_and\\_burial\\_practices](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ancient_Greek_funeral_and_burial_practices)
- The Ritual Lament in Greek Tradition  
[http://books.google.com/books/about/The\\_Ritual\\_Lament\\_in\\_Greek\\_Tradition.html?id=UW8pteWTc9oC](http://books.google.com/books/about/The_Ritual_Lament_in_Greek_Tradition.html?id=UW8pteWTc9oC)

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<sup>124</sup> A Fishman, Andrea. "Hrênoi to Moiróló gia: Female Voices of Solitude, Resistance, and Solidarity." Pg 271., n.d. Web. 24 Nov. 2013. [http://journal.oraltradition.org/files/articles/23ii/07\\_23.2.pdf](http://journal.oraltradition.org/files/articles/23ii/07_23.2.pdf)  
Page | 96

## *Persia (Ancient Iranians)*

### *Practices*

Modern understanding of ancient Iranian religion and its associated funerary practices is impeded by the limitations of the available sources. The earliest religious texts of the closely related Indo-Aryan speakers, principally the Rigveda (a collection of more than 1,000 hymns to various deities), are indispensable for making historical reconstructions of the development of Iranian religion.

The ancient religion worshiped many deities. While both male and female deities were worshiped the society and its gods were male dominated. Additionally, there evolved a dualistic ideology that came to permeate all aspects of life. Originally thought of as chaos and order, this evolved into the concepts of good and evil.

The Iranians conceived of the cosmos as a three-tiered structure consisting of the earth below, the atmosphere, and the stone vault of heaven above. Beyond the vault of heaven was the realm of the Endless Lights, and below the earth was the realm of darkness and chaos.

The Iranians did not build temples, instead preferring to worship in the open. Of most importance was fire, and the key ritual was the yazna, a ritual meal where the guest (a deity) was sent an invitation; on his arrival from afar he was greeted, shown to a comfortable seat, given meat and a refreshing and invigorating drink, and entertained with song extolling his great deeds and virtue. The sacred drink, hauma, was served at this feast. Hauma was made by pressing plants to extract their juice; this juice was then mixed with milk, and perhaps a bit of water.<sup>125</sup>

From the use of the old Iranian word, daxma, meaning grave, we can infer that interment was the prescribed method used for the dead. Additionally, kings were interred in freestanding or rock-cut tombs, their bodies being coated with wax.<sup>126</sup>

The ancient Persians viewed death as a continuation of life, with no notions of heaven, hell, reward, or punishment. After death, the disembodied spirit, the 'urvan' (ravan in modern Persian) lingered on earth for three days before departing downward to a subterranean kingdom of the dead. This place was ruled over by Yima.

In this kingdom, spirits (urvans) lived a shadowy existence and were dependent on their descendants on earth for survival. Offerings were made to feed and clothe them through rituals at specified times. The first three days right after death were the most important of all.

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<sup>125</sup> "Ancient Iranian Religion." Encyclopedia Britannica Online. Encyclopedia Britannica, n.d. Web. 10 Jan. 2014. <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/293595/ancient-Iranian-religion>

<sup>126</sup> "Encyclopedia Iranica." RSS. N.p., n.d. Web. 10 Jan. 2014. <http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/burial-ii>

Later beliefs added the idea that those who served the gods could join them in the afterlife in a kind of paradise.<sup>127</sup> More funerary customs can be gleaned from the epic poem Ferdowsi Shahnameh. These include:

- Tearing clothes as a sign of mourning
- Cutting hair off a horse's tail owned by the deceased
- Inverting the horse's saddle
- Splashing and dispersing azure color on horses and elephants
- Hanging martial instruments on his horse
- Splashing black soil on thrones, the head, etc.
- The bending of the waist against a coffin (bowing against the coffin)
- Washing the dead person with musk, camphor, ambergris, and rose water, and overflowing their head with musk, camphor, ambergris, and rose water.
- Garbing the deceased in silk
- Carrying the dead's coffin on the shoulder to respect them and closing the tomb<sup>128</sup>

#### Deities and Important Concepts

- Ahura Mazdā (“Wise Lord”) Creator of the universe and the cosmic order that he maintains. He is particularly connected with the principle of cosmic and social order and truth called “arta”.
- Mithra Though associated with the sun, specifically the first rays of dawn as he drives forth in his chariot, Mithra functioned preeminently in the ethical sphere. He is the god of the covenant, contract and treaty. He is also seen as the protector of the lands of those who worship him and abide by their treaties.
- Anāhiti The pure goddess who brings fresh water to the earth. She is also associated with fertility.

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<sup>127</sup> “Culture of Iran: A History of Moharram & Other Rituals of Death in Iran.” N.p., n.d. Web. 10 Jan. 2014. [http://www.iranchamber.com/culture/articles/rituals\\_of\\_death.php](http://www.iranchamber.com/culture/articles/rituals_of_death.php)

<sup>128</sup> Hassani Kalhori, Shahla. “Anthropological Analysis of Mourning and Burial Ceremonies in Ferdowsi Shahnameh.” N.p., n.d. Web. 16 Jan. 2014. <http://textroad.com/Old%20version/pdf/JBASR/J.%20Basic.%20Appl.%20Sci.%20Res.,%202%2812%2913139-13143,%202012.pdf>

- Yima  
The first man, the progenitor of the human race, and son of the sun. He is thought to reign over the afterlife.

### Modern Adaptations

- Lit a fire at the start of the rit. Inform everyone that the fire is lit to honor the gods, specially \_\_ (example Ahura Mazdā, Mithra and Anāhiti). When speaking of the gods you have selected, give a short explanation of who they were.

*Example:* We begin this rite by lighting a flame to honor Ahura Mazdā, wise lord who creates order and allows us to know truth. He who created the universe and maintains the cosmic order, help us to see thy structure and know thy guiding hand during our time of grieving. |

- Hold a yazna as follows. Set up two chairs and decorate each of them differently. The larger, more impressive chair should be dedicated to Yima and the smaller to the deceased.
- Display and read an invitation to Yima to attend the rites. Offer him food and ask that he welcome the deceased into his realm to guard and guide them.
- Display and read an invitation to the deceased. Place clothing on the chair reserved for them; offer them food and drink. Then acknowledge their presence at the rit. Sing a song or read a poem highlighting the deceased's accomplishments and virtues. At the end of the service, acknowledge that they will go with Yima past the stone vaults of heaven into paradise.
- Have pictures or statues of horses displayed. If you have a picture of the deceased riding a horse, be sure to display that.

### Sample Readings

The Old Persian text that exists where most likely written by orthodox Zoroastrians. However, it may be appropriate to take our cue from their writings as they pay homage to Ahura Mazdā and Mithra.

#### Ariaramnes, Hamadan (AmH)

1.(1-4). Ariaramnes, the Great King, King of Kings, King in Persia, son of Teispes the King, grandson of Achaemenes.

2.(4-9). Ariaramnes the King says: This country Persia which I hold, which is possessed of good horses, of good men, the Great God Ahuramazda bestowed it upon me. By the favor of Ahuramazda I am king in this country.

3.(9-11). Ariaramnes the King says: May Ahuramazda bear me aid.

#### From Arsames, Hamadan (AsH)

2.(5-14). Arsames the King says: Ahuramazda, great god, the greatest of gods, made me king. He bestowed on me the land Persia, with good people, with good horses. By the favor of Ahuramazda I hold this land. May Ahuramazda protect me, and my royal house, and may he protect this land which I hold.

## ARTAXERXES II, SUSAN A. (A2Sa)

Artaxerxes the Great King, King of Kings, King of Countries, King in this earth, son of Darius the King, of Darius (who was) son of Artaxerxes the King, of Artaxerxes (who was) son of Xerxes the King, of Xerxes (who was) son of Darius the King, of Darius (who was) son of Hystaspes, an Achaemenian, says: This palace Darius my great–great–grandfather built; later under Artaxerxes my grandfather it was burned; by the favor of Ahuramazda, Anahita, and Mithra, this palace I built. May Ahuramazda, Anahita, and Mithra protect me from all evil, and that which I have built may they not shatter nor harm.

### Resources

- Ancient Iranian Religion <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/293595/ancient-Iranian-religion>
- BURIAL ii. Remnants of Burial Practices in Ancient Iran <http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/burial-ii>
- Old Persian Texts <http://www.avesta.org/op/op.htm>

## *Moche*

### *Practices*

The funerary practices of the Moche reflected their highly stratified society. The elite funeral practices were the most elaborate and spectacular of the ancient Americas. These traditions grew out of a rich coastal tradition that grew to extend and unify polities.

Moche deceased were typically buried underground, in a fully extended position with their head to the South, on their back, with their hands alongside the body or placed on the pelvis. This position is believed to be symbolically associated with concepts of rest and sleep.<sup>129</sup>

The Moche who were poor and of low status were buried in shallow trenches with their faces painted red, and unspun cotton placed over their faces or put under the heads like a pillow. Sometimes a shallow gourd plate was placed under the head of the deceased. Wool yam was usually wrapped around the head, wrists, hands, ankles and feet. Sometimes a lump of copper was placed in the hand.

Grave goods for tradesmen also included tools of their trade.

A wealthy, high-status individual was wrapped in several cloths or in a cane bundle that formed a tube tied together and closed at the ends with shallow gourd plates. A very important person was placed in a cane box- like a coffin buried in a room-like chamber lined with stone or mud bricks. These tombs were roofed with cane or wood, and sometimes they had small alcoves on the side walls where ceramic pots were placed. Some elaborate graves have been found with more than 75 pots. They sometimes contained jewelry of shell, stone, gold, or silver.

Additionally, foods were often included in the graves.

In the richest Moche burials, the people were buried with other individuals. These people may have been sacrificed to accompany and/or serve the wealthy person in the afterlife.<sup>130</sup>

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<sup>129</sup> Death and Religion in the Southern Moche Periphery: Funerary Practices at Huambacho, Nepeña Valley, Peru. N.p., n.d. Web. 17 Jan. 2014.

[http://www.academia.edu/1131248/Death\\_and\\_Religion\\_in\\_the\\_Southern\\_Moche\\_Periphery\\_Funerary\\_Practices\\_at\\_Huambacho\\_Nepena\\_Valley\\_Peru](http://www.academia.edu/1131248/Death_and_Religion_in_the_Southern_Moche_Periphery_Funerary_Practices_at_Huambacho_Nepena_Valley_Peru)

<sup>130</sup> Lesson 8: Burial Traditions – Toward a Greater Understanding of the Moche | Fowler Museum at UCLA.” N.p., n.d. Web. 17 Jan. 2014 <http://www.fowler.ucla.edu/curriculum/royal-tombs-of-sipan/lesson-8>

Moche funerals had four phases, and while we cannot be sure of the sequence, it is clear that the burial was the most significant of these. The four phases are as follows:

1. Burial

The lowering of a horizontal casket into the grave shaft was typically done using ropes. Sometimes a grave mask made of copper was attached to the casket. Additionally, grave goods, including food and tools, were added to the grave.

2. Assembly

A group of people dressed holding a staff-like object, most likely a rattle. Each person is dressed similarly in long, netlike shirts, wearing headdresses made of clipped feathers projecting from a headband. Each person also wears a tiered item of attire extending down the back. The assembly engages in ritual activities.

3. Conch shell Transfer

Conducted under the gabled roof of a large and very elaborate structure that is approached by stairs. A person wearing a headdress with a crest-shaped ornament kneels and is either given or gives a conch-shell to the representatives of the deities (it is unclear if the conch-shell was being received or given).

4. Sacrifice

Human sacrifice was performed for very important members of society. Pictures show the gods holding a knife and a rope of birds. The birds are sometimes shown on a rack, and there is evidence that some people were sacrificed by being pecked to death by birds.<sup>131</sup>

### Deities and Important Concepts

- “Supreme Deity”

The Creator from whom all Moche people came. Believed to have lived in either the mountains or sky- always isolated from the people.

- Wiracocha – the staff god

This Wari god controlled life and death. Wiracocha was commonly shown with a rod in each hand and rays growing from his head. These rays often ended in stylized portrayals of animals such as pumas, condors, and sometimes in illustrations of maize.

- The Decapitator

God associated with human sacrifice. He is shown as having humans sacrificed to him. The Moche believed that sacrifice helped new life and growth. The kings were responsible for gathering the sacrifice, much as a farmer would be for gathering seeds.

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<sup>131</sup> Donnan, Christopher B., and Donna McClelland. “The Burial Theme in Moche Iconography.” N.p., n.d. Web. <http://www.doaks.org/resources/publications/doaks-online-publications/the-burial-theme-in-moche-iconography/moche.pdf>

## Modern Adaptations

Follow the four traditional steps of the burial as follows.

### 1. Burial

Paint the forehead of the deceased with red paint or makeup then wrap wool yarn around the deceased wrist (and/or the head, hands, ankles and feet). Next take some unspun cotton or cotton balls and place under the head of the deceased.

Symbolically lower a pot with food into the grave via the use of ropes or offer a pot of food at the grave site. Also include a tool that represents what the person did in life in the coffin.

### 2. Assembly

Pass out rattles and staffs. Have a group walk around the coffin, rattling the rattles and praying for the deceased.

### 3. Conch shell Transfer

Have a person represent Wiracocha by holding a special staff. Give him a conch shell asking him to guide the deceased to an honored place. Have the person give the shell back assuring you that he will keep the deceased in his care as long as the person's memory is also well tended.

### 4. Sacrifice

Offer some food or drink or something valued by the deceased to the gods. The item should be destroyed in some ritual way.

## Sample Readings

No writings exist from the Moche civilization.

## Resources

- Death and Religion in the Southern Moche Periphery:Funerary Practices at Huambacho, Nepeña Valley, Peru  
[http://www.academia.edu/1131248/Death\\_and\\_Religion\\_in\\_the\\_Southern\\_Moche\\_Periphery\\_Funerary\\_Practice\\_s\\_at\\_Huambacho\\_Nepena\\_Valley\\_Peru](http://www.academia.edu/1131248/Death_and_Religion_in_the_Southern_Moche_Periphery_Funerary_Practice_s_at_Huambacho_Nepena_Valley_Peru)

## Nazca

### Practices

This Peruvian civilization is famous for the line drawings found in the earth, and the mummified remains found in the Chauchilla Cemetery. However, these forms of burial seemed to have been widely practiced.<sup>132</sup>

- Chamber Tombs or “Barbacoas”  
Mummified bodies were clothed in embroidered cotton and then painted with a resin and kept in purpose-built tombs made from mud bricks. The resin is thought to have kept out insects and slowed bacteria trying to feed on the bodies. Nearby pillars seemed to have been used as a place to dry out a body prior to internment.

Sometimes the heads of the body were removed and replaced with jars painted to represent a human head.

- Pit Burials

The most common Nazca funeral practice was to bury their dead in pits dug into the sandy cliffs or in the hills encompassing the river valleys. Graves average six to ten feet in depth and could be either square or a round cross section. The dead were buried in a seated position, knees flexed against the chest, with the body dressed in typical clothing with additional cloths wrapped around the bundle. Small children were sometimes buried in large pottery within a larger grave, but most graves only contained a single body and often also contained items such as pottery. Vessels (often as offerings), sewing kits, weapons, and other items for everyday use. The graves were roofed over with wood beams, which were then covered with small fieldstones or adobe bricks.<sup>133</sup> Often, a single cane was stuck vertically into the mud cap to serve as a tomb marker.

- Urn Burials

Most urn burials involve children younger than six, although occasionally youths and adults were interred in this manner. The individuals were usually placed in a seated and semi-flexed position. Generally, the burials falling into this category were very simple, the bodies often being wrapped in nothing more than undecorated plain weave textiles. Grave goods did not normally accompany these simple burials.

The famous Nazca lines were used for religious processions. Some of the lines depict nature spirits that the Nazca sacrificed humans by beheading them. From the evidence, there is no indication that these processions were a part of a funerary process.

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<sup>132</sup> Isla, Johny, and Markus Reindel. “Burial Patterns and Sociopolitical Organization in Nasca 5 Society.” N.p., n.d. Web. 13 Feb. 2014. [http://www.dainst.org/medien/de/nasca\\_isla\\_reindel\\_2006.pdf](http://www.dainst.org/medien/de/nasca_isla_reindel_2006.pdf)

<sup>133</sup> “Sacred Traditions- Anthropology 2120 – Danielle’s Eportfolio.” Danielle’s Eportfolio. N.p., n.d. Web. 13 Feb. 2014. <http://tink9966.weebly.com/sacred-traditions—anthropology—2120.html>

## Deities and Important Concepts

- The Nazca people practiced intensive agriculture in an area in a precarious area characterized by unpredictable natural events such as frequent droughts (as the area is a desert), earthquakes, and flash flooding. The need for water affected their entire lifestyle and played a major role in the form and practice of their religion.

Their ritual practices seemed to center on appeasing the mountain gods who were responsible for fertility and also associated with water.

- The famous geoglyphs surely provided a kinetic, ritualistic reminder to the Nasca people that their fate was tied to their environment—its natural beauty, its ephemeral abundance, and its life-threatening austerity. Thus, it is fitting that they be incorporated into a funeral for one who honors this culture.
- Domestic animals such as the llama and alpaca had been imported from the highlands at an earlier time and were present in Nasca society, as was the Guinea Pig (*Cavia porcellus*), which was used in ritual and as a ritual food.<sup>134</sup>
- The Nazca religion centered on the concept of animatism or the belief in supernatural forces present in nature, which control the resources that affect men's lives. These spiritual forces were often symbolized in the ceramic art by images of mythical creatures composed of elements of the most powerful creatures of the sky, the earth, and the ocean.<sup>135</sup>
- Shamans, rather than priests, were the officiants in Nasca rituals. Shamans were the intermediaries between the spirit world and the everyday world. Shamans are depicted as playing panpipes, drums, and clay trumpets. They wore a figure-eight turban and drank a hallucinogenic brew as part of their rituals.<sup>136</sup>
- Depictions of the deities are composite creatures representing the most powerful forces of the air (condor and falcon), earth (puma and jaguar), and water (killer whale and shark).
- Many items show plants growing out of skulls. From this we can see that the Nazca saw the connection of death to life. Many decapitated skulls or trophy heads have been found. These offerings were thought necessary to ensure fertility.

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<sup>134</sup> Proulx, Donald A. "The Nasca Culture: An Introduction." p 13–14., n.d. Web. 14 Feb. 2014.

[http://people.umass.edu/~proulx/online\\_pubs/Nasca\\_Overview\\_Zurich.pdf](http://people.umass.edu/~proulx/online_pubs/Nasca_Overview_Zurich.pdf)

<sup>135</sup> Ibid. p. 14–15

<sup>136</sup> Ibid. p. 15

## Modern Adaptations

- Even though the Nazca lines were most likely not used for funerary reasons it would seem fitting to have people walk on lines similar to the Nazca lines as part of a funerary procession. This could be done in honor of the mountain gods who are still worshiped by the Andean culture. These gods, who appear as animals such as the spider, the monkey, and the whale could be invoked and honored as the very ground that the person shall be committed to.

Different ways exist to make temporary line drawings that people could walk on. One of the most common is to use a rope and stake system.

- Bury the person with a jar that has a face painted on it.
- Speak of how death and life is connected. How life needs death so that new things can come about. Plant something for the dead to represent that life continues.
- Stick a single cane into the grave to mark its place.
- Have someone play ‘pan pipes’, drums, and/or clay trumpets. Alternately, play recorded music that incorporates these instruments.

## Sample Readings

The Nazca had no written system.

## Resources

- Burial Patterns and Sociopolitical Organization in Nasca 5 Society  
[http://www.researchgate.net/publication/226923989\\_Burial\\_Patterns\\_and\\_Sociopolitical\\_Organization\\_in\\_Nasca\\_5\\_Society](http://www.researchgate.net/publication/226923989_Burial_Patterns_and_Sociopolitical_Organization_in_Nasca_5_Society)
- The Nasca Culture: An Introduction  
[http://people.umass.edu/~proulx/online\\_pubs/Nasca\\_Overview\\_Zurich.pdf](http://people.umass.edu/~proulx/online_pubs/Nasca_Overview_Zurich.pdf)

## Byzantine Empire

### Practices

Prior to converting to a Christian nation in 324 AD, the empire worshiped the Roman gods and goddesses.

After the outlawing of the Pagan religions many of the ancient practices were still honored alongside the more modern Christian practices, for example the women continued their lamentations, which were accompanied by acts of self-mutilation: they cut their chests and faces; they undid and tore out their hair, and wrung their hands and held them up to the sky. Another older pagan tradition that was still honored was the practice of burying the corpse with funerary offerings, perhaps with the hopes that they would be used again in commemorative rites that brought the deceased back cyclically from beyond the grave.

Archaeological excavations on Thasos Island have revealed that the deceased were sometimes covered with freshly cut grass, possibly symbolizing the cycle of life and death. Finally, objects that facilitated the passage to the other world were placed in the grave. The most commonly used objects were coins, like the mythical obolus (Greek silver coin) used to pay Charon for the passage of the deceased across the Styx.<sup>137</sup>

### Deities and Important Concepts

See Deities and important concepts in the Roman section, as the Byzantines worshiped the Roman gods and goddesses.

### Modern Adaptations

- Speak of the grass that will cover the grave as a reminder of the cycles of life and death. A small patch of grass could be laid on top of a coffin as the following was said.

“Following the practice of the ancient Byzantine Pagans we offer this grass as a reminder that life and death are connected.

Life will rise and fall and rise again. So too has \_ lived and died, and in time will return to us.”

- Create a small altar in your house to the memory of the deceased. Privately take some time to remember what they meant to you in life and leave offerings of something they might have enjoyed, such as a small bit of food.

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<sup>137</sup> “Funerary Practices in Byzantium.” Qantara. N.p., n.d. Web. 01 Mar. 2014. [http://www.qantara-med.org/qantara4/public/show\\_document.php?do\\_id=1170&lang=en](http://www.qantara-med.org/qantara4/public/show_document.php?do_id=1170&lang=en)

### Sample Readings

Readings from Roman sources would be appropriate.

### Resources

None found for Pagan Byzantine funerals.

## *Teotihuacan*

### Practices

At its zenith, perhaps in the first half of the 1st millennium AD, Teotihuacan was the largest city in the pre-Columbian Americas. It was a multi-ethnic city known for its many elaborate pyramids and well-preserved murals. The society at Teotihuacan was hierarchical, and this is reflected in its burial practices.

Low-status individuals were buried in floors or public areas within earthen pits, and high-status individuals received deeper burial pits in more public and sacred spaces. The grave goods found with individuals also vary by status, ranging from ceramic vessels and obsidian to jadeite and highly decorated vessels. Elite burials are found in tombs with exotic materials and metals.<sup>138</sup>

Human sacrifice was also practiced and is especially seen in the creation of the great pyramids.

Burials for women and men were similar as both were buried in the earth, wrapped up, and their bodies placed in a crouching position, facing eastward toward Tlalocan, the place of abundance and joy. Adolescents and children were buried in a crouching position on their backs, and newborns were placed in a crouched position in a wide bowl or in large pieces of earthenware, sometimes covered by another vessel as protection.<sup>139</sup>

Cosmetics seemed to be used as a part of the funerary process, at least for the elite class. Additionally, the remains of cosmetics have been found near grave sites and may have been left as funerary offerings for warriors (to use as war paint) and dancers (to use as stage makeup).<sup>140</sup> Priests would also visit the elite, remove the bodies, and redecorate them with cosmetics as part of post-funerary rites.

Sixteenth-century chroniclers had a clearer picture of indigenous peoples' ideas about death at the time of the conquest; their accounts can be correlated to archeological observations. On the whole, the dead were destined for Mictlán, and those who died due to causes related to the rain god, Tláloc (from lightning strikes, drowning, gout, dropsy) went to Tlalocan. Warriors killed in combat went to the House of the Sun, while sacrificed prisoners of war and women who died during their first childbirth, and babes in arms who died were headed for Chichihualcuauhco, the place of the árbolnodriza, the nursemaid tree, where they would be fed while they waited for the moment to return to the world.

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<sup>138</sup> "The Role of Cosmetics in Teotihuacan Funerary Rites." Bones Dont Lie. N.p., n.d. Web. 13 Mar. 2014. <http://bonesdontlie.wordpress.com/2012/02/23/the-role-of-cosmetics-in-teotihuacan-funerary-rites/>

<sup>139</sup> Sanchez, Carlos. "Funeral Rites in Pre-Hispanic Mexico." N.p., n.d. Web. 13 Mar. 2014. <http://www.revistascisan.unam.mx/Voices/pdfs/9415.pdf>

<sup>140</sup> "The Role of Cosmetics in Teotihuacan Funerary Rites." Bones Dont Lie. N.p., n.d. Web. 13 Mar. 2014. <http://bonesdontlie.wordpress.com/2012/02/23/the-role-of-cosmetics-in-teotihuacan-funerary-rites/>

## Deities and Important Concepts

- Great Goddess of Teotihuacan (Spider Goddess)  
The main deity of Teotihuacan, her worship seems to have been confined to the city. She is depicted wearing a bird head dress and a nose pendant. She is shown with three or five descending fangs.

Worshipped as the goddess of the underworld, darkness, the earth, water, war, and possibly even creation itself. She also had a warlike aspect, but was depicted as being much gentler than other Mesoamerican god/desses.

The underworld that she rules over is shown as a paradise.

- Green stone – Jade or Obsidian  
Green Obsidian was only found at Teotihuacan. This high-quality stone was extremely useful for making tools and weapons. Green stones were seen as being alive. Thus, Jade and Obsidian were valued for more than their functional properties.
- Mictlán, Tlalocan and Chichihualcuauhco  
Most of what we know of these afterlife locations comes from the Aztecs. More details on these locations can be found in the Aztec section.

## Modern Adaptations

- Bury a piece of green stone with the person. Speak of how the stone represents life.
- Apply cosmetics to the deceased as a sign of honor.
- Let it be known that the deceased will go to the paradise that is ruled over by the Spider Goddess by saying the following:

“\_\_\_ fear not, the great Spider Goddess who once ruled over Teotihuacan will claim you. She will take you to her lands, which are lovely to behold.”

## Sample Readings

Regretfully, no written language has been deciphered at Teotihuacan.

## Resources

- Funeral Rites in Pre-Hispanic Mexico <http://www.revistascisan.unam.mx/Voices/pdfs/9415.pdf>
- The role of cosmetics in Teotihuacan funerary rites  
<http://bonesdontlie.wordpress.com/2012/02/23/the-role-of-cosmetics-in-teotihuacan-funerary-rites/>

## *Huari (Wari)*

### Practices

The Wari built an empire that spanned much of present-day Peru. Their Andean capital, Huari, became one of the world's great cities, laid out in specialized sections.

Rituals were accompanied by the drinking of chicha, a fermented alcoholic brew similar to beer but made from corn. Chicha was drunk in social rank, and most likely, a lot of toasts were made as a part of any ritual.

From the archeological evidence, the Wari fostered a cult of royal ancestor worship. Royal tombs have been discovered with rows of seated human bodies buried in a seated position and wrapped in poorly preserved textiles. In other chambers, the remains of royal queens were found along with an assortment of rich possessions (gold and silver ear ornaments, silver bowls, bronze ritual axes, a rare alabaster drinking cup, knives, coca leaf containers, and brilliantly painted ceramics). Lastly, evidence suggests that the Wari displayed the mummies of their queens on the stone throne of the ceremonial room, allowing the living to venerate the royal dead.<sup>141</sup>

The location of the tomb was marked with a carved wooden mace that served as a grave marker.

As for non-elite Wari, they were honored via endocannibalism, the ritual eating of the body of the deceased. Right after death, the closest relatives would hug and embrace the deceased person. This was followed by a funeral song in which everyone referred to the dying or dead person by consanguine terms and recollected events they had experienced together during the person's lifetime. Relatives would be sent for and the funeral would usually take place about three days after the person died. Mortuary preparation involved ritual wailing and other ceremonies, building a fire, removing the visceral organs, and finally roasting the body. The decedent's closest kin would not consume the body, but they urged the attendant relatives to eat. Consumption of the flesh would assuage the family's grief, as it meant the soul of the person was being kept in the living body of relatives, rather than being abandoned to wander the forests alone.<sup>142</sup>

In Wari's visions of the afterlife, the spirits of the dead reside under the waters of deep rivers and lakes. The ancestors appear as they did in life, but everyone is strong, beautiful, and free of deformity, disease, and infirmity. The ancestors' social world resembles a village. Life is easy and crops grow abundantly. All food is vegetarian.

In the underworld, the Wari align and intermarry with the Water Spirits, who are primal forces that control human death, animal fertility, and destructive storms.

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<sup>141</sup> Pringle, Heather. "First Unlooted Royal Tomb of Its Kind Unearthed in Peru." National Geographic. National Geographic Society, 27 June 2013. Web. 03 Apr. 2014.

<http://news.nationalgeographic.com/news/2013/06/130627-peru-archaeology-wari-south-america-human-sacrifice-royal-ancient-world>

<sup>142</sup> "Wari Culture." Wikipedia. Wikimedia Foundation, 30 Mar. 2014. Web. 03 Apr. 2014.

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wari\\_culture](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wari_culture)

The Wari believe that the dead will eventually regenerate into animals. That in this way their spirit will live on while providing food to their living relatives. It is believed that the deceased continues to care about their family and provide for them in this way. The most common animals that the ancestors are believed to regenerate into are fish and Peccaries (a type of pig).

### Deities and Important Concepts

- Wiracocha  
The “staff god” Controlled life and death.
- Pacha Kamaq  
 (“Earth maker”) Creator god.
- Towira Towira  
A giant and leader of the Water Spirits. His beer is said to be the true cause of death. He also washes the deceased in a warm water bath to ‘awaken’ them. After the bath, the deceased is painted with genipap, which makes a black paint. This marks the social transitions and integration into the Water Spirit’s society. (The same paint is used to mark social transitions in life.)

Towira Towira can be thought of as a kind of grim reaper who helps the deceased transition into the next realm.

### Modern Adaptations

- Starting with the eldest person in the family, drink a toast that includes a memory of the deceased. Continue to the next eldest person, etc. If children are too small to make a toast, state how they are related to the deceased.
- Create a song or poem talking about the deceased.
- Touch the body of the deceased, letting it know that its soul shall pass to the living.
- Have a feast of roasted meat, stating that the meat is being eaten in memory of the deceased. That in this way, the deceased is being kept alive. Charge the people at the feast to remember the dead when they eat together.
- Speak of the village in the afterlife where the deceased will reside. Ask the Water Spirits, and specifically Towira Towira to welcome the deceased into their society.
- Wash the body in warm water and mark it with a bit of black paint to represent that the person is now a part of the Water Spirit’s society and has transitioned to the next phase of their existence.

### Sample Readings

The Huari did not have a written language.

### Resources

- Amazingly Untouched Royal Tomb Found in Peru <https://www.livescience.com/37810-royal-wari-tomb-found-in-peru.html>
- Povos Indigenas - Wari  
<https://pib.socioambiental.org/en/Povo:Wari>

## Toltec

### Practices

There is debate as if there was an actual Toltec culture. Most of the information once viewed as historical data comes from the surviving Mexica (Aztec) myths. “Toltecs” as described in the Mexica sources were merely one of several Nahuatl-speaking city-states in the postclassic period, and not a particularly influential one at that. One may thus view a “Toltec” to mean simply an inhabitant of Tula during its apogee.<sup>143</sup>

Having said that, the mythical view of the Toltec as precursors to the Mexica, who represented a height in civilization, has its appeal. The magnitude of the Mexica’s reverence and respect is evidenced in the Mexica expression *Toltecayotl* or ‘to have a Toltec heart’, which meant to be worthy and to excel in all things.

According to the Mexica legends, the Toltecs believed that upon death, the eternal self, the soul, would leave this earth and add itself to many souls. The many souls would remain forever, not in a heaven-like place, but rather as one whole being together.

It was thus believed that not a lot of emphasis was given to the death of an individual.<sup>144</sup>

### Deities and Important Concepts

- Ce Acatl Topiltzin (Our Prince One- Reed Feathered Serpent, also known as Quetzalcoatl), the mythical lord of the Toltecs and their major city Tōllan.

Reigning in peace and prosperity, he contributed much to the lifestyle of the Toltecs with basic ideas such as civilization. He was generally considered a god upon earth by his followers, with similar powers to those of his namesake. According to legend, the most accepted fate of the god was that he migrated to Tlapallan, where he either died or would rest forever.

He dispelled the traditions of the past and ended all human sacrifice during his reign. The translations claim that he loved his people so much he insisted that they only meet the ancient standards of the gods; he had the Toltec offer them snakes, birds, and other animals, but not humans, as sacrifices.

- Tolteca and Toltecness  
These words used by the Nahuans (Mexica) reflect their respect for the Toltecs, who were viewed as their intellectual and cultural predecessors.

“Tolteca” was synonymous with artist, artisan, or wise man, and “toltecayotl.” “Toltecness” meant art, culture, and civilization.

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<sup>143</sup> “Toltec.” Wikipedia. Wikimedia Foundation, 18 Apr. 2014. Web. 24 Apr. 2014.

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Toltec>

<sup>144</sup> “Toltec Religious Beliefs – Toltec Civilization.” N.p., n.d. Web. 24 Apr. 2014.

<https://www.sites.google.com/site/tolteccivilization/religious-beliefs>

### Modern Adaptations

- Speak of how the person displayed Toltecayotl – a Toltec heart that excels in all things. Speak of the specific deeds that the deceased excelled in. Works in art, culture, and civilization (such as civil service) are especially appropriate.
- Call on Ce Acatl Topiltzin and his love for his people, and dedicate the deceased to him.
- Speak of how the deceased's wisdom will merge with the ancestors. How will they become one in the great soul that reminds us of all those who have gone before us.

### Sample Readings

The only text dealing with the Toltecs is the myths of the Mexica.

### Resources

- Toltec (Wikipedia)  
<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Toltec>
- Ancient History Encyclopedia: Toltec Civilization

## Chimu

### Practices

Located in Peru, this civilization was known to worship the moon, in contrast to the Inca, who conquered them. The Chimú civilization grew out of the remnants of the Moche culture.

Early Chimú cemeteries are found without pyramid associations. Burials are usually in extended positions, in prepared tombs. The rectangular, adobe-lined and covered tombs have niches in their walls in which bowls were placed. The Chimú buried their dead with large quantities of textiles and vessels that held food and drink to provide sustenance for the deceased in the afterlife. Funeral masks were also found.

Cacique stones monuments were believed to be ancestors of the people in whose area they stood, and it is clear that the Chimú worshiped their ancestors.

Among the royalty, a raised, truncated mound served as a burial platform. These were found within the palace complex. Additionally, royalty was often buried along with human sacrifices.

While we do not know much about the actual funerary rituals of the Chimú, silver miniatures and detailed maquettes (models) have been found that give some clues to some of the rites performed. The silver miniatures depict men carrying a sedan chair and an oval casket. From many such works, it is clear that high-status individuals were carried in sedan chairs as part of the funeral procession.<sup>145</sup> Similarly, the maquettes give us clues to funerary rites. The figures depict multiple characters carrying mummy bundles or offerings, serving or drinking corn beer, and playing music. Musicians play drums, rattles, flutes, or panpipes. Chimú sculpted vessels made of sheet silver also occasionally represent musicians. Musicians play drums, rattles, flutes, or panpipes.<sup>146</sup>

### Deities and Important Concepts

- Goddess of the moon, weavers, and the sea  
The main deity of the Chimú. Considered more powerful than the sun because the moon can be seen both in the day and the night.
- The sun, destroyer god  
Viewed as a harsh god, most likely because of the harshness of the sun in their desert environment.
- The staff god  
Similar to the Moche staff god but depicted as more human. Like the Moche staff god, he controlled life and death.

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<sup>145</sup> “Krannert Art Museum.” Peruvian Model Funeral Cortège. N.p., n.d. Web. 02 May 2014.  
<http://www.kam.illinois.edu/collection/americas/FuneraryCortege.html>

<sup>146</sup> “Heilbrunn Timeline of Art History.” Music in the Ancient Andes. N.p., n.d. Web. 02 May 2014.  
[http://http://www.metmuseum.org/toah/hd/muan/hd\\_muan.htm](http://http://www.metmuseum.org/toah/hd/muan/hd_muan.htm)

- Spondylus shellfish  
A common offering associated with the sea, rainfall, and fertility.

### Modern Adaptations

- Have participants carry offerings to the funeral site to be interred.
- Play panpipes, flutes, rattles, and drums as part of the procession to the funeral site. Alternately, play recorded music with these instruments as part of the funeral service.
- Bury a Spondylus shell (or other seashell) so that the deceased will have the comfort of the gentle rains
- Wrap the deceased with some cloth, being sure to include the head. The cloth can be a recreation of patterns used by the Chimú, depict something meaningful to the deceased, or simply be a colored piece of cloth. For the latter, choose a color that represents some aspect of the deceased's personality. Speak about how the cloth will protect the deceased as they transition into the next world.
- Offerings of food in jars can be buried so that the soul of the departed will always be nourished.
- Sew a mask onto the cloth wrapped around the deceased with the idea that the memory of the deceased's face shall not be forgotten. Alternatively, bury a mask with the deceased. |

*Note:* There is no evidence as to why masks were historically sewn onto the wrapped mummies. However, masks and other decorations played an important role in the intricate conveyance of the dead from this world into the next, as symbols of wealth and status, and because they were believed to protect and beautify the dead.

### Sample Readings

No writing exists.

### Resources

- Death in Ancient Peru  
<https://artsandculture.google.com/story/death-in-ancient-peru-museo-larco/uwWxg2wunvS-IA?hl=en>

## Mexica (Aztec)

**Note:** The proper name for people commonly known as Aztecs is Mexica. I use the original name of these people.

### Practices

We have a wealth of information about the beliefs and practices of the Mexica and their extensive and diverse view of both the living world and the realms of the dead.

Death was seen as a necessary concession to the astral forces that gave them the privilege of life. Their ideas of death were clearly transmitted from a place of deep reverence for the universal energy that permitted their creation and survival. This relationship can be seen in their creation myths, where two of the gods sacrificed themselves to create the sun and moon in the current (fifth) epoch. Humans were created by the gods with Quetzalcoatl, the symbol of wisdom, traveling to Mictlan, “the place of the dead,” to rescue the “precious bones” of humans of previous ages in order to give life to a new era. After retrieving the bones, Quetzalcoatl, sacrificed his own blood, drawn from his penis, to bring the new humans to life.<sup>147</sup>

Because sacrifices had been given by the gods to create men, the Mexicas reasoned that they must reciprocate in kind. They also believed that they could keep another cataclysm from happening by giving their blood to keep the sun moving and shining. In fact, they came to regard their existence as the sole cosmic source of energy for the Sun. This warrior mysticism led them to believe that sacred war and sacrifice would preserve the Sun and forever connect death at war with the Giver of Life.<sup>148</sup>

Their ceremonial centers were divided to reflect their views of all the worlds, both the living and the dead. An immense island divided into four quadrants or directions. The East was the region of light, fertility, and life, symbolized by the color white. The North was the direction of darkness, coldness, and war. It was where the dead were buried, and its color was black. The west represented birth and decay, the mystery of origin and end. Its color was red. South was the region of heat and tropical weather; its color was blue.<sup>149</sup>

The Mexica conception of the afterlife was such that many factors contributed to determining one's destiny in the afterlife. The Mexica were very precise in determining one's fate; in life, this was done using your birth date. In death, this was dictated by the manner in which you died and, in some cases, by your occupation in life.<sup>150</sup>

The bodies of the dead were returned to the Mother Earth, Coatlicue, either by cremation or burial, and thus reclaimed back into her womb. The ashes from cremation would also feed her and the god Tlaltechtli.

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<sup>147</sup> Aguilar – Moreno, Manuel. “Handbook to Life in the Aztec World.” N.p., n.d. Web. 05 Aug. 2014 p. 161 – 162 <http://tinyurl.com/q737j66>

<sup>148</sup> Ibid. p. 162

<sup>149</sup> Ibid. p. 162

<sup>150</sup> Ibid. p. 162

However, the soul of the individual traveled to a predetermined place, depending on the kind of death. This journey was an arduous voyage for some and a passage to eternal joy for others, with some people being elevated to godlike status. Morality and lifestyle seemed to have little effect on the final resting place.

The soul would end up in one of four places depending on how they died.

- Chichihuacuauhco

The Orchard of the gods means literally “in the wet–nurse tree”. A paradise that received children whose innocence had been protected as a result of an early death while still nursing. It was thought that the children would either return to repopulate the earth in the next epoch or to a woman's womb sometime in this epoch.

- Tonatiuh–Ilhuicac

The souls of soldiers fallen at war and the souls of mothers who died in childbirth rested in the Heaven of the Sun. This was perhaps the most desirable ending to an earthly existence because it was considered a place of honor. These souls had the privilege of accompanying the Sun in its daily cycle. The soldiers during the daylight hours joined the sun and engaged in mock battles and war songs. The women joined the Sun in its nightly descent, carrying him or marching before him while shouting with joy, fighting and praising him.

After four years of joy and happiness, these souls would inhabit clouds. The male warriors were changed into beautiful birds and butterflies that flew freely between heaven and Earth. The women became goddess and returned to their earthly homes where they were sometimes seen by their husbands.

- Tlalocan

The paradise of the rain god, Tlaloc, received individuals specifically chosen by him. It was believed that any who died in a death related to water went there. This included drowning, lightning, dropsy, gout, lepers, manage or tumors. Also, children were sacrificed to the god.

Such people were always buried. Their remains were seen as seeds that lived and germinated deep within a sacred mountain, which in turn produced water in the form of clouds, rivers, and winds to feed the earth.

The souls of these people became attendants of Tlaloc and were known as “masters of water” and “little winds”.

This place was seen as a lush green land always in summer and feed by rain. The souls here existed in blissful tranquility, free from fatigue, worries, and problems.

- Mictlan

The underworld physically understood to be the underbelly of the Earth. A dark region reserved for everyone else, regardless of class – a place of uncertainty and mystery.

The lord of the dead, Miclantecuhtli, and his female companion, Mictlancihualt ruled this realm.

To reach this realm the dead were required to undertake a long and treacherous journey and overcome nine separate phases. This journey is thought to represent a reverse trip back into the womb.

1. Cross a river called Apanohuaya with the help of a dog (often a puppy) buried with them for this purpose.
2. Naked from crossing the river they had to pass between Tepetl Monamictia, a pair of fierce mountains that constantly crashed against each other.
3. Climb a deadly mountain made of razor-sharp obsidian called Itztepetl.
4. Cross eight gorges (Cehuecayan) in the freezing cold and snow.
5. Cross eight valleys (Itzehecayan) where brutal winds cut through them like a knife.
6. Walk down a path that exposed them to a flurry of innumerable arrows (Temiminaloyan) and have their heart eaten by a jaguar.
7. Cross a mysterious place “where the flags waved” where they would find a lizard or crocodile called Xochitonatl representing the Earth as the ending this ordeal and returning to the Earth.
8. Cross the nine rivers, Chiconamictlan, again with the aid of the Techichi dog.
9. Reach Chiconamictlan (the ninth hell) where they were received by Mictlantecuhtli.

The journey was thought to take four years to complete. At the end of the journey, the dead lost their attachment to their physical and earthly self and disintegrated, disappearing forever.<sup>151</sup>

The passage of the body and soul from life to death required an intricately orchestration of ritual and mourning. While funerary rites were similar for most people, nobility and women who died in childbirth required special and more elaborate rituals.

Two methods were standard for funerary practices – burial and cremation. Burial was used for people without rank, individuals from other territories, and those who assisted with the task of daily life--the young, the unmarried women, women who died in childbirth, and those called by Tlaloc.

Cremation, symbolizing the transformation of the soul so that it could live in the heaven of the Sun, was reserved for rulers, great lords, and warriors who died in battle or gave their blood.

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<sup>151</sup> Ibid. p. 162

Fire was seen both as a cleansing element and a means by which people could take items they would need, such as a dog, with them. It was also seen as a way to communicate with the dead and send them both advice for their journey and aid.

Funerary rites occurred in five stages over four years. Stage one was a series of orations to both the deceased and the mourners. First the dead person, whose spirit was still thought to linger, would be addressed, then the mourner or heir.

For non-nobles the eyes were carefully closed, and then the highly revered master of burials would be called. These officials cut up pieces of paper made of tree bark and covered the body, and then poured a vase of water on the person's head (symbolizing the amniotic fluid, because their body was returning to the womb of the Earth). The person was dressed as appropriate for their position in life.

A vessel of water was placed nearby to satisfy the dead's thirst during their journey to the other world, and they were furnished bits of paper to be used as follows during their journey: to pass between the mountains, to safely bypass the serpent, to traverse the lands that were the domain of the crocodile, to traverse the seven deserts, to go through the eight hills, and to defend against the north winds.

One of the principal ceremonies was killing the dog that would accompany them. The dog was always yellow in color. A cord was put around the animal's neck so it could cross the river and it was then either buried or cremated at the same time the person was buried.

If the person was being cremated their body was put in a fetal position and they were burned with resinous pinewood along with the tools of their trade. The master of ceremonies would burn incense around the pyre and intone a funeral hymn. The ashes were placed in an earthen vase that contained at its bottom a green jewel (to serve as the deceased heart). The vase was then interred in a deep hole and for four days was covered with offerings of bread and wine.

If the body was buried the actual burial occurred 80 days after death. The body was often shown as being put into a fetal position. The ritual of burning an effigy was repeated at this time and performed once a year for four years on the anniversary of death, at which time it was believed the person had arrived in Mictlan. If the person was a warrior mourners would wait to bathe and groom themselves after the 80 days.

Another ritual consisted of keeping the energy of the deceased close to the family by cutting locks of hair from the top of the head and mixing these with locks cut at birth. These were kept in a vessel stored near the home of the deceased.

Royal funerals were even more elaborate and magnificent. Royalty was buried with many of their rich possessions. Nobles and slaves gathered and a great rite took place that culminated in the cremation of the king. The slaves who had tended the king were sacrificed so they could continue to serve him. (See *Handbook to Life in the Aztec World* by Manuel Aguilar for more details on the Royal funerals).

Merchants were treated as special cases because of the long periods they spent traveling. Merchants were buried with a feather object in their mouth. The hollows of his eyes were painted black and his mouth red. His body was striped with white soils. His peers dressed him in paper and dressed him. The body was

tightly wrapped and bound onto a wooden frame or carrying racks and taken to the nearest hill or mountaintop. The body was buried while a companion stood guard. It was believed that merchants went to Tonatiuh-Ilhuicac along with the warriors and women who died at birth.

Women who died in childbirth were also believed to be destined for Tonatiuh–Ilhuicac. They were treated with equal reverence as soldiers. They were dressed in their best outfits, their head and hair was washed, and her hair was left loose and untied. Midwives and old women gathered to accompany the body; they carried shields and swords and made war cries. Young men came out from school to meet them and struggle with them, attempting to seize the woman's body. The woman was buried in the courtyard of the temple of the goddesses, called the heavenly women. Her husband, relatives, and friends guarded her body for four days.

These women became formidable deities of the twilight, and on certain nights appeared at crossroads, striking those they met with paralysis.

Cemeteries were not common in the Mexica world; instead, people were interned in fields and near their homes, showing that the deceased was considered still a part of the family. Newborn and very small infants were buried in or close to the family corn bins, perhaps to guarantee the growth of the corn.

### Deities and Important Concepts

- Quetzalcoatl “The Feathered Serpent”  
The most famous of the Mexica gods. This god of the west, the morning star, of priesthood, of learning, and knowledge. He was responsible for allowing humans to be created.
- Tlaloc  
One of the most ancient Meso–American gods. He was the god of rain and was associated with fertility and agriculture. The Mexica believed that the cries and tears of newborn children were sacred to the god.
- Coatlicue “The Mother of Gods”, “Serpent Skirt”  
A major Mexica deity. The earth–mother goddess. Represented as an old woman, she symbolized the antiquity of earth worship. She gave birth to the first set of gods. The patron of childbirth, she was associated with warfare, governance, and agriculture.
- Mictlantecuhtli and Mictlantecihuatl  
King and Queen of the most common underworld.

## Modern Adaptations

- Start the funeral by addressing the deceased. Perhaps telling about how they will be missed.
- The way the person is honored should reflect how they died and/or their profession. I would extend the traditional deaths as shown here.
  - Anyone considered a child when they died would be spoken of as going to Chichihuacuauhco where they are given everything they need. It should be stated that they will be born again so that they can experience the potential that they never got to explore.
  - Any person who served as a soldier would be spoken of as going to Tonatiuh–Ilhuicac. It would be especially appropriate to release butterflies at these funerals.
  - A woman who has given birth in her life would also be revered as going to Tonatiuh–Ilhuicac.
    - These women can be honored as being spoken of as becoming ancestral goddesses who will continue to look after their home and family.
- Anyone who would be considered a merchant and spent a lot of time away from family would also be considered to be going to Tonatiuh–Ilhuicac.
- Those whose deaths related to water, including dying from tumors, would go to the realm of Tlalocan. They should be buried if they can be.
- Everyone else would be said to be going to Mictlan. The journey to Mictlan can be seen as a loss of one's ego so that they can merge with the ancestors.
  - A picture of a dog should be placed with the remains of the deceased. If the person had an animal cremated and ashes are available, it may be appropriate to also place the ashes with the person.
  - The dog should be seen as a symbol that no one makes any journey completely alone.
  - Pieces of paper with the steps of the journey can be burned with the hope that the deceased will complete the journey as they need in order to go back to the source of all things.
- Including a responsive reading would be very appropriate.
- Speak of the body returning to the earth, but the spirit going to the afterlife.

## Sample Readings

You can find some of these by doing a search on Nahuatl poems. Nahuatl, was the language spoken by the Mexica. I have selected a few that I thought were especially appropriate.

Composed by a certain ruler in memory of former rulers <sup>152</sup>

1. Weeping, I, the singer, weave my song of flowers of sadness; I call to memory the youths, the shards, the fragments, gone to the land of the dead; once noble and powerful here on earth, the youths were dried up like feathers, were split into fragments like an emerald, before the face and in the sight of those who saw them on earth, and with the knowledge of the Cause of All.
2. Alas! alas! I sing in grief as I recall the children. Would that I could turn back again; would that I could grasp their hands once more; would that I could call them forth from the land of the dead; would that we could bring them again on earth, that they might rejoice and we rejoice, and that they might rejoice and delight the Giver of Life; is it possible that we His servants should reject him or should be ungrateful? Thus, I weep in my heart as I, the singer, review my memories, recalling things sad and grievous.
3. Would only that I knew they could hear me, there in the land of the dead, were I to sing some worthy song. Would that I could gladden them, that I could console the suffering and the torment of the children. How can it be learned? Whence can I draw the inspiration? They are not where I may follow them; neither can I reach them with my calling as one here on earth.

Cuicatli quicaqui <sup>153</sup>

*I changed the original wording as follows to make it more understandable. "My heart hearts a song" to "my heart feels a song," and "garlands flower" to "garland flowers."*

My heart feels a  
song, I begin to cry.  
Already I know myself.  
We go among flowers.  
We will leave the earth here.  
We are loaned to one another.  
We go to His house.

Put on me a necklace  
Of varied flowers.  
They are in my hands,  
Garland flowers on me.  
We will leave the earth here.  
We are loaned to one another.  
We go to His house.

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<sup>152</sup> Brinton, Daniel G. "The Project Gutenberg EBook of Ancient Nahuatl Poetry." N.p., 30 Apr. 2004. Web. 12 Aug. 2014.  
<http://www.gutenberg.org/files/12219/12219-h/12219-h.htm#IX>

<sup>153</sup> "Nahuatl Poetry." N.p., n.d. Web. 12 Aug. 2014. <http://www2.potsdam.edu/schwaljf/Nahuatl/poetry.ht>

Flowers are our only garments by Nezahualcoyotl<sup>154</sup>

**Note:** The following is an example of a typical responsive poem. The phrases with *ohuaya* are the responses and are similar to something like tra-la-la. From what I was able to find it is pronounced Oh–why–ye.

Flowers are our only garments,  
only songs make our pain  
subside, diverse flowers on  
earth,  
*Ohuaya ohuaya.*

Perhaps my friends will be  
lost, my companions will  
vanish  
when I lie down in that place, I Yoyontzin –  
Ohuaye!– in the place of song and of Life Giver,  
*Ohuaya ohuaya.*

Does no one know where we are going?  
Do we go to God’s home  
or do we live only here on  
earth?  
*Ah ohuaya.*

Let your hearts know,  
oh princes, oh eagles and jaguars  
that we will not be friends forever,  
only for a moment here, then we  
go to Life Giver’s home.  
*Ohuaya ohuaya.*

### Resources

- Handbook to Life in the Aztec World by Manuel Aguilar – Moreno 2006 Starting at page 160  
<http://tinyurl.com/q737j66>
- Who goes to Mictlan?  
<https://zoesaadia.com/historia-en-el-calmecac/who-goes-to-mictlan/>

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<sup>154</sup> “Aztec Poetry: Three Poems.” N.p., n.d. Web. 12 Aug. 2014. <http://www.mexicolore.co.uk/aztecs/home/aztec-poetry-2- three-poems>

## *Inca*

### Practices

People were buried, sometimes in groups. Often, the deceased person, whether commoner or noble, was placed in a fetal position (lying on one side with knees curled up to the chest) or placed sitting up with some of his or her belongings and wrapped in a special cloth or mat. The nobility, however, were often buried with many more belongings and dressed in elaborate clothing. It was important that the body was not burnt, as it was believed that the body played a part in the journey to the afterlife. Burial vaults were located near residences for easy access to the mummified bodies and were often painted red.

Important persons, such as nobles, were often mummified. They also continued to play a role in society and were fed, clothed, and brought out to participate in festivals.<sup>155</sup>

In the central highlands, the deceased were placed in a burial tower or sepulcher. The body was eviscerated, and balsamic substances were added to aid in preserving the body. The mummification process in the lowlands and coastal regions was slightly more complex. The organs and the flesh were not always removed, but when the flesh was taken off the body, it was buried next to the dead in ceramic vessels.<sup>156</sup>

The bodies of the dead were revered as huacas – something imbued with supernatural powers and honored as such. The Incas believed that the soul of a dead person protected its descendants from evil and liked its body to be brought out during festivals to be given food and chichi (a fermented or non-fermented beverage usually derived from maize).<sup>157</sup>

Death involved the passage through several different bodily states; there was no simple dichotomy established between an alive and a dead body. The first stage of death was known as *wañuq*, in which the individual entered the realm of the newly dead. During this period the deceased transitioned from the world of the living, in which his or her body was a live material presence, into the world of the dead, in which the spiritual body dominates. After *wañuq*, the body became an *aya*, which simply means a dead body. At this point the spiritual body has separated itself from the physical body, and the person has transitioned into his or her eternal state as an ancestor. However, this separation was not absolute. For example, physical sensation was thought to occur in the bones, which remained with the body for eternity, even after the flesh had deteriorated. Thus, the *aya* could still feel physical pleasure and pain even though it was no longer living.<sup>158</sup>

For an entire year after death, the deceased undertook a journey through the afterlife. This journey took place both in the world of the living, known as *Cay Pacha*, and in the underworld, known as *Ucu Pacha*.

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<sup>155</sup> “Old Beliefs Die Hard.” Chinchorro Mummies. N.p., n.d. Web. 01 Sept. 2014.  
<http://chinchorromummies.wordpress.com/2010/12/07/old-beliefsn-die-hard/>

<sup>156</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>157</sup> Malpass, Michael A. “Daily Life in the Inca Empire.” Westport, CT: Greenwood, 1996. N. pag. Print.

<sup>158</sup> Suarez, Ananda Cohen, and Jeremy James. George. Handbook to Life in the Inca World. New York, NY: Facts On File, 2011. p. 150. Print

Pacha. The Inca underworld was thought of as a wet, murky place below ground. As a test of perseverance and strength, the deceased was put through a series of physical obstacles. For example, the dead were required to cross a treacherous bridge made from human hair, and many mummy bundles are given offerings of human hair to help complete this task. Other colonial-period accounts describe ferocious packs of dogs that menaced the newly dead on their journey. If the deceased did not pass this series of tests, he or she would remain in Ucu Pacha for eternity. If successfully completed, the dead would finally reach his or her ancestral home among the huacas (sacred shrines). This place of origin, from which all humans came, was known as Pacarina. While humans resided in human-made settlements, constructed from adobe or stone, the souls of the dead returned to the original source that gave rise to human life and culture—the natural world.<sup>159</sup>

Those who obeyed the Incan moral code: *ama suwa, ama llulla, ama quella* (do not steal, do not lie, do not be lazy)—went to live in the sun’s warmth. Others spent their eternal days in the cold earth (as they could not pass the trials needed to make it to Pacarina. In addition, if the soul passed the tests, it was free to move between the world of the living and the dead.

Funerals were solemn affairs that lasted about five days for the common man, involving the entire community to which the deceased belonged. Despite their solemnity, however, they were far from stoic; performances, speeches, song, and interactions with the dead were all integral to the Inca mourning process. Singers and dancers performed hymns that extolled the virtues of the individual throughout his or her lifetime. Processions occurred throughout the town in the person’s honor. The widow and other relatives wore all-black mourning clothes for weeks, and sometimes months, after the person’s death. Animal sacrifices were made a few days after the initial mourning period.<sup>160</sup>

The tomb contained many grave goods intended to provide materially for the person in the afterlife. Sacrificed animals, food, coca leaves, pottery, and objects related to the profession and social position of the deceased were deposited into the tomb. Some of the individual’s possessions were burned upon death, including a small tract of farmland that had been cultivated by the deceased during his lifetime.<sup>161</sup>

Royal funerals were even more elaborate. The funeral plans were kept secret until a successor was named. Along with the customary animals, children were ritually sacrificed in male–female pairs at mountain shrines located throughout the empire. Many of the king’s secondary wives were served large quantities of chicha until drunk and then strangled and deposited in his grave as sacrificial offerings to accompany him in the afterlife.<sup>162</sup>

The body was treated with great care; it was first sprinkled with cornmeal and the blood of the sacrificed llama, and on the fifth day it was ritually washed by the widow and other relatives at the meeting point of two rivers. Washing was seen as a spiritual purification and cut down on the toxins produced by the body. Mourners typically placed a lump of silver, gold, or precious stone in the mouth, hands, and chest of the deceased. The body was placed in a seated position with the head facing down and dressed with great

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<sup>159</sup> Ibid. p. 151

<sup>160</sup> Ibid. p. 151

<sup>161</sup> Ibid. p. 152

<sup>162</sup> Ibid. p. 152

finery, often wearing clothing and accessories that exaggerated the individual's social and economic position.<sup>163</sup>

Deceased Incas were worshipped by their direct descendants for two generations. This entailed periodically visiting the ancestral mummy; providing him or her with food, chicha, and other sacred offerings; and incorporating the mummy into public ceremonies that commemorated the dead. On the outskirts of most villages, where the pucullos were located, were also ceremonial platforms known as cayán, intended for the performances of such ceremonies.<sup>164</sup>

Families also consulted with ancestors to aid in decision making and to provide favors and predictions for the future. Prior to marriage the bride and groom were presented to the ancestors for approval.<sup>165</sup>

### Deities and Important Concepts

- **Inti**  
The principal god of the Incas. The rules of the Inca were said to descend from this sun god.
- **Virachocha**  
Neither male nor female, this god created the earth, sky, stars, and all living things.
- **Mama Quilla**  
Goddess of the moon. Silver was sacred to her as it was considered the tears of the moon.

### Modern Adaptations

- Include red cloth with the body and bury it. Given that textiles were a key part of Inca life this would be a way to incorporate the color red, found in so many burial sites, in the funeral.
- Speak of the deceased as a huacas, an honored one who will protect their loved ones.
- Talk about the fact that the loved one gains power in death to influence those of us who remain.
- Offer up food and a fermented drink to the deceased as a symbol that they are still an important part of our lives.
- Talk about the journey that the deceased will make from newly dead to finally accepting and moving past their physical body to finally merge with the source of life and nature. Compare this to the journey we all make when mourning one who has passed on.
- Bury a bit of hair given from family members to help the deceased cross over easily. To know that they have the families support to move on.
- Have singers and dancers perform hymns that extol the virtues of the individual throughout his or her lifetime.
- Include a procession to the funeral site to honor the deceased.
- Burn pictures of items that were near and dear to the departed. Be sure to use pictures printed on paper rather than true photos.
- Sprinkle the body of the deceased with corn and also wash it.
- Let it be known that the deceased shall reside in Pacarina where they will spend their days in the sun's warmth.

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<sup>163</sup> Ibid. p. 152

<sup>164</sup> Ibid. p. 156

<sup>165</sup> Ibid. p. 156

- Declare that the deceased shall be venerated for two generations. Be sure that arrangements are made so that the deceased shall be remembered by at least two generations of the family. This could include invoking the deceased for a blessing at a wedding, for example.

### Sample Readings

The Incas did not invent any sort of written language. However, some scholars believe they used a series of knots and colors known as khipu as a form of communication. The khipu was believed to work much like ASCII codes, where a specific set of knots represented a symbol. The current hypothesis is that this system was extended by adding color to the basic 7 knots symbols (plus no knot).

Thus, it might be fitting to either create a work of knots or have participants tie knots that are added to an overall work to be given to the family.

### Resources

- Handbook to Life in the Inca World. New York 2011 by Suarez, Ananda Cohen, and Jeremy James.

## Celtic

### Practices

Many scholars now believe that the ancient Celts did not live in Britain but were confined to the European continent, with settlements located as far east as Turkey.<sup>166</sup> For this website, I have ignored any association of the Celts with Britain.

The Celts were a diverse group of independent tribes and thus practiced a great variation in terms of regional differences and during separate periods. However, we can see trends in various periods of Celtic culture.

The Urnfield developed a culture of cremation of the dead, and then burial in urns. The Urnfield culture lasted until the start of the Hallstatt period, when the Celts began the practice of inhumation, or full-body burial, often including grave goods. Finally, we have the La Tene culture that further embellished the interred with more elaborate grave goods and items which would be needed for the individual's next life, or afterlife.<sup>167</sup>

While the Celts did not have a written language, we do know something of their views on death. We know that it was the custom to bury grave-goods with the dead, or to slay a wife or slaves on the tomb. We also know that they had a belief in the presence of ancestral ghosts remaining around the hearth and even buried their dead around the hearth.<sup>168</sup> Additionally, the Celts' belief in an afterlife was so strong that they would put off the payment of debts until they met on the other side. So, the idea of burying objects that would be of help on the other side was not unusual.<sup>169</sup>

We also know that in the Hallstatt period, it was the custom to bury the body. The wealthier were buried in four-wheeled wagons, the vehicles of farming-based communities. Later, in the La Tene period, we see a switch to cremation, followed by the burial of ashes. During the La Tene period, we find the ashes sometimes interred with two-wheeled chariots, indicating a switch to a more militaristic society.<sup>170</sup>

The La Tene burial rituals appeared to be highly festive and elaborate. Held under a mound, deceased people were placed within a wooden chamber that was fashioned from oak. Inside, an array of personal items is included. Personal ornamental items are also added to the deceased, which are thought to give the deceased power in the afterlife.<sup>171</sup>

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<sup>166</sup> Jarus, By Owen. "History of the Celts." LiveScience. TechMedia Network, 07 Apr. 2014. Web. 03 Oct. 2014. <http://www.livescience.com/44666-history-of-the-celts.html>

<sup>167</sup> Slipsager, April. "Iron Age Celtic Religion." AprilSlipsager – Iron Age Celtic Religion. N.p., n.d. Web. 16 Oct. 2014. <http://aprilslipsager.wikispaces.com/Iron+Age+Celtic+Religion>

<sup>168</sup> Macculloch, J.A. "The Religion of the Ancient Celts." Religion of the Ancient Celts. N.p., n.d. Web. 9 Oct. 2014. <http://www.gutenberg.org/files/14672/14672-h/14672-h.htm%23chap10#chap10>

<sup>169</sup> Slipsager, April. "Iron Age Celtic Religion." AprilSlipsager – Iron Age Celtic Religion. N.p., n.d. Web. 16 Oct. 2014. <http://aprilslipsager.wikispaces.com/Iron+Age+Celtic+Religion>

<sup>170</sup> Slipsager, April. "Iron Age Celtic Religion." AprilSlipsager – Iron Age Celtic Religion. N.p., n.d. Web. 16 Oct. 2014. <http://aprilslipsager.wikispaces.com/Iron+Age+Celtic+Religion>

<sup>171</sup> Ibid.

There is also an association of rams with the dead. Clay andirons have been found (horizontal bars upon which logs are laid for burning in an open fireplace) with ram's heads. Additionally, figurines of a ram have been found in Gaulish tombs, and it is associated with the god of the underworld.<sup>172</sup>

The dead were also fed at the grave or in the house. In Ireland, after a death, food is placed out for the spirits, or, at a burial, nuts are placed in the coffin. In some parts of France, milk is poured out on the grave.<sup>173</sup>

Archaeological evidence shows the importance of the feast for the dead. These include in almost all cases, a big feast in the area of the graveyard, of which sometimes diverse animal bones can be located, including pieces of meat and a container with drink (most often beer, but in some cases wine). Additionally, other grave goods were interred after being ritually destroyed or 'killed.'<sup>174</sup>

### Deities and Important Concepts

- Donn (the dark one)

The lord of the dead, whom the Celts believed they descended from.

Donn was the chief of the Sons of Mil, a mythological race who invaded Ireland, ousting the Tuatha Dé Danann. Donn slighted Ériu, one of the goddesses for whom Ireland was named. He was drowned off the south-west coast of the island. A place near this spot, on a small rocky island named 'Tech nDuinn' ('the House of Donn'), became Donn's dwelling place as god of the dead. This house was the assembly place for the dead before they began the journey to the otherworld.<sup>175</sup>

- The otherworld

"The Fortunate Isles" in the western sea, or at other times underground (such as in the Sídhe) or right alongside the world of the living, but invisible to most humans. The other world was seen as a place of light and joy, a type of paradise.

### Modern Adaptations

- Bury goods that meant something to the deceased with them.
- Speak about meeting them in the otherworld on the blessed Isle, where there exists nothing but joy.
- Burn or bury a picture of a vehicle. This should be a picture of a vehicle that meant something to the deceased. The vehicle could be taken as a representative of a smooth transition.
- Call upon Donn to greet the newly dead and welcome them to the afterlife.
- Bury a figure of a ram's head to represent the god of the underworld.
- Place nuts and/or pour milk on the grave site. This can also be done in front of an altar with the cremated remains of the deceased.

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<sup>172</sup> Macculloch, J.A. "The Religion of the Ancient Celts." Religion of the Ancient Celts. N.p., n.d. Web. 9 Oct. 2014. <http://www.gutenberg.org/files/14672/14672-h/14672-h.htm%23chap10#chap10>

<sup>173</sup> Ibid.

<sup>174</sup> Karl, Raimund. "Celtic Religion: What Information Do We Really Have?" N.p., n.d. Web. 9 Oct. 2014. [http://draeconin.com/database/celtreli.htm#DEATH\\_RITUALS](http://draeconin.com/database/celtreli.htm#DEATH_RITUALS)

<sup>175</sup> "Donn." Wikipedia. Wikimedia Foundation, 24 Aug. 2014. Web. 03 Oct. 2014.

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Donn>

- Have a feast to honor the dead. It is especially appropriate to share some food at the gravesite, so one can pass around some bread or cakes at the funeral.

### Sample Readings

As stated, the Celts did not have any written language. The following is offered as a reading that reflects the spirit of the beliefs of the Celts and would be appropriate to use.

Excerpt from *The Isles of The Happy* (an ancient Irish Poem)<sup>176</sup>

There is a distant isle,  
Around which sea-horses glisten:  
A fair course against the white–swelling  
surge– Four pedestals uphold it.

A delight of the eyes, a glorious range  
Is the plain on which the hosts hold games:  
Coracle contends against chariot  
In Silver–white Plains to the south.

Pedestals of white bronze underneath Glittering through ages of beauty: Fairest land throughout the world, On which the many blossoms drop.

An ancient tree there is in bloom,  
On which birds call to the Hours:  
In harmony of song they all are  
wont To chant together every  
Hour.

Colours of every shade glisten  
Throughout the gentle–voiced  
plains:  
Joy is known, ranked around  
music, In Silver–cloud Plain to the  
south.

Unknown is wailing or treachery  
In the homely cultivated land:  
There is nothing rough or harsh,  
But sweet music striking on the ear.

Without grief, without gloom, without death,  
Without any sickness or debility–  
That is the sign of Evin:  
Uncommon is the like of such a marvel.

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<sup>176</sup> Meyer, Kuno. “Selections from Ancient Irish Poetry.”, by Kuno Meyer. N.p., 17 Apr. 2010. Web. 16 Oct. 2014 [http://www.gutenberg.org/files/32030/32030-h/32030-h.htm#MYTH\\_AND\\_SAG](http://www.gutenberg.org/files/32030/32030-h/32030-h.htm#MYTH_AND_SAG)

A beauty of a wondrous land,  
Whose aspects are lovely,  
Whose view is wondrous fair,  
Incomparable is its haze.

Then if Silverland is seen,  
On which dragon–stones and crystals  
drop– The sea washes the wave against  
the land, A crystal spray drops from its  
mane.

Wealth, treasures of every hue  
Are in the Land of Peace–  
a beauty of freshness:  
There is listening to sweet  
music, Drinking of the choicest  
wine.

Golden chariots on the plain of the sea  
Heaving with the tide to the sun:  
Chariots of silver on the Plain of  
Sports, And of bronze that has no  
blemish.

Steeds of yellow gold are on the sward there,  
Other steeds with crimson colour,  
Others again with a coat upon their  
backs Of the hue of all–blue heaven.

At sunrise there comes  
A fair man illumining level lands:  
He rides upon the white sea–washed  
plain, He stirs the ocean till it is blood.

A host comes across the clear sea,  
They exhibit their rowing to the land:  
Then they row to the shining stone  
From which arises music a  
hundredfold.

It sings a strain unto the host  
Through ages long, it is never  
weary:  
Its music swells with choruses of hundreds–  
They expect neither decay nor death.  
Many–shaped Evna by the sea, Whether it be  
near, whether it be far–

In which are thousands of many–hued  
women, Which the clear sea encircles.

If one has heard the voice of the music,  
The chorus of little birds from the Land of  
Peace, A band of women comes from a height  
To the plain of sport in which he is.

There comes happiness with health  
To the land against which laughter peals:  
Into the Land of Peace at every season  
Comes everlasting joy.

### Resources

- The Religion of the Ancient Celts  
<http://www.gutenberg.org/files/14672/14672-h/14672-h.htm#chap10>
- World History Encyclopedia – Ancient Celtic Religion  
[https://www.worldhistory.org/Ancient\\_Celtic\\_Religion/](https://www.worldhistory.org/Ancient_Celtic_Religion/)

## Norse

### Practices

It was Odin himself who was said to specify the preferred method of internment. Odin insisted men should be burned on a pyre and then have their ashes buried or set out to sea. In addition, if a man buried treasure or other valuable possessions, he would be able to access those objects after his death.<sup>177</sup>

Archaeological evidence shows that the majority of Viking burials were indeed cremations. The bodies were burned, and then the grave, stone cairn, or mound was raised over them.

In pre-Viking times, the dead were cremated in their everyday clothes with a few grave goods. The remains would then be gathered and placed in a pottery urn, and then either buried or scattered on the ground. The grave of the deceased would usually be marked by a pile of stones, sometimes in the shape of a ship.

Grave goods indicate that people believed the afterlife would resemble their current life, and therefore, objects useful in life were most often given, including some instances of food and drink.

During the Viking Age, burials became a little more elaborate and grew to include mound and ship burials. Burials also occurred as found in “chamber graves”. In the case of an elite person being buried, this meant that the body was laid fully clothed in a timber-lined pit surrounded by grave goods, sometimes with horses or even human sacrifices. A non-elite was more likely buried in a simple wooden coffin or birch-bark shroud.

Mound burials were also seen, and the most elaborate burial was to place the deceased in their ship, which was buried, and then the site was outlined by stones. Another practice was to bury someone in a wagon or with horses, perhaps indicating that some form of transport was required.<sup>178</sup>

Along with useful items found in graves, sometimes Stone Age axes or flint celts have been found. These “thunderstones” were associated with Thor and represented Thor’s protection of the soul.<sup>179</sup>

Existing texts show that the afterlife you reach would depend on how you lived your life. The Vikings believed that the brave warriors who fell in battle would reap the most reward in the afterlife.

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<sup>177</sup> Clark, Darci. “Viking Religion and Burial Rituals.” N.p., 15 July 2014. Web. 06 Jan. 2015.  
<http://semiramis-speaks.com/viking-religion-and-burial-rituals/>

<sup>178</sup> “Death and Funeral Rites.” Vikingsociety – Death and Funeral Rites. N.p., n.d. Web. 07 Jan. 2015.  
<https://vikingsociety.wikispaces.com/Death+and+Funeral+Rites>

<sup>179</sup> “Archaeology of Ritual & Viking Religion.” Genealogy of Religion. N.p., 13 Aug. 2010. Web. 07 Jan. 2015. <http://genealogyreligion.net/the-archaeology-of-ritual-objects-and-normative-judgments>

The realms of the dead included:

- Valhalla (hall of the slain)

The hall situated in Asgard the realm of the gods, and Odin's home. Brave warriors and chieftains who would be useful in the final fight of Ragnarök were selected to reside here. It was considered the greatest honor to be among those in Valhalla.

Freya and Odin would divide the slain evenly. Those selected by Odin were then gathered up by the Valkyries and taken to Valhalla. Thus, half of the warriors that fell in battle would be selected for Valhalla, with the other half selected to reside in Freyja's afterlife field, Fólkvangr

Valhalla is a great hall with spear-shafts for rafters, a roof thatched with shields, coats of mail strewn over its benches, a wolf hangs in front of its west doors, and an eagle hovers above it. There, the chosen slain feast and drink mead while preparing for Ragnarök.

- Fólkvangr ("field of the host" or "people-field" or "army-field")

Another place where brave warriors could live in the afterlife. It was ruled over by the Goddess Freya, who selected half the fallen warriors to reside there. There are also passages speaking of women who died honorable deaths, residing in Fólkvangr.

- Helgafjell (holy mountain)

Helgafjell was somewhere you could go if you did not die in battle, but you would have had to have lived what is considered a good life. It was a pleasant realm, not all that different than the land of the living.

It was described as a warm place where the dead would talk, eat, and drink. It was considered so sacred that people could not look in its direction without washing their faces first.

- Hel / Helheim (From the Norse word *haljō*, which means "one who covers up or hides something".)

In some accounts this was dark realm ruled over by the Goddess Hel, a half-black half flesh-colored giant. It was reserved for those who had died in dishonorable ways. It was described as a cold, dark, and dreary subterranean abode separated from the living world by a rapid river. The dead, after crossing the river, walk through heavy gates that close behind them and never return again.

However, this realm might have been seen more as a death realm with no sense of community. More of a purgatory than the dark descriptions often attributed to it. A place where those who died in sickness or of old age resided.<sup>180</sup>

- Niflhel (Mist-hell)

The place of 'final death' where the souls that are no longer remembered by their kin reside.

- Nástrndo (Corpse-strand)

This is a realm which houses those people who swore false oaths and murderers, as well as those who seduced the close confidants of other men.

Drops of poison fall in through the roof vents and the hall is woven of serpents' spines.

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<sup>180</sup> Spatacean, Cristina. "Women in the Viking Age. Death, Life after Death and Burial Customs." N.p., May 2006. Web. 7 Jan. 2015.

[https://www.duo.uio.no/bitstream/handle/10852/26661/Master\\_Thesf%5B1%5D..pdf?sequence=1](https://www.duo.uio.no/bitstream/handle/10852/26661/Master_Thesf%5B1%5D..pdf?sequence=1)

Another interesting concept seen in the Norse beliefs in death was the depiction of an erotic meeting between the dead and a figure from the death realm (examples being with Hel or Rán for those who died at sea).

Once the funeral was completed, the deceased were considered to continue an existence in close connection with the living. In fact, there existed a strong communion between the living and the dead, who were generally trusted and venerated, but also feared. The dead were considered to perform functions that were important for the existence and continuity of the family as part of society.

They could give advice and help their living relatives, but at the same time, the dead could injure the living in some sort of revenge.

The continued relationship with the family or kindred was, in fact, what really mattered. As a consequence, life could gain meaning for the individual only when seen as part of the kinship group. Upon the physical death, one member of the kinship group was believed to go over from one sphere of the family group to another. Death was not regarded as a barrier separating the kinship group from one of its members and vice versa, but rather as a transition from one stage to another.<sup>181</sup>

### Deities and Important Concepts

- **Odin / Wotan (“The Furious One”)**  
The chief divinity of the Norse pantheon, the foremost of the Aesir. He is called Alfadir, Allfather, for he is indeed the father of the gods. While associated with war and death, he is also a god of poetry and wisdom. He also rules over Valhalla.
- **Freya**  
One of the foremost goddesses of the Vanir, she was associated with sex, battle, pleasure, love, and fertility. She rules over the heavenly field of Fólkvangr.
- **Rán**  
A sea goddess, depicted with a net, she was also the mistress of the maritime death realm. She both tries to capture those who go out to sea and also takes those who die there.  
  
She might be an appropriate goddess for a funeral for someone who had a profession dealing with the sea.
- **Hel**  
The daughter of Loki, and thus part giant. She was given “authority over nine worlds, such that she has to administer board and lodging to those sent to her, and that is those who die of sickness or old age”.  
  
Her realm could be pleasant, as shown when she prepared it for the coming of Baldr, Odin’s son: the benches were decked with arm-rings, the dais was fairly strewn with gold, and the mead was brewed.
- **Valkyries (“chooser of the slain”)**  
Often depicted as women warriors, they bring their chosen to the afterlife hall of the slain, Valhalla.
- **Ragnarök**  
The final battle of the current cycle, where balance is restored and a new creation begins.
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<sup>181</sup> Ibid.

## Modern Adaptations

- Use materials from modern Heathenry or Norse funerals

The worship of the Norse pantheon has had a revival with the rise of the modern Neo Pagan movement. Referred to as Heathenry or Asatru, there are a lot of resources available for those who follow this path.

- Speak of cremation as quickly releasing the soul of the deceased. You may want to reference Rus's quote in Ibn Fadlan's 10th-century account of a Norse funeral.

“We burn him in a moment, so that he enters Paradise at once.”

This might be paraphrased as “Our loved one has been consumed by the flames so that they might be released in a moment from this life and enter Paradise at once.”

- Have people wash their faces prior to viewing the grave or urn. Speak of how they are purifying themselves for the sacred act of honoring the deceased.
- Get a stone that looks like a Stone Age axe and dedicate it to Thor. Bury this stone to watch over the dead.
- Offer food and drink to the deceased, letting them know that they are still a part of the family.
- Have attendees put stones on the grave, sharing a memory of something worthy that the deceased did.
- Bury a picture or model of a wagon or ship with the deceased, wishing them a smooth journey.
- Have someone represent a goddess or god associated with the other world (Examples: Odin, Freya, Hel, Rán). Have them say something like the following.

“Welcome \_\_\_ to my realm, and fear not,  
for I greet thee like a lover, embracing thee  
and marking thee as my own.

Take thy rightful place now in  
my realm to eat, drink, and  
remember. ”

## Sample Readings

### Poetic Edda: Hávamál 76

Cattle die,  
kinsmen die  
the self must also die;  
I know one thing which never dies:  
the reputation of each dead man.

## Modern Prayer

(This is similar to translations of the text of Ibn Fadlan, an Arab who witnessed a Viking funeral)

Lo, There do I see my Father

Lo, There do I see my Mother and

My Brothers and my Sisters

Lo, There do I see the line of my people back to the

beginning Lo, They do call to me

They bid me take my place among them in the halls of

Valhalla Where thine enemies have been vanquished

Where the brave shall live Forever

Nor shall we mourn but rejoice for those that have died the glorious death.

## NB380 inscription from Norway

Hail to you and good thoughts. May Thórr receive you, may Óðinn own you.

## Resources

- Viking Funeral Poems  
<https://www.norsevk.com/2024/09/viking-funeral-poems.html>
- A collection of modern Norse funerary poems  
<http://www.odins-gift.com/wichtig/1theme/musings.htm>

## Some Useful Resources

The following resources provide useful information for a variety of cultures.

- World History Encyclopedia  
<http://www.ancient.eu.com>
- God checker  
<http://www.godchecker.com/>
- Encyclopedia Mythica  
<http://www.pantheon.org>
- List of death deities  
[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List\\_of\\_death\\_deities](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_death_deities)

## Inspiration (Poems, Quotes, Readings, and Songs)

I have updated this to remove any gender specifications. You can do this solo, have one person act as the main officiant (HP/HPS/HPx [binary]), and have other people call a specific quarter depending on the number of people who are willing to participate.

### Wiccan-Inspired Circle Casting

#### *Circle Casting 1*

*Based on a ceremony by Maphis (Samuel Wagar)*

##### West:

As the sun sets  
So, our friend has left us  
The water of our tears, like the salt water of the sea, and  
the water of our mothers' womb, blesses this Circle.

##### South:

As life is a day  
So, our friend has passed into the night  
The fire of our life, the passion and courage, the  
strength given to us by our friend, blesses this Circle.

##### East:

As the wind blows  
So, our friend has gone.  
The breath in our lungs like a gentle breeze, and  
like the memories of our dead, blesses this  
Circle.

##### North:

As the Earth forms us  
So, our friend shall return to the earth  
Our Mother feeds us and clothes us. She gives us everything, and in the end, she takes our bodies back.  
And thus, Earth blesses this Circle



## Circle Casting 2

*From Transitions creating Pagan funerals*

### West:

Spirits of the West, Powers of Water, we call you. Open our hearts, let our tears and love flow. Bring us healing and renewal. Remember *Name*, who loved life, loved his/her friends, and his/her magical family. Blessed be!

### South:

Spirits of the South, Powers of Fire, we call you. Keep the fire of our love for *Name* alive – in the memory of this lover of the sun and of Helios. Blessed be!

### East:

Spirits of the East, Powers of Air, we call you. Bring us bright memories of our beloved *Name* and of the *Music or similar as appropriate* that surrounded him/her. Blessed Be!

### North:

Spirits of the North, Powers of the Earth, we call you. From you we come; to you we return. Bring us Strength. Remember *Name* to whom you gave strength and wisdom and embraced in his/her passing. Blessed be!



## Circle Casting 3

*A Pagan Blessing for the Dead on About Religion*

### Center:

Take me now, take me now  
for to face the Summerlands.  
By the earth and wind and the fire and rain,  
I'm on my way, remember me.

### West

Take me now back to the water  
from which we spring and then return.  
I shall cross over; now it is my turn.  
I am not afraid. Remember me.

**South:**

Take me now back to the fire  
from which we spring and then return.

I shall cross over, now it is my turn.

I am not afraid. Remember me.

**East:**

Take me now back to the air  
from which we spring and then return.

I shall cross over, now it is my turn.

I am not afraid. Remember me.

**North:**

Take me now back to the earth  
from which we spring and then return.

I shall cross over; now it is my turn.

I am not afraid. Remember me.

**Family blessing:**

(Touch each family member with your athamé as you say the following)

Blood of my blood

Bone of my bone,

Flesh of my flesh,

Keep my soul alive,

I will live on.



## *Circle Casting 4*

Circle Casting and closing for the Funeral rite

**Note:** I have placed the quarters according to my tradition (1734). Feel free to move them to reflect your traditional placement.

### *Casting the circle*

Most likely, you will have everyone remain seated, and the participants in the casting will stay up front and simply turn to each quarter. If you are doing this for a small group, you can do a more traditional casting with everyone gathered in a circle and the quarters being called around them.

Make sure everyone is settled before you begin.

### *Intro*

Hold hands with your neighbor to remind you that we do not mourn alone. Also, if you wish, you may participate in this rite by repeating “help us to heal.”

In a moment, we will cast a sacred circle. Let us gather together therein so each of us can feel what we need. To rejoice that we knew \_\_\_\_\_ and to grieve our separation.

### *West / Water / Blue*

To the West I call.

Let tears like rain fall

to heal our hearts.

Water, reflect our emotions

help us to heal.

### *North / Air / Yellow*

To the North I call.

Let eulogies like wind stir

to heal our minds.

Air, inspire memories

help us to heal.

### *East / Fire / Red*

To the East I call.

Let determination like a flame grow

to heal our lives.

Fire, inspire action

help us to heal.

*South / Earth / Green*

To the South I call.

Let community, like flowers, bloom.

Earth, that grounds us,

we thank you for your healing.

*All*

To Spirit I call.

\_\_\_\_\_ will continue to inspire us.

Spirit, that uplifts us,

we thank you for your healing.

SO MOTE IT BE.

Merry Meet and Merry Part and Merry Meet again.

## Readings

### *Modern Readings*

*Note: In the cases where a piece does not have a title, I have identified how it can be used. Such entries are preceded with "Usage:"*

#### Funeral – Usage: perfect for a Neo-Pagan

That which came from the earth  
Has returned to the earth.

That which belonged to the spirit  
Has returned to the Ancient Ones.

The wheel turns.

That which belongs to fellowship and love —  
That which belongs to the circle —  
Remains with us.

*Nothing is final.*

No farewell is the last farewell.  
The wheel turns  
And we who remain behind  
Know that one day we will once again  
Share the bread and wine with our kin.

#### A Meditation on Death by Sabina C. Becker

Death is a piece of Life, not its opposite, not even its end, but merely one station of a larger cycle. We are born, we die, we are reborn in a different shape. Our bodies decompose and feed the flowers that feed the soil that feeds the crops that feed the livestock that feeds us. These are the facts of Life and Death: when something dies, it becomes a part of something else that lives.

#### Usage: Need to go within and give time to grieve by Molly Fumia

The season of grief is our shutting-down time. We prepare the cottage of our hearts for the winter, securing our windows to the world, stocking the cupboards with what will sustain us during the cold and the dark. Carefully, we rebuild our inner fire, and huddle in its warmth while the storms of winter pass, awaiting a spring that will come as surely as the steady passage of the days.

## Music When Soft Voices Die (To –) by Percy Bysshe Shelley

Music, when soft voices die,  
Vibrates in the memory—  
Odours, when sweet violets sicken,  
Live within the sense they quicken.

Rose leaves, when the rose is dead,  
Are heaped for the beloved's bed;  
And so thy thoughts, when thou art gone,  
Love itself shall slumber on.

## Bread and Music by Conrad Aiken

Music I heard with you was more than music,  
And bread I broke with you was more than bread;

Now that I am without you, all is desolate;  
All that was once so beautiful is dead.

Your hands once touched this table and this silver,  
And I have seen your fingers hold this glass.  
These things do not remember you, beloved,  
And yet your touch upon them will not pass.

For it was in my heart you moved among them,  
And blessed them with your hands and with your  
eyes; And in my heart they will remember always,—  
They knew you once, O beautiful and wise.

Usage: Acknowledges grief and acceptance

Gentle clouds trace the sweep of your angel wing.  
Your smile set the Heavens aglow.  
Without you, my world is dark and cold.  
Shining Star,  
I wrap your memory around me  
and continue on this path  
to find you again.

### Inspired by an Eskimo legend

Perhaps they are not the stars,  
but rather openings in Heaven  
where the love of our lost ones  
pours through and  
shines down upon us  
to let us know  
they are happy.

### Eulogy by Mark Twain

Warm summer sun, shine kindly here;  
Warm southern wind, blow softly here;  
Green sod above, lie light, lie light —  
Good night, dear heart, good night, good night.

### For Lovers By Yakmochi – translated by Kenneht Rexroth

We were together  
Only a little while,  
And we believed our love  
Would last a thousand years.

### Funeral Bliss by W.H Auden

Stop all the clocks, cut off the telephone,  
Prevent the dog from barking with a juicy bone,  
Silence the pianos and with muffled drum  
Bring out the coffin, let the mourners come.

Let aeroplanes circle moaning overhead  
Scribbling on the sky the message He Is Dead,  
Put crepe bows round the white necks of the public doves,  
Let the traffic policeman wear black cotton gloves.

He was my North, my South, my East and West,  
My working week and my Sunday rest,  
My noon, my midnight, my talk, my song;  
I thought that love would last forever: I was wrong

The stars are not wanted now: put out everyone;  
Pick up the moon and dismantle the sun;

Pour away the ocean and sweep up the wood;  
For nothing now can ever come to any good.

### Healing will come by Molly Fumia

The season of grief is our shutting-down time. We prepare the cottage of our hearts for the winter, securing our windows to the world, stocking the cupboards with what will sustain us during the cold and dark. Carefully, we rebuild our inner fire, and huddle in its warmth while the storms of winter pass, awaiting a spring that will come as surely as the steady passage of the days.

### Usage: Possibly good for near the end of the ceremony by Molly Fumia

Go where you will be healed, but take someone along who loves you, who will listen along the way, and with whom you can share a quiet toast when you reach your destination.

### Losing someone should change us by Molly Fumia

Life will not go on the same way without her. If it were the same, we could only conclude her life meant nothing, made no contribution. The fact that she left behind a place that cannot be filled is a high tribute to the uniqueness of her soul.

### Remembering those who are gone is a gift by Molly Fumia

Now that he is gone, never hesitate to tell his story. He has left you behind with treasures to be shared. When you remember, your memories are sent far into the future, a sweet heritage for all those who will come after.

### Everything passes away by Molly Fumia

The moon and the year  
Travel and pass away:  
Also the day, also the wind.  
Also the flesh passes away  
To the place of its quietness.

### Death cannot part friends by William Penn, from "Union of Friends"

They that love beyond the World, cannot be separated by it.  
Death cannot kill, what never dies.  
Nor can Spirits ever be divided that love and live in the same  
Divine Principle; the Root and Record of their Friendship.  
If Absence be not death, neither is theirs.

Death is but Crossing the World, as Friends do  
the Seas; they live in one another still.

### To have loved is enough by James Joyce

Gentle lady, do not sing  
Sad songs about the end of love;  
Lay aside sadness and sing  
How love that passes is enough.

### Healing will come by Abraham Lincoln

In this sad world of ours, sorrow comes to all.

Perfect relief is not possible, except with time.

You cannot now realize that you will ever feel better.

And yet this is a mistake.

You are sure to be happy again.

To know this, which is certainly  
true, will make you less miserable  
now.

I have experienced this enough to know what I say.

### Kaddish; Usage: For your mother by David Ignatow

...

Earth is your mother as you were mine,  
my earth, my sustenance, my comfort, and my strength, and now,  
without you turn to your mother  
and seek from her that I may meet you again  
in rock and stone: whisper to the stone,  
I love you; whisper to the rock, I found you;  
whisper to the earth, Mother, I have found my  
mother and I am safe and always have been.

### Usage: Have no more fear by Shakespeare (with one rewritten verse)

Fear No More the Heat of the Sun, nor the Furious Winter's Rages. Thou thy Worldly Task has done;  
Home art gone, and ta'en thy Wages. Golden Lads and Girls all must, as Chimney-Sweepers, come to  
dust.

Fear No More the Frown of the Great; thou art past the Tyrant's Stroke. Care No More to Clothe or Eat: to  
thee, the Reed is as the Oak. The Scepter, Learning, Physic, must all follow. This and come to Dust.

*(Rewritten Verse)*

Hear, Nature, hear! Great Goddess, Hear! Crown them with Flowers, and make them Your Joy— Who  
taught us to love Thee.

Quiet Consummation have— and Renowned be thy Grave

## *Death makes an impression by Hermann Broch*

Our dead brothers still live for us and bid us think of life, not death — of life to which in their youth they lent the passion and glory of Spring. As I listen, the great chorus of life and joy begins again, and amid the awful orchestra of seen and unseen powers and destinies of good and evil, our trumpets, sound once more a note of daring, hope, and will.

## *There is no such thing as death by Charles Mackay*

There is no such thing as death. In nature nothing dies. From each sad remnant of decay, some forms of life arise so shall his life be taken away before he knoweth that he hath it.

## *I Only Wanted You Vicky Holder*

*(Suggestion: Change God to the Gods)*

They say memories are golden,  
well maybe that is true.

I never wanted  
memories, I only wanted  
you.

A million times I needed  
you, a million times I cried.

If love alone could have saved  
you, you never would have died.

In life, I loved you  
dearly, in death I love  
you still.

In my heart, you hold a  
place no one could ever fill.

If tears could build a  
stairway and heartache  
make a lane, I'd walk the  
path to heaven and bring  
you back again.

Our family chain is broken,  
and nothing seems the  
same.

But as God calls us one by one,  
the chain will link again.

## *Ancient Readings*

*Note: In the cases where a piece does not have a title I have identified how it can be used. Such entries are prepeneded with "Usage:"*

### *A Funeral Service*

That which came from the earth  
Has returned to the earth.

That which belonged to the spirit  
Has returned to the Ancient  
Ones.

The wheel turns.

That which belongs to fellowship and love  
— That which belongs to the circle —  
Remains with us.

Nothing is final.  
No farewell is the last farewell.  
The wheel turns  
And we who remain behind  
Know that one day we will once again  
Share the bread and wine with our  
brother.

### *Isha Upanishad 17 Hinduism*

Now my breath, and spirit goes to the Immortal,  
and this body ends in ashes;  
OM. O Mind! remember. Remember the  
deeds. Remember the actions.

## Seicho-no-le

### Nectarean Shower of Holy Doctrines

Man's real nature is primarily spiritual life,  
which weaves its threads of mind to build a cocoon of flesh, encloses its own soul in the cocoon,

And for the first time, the spirit becomes the  
flesh. Understand this clearly: The cocoon is not  
the silkworm;

In the same way, the physical body is not  
man but merely man's cocoon.

Just as the silkworm will break out of its  
cocoon and fly free,

So, too, will man break out of his body—  
cocoon and ascend to the spiritual world  
when his time is come.

Never think that the death of the physical  
body is the death of man.

Since man is life, he will never know death.

## Birago Diop, Mali Poem African Traditional Religions

Those who are dead are never gone:  
they are there in the thickening shadow.  
The dead are not under the earth;  
they are there in the tree that rustles,  
they are in the wood that groans,  
they are in the water that runs,  
they are in the water that sleeps,  
they are in the hut, they are in the crowd,  
the dead are not dead.

Those who are dead are never gone:  
they are in the breast of the woman,  
they are in the child who is wailing,  
and in the firebrand that flames.  
The dead are not under the earth:  
they are in the fire that is dying,  
they are in the grasses that weep,  
they are in the whimpering rocks,  
they are in the forest, they are in the house,  
the dead are not dead.

### Bhagavad Gita 2.19-25 Hinduism

One man believes he is the slayer, another believes he is the slain. Both are ignorant; there is neither slayer nor slain. You were never born; you will never die. You have never changed; you can never change. Unborn, eternal, immutable, immemorial, you do not die when the body dies. Realizing that which is indestructible, eternal, unborn, and unchanging, how can you slay or cause another to be slain?

As a man abandons his worn-out clothes and acquires new ones, so when the body is worn out a new one is acquired by the Self, who lives within.

The Self cannot be pierced with weapons or burned with fire, water cannot wet it, nor can the wind dry it. The Self cannot be pierced or burned, made wet or dry. It is everlasting and infinite, standing on the motionless foundation of eternity. The Self is unmanifested, beyond all thought, beyond all change. Knowing this, you should not grieve.

### Chunag Tzu 23 Taoism

Birth is not a beginning; death is not an end. There is existence without limitation; there is continuity without a starting point. Existence without limitation is space. Continuity without a starting point is time. There is birth, there is death, there is issuing forth, there is entering in. That through which one passes in and out without seeing its form, that is the Portal of God.

### Chuang Tzu 2 Taoism

How do I know that the love of life is not a delusion? How do I know that he who is afraid of death is not like a man who left his home as a youth and forgot to return? Lady Li, was the daughter of the border warden of Ai. When she was first taken captive and brought to the state of Chin, she wept until the bosom of her robe was drenched with tears. But later, when she went to live in the royal palace, shared with the king his luxurious couch and sumptuous food, she regretted that she had wept. How do I know that the dead do not repent of their former craving for life? Those who dream of a merry drinking party may the next morning wail and weep. Those who dream of wailing and weeping may, in the morning, go off gaily to hunt. While they dream, they do not know that they are dreaming. In their dream, they may even try to interpret their dream. Only when they have awakened do they begin to know that they have dreamed. By and by comes the great awakening, and then we shall know that it has all been a great dream.

Once upon a time, Chuang Tzu dreamed that he was a butterfly, a butterfly fluttering about, enjoying itself. It did not know that it was Chuang Tzu. Suddenly he awoke with a start, and he was Chuang Tzu again. But he did not know whether he was Chuang Tzu who had dreamed that he was a butterfly, or whether he was butterfly dreaming that he was Chuang Tzu. Between Chuang Tzu and the butterfly, there must be some distinction. This is what is called the transformation of things.

### Igbo Song (Nigeria) African Traditional Religions

We are on a market trip on earth:  
Whether we fill our baskets or not,  
Once the time is up, we go home.

Usage: Especially appropriate for a Neo-Pagan by Praxilla of Sicyon (Ancient Greece)

Loveliest of what I leave behind is the sunlight,  
and loveliest after that, the shining stars and the moon's  
face, but also cucumbers that are ripe, and pears, and  
apples.

Lament the Flutes for Tammuz

*from The Golden Bough (Babylonian)*

At his vanishing away, she lifts up a lament,  
'Oh, my child!' at his vanishing away, she lifts up a lament;  
'My Damu!' at his vanishing away, she lifts up a lament.  
At the shining red cedar, rooted in a spacious place,  
'My enchanter and priest!' at his vanishing away, she lifts up a lament,  
At the shining red cedar, rooted in a spacious place,  
In Eanna, above and below, she lifts up a lament.

Like the lament that a house lifts up for its master, lifts she up a lament,  
Like the lament that a city lifts up for its lord, lifts she up a lament.  
Her lament is the lament for a herb that grows not in the bed,  
Her lament is the lament for the corn that grows not in the ear.  
Her chamber is a possession that brings forth not a possession,  
a weary woman, a weary child, far spent.  
Her lament is for a great river where no willows grow,  
Her lament is for a field, where corn and herbs grow not.  
Her lament is for a pool, where fishes grow not.  
Her lament is for a thicket of reeds, where no reeds grow.  
Her lament is for woods, where tamarisks grow not.  
Her lament is for a wilderness, where no cypresses grow.  
Her lament is for the depth of a garden of trees, where honey and wine grow not.  
Her lament is for meadows, where no plants grow.  
Her lament is for a palace, where length of life grows not.

## Songs

It is often the case that those asking for a ceremony will have music selected. These are a few examples of songs that may be appropriate to play.

### *Secular*

- *Autumn Time* by Libana
- *Lament* by FAUN
- *The Earth, The Air, The Fire, The Water*
- *The River is Flowing* by Lindie Lila
- *We All Come From the Goddess*
- *When We Are Gone* from *Second Chants* by Reclaiming

### *Non-Secular*

- *Angel* by Sarah McLachlan
- *Angel Standing By* by Jewel
- *Bridge Over Troubled Water* by Simon and Garfunkel
- *Dante's Prayer* by Loreena McKennit
- *Forever Autumn* by Jeff Wayne
- *Harvest Moon* by Neil Young or Cassandra Wilson cover
- *Hey Jude* by The Beatles
- *Hold Me* sung by MotherTongue  
<https://youtu.be/-GdqynvoswY>
- *Hold on to Memories* by Disturbed
- *Let it Be* by The Beatles
- *Memories* from *Cats*
- *Not a Day Goes By* from *Merrily She Rolls Along*
- *Partings* by Ruth Barrett & Cynthia Smith
- *Stardust* by Hoagy Carmichael
- *The Last Time I Saw Her* by Gordon Lightfoot
- *The Song of India*
- *The Way We Were* by Barbara Streisand
- *Turn, Turn, Turn* by The Byrds
- *What I Did for Love* from *A Chorus Line*
- *Where You Are* by Josh Groban
- *Wishing You Were Here Again* from *Phantom of the Opera*

## Animals

### *General*

James Herriot, British veterinary surgeon and writer

If having a soul means being able to feel love and loyalty and gratitude, then animals are better off than a lot of humans.

### *A Bridge Called Love*

It takes us back to brighter years,  
to happier sunlit days  
and to precious moments  
that will be with us always.

And these fond recollections  
are treasured in the heart  
to bring us always close to those  
from whom we had to part.

There is a bridge of memories  
from Earth to Heaven above...  
It keeps our dear ones near us  
It's the bridge that we call love

### *Tribute to a Best Friend*

Sunlight streams through the windowpane onto a spot on the floor...  
then I remember,  
It's where you used to lie, but now you are no more.

A voice is heard along the road, and up beyond the hill,  
then I remember,  
it can't be yours... your golden voice is still.

But I'll take that vacant spot of floor and empty, muted hall,  
and lay them with the absent voice and unused dish along the wall.

I'll wrap these treasured memories in a blanket of my love,  
and keep them for my best friend until we meet above.

## Lost Pet

(Suggestion: *change God bless to the Gods bless you or Deities bless you*) |

I stood by your bed last night  
I came to have a peep.  
I could see that you were crying,  
You found it hard to sleep.

I whined to you softly  
as you brushed away a tear,  
“It's me, I haven't left you,  
I'm well, I'm fine, I'm here.”

I was close to you at breakfast,  
I watched you pour the tea,  
You were thinking of the man  
your hands reached down to me.

I was with you at the shops today  
Your arms were getting sore.  
I longed to take your parcels,  
I wish I could do more.

I was with you at my grave today,  
You tend it with such care.  
I want to reassure you,  
that I'm not lying there.

I walked with you towards the house,  
as you fumbled for your key.  
I gently put my paw on you,  
I smiled and said, “It's me.”

You looked so very tired,  
and sank into a chair.  
I tried so hard to let you know,  
that I was standing there.

It's possible for me,  
to be so near you every day.  
To say to you with certainty,  
“I never went away.”

You sat there very quietly,  
then smiled, I think you knew  
... in the stillness of that evening,  
I was very close to you.

The day is over...  
smile and watch you yawning  
and say "goodnight, God bless,  
I'll see you in the morning."

And when the time is right for you  
to cross the brief divide,  
I'll rush across to greet you  
and we'll stand, side by side.

I have so many things to show you,  
there is so much for you to see.  
Be patient, live your journey out  
...then come home to be with me.

## *Cats*

### *To Love Again|*

Oh what unhappy twist of fate  
Has brought you homeless to my gate,  
The gate where once another stood  
To beg for shelter, warmth and food?

For from that day I ceased to be  
The master of my destiny,  
While she, with purr and velvet paw  
Became within my house the law.

She scratched the furniture and shed  
And claimed the middle of my bed,  
She ruled in arrogance and pride  
And broke my heart the day she died.

So if you really think, oh cat I'd  
willingly relive all that,  
Because you come forlorn and thin  
Well don't just stand there – come on in!



Dearest Kit–Kat by Monte Farber and Amy Zerner

We loved to see you on your chair,  
But now we see you everywhere.

We'd look for you in all your places.  
Now you're in our sad embraces.

We loved to feel your soft, sweet hair,  
But now we feel you everywhere.

You slept warm on our garden's boulder,  
Now you sleep beneath its shoulder.

We loved to touch you here and there,  
But now you touch us everywhere.

You loved to get right in our way,  
But now we can't move, work, or play.

We used to love your Kit–Kat ways,  
But now we love you more each day.

Ode to Yoda by Jo Chase

Blessings on thee little boy,  
bright-eyed cat who gave us joy.  
Thou with mouth and pedigreed purr,  
wrapped in glorious dark brown fur.  
Of our lives, you been a part,  
leaving pawprints on our hearts.

## My Little Cat Ghost

The years I've worn you,  
warm upon my shoulder  
have led us here —  
surprised to find us older.

And there was nothing left  
to do today  
but hold you close  
and help you on your way.

Be still, my little cat,  
be well, be free.  
I know you're somewhere new  
and loving me.

## *Dogs*

This site has over 30 dog quotes about grieving and loss.

<http://www.dogquotations.com/grieving-and-loss.html>

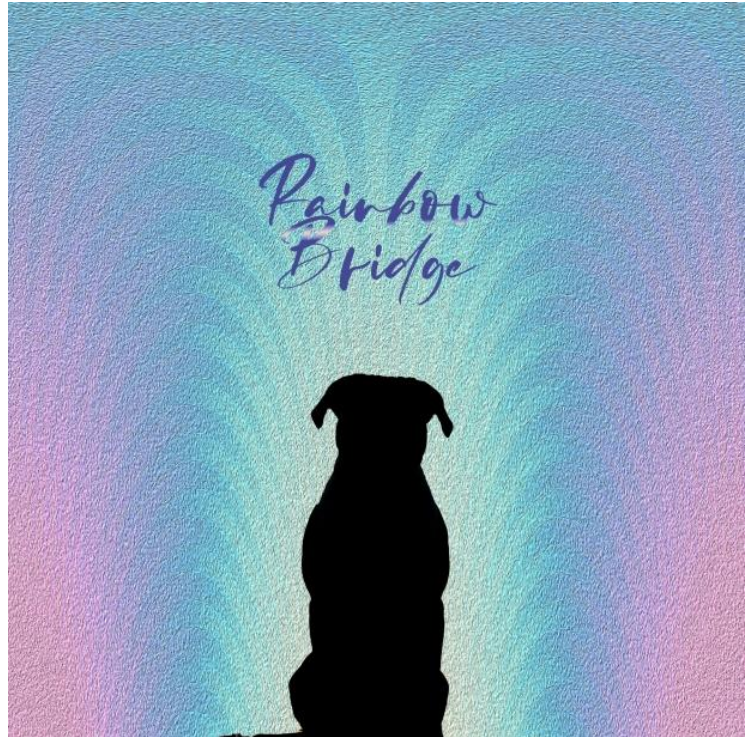
### *We Have a Secret*

We have a secret, you and I  
that no one else shall know,  
for who but I can see you lie  
each night in fire glow?

And who but I can reach my hand  
before we go to bed  
and feel the living warmth of you  
and touch your silken head?

And only I walk woodland paths  
and see ahead of me,  
your small form racing with the wind  
so young again, and free.

And only I can see you swim  
in every brook I pass  
and when I call, no one but I  
can see the bending grass.



### *Treasured Friends*

I lost a treasured friend today  
The little dog who used to lay  
Her gentle head upon my knee  
And shared her silent thoughts with me.

She'll come no longer to my call  
Retrieve no more her favourite ball  
A voice far greater than my own  
Has called her to his golden throne.

Although my eyes are filled with tears  
I thank him for the happy years  
He let her spend down here with me  
And for her love and loyalty.

When it is time for me to go  
And join her there, this much I know  
I shall not fear the transient dark  
For she will greet me with a bark.