Ancestor Worshiping or Ancestral Veneration has been a cultural practice that occurred all around the world. It is present in many cultures and practices, like Mozambican religions (having remained a central point of dispute during the civil wars of the 20th century), or in Chinese and Korean traditions (where during the attempt of institutionalization of the Christian, Jesuit and Protestant religions was a point of battle and martyrdom). It has been part of human understanding for a long time, for example, during the Roman Empire the genealogical line one was descendent from was crucial to the social standing - causing the remembrance and also veneration to be an essential part of the cultural and social organization and structure. Like there are infinite cultures so are the belief systems surrounding the practice and ways to venerate and honor the ancestors. Sometimes as a central part of a certain society or just as a general practice.

Ancestors are conceptualized as somewhat comparable to gods and other spirits, as such they are characterized as with similar powers and qualities, but with the same essence of a human. They are like deities and as such possess equivalent power influencing the living, but can also be perceived as similar to supernatural figures with anthropomorphic characteristics. They are able to execute the same moral judgments as their descendants but have the supernatural powers equal to their spirits or gods. Ancestors can influence the affairs of the living and their lives in general. So, the living worship and honor them in attempt to not irritate or offend their ancestors.

There are many types of ancestors and entities that one can worship: Related Spirits, Affinity Spirits, or Non-human Spirits.

**Types and distinctions**

Blood ancestors are part of the first group. They are considered to be the individuals that have preceded the you. Each of our genealogical lines leads us to one specific individual, the Mitochondrial Eve (believed to be the first human women who lived in Africa roughly 100,000 to 135,000 years ago – the concept has been debated amongst biologists and archeologists.). This line of people that have enjoyed lively lives and resulted in what each one of us is, can be part of our spiritual journeys; either through guidance, considering their proximity to an ascended realm, but also defending us from evil intent and bad energies acting similarly to a banishing spell.

Even in a closer temporal scale, our recently deceased relatives might have a big impact on the spiritual journey we go through, they might be little bit harder to work with if they have not yet accepted their own death, but one can also help them ascend.

Sometimes, when we delve into the higher realm, we might find that the spirits that we connect more personally might not even share DNA with us, that happens with Lineage Ancestors, in cases of Adoption, Partnership, Affinity (by identity, sexual orientation, talent or just profession) or even in case of Initiation to a spiritual group. Ancestor worship is truthfully as diverse and open as the many existent practices.

However, it is critical to remember that sometimes some of the spirits we might come across do not have good intentions and might try being deceitful or just not helpful. In such cases they are considered Ghosts. They can be related to you, just like blood related ancestors, but in this case, they did not have a timely death or left unfinished business on this realm. They can also just be attached to a place or person where they left unfinished business. One should try not empowering them, and maybe even, if possible, help them ascend or obtain peace.

Just as Ghosts can be attached to place, so can some Spirits. Connected to Land, Houses or Property, they can take any shape, animals, plants, even humans. These represent the living beings that were born, lived, or died area that area. They are usually old and have a strong relation with the terrain and ecosystem, in case of the Land Spirits or the resources that were used and the place they were built upon, in the case of the House Spirits. You can honor this kind of spirits in many ways: by keeping the property clean and the land well-taken care of, by giving offerings like planting the soil, or not let deteriorate.

There are also Non-human Spirits you might consider connecting with. As a species we evolved from other animals, as such if you possess the affinity you might even worship animals or plants. These might not be the main spiritual revered energies of worship, but it can be a central part in your practice and craft if you work with necromancy or herbalism.

**How to know which Entities are present and how to communicate**

There are many ways one can try to identify them. One of the most used modes is through divination, for example, tarot. Around the Internet and through different sources the spreads vary a lot, but a base number of questions that can guide you:

1. What spirit is present?

2. What the intentions/motivations of the spirit?

3. What is the nature of this connection?

4. What is the role of this connection currently in my life? What will it be for the future?

5. How can I maintain this connection?

6. How do I best honor you and this connection?

7. What are the main messages from my ancestors?

8. What are the traits I inherited from this blood line? (for blood related ancestors)

And so on. The spread can take any shape but usually triangles, ovals and lines are the ones used. The best questions one can make should be chosen based on your intuition and the type of presence you feel in your space. Many spirits and some deities may reach you, but in case of your ancestors it is mostly a personal affair. A well-maintained connection with those that preceded you can be central in understanding yourself and your own issues, especially considering how most blood lines carry generational trauma.

**Generational Trauma and How to break the chain**

Generational trauma is usually the emotional wound that our ancestors were never capable of healing, even if they tried. The origins are endless, but at the very epicenter of such occurrence is emotional turmoil and suffering. This could happen at an interpersonal as well as a generational level, like in cases of war, slavery, genocide, aggression, or cruel traditions.

Even though nowadays we tend to comprehend it as personal issue, we can carry it in our blood and at the very center of our cells. It has been proved that we can inherit the stress and trauma responses of the ones before us. Recognizing these patterns and identifying the why’s, what’s, and when’s with the help of the people who suffered them may be a central part in healing and breaking these cycles. Which can be one of the key reasons to dive into this branch of the spiritual craft.

The first and most import step to heal this type of wounds is to recognize them. Like in modern medicine. The first step to heal a disease is to diagnose it – to comprehend what can be done about it. However, a single pill will not solve this type of injury. There is the primary need to accept it, to put acknowledge it. Most of us will try fixing it right away, but this approach can be a form of denial, that can hurt us more in the long run. Sit with this pain, understand it (if possible) talk with your older family members and understand their experiences and what feelings you’ve shared up to this moment.

“The truth is, we can’t really hide trauma, and ignoring it doesn’t make it disappear.” (Vaudoise, 2019)

Once you’ve sat with these emotions, accept them, and forgive. This is not the equal to forgetting, but part of the process to heal yourself and your ancestors; as well as reducing the harm you inflict to others. In many cultures and practices forgiveness is at is very core. In yoga, for example, it is a central point, to forgive and to heal with it. The most important part of this process is to not fall for the idea that all these mechanisms you inherited are obstacles. They are essential part of your spiritual growth and your own path for inner peace. You are not just healing yourself, your blood line but also understanding history and the actions of those before you. It is instrumental to respect and comprehend the relativity of time and morals, while understanding the vices of such harmful actions – remembering our ancestors might be the victim as well as the aggressor.

To help your own progression and the healing of your bloodline, you might create art; any craft, communicate with those around you, but most importantly accept death and its inevitability. The Romans had an entire philosophy for such concepts – *Memento Mori*. Simply put, it represents the idea that one should remember one must and will die. Practicing this mode of living is sometimes hard. Our own mortality might be a harsh realization. Some of the spirits don’t understand their own death, and for that there are rituals that you can do. But more importantly, remember that death is the most natural thing in the world and probably the only guaranteed thing in every life. You might need remembering some of your ancestors of their death, and for such I would recommend in the first place creating a good connection with them. One of the methods is through the building an altar.

**How to Connect and Worship your Ancestors?**

Like most spiritual crafts there are some steps you can take to make the connection easier and more accessible. You don’t truly need buying anything special when building your own altar, it can be just something you are called to, or even after researching you find a particular thing that is part of your ancestors culture that has importance, it really depends on what you find that aligns with you and the energies you are honoring.

Most people do it in harmony with the lunar calendar and set it during the new moon, and just like the numerous practices there are many ways of doing it. Nevertheless, cleansing the space as well as yourself, connecting with the energies in cause; some people take weeks before deeming it as finished, others simply a night. One might even proceed in their own ritual, but this should be a crucial step when establishing a connection with a spiritual being. Conventionally, people tend to represent all the natural elements on their altars:

Fire is represented by candles, or even oil lamps associating it with “progress”, warmth, prayer, and clarity. The fire itself does not need to be real if that is an issue but is somewhat essential. Water is the vessel of the spiritual energy; it is an essential part of any ecosystem, most being and ourselves. It is one of the keyways of conducting the energy of the spirits to a more concrete realm. Some altars have bowls or cups full of water aiding in the spirits stay present and communicating. Air, by chanting prayers to invoke the ones you are connecting. This way you are also claiming spiritual energy through your words and intentions. Earth, by grounding yourself by meditating, but also by a cloth at the base of your altar. Cloth is present in many practices, representing our own fates. The same way our realities are weaved by our actions, so do the fibers present in the textile. Think of it like the same way the universe is woven through our actions and energies, so are the spiritual beings. The drapery can possess a cultural significance, based on your background, or simply something you find pretty.

Images can additionally be included and are sometimes used to keep the ancestors present, as a way of remembrance, or if worshipping other entities, you may even use statues and representative drawings to honor them. You may implement a comparable system of “art” production to knit your energy into honoring them. The altars don’t need to be a space of bought extravagant things. You can literally do it all yourself if you have the inclination.

Once established, the maintenance of the altar can be done as you prefer. Some do it daily, others monthly, it truly depends on the type of relation you want to keep with the spiritual energies that you are in contact with. However, the same way you should meditate regularly to keep in touch with both your intuition and higher self, so should you try keep an open relationship and remain them satisfied. That can be achieved through many forms. Offerings are one of the methods or even embellish it with tools, charms, and other elements of importance to the spiritual energy that you are in contact with.

Ancestors worshiping can be a fundamental part of your practice, especially if you are able to connect with them and if you intend on healing the wounds of your family. It can be a difficult procedure, and emotionally draining. Yet it is essential for our personal growth. The procedures here referred are not rules, simply suggestions. There isn’t a wrong or right way of worshipping a spiritual being. However, remember that respect should always be at the very center of any interaction you have with every entity of the spiritual realm. Take your time knowing them and yourself.

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