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# Encyclopedia of Spirits

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# The Encyclopedia of Spirits:

*The Ultimate Guide to the Magic of Fairies, Genies,  
Demons, Ghosts, Gods, and Goddesses*

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 HarperCollins e-books

*For Leor Warner, Ascended Master (20 July 1941–13 September 2007)*

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## Introduction

### THE PUBLIC FACE OF SPIRITS

Fairies, demons, Djinn, devas, dybbuks, dakinis, Nymphs, mermaids, ghosts, nagas, orishas, lwa, *mystères*, Elves, dragons: that's just a few of the many kinds of spirit beings. Considering how many people vociferously refute their very existence, the extent to which spirits permeate modern human culture is astounding.

You don't have to believe in spirits to be surrounded by them. In fact, it's pretty hard to avoid them. Let me repeat: *spirits permeate human culture*. References are so all-pervasive that it can be easy to overlook their original meanings.

### SPIRITS PERMEATE OUR LANGUAGE

Do you want to flatter a woman? Call her a goddess. If a woman is beautiful, small, and lithe, she might be called a sprite or sylph. If you find this woman inspirational, she's your muse. If she's irresistible, she's a siren. Sprites, sylphs, muses, sirens: these are all categories of spirits.

Names of individual spirits permeate language, too. Want to flatter a man? Call him Adonis or an Apollo. If he's a musician, call him Orpheus. Maybe that beautiful woman isn't small and lithe; maybe she's voluptuous or statuesque, Junoesque, in other words. Coming up with these references is no Herculean task; just a little thought and effort and you, too, will be thinking up dozens. Here's a few more:

The name for the physical condition of an erection that refuses to recede (sometimes to the point of medical emergency) is priapism, inspired by Priapus, a Greek spirit, who, as his votive statues attest, sports a permanently erect phallus. Do you have an enemy, someone who is gunning for you? That person is your nemesis, named for the Greek goddess of justice and vengeance. Ever described being stuck in the office, stuck in an elevator, stuck in a traffic jam or hospital

emergency room as like being stuck in hell? You've just evoked Hel, Norse guardian of the realm of death. Trying to seduce someone? Try an aphrodisiac—something evoking the power of Aphrodite, alluring goddess of love and sex.



*Nemesis*, *priapism*, and *aphrodisiac* are elegant words, indicative of a fine vocabulary. Spirits permeate all facets of speech—obscenities, too. Ever muttered, “Oh, Frigg!” in a moment of frustration or told someone harshly to get away from your frickin’ car? That word’s not just a soundalike substitute for a stronger obscenity: it’s the name of yet another Norse goddess, alternatively spelled Frigg or Fricka. A modern obscenity for women’s genitalia evokes the name of Kunti, a very ancient goddess of India, although honestly it’s doubtful whether most of those who use the word have a clue as to its origins or that the word emerged in sacred contexts.

Jumping Jupiter! By Jove! Names of spirits permeate modern marketing and brand names. Before Nike, Mercury, and Saturn named shoes, cars, or even planets, they named deities. It is not that manufacturers necessarily believe in these spirits or consciously wish to pay homage, but that the essences of these spirits have so permeated our cultural vocabulary that all it takes is their names to evoke visceral reactions en masse. For instance, I own lipsticks named after biblical seductresses: Salome, Jezebel, and Astarte. Go ahead and guess whether these lipsticks are bold and bright red or pale pink and sedate.

#### **SPIRITS PENETRATE OUR CULTURE**

They permeate literature from its earliest days to today’s best sellers. Enheduanna, oldest known author in history, composed hymns to the

goddess Inanna over four thousand years ago. Her work remains in print, now in English translation.

Spirits of one sort or another are significant characters in recent favorites like Philip Pullman's *His Dark Materials* trilogy, Neil Gaiman's *American Gods*, and Gaiman and Terry Pratchett's *Good Omens*. *The Da Vinci Code*? Fascination with Mary Magdalen knows no bounds.

Sometimes references to spirits are intended literally; sometimes they serve as allegory or metaphor. Sometimes a spirit's name is expected to do nothing more than evoke a mood or emotion, create some ambience.

*Maybe* folklore can exist without spirits, albeit in truncated form, but mythology definitely can't. Worldwide mythology is accurately defined as stories about and involving spirits. An entire literary genre—*fairy tales*—is named for a branch of the spirit world.

Literary classics are populated by spirits (*The Aeneid*, *The Iliad*, *The Odyssey*, *Faust*, *Macbeth*, or *The Tempest*). So are comic books: Morpheus, the Erinyes, Uma, Circe, and Lilith are but a few of the spirits who prowl through their pages, as do Brunnhilde the Valkyrie, hammer-deity Thor, and virtually the entire Nordic pantheon.

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*Folklore isn't only old. Brand-new folk tales featuring La Llorona, the Weeping Woman, and Bloody Mary, the killer in the mirror, emerge daily. Hawaiian volcano goddess Pelé is the subject of modern urban legends and old myths.*

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Poems are full of spirits: again sometimes the allusions are intended literally, sometimes allegorically. Consider Edmund Spenser's *The Faerie Queene* or Christina Rossetti's *The Goblin Market* or various poems by William Butler Yeats. I'm pulling these out of the air, somewhat randomly, in no particular order: thousands of others, maybe millions, could just as easily substitute.

If you have a taste for classical culture, then you may know that the very first official ballet was inspired by the witch-goddess Circe. It was



but the first of many. Other dancing spirits include *La Sylphide*'s winged Scottish Fairies, *Swan Lake*'s secret swan goddesses, and *Giselle*'s willies, an alternative name for *vila*, seductive, sometimes deadly, forest Fairies. (Vila guest star in the Harry Potter novels, too.)

Spirits permeate opera: for starters, *Undina*, *Maria Padilla*, *Ariadne auf Naxos*, and Richard Wagner's entire *Ring Cycle*. (Speaking of rings, spirits are intrinsic to the plots of J. R. R. Tolkien's *Lord of the Rings* and the *Ring* series of novels, movies, and manga.)

Styles of art, literature, and music may come and go, but the spirits are eternal. They pervade popular music as completely as classical: "Stupid Cupid!" "Cupid, draw back your bow!" "Venus": a hit song twice, years apart, for Shocking Blue *and* Bananarama; "Venus in Blue Jeans"; Bob Dylan's "Isis"; Christina Aguilera's "Genie in a Bottle."

Sometimes references are metaphoric but not always. Sarah McLachlan's touring festival of women's music celebrated feminine power via its very name, *Lilith Fair*, honoring Lilith, rebellious demon-goddess and first woman. Fleetwood Mac's "Rhiannon," ostensibly a song about a Welsh witch, actually evokes a Welsh goddess. Listeners unfamiliar with African-Diaspora religions understood Desi Arnaz's trademark "Babalu" to be a fun novelty number rather than a tribute to a potent West African deity. (See *Babalu Ayé*.) Likewise, the macarena is not just a dance craze but a spiritual tribute, in this case to La Macarena, favorite Madonna of Spanish matadors.

Spirits permeate the visual arts so thoroughly that discussion is almost pointless, it's so overwhelming.



Images of spirits surround us. They are *everywhere*. Cemeteries are filled with images of assorted psychopomps, those spirits who escort human souls to afterlife realms. Garden stores offer stone sphinxes,

plaster gnomes, and a vast selection of Aphrodites on the half-shell. Look in store windows and calculate how long until you encounter the ubiquitous image of Maneki Neko, the Japanese beckoning cat, who reputedly attracts customers as if by magic. Mermaids grace the labels of products like wine, tuna fish, and sardines, not to mention Starbucks coffee. Recent trips to the supermarket netted me a bottle of Japanese rice vinegar with a label featuring the smiling face of Okame, goddess of mirth; a jar of Laxmi brand coriander chutney, named in honor of India's goddess of good fortune; and a bottle of Spanish Rioja wine with a label depicting Ares, that helmeted lord of war.

Visit virtually *any* art museum, except those devoted solely to abstract art, and just try to avoid the spirits. They're pretty omnipresent in museums devoted to history, too. Look at an Egyptian mummy case: it's covered with pictures of spirits. Go visit crafts museums, quilting exhibitions, sculpture gardens: odds are, you'll find some spirit lurking in the works. If the spirits aren't on display, their images are almost guaranteed to be in the gift store, waiting for someone to take them home.

Once upon a time, Western art was entirely "religious": what that means in plain English was that the only officially acceptable art featured images of Christian religious figures: Madonnas, for example. During the Renaissance, as restrictions loosened and artists were permitted to create work that wasn't exclusively Christian, they didn't so much change their subject as broaden it: images of Pagan deities were added to the repertoire. Think Sandro Botticelli's *The Birth of Venus* or Pieter Pauwel Rubens' epic painting, *The Rape of Europa* (the name of that continent honors that goddess). Even centuries later, the subject of spirits never seems to grow stale: it remained a favorite theme of the Salon Painters, Pre-Raphaelites, and Symbolists and remains popular today. Goddess images permeate the work of modern artists like Nancy Spero, Mayumi Oda, and Niki de Saint Phalle. The lwa (spirits of Vodou) dominate Haitian art no less than angels and saints once dominated European art. A large void is created in Tibetan art should one remove all depictions of the divine Tara.

Some religions (Islam, Judaism) banish imagery to varying degrees for fear that *any* image may be construed as sacred and thus venerated. In

fact, as we'll see, spirits do come in every possible permutation: in the form of humans, animals, hybrids, fantastic creatures, plants, even household appliances.

Frankly, it may not be humanly possible to eliminate spirit-based imagery; they insinuate their identities into geometric shapes, too, most famously the cross, but also others. (Before crosses signified Christianity, they were Aphrodite's special emblem.) The symbols indicating Mars and Venus (&male; and &female; respectively), now frequently serving as a universal code for men's and women's restrooms, identified deities long before they represented genders.

### **SPIRITS ARE RELIGION**

Religion may be defined as veneration of at least one sacred being or deity. Buddhism and Confucianism are often described as philosophies, not religions, precisely because veneration of a deity is not crucial, although neither denies the existence of spirits. Buddhist art is filled with spirits: like pre-Renaissance Western art, it is intrinsically spiritual in nature.

In a museum, objects are neatly and clearly labeled. Although some ancient objects are discovered complete with intelligible inscriptions (much of what we know about Europe's Celtic deities derives from these inscriptions), in general, ancient images are unearthed without labels. Many ancient artifacts, whether depicting rotund women (the Venus of Willendorf and others of her ilk), recognizable animals (Celtic or Scythian artifacts), or fantastic beings (dragons, griffins, snake-women) are widely interpreted as portraits of the sacred. These assumptions are not wrong.

Throughout time, apparently from our earliest beginnings, people have been inspired to create images of spirits. Spirits may be ubiquitous now; they were ubiquitous way back when, too. Wood, stone, clay, and metal survive best, but vestiges of other arts survive, too. Some of the earliest documented tattoos, for instance, from ancient Egypt, were inspired by images of deities like Neith and Bes. Mummification preserved ornamented flesh so that tattoos survive as testimony to devotion to these spirits.

To this very day, sacred imagery constitutes an extremely high percentage of tattoos. I have a tattoo design book, published recently in Japan; 155 pages are exclusively devoted to tattoos of spirits, multiple images per page. It's only one of many such books (which are not merely recycling the same images). The ancient Egyptian image of the Eye of Horus retains its popularity. Dragons and mermaids permanently grace many arms and legs. Kickboxers favor tattoos of their patron, monkey spirit Hanuman.

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*Synonyms for religion include spiritual tradition and spiritual faith. Some religions/spiritual traditions incorporate references to spirits into their very names: Shinto means "the way of the spirits"; Santeria means the religion of the "saints," a euphemism for once-outlawed African spirits more accurately called orishas. Vodou literally means "spirit." Spiritualism and Spiritism/Espiritismo are systems of contacting and honoring spirits.*

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Spirits aren't snobs: they permeate kitsch and fine art alike. Gift stores are filled with little, inexpensive Fairies, pixies, and mermaids. Virtually every Wiccan, Pagan, or occult-oriented store around the world sells reproductions of ancient statues of deities, as well as jewelry and gifts inspired by these spirits. Catalogs representing a wide variety of spiritual traditions sell goods inspired by an ever-growing number of spirits. Collectors of Lladro porcelain can purchase images of India's elephant spirit, Ganesha; Lakshmi, Goddess of Wealth; and the Medicine Buddha. If you prefer Wedgwood fine china, you can collect images of Aurora, Goddess of Dawn; the Horae, Greece's dancing goddesses of the hours; and Aphrodite, Lady of Love. Did someone say Santa Claus? Let's not even go there. Discussion of Santa's legion of images requires its very own encyclopedia.

There's also virtually no point in attempting a brief discussion of spirits in the movies. It's impossible: the list is endless. Up until now, I've avoided that special category of spirit: ghosts. Once included, that previously already endless list increases *exponentially*. Without ghosts

and demons, the hugely popular genre of horror films is reduced to little beyond mad scientists, psychopaths, and slashers.

Fairy tales aren't the only literary genre named for spirits; ghost stories rank among the earliest surviving pieces of literature. The ancient Egyptians *loved* them, as did the ancient Chinese. Their appeal remains undiminished. Travel around the world; study the folklore of every culture. It's hard to find a place lacking suspenseful ghost stories.

The spirits aren't going away. We are not outgrowing them. They are not passé but are keeping pace with modern innovations.

On a spiritual level, Ogun, West African spirit of iron, and Brigid, Irish spirit of smithcraft, no longer have enough smiths to keep them busy. Tireless, energetic beings, both now demonstrate interest in modern technology, especially if it involves metal. Having trouble with your computer or your car? Call on either one for help. (See their individual encyclopedia entries for further details.)

On a popular level, eliminate vampires, ghosts, demons, and extra-terrestrials (yes! See the entry on page 396 for more details), and how many television shows have also fallen by the wayside? *Supernatural*, *Medium*, *Dr. Who*, *Charmed*, *The Ghost Whisperer*, *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*, *Angel*, and *lots* more. Computer games, manga, and anime? All totally permeated by spirits: *Spirited Away*, *Demon Diary*, *Age of Mythology*, and *Hell Girl* are just the first to randomly come to mind.

Pokémon characters are based on ancient Japanese spirits. Yu-Gi-Oh!, another juvenile phenomenon, makes *constant* reference to spirits of old Egypt. Video games without spirits? Again, you've just gutted an entire genre. As anyone fascinated by spirits can attest, online research is virtually impossible as attempting to conduct a search via names of even the most obscure spirits results in sites devoted to role-playing games, video games, and Dungeons and Dragons, not the anticipated scholarly works. Clearly, spirits are important to people, one way or another, for one reason or another, even if only for entertainment.

Spirits have traveled with humans from our earliest days, maybe even from Day One. Just try to find a creation myth from anywhere in the world that doesn't involve a Supreme Creator, spirits of creation, or at the very least, some assistance from a spirit.

Spirits create the universe. Spirits hang the sun and moon in the sky. Spirits *are* the sun and moon *and* the sky! Typically, spirits create us.

Agriculture? Weaving? Medicine? Fire? Freshwater? Check the myths: inevitably anything important is a gift from a spirit. The alphabet? The Egyptians credited it to the primeval spirit Thoth. The calendar? Ditto. The Egyptians said Thoth created that, too. First book in the world? Once again, the Egyptians gave credit to Thoth.

Something may be mystical or practical, crucial or extraneous; regardless, there's probably a myth ascribing its origin or transmission to one or more spirits. Even our ability to reproduce, according to myth, is dependent upon the spirits: an Indonesian story suggests that people were basically too stupid to figure out childbirth without spiritual intervention. Men were cutting women open to extract babies, performing primitive, invariably fatal Caesarean sections. A crocodile spirit complete with doctor's bag came to our rescue, explaining natural childbirth. Alternatively, myths from Africa and Asia suggest that snake spirits physically demonstrated childbirth techniques directly to women. Vestiges of the shimmying motions they taught survive in Eastern dance (belly dance), yet one more art form with profound ties to spirits.

Spirits are involved with creation, birth, and every aspect of life. Literally our spirit guides, they journey through life with us, teaching us, protecting us, haunting our dreams, inspiring us, sometimes scaring us, accompanying us every step of the way and beyond.

Consider death. What happens to us? Where do we go? Myths about death lacking spirits are about as common as creation stories without them. Virtually every heaven, hell, or other traditional realm of death is populated and supervised by spirits. Never say never, but I can't think of a belief in an afterlife that doesn't involve some sort of sacred being, from Saint Peter at the pearly gates to angels floating on clouds to the aforementioned Hel to Zuni dance halls of the dead to the roadhouses of the Pagan Irish Otherworld where guests drink and feast to their hearts' content. How do we get to these afterlife realms? How will we know the way? Invariably a spirit is there to guide us.

Yet historically, spirit-human interactions have not always been happy and pleasant, not because of demonic attack but because people

relentlessly persecute other people for their beliefs in spirits. A historic fact for at least the past couple of thousand years (not a mere blip in time) is that people exist who will torture and kill other people and make their lives miserable because of the spirits they venerate or the spirits they *won't* venerate. For example, the Spanish Inquisition, the witch trials that intermittently gripped virtually all of Europe for centuries, and the violent persecution of indigenous religions on *all* inhabited continents.

While there's less spirit-inspired violence in secular societies, still spirits are expected to stay in the space allotted them, which is usually commerce. Medusa is the face of Versace, its corporate logo. You can buy a T-shirt or lunch box displaying images of Kali but if you openly discuss believing in the true existence of these spirits, you will make many people very nervous. Your sanity or at least your level of education may be questioned.

Organized religion tends, at best, to be ambivalent toward individual human-spirit interaction. Why this is so will be discussed later; however, suffice it to say that mainstream society in very many places on Earth discourages overly enthusiastic veneration of spirits. It's okay to put their images on food labels or other products, providing these are considered mere ornamentation. Learning the "truth" about Santa Claus—that he doesn't exist—has become a modern rite of passage.

So why won't spirits go away? Why don't we forget about them? Why is our fascination with them so persistent? There has been a popular resurgence of traditional spirituality (read: interaction with spirits) in modern industrialized nations, yet this does not nearly account for the sheer *pervasiveness* of the spirits around us. If anything, spirits are *more* pervasive than they were fifty years ago. New forms of media, technology, and entertainment have created portals for these spirits that previously didn't exist. Spirits are legion; they surround us; they are *everywhere*.

Days of the week? Named for spirits. Wednesday is Woden's Day; Thursday is Thor's Day. Not just in English, either: *Mardi* ("Tuesday" in French) is the day dedicated to Mars; *Mercredi* (that's Wednesday) invokes Mercury, also a traveling spirit of magic, just like Woden, with whom he shares the day.

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*“Folk religion,” which emphasizes spirit-human interactions, as opposed to a more impersonal, abstract emphasis on ethics, is generally considered déclassé and is discouraged or actively repressed by authorities of all kinds.*

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Months of the year? Once again, named for spirits: January for Janus; May for Maia. Juno, a very important spirit, gets two months: June and February, named for her title, Juno Februata, variously interpreted as Juno of the Fever of Love or Juno the Purifier. That’s why marrying in June is considered so lucky: Juno is the goddess of marriage. Marry in her month and obtain her blessing. Again, this isn’t just some English language affectation: the Hebrew month of Tammuz commemorates the goddess Ishtar’s doomed divine lover.

Names of months not evoking spirits seem consciously named so as to deliberately *not* invoke them. Often they lack names but are merely numbered: October is literally the eighth month; November the ninth; December the tenth, as in the *decimal* system, a numeric system based on a count of ten. (Yes, October, November, and December are now respectively the tenth, eleventh, and twelfth months of the Western calendar, but the names derive from a time when March, Mars’ month, was the first month of the Roman calendar. The calendar was revised, but the names of the months were not.) Either spirits are crucial to humans or, based on our vocabulary, maybe our imagination is just really limited. We can’t seem to think of creative names without dipping into the well of spirits.

The cities we live in? Yep, named for spirits—lots of them! This is partly out of affection and respect, but also partly because, like marrying in June, honoring a spirit by naming something important after it was once commonly believed to invoke, even force, a blessing from that spirit.

- Lyon, France, honors Celtic deity Lugh.
- Paris: one theory of the name’s origins suggests that it means “city of Isis.”



- The Moroccan city Tangier is named for the local goddess Tingis.
- The list of places allegedly named after Neolithic goddess Car includes Carthage, Corsica, and Carcassonne, just for starters. (Yes, the words *car* and *chariot* are also believed related. Look at her entry on page 316 for more details.)

Planets? Once again, named after spirits. Mercury, Venus, Mars, Jupiter, Saturn, Uranus, Neptune, Pluto name our planets as well as some of the most significant members of the Roman pantheon. Perhaps you consider Pluto a “dwarf ice planet” now or an asteroid? No matter; even those are all named for spirits, too: Vesta, Juno, Ceres, Pallas, and so forth.



Pretty much everything in space, unless numbered, like those months, evokes a spirit: Chariklo was the name given to centaur number 10199. (Centaurids are a kind of icy planetoid located between Jupiter and Neptune. See, even brand-new space phenomena—like *dwarf* ice planets—are named for old spirits.) On the other hand, the extra-solar planet (meaning, beyond our solar system) now technically termed HD 209458 b was once informally called Osiris.

A trans-Neptunian object discovered in 2003 has been named Sedna. We’ve ventured far from the Roman pantheon that dominates most of space, yet the name still evokes a spirit, in this case, the Inuit goddess of the depths of the sea. Space phenomena that may or may not even exist are also named for spirits: for instance, the theoretical Dark Moon Lilith or the yet-to-be-discovered planet, Vulcan.

But really, there’s no need to look to the heavens. Just go outside and look down at the ground. Our very own planet’s name, Earth, honors a Germanic goddess, Herta, also spelled Eartha.

Why are these spirits so pervasively ever-present?

Well, at the very least, spirits, whether you believe they genuinely exist or are figments of our collective creative imagination, enrich our

lives. They fascinate and enthrall us. Myths, legends, and stories comfort us and provide solace in times of need. They entertain us. They bring us fun. Clearly, considering the number of artistic works they inhabit, they are inspirational. Does anyone seriously believe that the ghost story will ever be eradicated?

Fun, entertainment, inspiration, comfort: that's actually quite a lot, certainly enough to justify millennia of attention from all over the world. The spirits in this encyclopedia represent every inhabited continent, deriving from many cultures, eras, and spiritual traditions. Some of these spirits currently possess millions of devotees; others are barely remembered.

Within this book you'll find individual spirits of varying degrees of power as well as types (genres) of spirits from all over Earth:

- Astarte, Azazel, Baal, Asherah, and other spirits of the Bible
- Mermaids from every corner of Earth
- East African Zar, Irish Sidhe, and Burmese Nats
- Japanese kami, kappa, oni, and onryo
- Pomba Giras from Brazil
- Spirits of Vodou, Santeria, Umbanda, and Candomblé

Awaiting you among these pages are spirits of fertility, birth, healing, love, death, and destruction; spirits of disaster relief and those of good fortune; spirits whose primary purpose is to relieve world suffering, as well as a few who really enjoy stirring up trouble.

Meet spirits of disease, cat goddesses, dog demons, vampire pumpkins, guardians of children, and guardians of cadavers. Discover suppressed Celtic goddesses, secret goddesses of the Kabbalah, female Buddhas, Demeter's *other* daughter, African Powers, Dragon Queens, White Ladies, Black Madonnas, the Green Man, the Peacock Angel, lots and lots of ghosts and Fairies—some helpful, some not—and many, many more.

You'll find a host of rainbow serpents, Dragon Kings, night walkers, party animals, and *Kel Asuf*, Tuareg Spirits of Solitude. Primeval spirits rooted in the mists of time mingle with brand-new spirits only now emerging.

Their myths and legends will entertain and move you. Some may provide moral guidance and inspiration; others offer welcome chills of horror. Hopefully, many will provide creative inspiration so that the list of books, movies, music, and art in which they star continues to expand exponentially. If this is sufficient for you, then this encyclopedia's over one thousand spirits await you. No esoteric knowledge is needed to enjoy the pleasures of their company.

However, if this is not enough for you, if you seek more from the spirits, then keep reading. We've just skimmed the surface.

### THE SECRET LIVES OF SPIRITS

What more *could* you want from spirits? Well, what would you like? What do you need? What is missing from your life?

- Your desires may be material (money, prosperity, a better job, a home).
- They might be emotional (true love, an acceptable spouse, a child).
- You may seek a cure for an ailment that defies conventional solutions.
- You may need protection (from an abusive spouse, partner, or relative; from enemies, ghosts, eviction, bad influences, or even from yourself).

You may need a miracle. You may seek comfort, vengeance, reconciliation, or justice. You may not *want* anything per se: maybe you just crave the company of spirits. Perhaps you long to feel the presence of the sacred. Maybe you'd just like to personally unravel some mysteries of the universe: to truly *know* whether or not spirits exist.

Maybe there is a spirit who calls to you, who fascinates and enthralls you (Rhiannon, Lilith, Oshun, whomever). You'd like to bring this spirit deeper into your life; you'd like to experience its presence firsthand. All this and more can be had.

Name your desire, secret hope, wish, or fear: a spirit exists who can fulfill or prevent it as needed, who can help you make your dreams come

true. Somewhere out there, one or more spirits are waiting to work with you. Working with spirits is not exactly like finding a genie trapped inside a bottle or rubbing an old magic lamp, but those legends do possess a kernel of truth. Spirits really do protect and provide for people.

Here's an open secret: spirits do more than pervade literature, advertising, games, myths, and movies. They also walk among us. Some may find that statement shocking or surprising, ludicrous or laughably absurd, but for *many* people, all over Earth, coming from *all* walks of life, unconventional and conventional alike, it's a statement of basic, obvious fact.

There has *never* been a time when a substantial number of people did not consider the presence of spirits to be part of normal reality, including right now. There has *never*, ever been a time when people and spirits did not communicate and interact with each other, including right now.

Among those who work with them, the presence of spirits is generally perceived as positive, a *blessing*, rather than the opposite. Interaction and communication with spirits is usually beneficial; at least from the perspective of those who actually know them. Those who loudly proclaim otherwise tend to be religious disciplinarians with a vested interest in other peoples' spiritual choices.

Working with spirits is a shared and universal human experience. *Every* group of people *everywhere* on Earth has some history of spiritual interaction, whether or not it is publicly acknowledged, whether or not it is currently celebrated, condemned, or suppressed.

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*Spirits are world travelers. They mingle among us everywhere. Spirits travel with people to new places where other local spirits await. If you were searching for common denominators shared by all people everywhere, chief among them, aside from the most basic biological needs, are experiences with spirits.*

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Right now, somewhere on Earth, on each and every continent, people are actively, consciously venerating, petitioning, thanking, channeling, communicating with, interacting with, and/or pleading with spirits. What do they seek?

- Healing
- Protection
- Prosperity
- Happiness
- Power
- Direct contact with the sacred

People haven't been doing this futilely for thousands of years because there's nothing else for them to do with their time. Spirit veneration has survived and thrived despite thousands of years of brutal opposition because it produces joy, success, and positive results. In fiction, people run from vicious spirits, but in real life, people actively seek their presence and have historically suffered tremendous persecution in order to maintain relationships with spirits because the rewards are immeasurable.

Thousands of years of propaganda to the contrary, encounters and experiences with spirits are generally positive. That's why people keep seeking them out. Rather than wreaking havoc, spirits help, protect, and guide us. They rescue us from all sorts of disasters, performing miracles, and providing lifelines when conventional solutions fail.

Requests for contact, personal encounters with spirits, and rituals honoring them are occurring *right now* in modern, highly populated, sophisticated cities as well as out in the boondocks and everywhere in between. I feel absolutely confident writing that no matter when you are reading this, people are engaged in some sort of spiritual interaction.

Yes, some of the people engaged in these activities may be poorly educated or of low intellect, but others are academics, engineers, physicians, and other highly educated professionals of all kinds. Presumably some *are* delusional, but most are not (and anyway, plenty of certifiably delusional people fervently deny the existence of spirits,

too. There's no proof in that, one way or the other.)

Those acknowledging the existence of spirits subscribe to every possible religious and political persuasion. (Despite Marx's aphorism about religion being the opiate of the people, many Italian Communists claim the Black Madonna as a fellow traveler.)

Those who venerate or work with spirits don't consider themselves "believers": they *know* their own experiences to be valid and true. Others, having had no experiences with spirits (or being unable to recognize them), do *not* know this to be true and may assume—and insist—that what isn't true for them can't possibly be true for anyone else.

It is possible that not everyone experiences the world in exactly the same way, and so there's no point in arguing: tolerance may be the wisest course of action.

- For those who are already devotees, no explanation is necessary.
- For those inclined otherwise, no explanation may be sufficient.
- For those who are curious or "on the fence," familiarize yourself with the rules and methods of spirit working and find out for yourself.

#### **THE FIRST LESSON: ANYONE CAN HAVE DIRECT CONTACT WITH THE DEITIES, NO MEDIATORS REQUIRED**

If you consider all the implications of that statement, then you will understand why authorities of all kinds, secular and religious alike, have historically attempted to suppress spirit working and its close relative, shamanism. Working with spirits instills independence and personal responsibility; it does not encourage passivity. Working with spirits offers each individual direct access to the higher powers.

*This* is why people can't forget the spirits. *This* is why people won't abandon them, despite persecution. *This* is why stories, legends, and myths about spirits have been recounted for thousands of years. *This* is why people are willing to die for them:

- During the European witch craze, veneration of spirits like Diana,

Freya, Herta, and Hulda was forbidden on pain of slow torture and death. Yet Inquisition records show that, for centuries, many defied these restrictions.

- Kidnapped Africans, sold as slaves in the Western Hemisphere, were forbidden, on pain of horrific torture and death, to venerate their old spirits. The proof that they continued to do so anyway is demonstrated by the survival and vitality of various African-Diaspora spiritual traditions.
- The Bible records the number of times the image of the controversial Hebrew goddess Asherah was removed from Solomon's Temple. Clearly someone kept putting her back.

Why? Because whenever times are trying and tough, people turn to spirits. Not because we are foolish, superstitious, and ignorant, but because over millennia, spirits have developed a track record.

#### **BENEFITS OF WORKING WITH SPIRITS**

- Spirits and the process of working with them bring joy
- To be in the presence of spirits is to be in the presence of the sacred.
- Working with spirits is a conduit to ecstasy.
- Spirits help us fulfill our dreams, save us when we're in trouble, and provide healing when conventional medicine throws in the towel.

Apparently our fascination is mutual: spirits have consistently proven to be as interested in us as we are in them. (At least some of them; those with absolutely no interest in humans are probably of no concern. You are unlikely to ever encounter them.) It's not just that we can't forget them; they can't seem to forget us, either, or leave us alone. And, in general, as many people know, that's an extremely good thing.

Yes, every once in a while, negative experiences occur: a ghost gone astray or an angry spirit encountered. Some spirits are less pleasant than others. Yet this shouldn't be cause for panic; these situations can be effectively dealt with, *if* you know what to do.

This book is a practical guide to spirits, identifying many by name and

type. It contains information regarding what to expect from spirits and methods of venerating and working with them (or avoiding them, if you choose). Before any of this can be accomplished, however, let's first establish: what are spirits anyway? Let's explore the *who*, *what*, *where*, *when*, *why* and, maybe most crucially, the *how* of working with spirits.

### WHO OR WHAT ARE SPIRITS?

Spirits are powerful, independent entities who resist human efforts to define them. That's the absolute most simple and most basic definition—and ultimately the only one you really need to understand in order to work with them. More complex definitions exist, too; lots of them. For millennia, mystics have cataloged complex, esoteric cosmologies explaining the true nature of the universe including spirits. If this fascinates you, a lifetime can be happily spent in study and exploration. However, this is not necessary for practical interaction with spirits any more than really understanding exactly how the lymphatic or endocrine systems work is required for close, personal, satisfying relations with other people.

Spirits are ephemeral, volatile, fluid; they can be hard to pin down. Spirits have specific names, personalities, and responsibilities, but sometimes spirits masquerade as each other. Sometimes one spirit answers to many names. Sometimes one name may be used by several spirits. Sometimes several spirits share one image.

Confused? Then you're on the right track. Working with spirits is not like buying a carton of milk. Requesting a miracle is not like requesting a time-share or bank loan. As familiar as spirits can become, they are *never* commonplace, but always awe-inspiring. Although an intrinsic part of our world, spirits always remain out of the ordinary.

A common synonym for *spirits* or *deities* is *mysteries*. (It's even more common in French and Spanish: *mystères* or *misterios*.) Spirits are among the universe's true sacred mysteries. If you are looking for something easy to define, control, comprehend, and pigeonhole, well, forgive me, but you're in the wrong place.

Spirits resist easy categorization. Spirits challenge standard modern



axioms of space, time, and reality. There are valid reasons why so many have a hard time accepting their existence. But, be that as it may, as those who have had direct experience with them can attest, they are genuinely here among us.

Modern scientific method requires predictability, uniformity, standardization, and the ability to reproduce results on demand. Modern scientific method is a human construct, created by people to fulfill human needs, goals, or desires. The spirits don't play by those rules. Some mysteries of the universe defy human control and complete comprehension, spirits foremost among them.

Contrary to scientific method, spirits offer results as they please, when they choose. If anything, *we* are *their* lab rats. Sacred texts, myths, and legends recount innumerable instances of spirits testing humans. The most famous examples derive from the Bible, most explicitly in the Book of Job. Odin travels the world personally testing human hospitality, as does the Prophet Elijah. The myth of Santa Claus checking who's been naughty and who's been nice is a vestigial memory of spirits testing humans before deciding whether to dispense gifts or punishment.

Spirits are living, intelligent, sentient, and willful. They live *outside* our imaginations. We didn't invent them or make them up, although we have certainly embellished and twisted many of their legends.

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*You don't need to memorize every detail about every single spirit. However, you do need to familiarize yourself thoroughly with any spirit with whom you wish to work.*

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Spirits are alive in their own way, which is not exactly the same way people or animals are alive (especially those ghosts). No existing word may adequately express the manner in which spirits are alive, but that is an inadequacy of language. Attempts to surmount this inadequacy have led to common paradoxical terms like *undead* or *the living dead*.

Spirits are animated, capable of communication, travel as they please

or are ordered, react to stimuli, and demonstrate individual personalities and emotion. Not all spirits are immortal, but in general, even those who are not possess life spans so long that, for all intents and purposes, at least from our perspective, they might as well be.

Spirits possess their own kind of consistency. They are true to their own selves. They possess their own rules, but generally those rules have existed for hundreds, if not thousands of years. If you familiarize yourself with individual spirits *before* working with them, there should be no unpleasant surprises.

Those spirits who are temperamental, prone to violence, perpetually grouchy, or pranksters make no pretense of being otherwise. They are who they are; they make no secret of their nature. Loki, Papa Legba, and Mercury are unabashed tricksters (Norse, West African, and Roman spirits respectively). Kwan Yin, goddess of mercy, is forever patient and loving, but sacred harlot Pomba Gira makes no such promises.

Some people keep their deepest desires secret, but the spirits' own needs, desires, dislikes, and predilections tend to be up-front and on the table. Information required to work with many of them is straightforward. Spirits may appear in different forms or manifestations, but each still has a basic nature, a true essence, that remains consistent.

- The Barons and Gédés, Haitian spirits of the dead, adore profanity and ribald humor.
- Yewá, a cemetery spirit, despises vulgarity. If you utter an obscenity in front of her altar, don't expect favors.

Spirits are generally invisible, although many can make themselves selectively visible when they choose. All that open space surrounding you? That seemingly empty air? Many claim that it's actually filled with all kinds of spirits. The Talmud suggests that it's a good thing that spirits are invisible: if we could actually see all the myriad spirits constantly surrounding us, we'd drop dead of shock, awe, or fright.

Spirits most often show themselves to people in dreams, but sometimes people see spirits while they're awake, even when other people present are unable to do so. This may be because the spirit wishes to communicate only with that person or because, for one reason or

another (high fever; intense hunger or emotions; entheogens), the filters that normally prevent us from seeing spirits have, at least momentarily, slipped. Visions are also sometimes shared; spirits may manifest themselves to groups of people, simultaneously or not. I once lived in a house where several people saw the same ghost. We all shared the same experience, but independently, not at the same time.

Some special people possess the power to consistently see spirits even when others can't, with or without a spirit's permission. Sometimes people welcome or actively seek this power, which may be the conscious result of intensive spells and rituals. (Some spirits also bestow this ability.) Others just see spirits, whether they want to or not. This person may possess specialized vision or lack standard filters.

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*The little boy who sees dead people in M. Night Shyamalan's 1999 movie The Sixth Sense is terrorized until he understands his gift and learns to interact with the ghosts, rather than vainly attempting to flee from them. Once the ghosts are accepted and understood, they stop being so terrifying for both the boy and the movie's viewers.*

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Some cultures and traditions perceive this power as a sacred gift: people are taught to use and control their abilities for their own benefit as well as for the community at large. Other cultures and traditions perceive this ability as dangerous, scary, diabolical, a mark of Satan, or alternatively as preposterous and unbelievable, hence a sign of mental illness. In fact, it *can* be very traumatic to consistently see what others cannot, especially if living among those who fear, despise, deny, or disparage this talent, and most especially if lacking the knowledge to control this power.

Many spirits shape-shift, meaning they assume different forms. In general, specific spirits consistently manifest in specific, recognizable forms. They own different forms the way you or I own different outfits. Some have more extensive wardrobes than others.

It is crucial to remember that, regardless of how they appear, whether in grand or humble form, these are really sacred beings of spirit and energy. They may resemble a person, animal, bird, or bug, but that guise is a cloak. Most spirits are aware that humans generally find it difficult to communicate with anything except another human—or at least something resembling one. Hence, when spirits wish to communicate or make their presence known, many do so in a form that we can understand and handle. (Of course, there are also those spirits who don't care and may even enjoy being terrifying.)

There are some stupid spirits. (Again, no surprises: their reputations precede them.) Some possess vulnerabilities that make it easy for humans to manipulate them, but in general, spirits are smarter and stronger than people. They truly possess the magic powers of our fantasies and dreams.

There are many different types of spirits. Not all spirits are of equal power. Some spirits profess to be supreme creators (of all or part of the universe; of us). These spirits may or may not be one and the same, just using different names in different places and with different people. Other spirits are created, just like us.

Some spirits rule or serve other spirits. Some possess unlimited power; others are comparatively limited. Be forewarned: it is wise to assume that even the lowest-level spirit possesses a few tricks up its sleeve and should be treated with caution and respect.

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*Spirits who manifest as humans do so in every shape, color, size, age, gender, and ethnicity. They reflect our sacredness back at us. No matter what you look like—thin or fat, tall or tiny, badly scarred, missing eyes or limbs, simultaneously possessing female and male genitalia—there is a sacred, powerful spirit who resembles you.*

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Some spirits are primeval; they may have existed since the dawn of time:

- Damballah does not speak because he is so primordial; he is from a time before speech.
- The same is true for forest deity Faunus.
- Archaeologists trace goddesses Car and Kybele back to at least the Neolithic Era.

On the other hand, new spirits are born daily. Hindu goddess Santoshi Ma emerged in the 1960s. According to some spiritual traditions, every living person has the potential to evolve into a spirit after death. Korean shamans (*manshin*) summon the spirit of General Douglas MacArthur at Inchon Harbor near where he landed during the Korean War. Images of visionary artist Frida Kahlo now appear on altars indicating that she has assumed goddess status.

### REALMS OF SPIRITS

Spirits live among us. Many possess powerful links with specific locations (the presiding spirit of a particular mountain or city, for instance) or with general regions (lakes, oceans, forests, deserts, swamps, the moon). Spirits reside in caves, stones, and trees. Some spirits are profoundly attached to their own shrines and images. Others prefer to stay near the humans they love and serve, sometimes residing in their homes. Some spirits haunt marketplaces and bathhouses. Ghosts may linger at the scene of a crime.

Spirits also possess their very own realms. The true definition of a *shaman* is someone who can journey back and forth between human and spirit realms. Shamanism is among the primal human skills, maybe the true oldest profession. Luckily, many shamans over the ages have shared their experiences. Much of what is known about spirit realms derives from their descriptions, the spiritual equivalent of a travelogue.

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*The best explanation regarding realms of spirits and the afterlife may derive from Amy Tan's 1995 novel, The Hundred Secret Senses. Kwan, a central character, can see and interact with the Yin World, the Chinese realm of*

*ghosts. She explains that post-death destinations are determined by who or what you love and believe. And if you're not sure or don't believe in anything, then the opportunity exists to visit various realms and choose which suits you best.*

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There are many, various individual spirit realms. Envision a huge spirit universe, parallel to our own, which is then subdivided into smaller realms, similar to how a huge catering facility may be subdivided into rooms. Many parties occur concurrently: beings pass from one to another. Portals and passages connect these realms, including our own.

Some realms are heavily fortified, difficult to access, like an elite, private club. Like that club, entrances to these realms may be guarded by fierce gatekeepers. Other realms are welcoming and comparatively easy for people to access.

Different spirits reside in different realms. Some claim residence in more than one realm. Others travel back and forth, visiting different realms, just like shamans. Among the Norse deities, Odin, Freya, and Frigg each preside over their own halls within the realm Asgard, while sea spirit Ran lives among the waves and Hel rules over a realm of death.

Morgan Le Fay presides over Avalon. Itzpapalotl presides over Tamoanchan, a paradise where, according to an Aztec creation myth, modern humanity was first formed from blood and bones stolen from Mictlan, the Aztec realm of death. Mictlan, in turn, is ruled by spirits Mictlantecuhtli and Mictlancihuatl, Lord and Lady Death.

Hades is the traditional Greek realm of death. The name of its ruler is a secret. Because it was considered dangerous to call him by his true name (no need to draw his attention), people instead refer to him by his realm's name. The general population of Hades consists of shades of humanity (ghosts, dead souls), but other spirits live there, too:

- Charon, the ferryman
- Cerberus, the three-headed watchdog who keeps ghosts where they

belong

- Persephone, Queen of Death
- Hekate, who moonlights as Persephone's personal handmaiden
- Adonis, who spends part of the year entertaining Persephone

Hades, Mictlan, Hel: we've just begun, and already three different realms of death have been identified. Keep reading. There are *many* more. Which one is real? Maybe all of them. The more crucial question is, which one (or ones) is most significant for *you*?

Spirits travel between realms, but people can, too.

- Shamanic training teaches how to visit spirit realms *and* safely return home.
- Spirit realms are accessed via dreams and visualizations. (More information and instructions follow.)

### WHERE ARE SPIRITS MOST LIKELY TO BE MET?

Ultimately in your heart. That said, spirits are more likely to be encountered in certain types of places:

Thresholds and crossroads are particularly conducive to spirit encounters. If you want to meet spirits, those are the places you're most likely to find them. (Conversely, if you *don't* wish to meet them, then those are the places to avoid.)

Thresholds are border areas where one force, power, energy, or element meets another. Thresholds exist everywhere: for example, the seashore is the threshold between land and ocean, the liminal, transitional area where earth meets water. Hedgerows were once the threshold between wilderness and civilization. Your mouth is the threshold between thought and speech.

Thresholds may be physical (the seashore); spiritual (the cemetery is the threshold between realms of life and death); and plain old literal: many spirits, Djinn in particular, like to congregate at door thresholds. That's the root reason behind the common superstition urging people to

step over, not on, a threshold. No need to wake or annoy any resident spirits. Universal folklore considers brides especially vulnerable to jealous spirits. The tradition of carrying the bride over the threshold emerged as a safety precaution, albeit a fun, romantic one.

Thresholds possess a liminal quality: if you are small enough to balance on a threshold, then you are neither inside nor outside, you are someplace in between. Twilight and dawn are thresholds of night and day: during those times, it is not quite night *or* day, but some fleeting, transformative magical time in between. “Once there was and once there wasn’t ...,” a traditional opening line of Eastern European fairy tales, the equivalent of “Once upon a time,” signals that the story takes place in a threshold zone.

Crossroads are where something intersects with something else. A crossroads might be literal (a traffic intersection; a meeting of roads) or spiritual (a shrine or altar is where the mundane meets the sacred). Unlike a threshold, a crossroads has a point of intersection. That point is perceived as possessing and emanating *tremendous* magical, metaphysical, and spiritual energy. Spirits both crave and contribute to that energy.

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*Sophisticated, modern, educated people who work with spirits inhabit their own threshold zone. They live a liminal existence, simultaneously walking in two worlds: the mysterious world of the spirits and the “rational” world that denies spirits’ existence.*

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Places where spirits are most likely to congregate include:

- Natural portals to their realms: wells, caves, springs, certain trees
- Shores, mountain peaks (natural thresholds)
- Cemeteries and birthing rooms (thresholds of life and death)
- Crossroads
- Ruins (especially those of sacred sites or scenes of disasters)



- Traditional fairs, markets, and festivals (spirits enjoy them as much as we do)
- Mirrors and divination devices

Spirits are also encountered, venerated, and petitioned at their shrines, temples, and tombs. Some have intense associations with specific locations. Journeying to a spirit's special shrine is like visiting them at home. Homes are provided for spirits by erecting altars, shrines, and spirit houses or by planting certain types of trees, plants, or gardens.

### WHY DO SPIRITS HELP US?

Different spirits possess different motivations and reasons:

- Love: they are your ancestors, personal guardians, or spiritual patrons.
- Some are just beings of incredible loving generosity and mercy.
- Others, while not so consistently altruistic, have generous moods. Ask at the right moment or in the right way and be rewarded.
- They have a loyalty of some sort, including ethnic, spiritual, or professional patronage.
- Some spirits respond well to bribery.
- Others help because they like you, identify with you, or seek an ongoing relationship with you.

Any one or combination of the above reasons may be true, but in addition, many spirits who help humans do so because it is their job. Providing assistance is their special function, their sacred charge, their *raison d'être*, their reason for being. In many cases, they live to serve and are eager to help. Some have made a sacred vow of assistance and so they *must* help, providing, of course, that you ask and they are aware of the need.

We may never know how many unrequested miracles occur on a daily basis. How many disasters have been secretly averted via spiritual intervention? Some guardian spirits operate undercover, but most desire

credit and rewards for their good deeds: they want to be sure you know who saved the day.

The most powerful spirits can do anything. There is no wish that Isis cannot fulfill. *However*, most spirits are specialists. Should you seriously need legal advice, you wouldn't just ask anyone: you'd look for a lawyer. If your sink backs up, you need a plumber. If your teeth hurt, you wouldn't call that plumber; you'd look for a dentist, preferably one you like and find sympathetic. After all, they will be putting their fingers in your mouth. Requesting assistance from spirits is similar. Associate with spirits you like and find sympathetic: they will be inserting their presence in your life.

So, for example, if your child needs spiritual protection, you might invoke Anubis, Bes, or Kwan Yin. If the love of your life wants to take you on a cruise and you wish to go but are secretly afraid of the sea, spirits who can guarantee safe passage include Poseidon, Agwé, Yemaya, Ma Zu, various mermaids, and the Stella Maris.

Another theory explains why some spirits may offer or withhold help. According to a Jewish legend, two worlds existed before our own. The one just previous to ours was populated by a race of beings who eventually came into bitter conflict with the Creator, who scrapped that world and created a new one with humans instead.

Some of the earlier beings were destroyed, but others survived and still linger or lurk in the shadows. (Depending upon who's telling the story, those primordial survivors may be called spirits or demons.) Some are helpful; others perceive people as usurpers and are resentful; still others are ambivalent. Some blame us; others worry that we'll meet the same fate and seek to protect and assist us. These survivors, the Old Ones, may perceive themselves as our elder siblings, disenfranchised step-siblings, or unfairly evicted prior tenants, thus explaining the complex blend of protectiveness, hostility, love, jealousy, and craving for gifts characterizing the attitudes of some spirits toward people.

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*Fans of H. P. Lovecraft or Buffy the Vampire Slayer/Angel will recognize these Old Ones or Elder Beings.*

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## WORKING WITH SPIRITS

How did people first learn to work with spirits? The short answer is that the spirits taught us. The specifics of how that knowledge was transmitted are a beloved theme of worldwide mythology. Details differ but frequently reference the natural affinity and attraction shared between spirits and people. For example, Siberian myth explains that the Creator sent a sacred bird to Earth charged with the task of teaching people how to shamanize. (Siberia is vast: depending on tribe and location, this bird may be an owl, eagle, raven, or rooster.) The bird fell in love with a woman. Their child was Earth's first shaman.

Since those primordial beginnings, people have taught other people how to work with spirits, sharing information, techniques, materials, and methods.

Working with spirits is an intrinsically sacred art, but a practical one, too. If spirits deliver on their promises, devotions increase. Weary or disenchanted spirits seeking to retire stop producing. Desperate people seeking assistance quickly get the message and seek help elsewhere. If one spirit doesn't deliver, another one may. That spirit then inherits the devotee's attentions. (Conversely, devotees who fail to fulfill obligations or hold up their end of a bargain may lose a spirit's ear and sympathy.)

Those spirits who consistently deliver, who dependably demonstrate generous or hardworking natures develop reputations. Word gets around. Some spirits are eager for human companionship, hungry for our love and attention. Guatemalan spirit Maximon, for instance, bears the reputation of being exceptionally responsive and hardworking, as does the Vietnamese goddess Ba Chua Xu.

It is in the nature of many spirits to be workaholics. This tendency is reflected in clichés like “work like a demon” or working “like one possessed.” This works to our benefit. However, like other workaholics, they may become impatient with slackers. You will be expected to hold up your end of the bargain.

Spirits work, but so do people. It's called *working* because you are not a passive recipient. People don't just sit back and wait for generous

spirits to shower us with blessings. Relationships between people and spirits are symbiotic: that means mutually beneficial. They work for us, and we work for them.

Methods of working with spirits have remained fairly consistent over millennia and all over the world. Documents recording appeals from early Common Era women asking Hermes to protect their soldier sons will sound familiar to anyone working with spirits today. Likewise, if those ancient devotees could time-travel forward to modern spirit-centered rituals, they'd find much to be very familiar.

Types of food or drink offered to spirits may differ; specific songs or drumbeats may differ; which incense is burned may differ; but basic methods of working with spirits are universal and eternal. Spirits communicate via symbols, oracles, and dreams. Most enjoy, crave, and expect small gifts. While the basic structure of independent spirit working is consistent, two factors are unique to each individual transaction and will affect their direction and outcome:

- Will the spirit respond to a petitioner as desired or even respond at all?
- What are the individual petitioner's hopes, fears, beliefs, and level of expertise or desperation?

How one works with spirits depends somewhat on what it is one hopes to receive from them. Let's take a closer look at pathways leading to spirits, and then let's explore the nuts and bolts of working with them. Let's examine two different scenarios.

Someone may literally *adore* a spirit. A spirit may fascinate and enthrall a person. Someone may have incredible respect for a spirit and perceive it as a role model, a shining example, a symbol of courage or fortitude, extreme beauty, virtue, or generosity. What this person desires is the presence of the beloved.

Let's say, for example, that someone has been fascinated with Artemis or Athena since childhood. She may begin collecting images or objects associated with that spirit. She spends a lot of time reading and considering their myths and legends. She wears jewelry or perfume evocative of that spirit; maybe gets a tattoo. People recognize her

affiliation and give her goddess-related gifts. Over the years, her collection grows and may take over a shelf or corner or entire room of her home. Intentionally or not, she has created altar space, whether or not she realizes it.

Maybe this is where this story ends: maybe she receives peace of mind, satisfaction, and happiness from her collection. Maybe she discovers over time that her thinking is clearer while sitting amidst this collection or while holding one particular object in her hands. Solutions to problems just seem to come to her, to pop into her mind. Maybe she starts traveling with a small portable image of the spirit because she sleeps more peacefully when it's with her. Maybe it never progresses from here.

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*Some people know exactly which spirits fascinate, interest, and appeal to them. They love this spirit, regardless of whether any reciprocal gesture is ever received.*

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*But* maybe the spirit starts appearing in her dreams. Maybe the spirit offers good advice, warns of pending problems, or asks for something. Maybe, even during waking hours, this person starts receiving communiqués from this spirit.

This person may never have intended to do more than create a beautiful tribute to a beloved spirit, whose genuine living reality she may never have considered or thought possible. What she has created, however, is a portal with a welcome mat. Through her devotion to the spirit, she has assumed the role of priestess or acolyte. Believers in reincarnation might suggest that she was once such a priestess in a previous life and that her actions are no accident.

Focusing intently on a spirit has attracted its attention. Actions of veneration were pleasing to the spirit: it wants more. Rather than a casual relationship, the spirit may seek increased attention in exchange for protection and patronage. Creation of altar space, the use of imagery,

and/or intense concentration has opened up a portal for the spirit.

If this person chooses to respond to the overtures made by the spirit, or if she, too, would like to kick the relationship up a notch, her next step is to consciously start tending her altar and/or begin feeding the spirit. Most people are amazed, honored, and delighted to receive contact, *but* if, for whatever reason, she does *not* want this relationship, she should very politely, calmly, respectfully, and clearly articulate her reasons why not directly to the spirit, possibly also offering some small tribute or gift as a peace offering in case the spirit is offended.

That's one fairly typical scenario, one way of forming a working relationship with a spirit. The flip side of this scenario is that what many people love most about spirits is their power and generosity. Sometimes a relationship with a spirit is sought specifically because we want something from them. The presence of the beloved isn't enough; help, benefits, a gift, or some miracle is sought.

Let's look at another typical path to the spirits.

This person has little or no interest in spirits, their stories, or whether or not they exist. She may be a rationalist who doesn't "believe" in them, or the whole subject may be off her radar; it's just not relevant. But *now*, some sort of crisis has arisen. Considerable time, effort, and money may have already been spent attempting to solve this problem, but nothing has worked. Finally someone else, seriously or jokingly, suggests an appeal to some spirit, or maybe the person in need saw some vague reference to spiritual intervention in a book.

Previously this suggestion would have been laughed off or automatically rejected, but the situation is now dire and no possibility, regardless how remote, can be dismissed. What this person needs is a miracle. She is clutching at straws. Spiritual intervention may be the only straw left to clutch.

Maybe this crisis is spousal abuse, and so someone has recommended seeking assistance from Yemaya or Ezili Dantor. Maybe she can't get pregnant, and so an appeal to one of the many fertility spirits is suggested (Artemis, Brigid, or Lilith, for example). Maybe the problem is an unhealthy addiction, hers or that of someone she loves. After years of frustration, someone asks, why not petition Maximon for help?

Why not, indeed? This person has *not* spent years accumulating sacred objects and knowledge. She may have no concept of the sacred whatsoever. All these names of spirits may be overwhelming and meaningless. She is a beginner, a novice, and may have doubts about the reality of spirits, let alone her own ability to reach them, *if* they exist. She lacks experience but needs help *now*. What does this person do next? Where does she start?

Here is the method in a nutshell:

- Identify a spirit who can help you or the spirit who is your personal patron.
- Familiarize yourself with this spirit; are you comfortable requesting their assistance?
- Respectfully but straightforwardly and *clearly* articulate what you seek, going into as much detail as needed. You cannot be too clear and precise.

Nothing in life is free. This is important: If there is a *single* key word that must be remembered about working with spirits, it is *reciprocity*. Relationships between people and spirits are *mutually* beneficial: in other words, spirits expect to receive something in return for favors rendered, if only sincere gestures of love and veneration.

Spirits don't want your soul or your firstborn. Put the knife down; no need to draw up a contract in your own blood. There's no need for a written contract at all. That's all propaganda intended to induce fear. Horror stories and religious propaganda present perverted distortions of the ancient art of negotiating with spirits.

In general, spirits seek veneration, relationships, some care and feeding, good deeds on their behalf, and gestures and testimonials to their power and generosity. Thus, the final two steps of working with spirits:

- Explain *precisely* what it is that you will give in return and *exactly* when the spirit should expect payment. *Never* promise something you know you can't or won't deliver.
- If the spirit fulfills its end of the bargain, make sure that you fulfill

yours, too.

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*Let's be frank: in emergencies, people take help wherever they can get it. In desperate circumstances, people will contact and accept aid from those whom they might otherwise prefer to avoid. This fact of life is what keeps loan sharks in business: those in dire financial straits seek and accept their assistance even though fully aware of the danger.*

*Working with spirits is similar: mired in a genuine life-or-death crisis, especially one involving the health or safety of a loved one, many seek out dangerous but powerful spirits. Even when motivated by desperation and hopelessness, even if you feel you have no choice, still familiarize yourself thoroughly with any spirit with whom you work. Learn their habits, their predilections: what do they do when they get mad? This makes for a happier, safer, ultimately more successful working relationship.*

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Some spirits are more flexible and good-natured, more or less acquisitive, compassionate, or generous than others. Some like to bargain or negotiate. Achilles won't respond at all until he considers an offer duly respectful and worthy of him.

There are many paths to the spirits. Different individuals approach spirits for a wide variety of motivations. If you seek nothing from them, if all you desire is to bask in their presence, then this process doesn't really apply (or at least until there is something you desire or need). Since the spirit has not been asked to do anything, nothing is owed in return. Should the devotee become bored or decide to explore a different spiritual path, veneration may simply stop at any time. (Sometimes this is the moment when previously silent spirits rear their heads and make their presence known.)

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*The person offering the petition to the spirit is the person who owes the debt.*



*Even if your request ultimately benefits or saves someone else, it is your wish that was fulfilled.*

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The relationship is more complex, however, if you actually desire something or expect to receive something, even just general patronage and protection. You may just vaguely hope that venerating a spirit will earn good fortune, but if and when you really need something, you must ask for it specifically and explicitly, naming your desire.

These requests are referred to as *petitions*, not in the sense of the modern political petition, a paper signed by vast numbers of people, but in the old-fashioned sense of a petition as a formal request for a favor, presented to royalty.

There are two ways of effectively presenting petitions:

- Petitions are offered spontaneously or impulsively in a moment of passion or despair.
- Petitions are formally presented within the context of rituals. This type of petition is planned in advance. An awful lot of expense and trouble may be taken to offer this petition, with the person sometimes journeying great lengths to be at a shrine at a specific moment. This petition may or may not be accompanied by offerings, the equivalent of a down payment on favors expected or a show of good faith.

If you have the time to plan, then the second method can be extremely effective, but sometimes a sincere cry from the heart is all it takes to catch a spirit's attention and sympathies. This is especially true if a spirit is already awaiting your call.

You will know within a reasonable amount of time whether a spirit has accepted your offer or wishes to negotiate further, because indications will appear. Sometimes immediate fulfillment of the request is the indication, but not always. (Utter long-term silence—no response—may indicate that this particular spirit has refused you or has not heard you. More about this later.)

Those seeking help with any aspect of pregnancy should advise the spirit that payment will only be made after the birth of a healthy child—not just upon conception. Vowing to bring a healthy child of a certain age to visit the spirit’s shrine is a very traditional payment. Likewise someone seeking assistance with healing might specify that payment will be made six months or one year following the cure just to ensure that it’s lasting. (Lists of the *many* spirits concerned with human health and reproduction are found in the Appendix.)

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*Spirits are offered terms and conditions. Tell a spirit exactly what you want. Simultaneously, tell the spirit what you don’t want. State the conditions required for delivery of your payment.*

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Terms and conditions depend upon the nature of what’s sought and the nature of the particular spirit. Of course, the longer a spirit must wait, the more substantial and thoughtful payment should be: you will have had time to prepare.

Spirits frequently work through people. We are their hands, tools, mouths, servants, and messengers, albeit often unknowingly. Although you are petitioning a spirit, do not be surprised to find a miracle arriving via human hands. Miracles frequently look very *normal*; they don’t always arrive with flashing lights and special effects as on T V. If you have a medical condition that has defied treatment and so have petitioned Raphael, a preeminent spirit of healing, and suddenly there is a medical breakthrough that results in your cure, *that’s* your miracle.

In Latin America, this system is called *la promesa*, literally “the promise”: a reciprocal vow, contract, or covenant between a practitioner and a sacred being. Although this term is Spanish, the concept is universal. Who is making the promise? Both spirit and human alike: it is a sacred vow and bond. (Spirits, even dangerous demons, are renowned for keeping their word, once given. They may try to weasel their way out through loopholes or word games, but they will not break a promise.)

Spirits expect to be paid for miracles provided. You want That may sound callous, especially in regard to a sacred being, this point is understood:

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*Some spirit-working traditions cite the marketplace as a metaphor for the world in which we live. Everything, every interaction or relationship with anyone involves negotiations and transactions of one sort or another, not necessarily financial.*

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- People who love and venerate spirits all the time, in good times and bad, tend to recognize gifts and miracles when received. They are quick to render gratitude, affection, tribute, and payments.
- Those who may have petitioned a spirit as a whim or long shot are more likely to dismiss experiences as *coincidence* and hence offer no payment or renege on a deal.

*Believing* in spirits is not necessary. What is required is the belief in the *possibility* that just maybe there is something out there that can help you. If it doesn't, well, there you are back in the same place where you started, problems and all. If you *are* helped, however, then it's crucial to acknowledge the reality of what helped you, even if only to yourself and the spirit.

Whatever you perceive spirits to be, it is crucial, if you intend to work with them, to see them as something alive and independent from you. Many people have a hard time accepting spirits as distinct living entities. Instead spirits are understood as archetypes, metaphors, or other abstract emanations of the human mind. Working with spirits without acknowledging them as independent entities inevitably leads to trouble. How can you ask an archetype for assistance? You can't. How can a metaphor provide miracles? It can't.

Archetypes and metaphors come from the human brain; miracles and favors produced by archetypes and metaphors clearly also stem from the human brain. If it's all from the human brain, then you can provide your

own miracles without asking for outside assistance. (And maybe you can. Some swear by the power of positive thinking. But that's not the same as working with spirits.)

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*In order to negotiate with spirits, to work with them, to request their assistance, to maintain a positive relationship, you must be able to accept spirits as something apart from you, something that exists independently of you.*

---

The problem is that many people *believe* in spirits when they need something and then, when the emergency is over, rationalize that spirits don't really exist and that the solution to their problems derived from coincidence or their own efforts. The result is the tendency to fail to pay off a spiritual debt or fulfill a vow. No one likes an ingrate, especially not spirits. You don't want their reality proved to you via their anger.

Trouble can be avoided very easily. If you can't accept their reality, if you have a deep emotional investment in spirits *not* being real, then just don't address them as living beings. Don't ask for anything. Don't promise anything. Don't fool around.

What's the going cost for a miracle? Again, spirits don't want your soul or your firstborn, either. Miracles provided are not tricks intended to make you relax your guard so that later you can be more easily harmed.

So what *do* you offer in exchange for a miracle? What do you give a spirit who has everything? What do you give someone who may have saved your life and whom you may wish to contact again, should the need arise?

The magnitude of the miracle (how badly it was needed; whether it was a matter of life and death) determines the magnitude of the offering. There are small petitions and major petitions: "Help me find a parking space" versus "Save me from cancer."

*Never* make vague, hysterical, grandiose promises like "I'll give you *anything!*" or "Take whatever you want," or "I'll give you the most

valuable thing I have!” or, like the biblical Jephthah, “You’ll get the first thing I see coming up the road.” You can see right away how this leads to misunderstandings and trouble.

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*Miracle-providing spirits tend to demonstrate displeasure by revoking the miracle. Some spirits are more or less patient and forgiving than others.*

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Likewise, never offer something that you know you won’t deliver or that you’re not sure you can deliver. If you have no money, don’t offer something expensive. It is, however, very traditional to base an offering on the requested miracle itself. Delivery of payment is dependent on delivery of the miracle: they are truly symbiotic. The Romans often inserted a little verbal proviso into spiritual petitions; it translates into English as “I give when you have given.”

- If you are asking for financial assistance, offer to give a percentage of riches received to a cause close to the spirit’s heart.
- Those seeking fertility often name a child after the spirit, bring the child to visit a spirit’s shrine when the child is old enough, and/or raise the child to be an active devotee.
- Those seeking cures may vow to help those suffering from the same affliction should they recover enough to be able to do so.

Historically, working with spirits has been the province of poor and working people. Spirits’ desires are often very modest. Mostly, they seek attention, acknowledgment, and gestures of gratitude. The most important aspect of an offering is that it is given lovingly and respectfully, not grudgingly. True gifts of the heart are more valuable than lavish donations offered carelessly. Here are some generally appropriate payments:

- Provide an artistic tribute, whether created by yourself or commissioned from another.

- Create an altar, whether an actual physical one or a virtual one in cyberspace.
- Throw a party in the spirit's honor, or offer a more private ritual meal.
- Name something important after the spirit, or post its image in a prominent place.
- Testify to the miracle in some public manner.
- Get a tattoo that references the spirit (name, image, or sacred symbols).
- Make a pilgrimage to a shrine or place strongly associated with that spirit.
- Many spirits are associated with specific animals, plants, and sacred sites. The world being what it is, most of them are endangered. Any efforts or charitable donations on their behalf will be greatly appreciated. Thus Artemis has powerful associations with wolves; if she helps you, do something to help them, whether directly or financially. Xtabay is associated with kapok (ceiba) trees; if she helps you, plant or preserve one.

### FINDING YOUR SPIRIT ALLIES

Different people need different spirits. Different spirits are attracted to different people. Not every spirit in this book will interest you; nor will every spirit be sympathetic toward you. Hence, this book identifies many, representing a wide variety of traditions and belief systems, so that you can shop around and locate spirits who are compatible with *you*. Consider it a smorgasbord of spirits. The most crucial issue, of course, is identifying *your* spirits, your own best personal allies; those spirits who walk with *you* offering advice and protection; who hear *your* petitions and answer them.

Obviously, anyone can speak to any spirit they choose. The bigger question is: will that spirit answer? If a spirit doesn't communicate with you, that doesn't prove it doesn't exist. That particular spirit may just not be interested in you. Your own spirit allies, guardians, and protectors

will answer your call. The trick is identifying them.

- The mystery is whether a spirit will work with you or not.
- Your challenge is identifying your own personal spirit allies.

How many spirits will you need? That depends upon you. Some people are social butterflies: they really enjoy the company of spirits. They create elaborate altars and throw frequent parties for the spirits. Many spirits are sociable, too. Invite them into your life, and they'll bring their friends, family, and animal familiars with them.

Other people feel blessed and content with one spirit ally. Likewise, some spirits are solitary or selective. They will only serve those (possibly very few) people they recognize as their own spiritual children, not humanity or the needy in general.

Some spirits are high maintenance, demanding attention and devotion. Prima donnas, they may not wish to share their spotlight, except perhaps with spirits who are deferential toward them. Others possess modest appetites and desires.

How many spirit allies anyone else has is irrelevant. There is no competition. What suits one person doesn't necessarily suit another. More is not necessarily better. It is the quality of each relationship that counts. These are intimate relationships; what is important is what is best for *you*. The best spirit-human relationships are lifelong symbiotic partnerships, characterized by mutual love, respect, and assistance. Consider them alliances, committed relationships, something like a really good marriage.

How will you find your spirit(s)? How do you choose your allies?

Frankly, they usually pick you. The real challenge often resides in identifying those spirits already hovering near; those already on standby, awaiting your call.

Some spiritual traditions suggest that each of us is born with a pack of spirit allies who travel through life with us, accompanying and guarding us. Some theorize that these alliances are eternal. Transcending death, our guardian spirits maintain their watch, incarnation after incarnation. Although *we* may lack recollections of past lives, the spirits know all. If

we are aware of these allies, if we can identify them and explicitly request their help, we then empower them to offer even greater assistance on our behalf. (Many can and will reveal past life information, too.)

Spirits are accumulated as needed. As we journey through life, experiences, accomplishments, behavior, or crises may attract or stimulate new spirit alliances.

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*Marriage isn't the only metaphor for spirit working; it might also be compared to pet adoptions. Dog shelters are filled with needy canines. Most people adopt one or two; some are able to care for many. Levels of attention, love and care received by the dog depend upon the adopting person. Whether the dog stays in his new home or is returned is also ultimately up to the person. Clever dogs attempt to stay in good graces via lots of tail wagging and signs of love. When it comes to spirit working, we're the dogs.*

---

If a spirit's name or image resonates or lingers with you, then it's very possible that spirit has been hovering near you, waiting for contact. If you have ever felt compelled to spend time and effort researching a spirit, maybe it's playing hide-and-seek with you. As the old saying goes, that which you are seeking may be causing you to seek.

Spirits may seek to work with you for any or all of the following reasons:

- The spirit perceives that you share something of its nature or essence.
- Some basis for assistance and loyalty exists (ethnic, familial, religious, professional).
- The spirit perceives a need in you, which it can fulfill.
- This spirit just likes you and enjoys your presence.
- Knowingly or unknowingly, you've called upon this power and they've responded.



Clues to help you identify your spirit allies include:

- Look for spirits whose names, images, or myths linger or haunt you, those spirits you just can't forget, whether positively or negatively. Sometimes spirits who initially scare us, become, after further reflection and knowledge, powerful, valued allies.
- Look for spirits who inspire you creatively, who are already serving as your muse.
- Look for those with whom you identify or with whom you share something significant.
- Look for spirits who possess affiliations with what you love.

If there is something you really love, a particularly beloved place, animal, flower, color, or even a lucky number, look for spirits sharing associations. If you consistently dream of bears or volcanoes, for instance, check the Appendix at the back of this book for associated spirits and see whether any resonate with you. If you've been collecting images of pigs since childhood, consider one of the many spirits associated with swine.

Which spirits appear in your dreams? Which keep popping up in your life? Remember, some spirits frequently manifest in the form of their sacred animals. Read through the entries of this book: you may already have had personal encounters and experiences. You just need to recognize and identify them.

This may sound cut-and-dry, but it's not. Sometimes what we perceive as a clear obvious link with a spirit is actually wishful thinking, fear, lack of self-awareness, or some other confusing human emotion.

Allow yourself to be surprised. Sometimes shockingly unexpected spirits make overtures of patronage. Spirits see our hidden powers and potential, even those we ourselves fail to recognize.

Many of the spirits in this book are *great* spirits, the equivalent of royalty. Their presence is both a blessing and an honor. If they make overtures, consider them; learn about them before ignoring or turning them down too quickly. (Persistent spirits continue to linger quietly, waiting for you to be ready. Others lose interest and won't be back.)

Do you share the name of a spirit? Many traditions consider that sharing a name creates an unbreakable bond. A spirit whose name you share may be obligated to serve as your patron, one reason why so many name their children after powerful, sacred beings.

Were you born on a day associated with a spirit? That, too, may indicate the existence of sacred ties. Brigid's holy day is 1 February. If that's your birthday, consider yourself linked. Various spiritual traditions, including Christian, Aztec, and ancient Egyptian, link specific calendar days with specific spirits. Those born on a spirit's day are believed to share in its essence and/or receive its patronage.

Some spirits are affiliated with the zodiac, Western and otherwise. For example:

- Artemis, Hera, and Yemaya are affiliated with Cancer.
- Ishhara, Oya, and Selkhet are affiliated with Scorpio.
- Kannon is guardian of those born in the Year of the Rat.
- Fudo guards those born in the Year of the Rooster.

Alternatively, consider which spirits might be attracted or sympathetic to you.

Some spirits feel ties of ethnic loyalty. Atargatis is also called Dea Syria, the Syrian Goddess. If you have strong ties to that nation, ancestral or otherwise, then you already have her private number. Rachel is the Mother of Israel. Guadalupe is Protectress of Mexico. Juno is Matron of Rome. In African-influenced Brazil, Yemaya, Queen of the Sea, is a national heroine: those who survived the slave trade's Middle Passage, to Brazil or elsewhere, are believed to have done so via her grace. Their descendents retain this spiritual bond.

Some spirits guard and guide those who share their spiritual or religious inclinations. Others mentor those who embrace certain political or social causes.

Spirits serve as professional patrons:

- Ho Tei and La Madama sponsor fortune-tellers, while Tanit protects astrologers.

- Coatlique has a soft spot for florists; Oshun for hairdressers.
- Brigid and Odin love poets.
- Ogun, Kwan Kung, and Michael Archangel sponsor law enforcement officers.

Some spirits are attracted to certain issues, needs, or even personalities. Some protect people because of shared experiences: Demeter suffered the trauma of a kidnapped child; if that's your personal pain, she shares it. Ezili Dantor raises her children alone; she is the matron of single mothers.

Do you feel in need of greater courage? Maybe it's time to spend time with Maeve or Ogun. Would you like to be more beautiful? Bring Aphrodite, Ezili Freda, or Oshun into your life. Perhaps you seek inner beauty, aspiring to unconditional love and generosity? Jizo or Kwan Yin can lead the way.

Sometimes physical attributes indicate an existing bond with a spirit. (Whether the spirit is merely attracted by these attributes or whether the spirit has actually caused them, essentially marking a person as its own, has long been subject for debate.)

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*Seek spirits you identify with or those you'd like to emulate. Devotion to spirits is sometimes rewarded by inheriting or absorbing that spirit's desired traits. (Conversely, don't spend too much time with spirits you dislike.) Who is your hero or role model?*

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- Obatala is guardian of albinos.
- Simbi's spiritual children may be born with a caul or display heads full of corkscrew ringlets.
- Various spirits of Europe, Asia, and Africa, including Hulda and the Elves, indicate interest in a person by causing hair to spontaneously form locks.

If a spirit resonates for you, odds are it's because it's already calling you, already hovering near you. *However*, if this is not a desired relationship, respectfully decline. Spirits will take "no" for an answer, if delivered politely, respectfully, and honestly.

It may be difficult to extract oneself from an existing relationship, especially if you've already requested and accepted big favors, but no one is ever required to enter a relationship that does not feel absolutely right. Consider these relationships as like marriage; it's not wise to enter casually. (Malevolent or harmful spirits can be permanently banished by more powerful, benevolent spirits. For more details, see page 50: *Are Spirits Dangerous?*)

Ultimately you will know when you have encountered and connected with your own special spirit allies because there will be some sort of response. Spirit contact may be subtle or obvious: a spirit may openly identify itself by name to you in a dream or show itself in a very recognizable form. Alternatively, the spirit's personal attributes, its signs and symbols, may begin to make constant appearances in your life. Sometimes you'll know you've made contact because the spirit has clearly fulfilled a request.

Not all gifts associated with spirits are pleasant or desired. One method of identifying spirit allies is to take stock of your life, especially your trials and tribulations, then determine which spirits are most likely to soothe your troubles and heal your ailments. Alternatively, check to see which might be responsible for causing these problems.

Spirits don't just solve problems; they control them, removing, bestowing, or maintaining, as they please. The very existence of your problems may indicate that some spirit awaits your call, especially if your situation consistently defies standard solutions.

Spirits are often associated with ailments that resist diagnosis and/or treatment. Disease spirits, in particular, both inflict and remove illnesses. The theory is that the spirit has deliberately inflicted the ailment so that you will make contact and request assistance. They may do this from love. They know no other more graceful, less painful way of making their desires known. The disease *is* their method of communication.

Recurring troubles of any sort may indicate a nudging spirit hoping

that eventually you'll ask for help. Once the right spirit is identified and contact initiated, the problem will be solved (and will stay solved as long as you maintain the relationship. Spirits are credited with many inventions, not least the protection racket.) The immediate solving of the problem may indicate that the right spirit has been found.

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*Choose your spirits wisely and carefully. You may have to live with them. Spirits are very similar to human guests: it's easier to invite them in than to make them leave.*

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What happens if you petition the wrong spirit? Most likely nothing. Literally. The wrong spirit is not likely to harm you. You will probably not even register on its radar. (The exception, of course, is if you petition a particularly malevolent spirit.) Spirits lacking interest will ignore you and your petition. You are left exactly where you started, no better but no worse.

Relationships with spirits are like any other relationship. A lot depends on personal chemistry. Sometimes we seek relationships with those who have no interest in us. Sometimes, with effort and persistence, those relationships can be earned. To gain an alliance with a spirit, practice courtship:

- Build an altar for this spirit.
- Become the type of person who would attract this spirit.
- Most importantly, do good deeds on behalf of whatever this spirit loves.

Rituals and visualizations may help identify spirit allies. Sometimes mediums or spiritual advisors can identify your spirit allies. Various commercially available oracle card decks also provide systems of identification. Some are very accurate, the one caveat being that your selection of spirits is inevitably limited by the preestablished number of cards. The oracle may help you identify *some* of your spirit allies, but not

necessarily all.

Don't despair if the identity of your allies is not immediately clear. Ultimately you will know your spirits because they identify themselves to you or respond to some gesture or request. No general rule exists: results may be immediate, but sometimes it's a lengthy process involving lots of trial and error.

Not to be too irreverent, but the process is not unlike entering the magical treasure cave in the old Warner Brothers' cartoon *Ali Baba Bunny*. The cave door opens only in response to a password. The guard seeks to enter the cave but can't recall the magic password, and so he experiments: *Open Sarsaparilla! Open Saskatchewan!* When he finally gets it right (*Open Sesame!*), the door responds. Spirits are similar. When you call on the right one, there will be a recognizable reaction in a reasonable amount of time: a portal of communication will open. Don't be impatient. The process itself is sacred. In addition to revealing your spirits, this is a voyage of self-discovery.

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*To earn an ally, be an ally. Many, if not most, spirits possess sacred animals, plants, or places. Working on their behalf is an act of veneration and should eventually attract favor and attention.*

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### COMMUNICATING WITH SPIRITS

Methods of soliciting human assistance are straightforward. Make your request in person or by proxy; call someone on the phone; send a fax, letter, or e-mail. Clearly, contacting spirits is more complex. Challenges include:

- Getting your message heard
- Communicating clearly, accurately, and precisely so as to prevent miscommunications
- Recognizing, interpreting, and understanding spirit messages and

responses

You may speak to spirits out loud or silently. They can hear you either way. Because you did not speak it aloud does not mean the request was not made. Vows made silently—only in your mind—count. Acknowledge whatever pops into your head, if only to refute, refuse, or clarify.

You may certainly communicate with spirits in any human language. Spirits respond to spoken and written petitions, so clearly they understand us. Some spirits also communicate via human languages, especially those who appear in dreams or who engage in ritual possession, in which case they speak through the mouths of people. (More about this later.)

Some spirits possess powerful verbal skills and are extremely articulate, especially those who exert dominion over poetry or communications or who once had human incarnations. Be cautious with spirits who take special pleasure in human language. Human languages tend to lend themselves to abuse by tricksters, whether spirit or human. Some spirits, like some people, revel in creative word games. Always consider potential implications. Pay close attention to exactly what's been communicated. Speak plainly, clearly, and *precisely* from your heart. Don't use mystic, esoteric language if you don't understand it. The crucial concern is making sure your needs and desires are expressed accurately. If you don't understand what you're saying, how will you know what message the spirit has received?

Working with spirits will sharpen your ears and comprehension. Spirits will teach you to choose your words wisely and to consider what it is that you truly seek. You will learn to clearly articulate your desires: to the spirits, but also to yourself and to other people, as well. Among the by-products of working with spirits is enhanced self-knowledge and improved social skills. The spirits will teach you to *really* listen and hear what's communicated to you, regardless of who's talking.

*Many* spirits, however, including those who visit in dreams, do *not* communicate verbally or at least not consistently in that manner. This does not mean that they do not communicate. Spirits *constantly* communicate with us, assuming perhaps that we still possess the once more prevalent skills of recognizing, interpreting, and understanding

their messages. (One theory is that spirits can see the best in us and thus expect nothing less, even if we do not yet possess those skills. They expect us to live up to our potential.) If one anticipates only verbal messages, then much communication is easily overlooked and lost. Spirits consistently communicate via *symbols*.

Once the knack for it has been acquired, symbolic language is eminently practicable, clear, and straightforward. Fluency requires that you slow down and examine the world around you, paying special attention to any coincidences. The spirits will teach you to read your surroundings the way you read a valuable, trusted road map.

Symbolic language is how spirits are most likely to communicate with you. Even verbal spirits complement their conversation with symbols. This is how it works:

- Most spirits possess various forms, which they consistently assume.
- Most also possess various preferences in food, fragrance, colors, and gifts.
- Some spirits are identified with certain numbers, trees, animals, birds, or plants.
- Individual spirits possess specific symbols, known as attributes, which serve as the equivalent of a calling card. Poseidon's attribute is a trident; Rosmerta's is a cornucopia.

(For more information, see the Glossary entries for *Altar*, *Attribute*, *Iconography*.)

These objects, forms, symbols, and preferences are used as vehicles of two-way communication. They are the vocabulary of spirit working.

For example, Yemaya's color is blue, and her number is seven. She is associated with the ocean, with saltwater, and with wet, juicy fruits containing lots of seeds, like watermelons or pomegranates. To attract her notice, you might somehow prominently feature her symbols. She, in turn, might use them to send a signal to you.

Methods of catching Yemaya's attention include lighting seven blue candles in her honor or inserting a note to her within a hollowed watermelon and sending it out to sea. Shortly after accomplishing either



or both of these actions, were you to observe seven blue balloons unexpectedly floating in the sky, this could be interpreted as a response to your petition or at least an indication that she has heard your call.

But that could just be a coincidence, you say. A basic tenet of working with spirits (or any kind of magical working, for that matter) is that *there is no such thing as coincidence*. Coincidences do not exist. The universe is not random. The concept of coincidence was invented to make it easier to dismiss things to which we should be paying attention. What is labeled *coincidence* is actually a signal to pay closer attention to something, to analyze its meaning and significance. What is labeled *coincidence* is more accurately called *synchronicity*.

To work with spirits is to live in a world where *everything* is potentially sacred. It is not a world to rush through, but to consider and savor. Every color, object, number, and encounter is potentially significant. Spirits open a door to a world that is the diametrical opposite of meaningless and random.

Now clearly, not all coincidences are of equal importance. Some are of great significance; others minor. Some are just little markers indicating that you are on the right path or that attention should be paid. Each is considered, weighed, and interpreted, not ignored or dismissed.

Other means of communicating with spirits include divination, dreams, oracles, and visualizations. Spells and rituals can also facilitate communication.

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*A series of coincidences is the spiritual equivalent of the path Hansel marks with white pebbles in the old fairy tale. They demarcate a road, which you can then choose to follow or not, but of which you should be aware.*

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## **Magic Messenger Dolls**

1. Create a small handcrafted doll to transmit a message to the spirit world. It's your message: sew or make it yourself. No need to be

skillful or talented; what you craft may be as simple or elaborate as you choose. (The simplest doll involves two pieces of fabric stitched together with stuffing inserted and a face painted on.)

2. Consider the spirit you are seeking to contact: select materials or colors evocative of this spirit.
3. Decide exactly how to phrase your message. Focus intently while crafting the doll.
4. Write your message on a small piece of paper, which may then be attached to the outside of the doll or stuffed inside, perhaps adding a small gift for the spirit.
5. Look the doll in the face, and tell it to transmit your message for you.
6. Leave the doll at a crossroads, cemetery, or any place where you perceive the spirit is present and/or powerful. It may also be buried, tied to a tree, or deposited in water.

### THE CARE AND FEEDING OF SPIRITS

How do you attract the spirits you seek? How do you encourage them to linger? Two general rules:

*If you feed them, they will come.*

*Care for them and they will stay.*

How do you get anyone to come visit you? Issue an invitation. How do you get them to stay or return? Make them feel welcome and desired. Offer what they crave and enjoy. Make the spirit feel at home.

Spirits are *constantly* cultivated, welcomed, or discouraged from drawing near. The problem is that this is generally done unconsciously with no awareness of which spirits are actually being beckoned closer. Which spirits do *you* cultivate? Are they benevolent? Powerful? Dangerous? Helpful? Troublemakers? Who do you attract? Is it who you want? Who are you already feeding, albeit accidentally?

The type of work you do, the food on your table, beverages, fragrances, music, friends and animals surrounding you, all this affects

the types of spirits you attract. Any sounds, images, fragrance, foods, work, or emotions that are constantly, consistently present potentially serve as lures for spirits (or serve to keep them away).

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*Working with spirits is sometimes called walking with spirits, reminiscent of advice offered to medieval pilgrims: “If you do not travel with the one whom you seek, that one will not be found when you reach your destination.”*

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The goal is to consciously issue invitations only to spirits sought, simultaneously discouraging unwanted guests. Consciously providing the ambience and gifts a spirit craves issues a potent, seductive invitation.

Summoning spirits involves courtship, seduction, bribes. Create an atmosphere (or at least a little corner) that appeals to a spirit and makes it feel at home. Many spirits possess associations with specific colors, numbers, images, fragrances, and objects. These are the tools used to beckon them. Spirits’ special colors, numbers, images, and attributes are essentially aspects and reflections of themselves. Oshun, for example, is identified with the number five, the spectrum of colors from yellow to gold to orange, sweet (not salt) water and honey. It would be accurate to say these things are sacred to Oshun, but it is also accurate to say that they share Oshun’s essence. She recognizes herself in them. By presenting these things to her, she not only feels at home, she finds herself in your home.

Manipulating these items via offerings and presentation simultaneously serves as a tribute and an invitation. Thus, henna is sacred to Hathor but henna also *is* Hathor. They share the same essence. This is a complex, esoteric notion; it emphasizes and underlines the omnipresence of the sacred. Look around you: everything you see, hear, smell, and touch may share the essence of one or more spirits. Make sure they are those you seek.

The most common method of conscious manipulation and presentation involves construction of some sort of altar, but this is not necessary. (For

more information on altars, see the Glossary.) Simply creating an ambience that attracts a spirit is sufficient. Select colors, items, plants, fragrances, and images (paintings, statues, photos, posters) carefully.

Spirits aren't only attracted by the tangible, but are also summoned by sound, emotion, and activities. Some love dance or certain musical instruments. Djinn can't resist listening to a good story. Yemaya despises domestic violence; negative spirits enjoy it. Spirits generally appreciate a good meal and are inclined to linger or return for more, especially if you're serving what they like. They like to be comfortable and cosseted; their special colors, fragrances, and sacred objects attract them like a magnet. Some spirits are attracted to music, plants, animals, or different human activities.

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*Child spirits don't have to worry about cavities: it's okay to feed them nothing but candy. Likewise, spirits don't suffer from lung cancer, cirrhosis, or clogged arteries. Don't worry about what's good for them; feed them what they like.*

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What distinguishes people from other species? One standard anthropological suggestion is that we cook our food. Prepared foods and beverages are something special we have that spirits crave. These serve as tribute, payment, and bargaining chips.

Spirits like to eat. (Some *really* like to drink.) In the same manner that people have special treats that are their favorites, so do many spirits.

Lighting candles and offering flowers are popular forms of veneration, but feeding spirits human food or drink on a regular basis is the most common method of venerating and maintaining contact with them. Think about preparing a birthday dinner for a beloved child: there will be a special cake in the child's preferred flavor, probably complete with significant decorations plus other favorite foods. That's essentially how you feed a spirit.

The custom of providing spirits with human food and drink is global. Vestiges of this universal ritual survive in the milk and cookies left for

Santa on Christmas Eve. If you are unfamiliar with the custom, then the next time you are in a Chinese or Thai restaurant, look to see whether food offerings have been placed on an altar.

Differences arise in exactly which foods are chosen, how and when they are presented, and crucially what is done with the food after it's been given to the spirit.

- Some traditions consistently serve only a spirit's favorite food and drink.
- Other traditions offer spirits a sampling of whatever people are having.

In other words, sometimes people just share their own meals. This may be a full portion or just a little morsel, similar to a tidbit for a pet. This method is often used to serve ancestors or house spirits; but it is also just standard practice in some spiritual traditions. Depending on circumstances, it may be all that people *can* offer.

On the other hand, sometimes people purchase or prepare foods especially for spirits. Tremendous care is taken to ensure that spirits only receive what they like. This may be a tiny treat or an elaborate, multi-course meal.

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*Not sure what to serve? Don't worry. A spirit may advise you of its wishes in a visualization or dream; however, a wide canon of spirits' food preferences exists, especially those of popular, widely venerated spirits. This lore has been documented over the ages as well as transmitted orally. Within this book, individual encyclopedia entries detail spirits' specific likes and dislikes, wherever applicable. Where no information exists, serving food or drink reflecting a spirit's area of origin or spiritual path is usually a safe bet.*

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What this spirit receives may bear no relationship to anything consumed by its devotees. Many teetotalers buy copious amounts of

liquor never to be tasted by human lips, only by spirits. Likewise many nonsmokers keep their spirit-allies well stocked with tobacco products. (Some light cigarettes for spirits or blow smoke over their images. Others offer unlit offerings, just setting cigarettes down, individually or as a pack.)

Spirits may express preferences for certain foods or beverages, often even for specific brands of alcohol, soft drinks, and cigarettes (perfume, too).

- Some have very modest, ascetic taste. (Baron Samedi accepts dry toast and black coffee.)
- Others prefer luxuries. (Ezili Freda expects champagne and fine French pastry.)
- Others enjoy home-cooked meals or ethnic specialties. (Kybele craves the feta cheese, honey, and garlic of her Anatolian homeland.)
- Some, like Papa Legba, crave treats like candy or cigarettes.
- Others just want to drink; keeping them boozed up keeps them generous and happy.

Sometimes, as with human guests possessing food allergies, it's crucial to know what *not* to serve: Fairies and Djinn refuse anything containing salt. Some spirits reject alcohol or are vegetarians.

Spirits may be served in very simple fashion or elaborate. Some are given their own table service, to be used only by that spirit. After these dishes are washed, they may be dried with towels color-coordinated to match a spirit's preferences. The important thing is that spirits are treated like honored, treasured guests.

What transforms an ordinary plate of food or glass of water into a sacred offering? Your thoughts, words, and actions. Don't just put the offering down. Even if you say nothing else, address the spirit by name or title and identify the offering as being for them. This may be done silently or aloud; they *can* hear your thoughts. (So something along the lines of "Here, Aphrodite, this is for you" would be the bare minimum.)

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*Let one tribute serve as another. Serve the spirits spirits named in their honor: brand names of many alcoholic beverages evoke spirits, such as Aphrodite Ouzo, Thor's Hammer Vodka, Frida Kahlo tequila, or Garuda beer. If you can't find an exact match, be creative: the Badb is only one of several crow spirits who might fancy a glass of Old Crow Bourbon.*

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Regardless of what, how, or where spirits are fed, an offering should never be tossed down as if it were scraps. Service should always be accompanied by a smile, respect, and courtesy. Don't hurry; treasure the moment. Feeding spirits is an opportunity to converse with them. It is your moment to thank them for past favors and to describe what may be needed in the future. Take a few minutes and speak while making your offering:

- Wish them good morning, good night, or whatever is appropriate; if it's a holiday or feast day, acknowledge it.
- Tell them about yourself, your family, and your needs.
- Bless them. Request a blessing in turn.
- Thank them for honoring you with their presence.
- If you feel inclined, sing to them, dance for them, recite poetry, prayers, or sacred texts.
- Pay attention to thoughts that just pop into your head; sometimes these are responses or messages from the spirits.

Food, beverages, and gifts make spirits feel welcome but also become influential tools of communication. Spirits are bribed with extra gifts. Consider them motivational tools. Let's say, every Monday you offer Papa Legba a glass of rum, just because you love him and wish to keep him near. However, one particular week, you need a special favor, so when offering him his regular tippie, tell him that if and when he comes through for you, you'll give him a little something extra. *You* specify what that something extra will be. (A thought that suddenly pops into your head might be his suggestion. There's a reason the words *inspiration*

and *spirit are* related. If his suggestion sounds right, you're in agreement. If it's not what you had in mind, nicely say "no" and make a counteroffer.)

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*Sometimes spirits serve themselves. Everyone is occasionally messy, but if food consistently falls from your fork or if drinks continuously spill, this may indicate a spirit trying to catch your attention, whether to have a word with you, initiate a new relationship, or suggest that present offerings are inadequate. Ancestral spirits are notorious for eating off your plate, but theoretically this could be any spirit. Pay attention to whatever it is that falls (specifically which food or drink) as these are the clues revealing the identity of your secret sharer.*

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If you're requesting a small favor, maybe offer to buy finer rum or a cigar. Specify whether this extra treat will be a one-time deal (one favor/one extra) or whether it will occur on multiple occasions or regularly from now on. Always be very clear.

If the favor you seek is more substantial, so should be your bribe. Maybe offer a full meal, a beautiful candle, or a new altar image. Gifts are in proportion to favors done and are given when favors are received.

Conversely, you may decide a spirit has let you down. You've been feeding a spirit long-term, for instance, but recently problems have occurred that fall under his jurisdiction. It is usually not advisable to abruptly terminate devotions, but they may be cut back. Explain to the spirit why the offering is not quite as enticing this week and describe the help you need in order to remedy the situation happily for both of you. Let's say you're feeding a spirit of prosperity and for a while your finances improved. Recently, however, there have been setbacks. Explain (politely!) that unfortunately, due to this reversal of fortune, you're unable to make the same fine offering as usual but must give something less. If the spirit wishes improvement, he or she will have to help.

Negotiations may be sensitive. Who exactly is serving whom? Spirits



may understand that they are doing *us* a favor by accepting offerings and gracing us with their presence. Spirits sometimes let their patronage slip a little if unhappy with their treatment and offerings. They may consider their power to be a motivational tool to be used on *you*.

The longer you work with a spirit, the more sensitive you become to its moods and desires. It will let you know if it's content or if something is amiss.

### WHERE ARE SPIRITS SERVED?

Serving spirits potentially transforms any space into sacred space. Where you place offerings depends upon the spirit in question and your desires and circumstances.

Offerings may be placed:

- On an altar.
- Wherever *you* eat.
- Wherever a spirit is most comfortable. For example, offerings for fire spirits are traditionally placed in or near hearths. Guardian spirits are fed near whatever they guard—no need to interrupt them from their duties.
- Libations may be poured on the ground or served in a chalice or glass.
- Depending on the spirit, offerings are placed in trees, buried in the earth, left at the shore, a cemetery, or a crossroads, or placed in living natural waters (sea, river, or stream).

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*It is ultimately the sincere gesture that counts most. If you serve spirits secretly, a tiny bit of food may be discreetly left on the side of your plate, just underneath it, or, if necessary, slipped onto the floor. Accompany the action with silent invocation.*

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Alternatively, serve spirits wherever their presence is needed.

Benevolent spirits bring blessings and benefits in their wake. Their very presence is auspicious, lucky, and produces a cleansing effect: malevolent spirits and psychic debris flee before them.

#### **WHEN ARE SPIRITS SERVED?**

That depends on the expectations of the spirit and on your desires and resources. Some spirits expect to be fed daily; others once a week; still others expect only annual offerings, usually on their feast days. (Details are found in individual entries.) That said, the more you feed a spirit, the happier it will be. Much depends on your relationship with the spirit. Spirits who are your allies, your constant companions, are usually fed on a steady, regular schedule. Others are fed only as part of a petition for help or as a gesture of gratitude. Some, like Hekate, prefer to be fed at night; others, particularly spirits affiliated with the sun, like Apollo, prefer daytime offerings. Still others, like Aurora, Goddess of Dawn, demand service first thing in the morning.

Coordinate feeding, appeals, spells, and rituals to coincide with times when spirits are most receptive or at the peak of their powers:

- Some spirits are associated with specific days of the week. For instance, Sarasvati, Goddess of Wisdom, is associated with Sunday.
- Some spirits are associated with specific dates of the year: Nicnevin, a Scottish witch goddess, is most accessible on the eve of 31 October, the beginning of the dark half of the ancient Celtic calendar (and modern Halloween).
- Some spirits are associated with celestial phenomena like solstices, equinoxes, or specific moon phases: Hekate favors the Dark Moon.
- Some spirits are at the peak of their power during specific seasons (winter, summer, etc.). Aine, beautiful Irish sun goddess, is at optimum power during the summer.
- Some spirits are associated with specific time periods of the year: Berchta and Odin are particularly active at Yuletide.

Sometimes care and feeding is temporary, as with disease spirits or Birth Fairies. Sometimes spirits are feasted annually, as on the Day of the Dead when lavish gifts and meals are offered to the dearly departed

before sending them on their way. Sometimes care and feeding is regular, consistent, ongoing, and potentially forever. If you succeed in attracting a spirit and it makes its presence known, it can be difficult and awkward to stop making the offerings that are now expected.

### WHAT DO YOU DO WITH SPIRIT FOOD?

If you work with spirits long enough, undoubtedly you will eventually witness the unusual. However, food offered to spirits usually just sits there until it's removed. Don't expect it to disappear by itself. This doesn't mean the spirits aren't eating: they partake of the essence, the spirit of the food, not its physical mass. (Beverages are different. They evaporate. The rate at which a liquid evaporates or doesn't may indicate whether or not a spirit likes the drink.)

To eat or not to eat: that is the question. What do you do with food and drink that's been given to spirits? Must it be thrown out, or should you eat it? Various approaches exist. Any of the following options will work, as long as the spirit understands what's going on. Choose which is most comfortable for you, but be consistent.

- Food is shared. Spirits consume the essence of the food (the spirit of the food). Humans wait a little while, allowing the spirits to partake first, but then actually consume the food. If this method is chosen, be sure to explain it explicitly to the spirits. This is a traditional Hawaiian mode of offering; chants accompanying offerings specify, "the essence for you; the food for me."
- Food may be divided into portions. When sharing food with Djinn, one portion is prepared without salt; the rest contains it. The presence of salt demarcates which part is for Djinn and which for people. Food for Djinn is often served outside, not in the home. Once it's been given, it's just left. Whatever happens to it is up to them.
- Some people refuse to touch *any* food offered to spirits; it's perceived as unlucky, dangerous, or inauspicious to do so as it no longer belongs to the human realm. *Nothing* is shared. Physical remains are eventually thrown away, tossed down the drain, left to decay, burned, buried, given to birds or animals, or disposed of

according to ritual. This may be dependent on the specific spirit. For example, while some dispose of Ogun's leftovers in the trash; others leave them at railroad tracks. Crossroads are exceptionally spiritually powerful places: many dispose of all offerings there. (This may be a rustic, forest crossroads or a garbage can located at a crossroads within a local shopping mall. Remember, a crossroads is anywhere where two or more paths cross.) Disposal methods may also depend on human preferences: those uncomfortable with "wasting" food may choose to scatter remnants to the birds.

Whatever method you choose, let the food stand long enough for the spirit to partake. How long is that? You decide, but usually at least the length of a reasonably leisurely meal. (If circumstances force you to make offerings secretly, the process may be speeded up; just explain to the spirits so that they understand. In general, spirits are very good-natured and cooperative, as long as they know what's going on. Speak to them plainly. If they're not happy with what you're able to offer, ask them to help remedy the situation.) Some leave offerings out overnight or until the next is scheduled so that a spirit never has an empty dish. Beverages may be left out until they evaporate or are scheduled to be replaced.

Feasts or parties may be given in a spirit's honor. This may be for fun, for pleasure, or as a fulfillment of a vow. A party may be just for you and the spirits. Conversely, friends and family may be invited to celebrate and mingle with the spirits. It is also traditional to sponsor charitable meals for impoverished and hungry people in a spirit's honor, especially as fulfillment of a vow.

Depending upon your arrangement with the spirit, it may or may not be necessary to tell anyone else about the spiritual aspects of a dinner. Secret codes may be used to represent the spirit, simultaneously honoring the spirit and protecting your privacy. For instance, Ogun, Patron of Warriors, might be honored by sponsoring a dinner for veterans in need. Serve food and drink associated with him. Decorating the room with images of creatures associated with him (big red roosters) or images of trucks, armored vehicles, and weapons (his attributes) evokes his presence without actually revealing his name.

## RITUAL

Throw a dinner party for some spirits. How do you choose your guests?

- Invite spirits who resonate with you or those you would like to get to know better.
- Invite spirits who share your ancestry or your spiritual beliefs.
- Choose those you'd like to honor.
- Choose spirit guests carefully, as if arranging a party for people. Do whatever you normally do: If you usually pay attention to proportions of male and female, gay and straight, single and married, old and young guests, then do the same with spirits, too. If you don't enjoy the company of children, don't invite the Marassa or any other Divine Children. Avoid whoever you dislike. Do you want all females? Males? Only the benevolent? Only the witty? The bold, the bad, the beautiful? Decide and pick.
- Alternatively, live dangerously and let divination be your guide. See which guests seek an invitation. Close your eyes, open this book, stick your finger on a page, and see whose name comes up. Repeat until you have enough guests. (Be careful with this method: you must be consistent. If your finger lands on a name, that spirit will be offended if not invited.)

Once you have your guest list, plan your menu. Set the table, creating place cards for each spirit. Seat yourself at the head of the table; you're the host. Add human guests or not, as desired. Be creative; have fun. Include ambient music, but leave some moments of silence in order to receive inspiration and messages. After the party's over, pay special attention to your dreams.

Let's get a crucial issue out of the way, as it prevents so many from accessing the blessings of the spirits and because, ironically, in the manner of self-fulfilling prophecies, fear is what attracts dangerous spirits.

**ARE SPIRITS DANGEROUS?**

Well, yes, honestly, sometimes; but not in the ways that many fear and imagine. An old aphorism suggests that the word *fear* is an acronym for “false evidence appearing real.” Much of what so many fear about spirits derives from thousands of years of false evidence, motivated mainly by two reasons:

- Some people want to discourage other people from independently working with spirits (usually so that contact is maintained only by an official hierarchy).
- Scary stories are more fun, suspenseful, and interesting than happy testimonials and so are more frequently told (and embellished to become even *more* interesting!).

Spirits aren't lap dogs. They're not pets or machines or imaginary superheroes. They are beings of immense, even unspeakable, power. That's why people venerate and seek to work with them. That power is why they are able to perform miracles and remove obstacles. Toy Fairies, absolutely incapable of harm, are available in gift stores. The real ones, the ones with the capacity to bless and protect, not only possess that unspeakable power but also the ability to choose how to use it or not.

The following are the most common, yet unfounded, fears regarding spirits:

- Spirits seek to ensnare souls.
- Spirits inevitably lead you down a path of doom and damnation.
- All spirits are evil.

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*Just as with fire and knives, spirits must always be treated with respect and caution. A combination of common sense and knowing how to work with them ensures safety.*

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The short, blunt response is that these accusations are false, but to

dispel fear, it is important to understand *why* these allegations even exist. (This is crucial: those who approach with love and respect may never ever encounter a negative spirit while those who reek of fear may attract the most malignant.)

Spirits, in general, get along with each other. Exceptions exist: Oshun and Oya have a long-running feud. What this means in practical terms is that they shouldn't be venerated side by side. If you seek relations with both, maintain separate but equal altars. (And people do and it's fine.)

Why? Two reasons: First, because otherwise, havoc may ensue, major or minor. Classic example: my friend simultaneously purchased glass-sheathed candles dedicated to each of these West African spirits and attempted to carry them home in the same small shopping bag. Needless to say, violence erupted: the bag (and candles) spontaneously and explosively broke before arriving home. The two warrior goddesses couldn't stand being that close to each other.

A potentially larger problem is that close proximity distracts them. Feuding spirits may compete with each other rather than dedicating themselves to helping you. *However*, even if these spirits prefer to avoid each other, they do not attempt to eliminate each other, nor do they paint each other as evil.

Other potentially competitive pairs include Artemis and Aphrodite, Ares and Athena, Hera and Leto, Ogun and Shango, Pelé and Poliahu, Garuda and the Nagas:

- Don't stand their statues side by side.
- Don't make the same appeal to both simultaneously.
- Don't attempt to play them against each other; it backfires.

Spirits can coexist; it's people who won't. When one nation conquers another or when aggressive missionaries proselytize, the status of preexisting local spirits inevitably becomes an issue. Typically one or more of the following scenarios results:

- Pantheons compromise, merge, or at least cooperate with each other, comfortably or not. Greek mythology provides the most famous example: Zeus, who arrived in Greece with Indo-European

invaders, married the indigenous goddess Hera, representing a merger of what were once two traditions.

- Sometimes one pantheon is coerced to serve another, as in Tibet where many indigenous Bon spirits now protect Tibetan Buddhism. Likewise in Myanmar, indigenous Nat spirits (or at least the thirty-seven most cooperative) also guard the Dharma. (See entries for *Bon Spirits*, *Nats*, and *Nats, Thirty-Seven* for further information.)
- Older, indigenous, or officially out-of-favor spirits are demonized. Witness the Jewish Bible whose prophets railed against popular veneration of Asherah and Ba'al. (Although cooperation exists here, too: annually Azazel gets his goat.) See individual entries for further details.

Christianity demonized *all* spirits, no compromises allowed. To be a Christian meant to deny other competing spirits; to fail to do so was a sin; the price: burning in Hell. As Christianity became a world power, this doctrine was carried all over Earth. People were taught that spirits whom they had previously venerated had, in fact, tricked and fooled them. The Church didn't deny that spirits delivered favors but interpreted these gifts as containing deceptive hidden costs: hellfire and damnation.

Spirits, it was officially explained, only offered gifts because they secretly wished to ensnare your one true immortal soul and send it straight to Hell, regardless of whether the particular spirits in question acknowledged the existence of Hell, single souls, or even the value of a human soul. (Many spirits, extremely ego driven, put greater value on altars, shrines, and public testimonials than on acquiring anyone's soul. Offering your soul isn't necessarily perceived as a good deal from their perspective.)

The ancient practice of bargaining and negotiating with spirits was reinterpreted as selling one's soul, Doctor Faust style. Those who argued or attempted to maintain traditional pre-Christian practices were accused of heresy, witchcraft, or devil worship and eliminated or frightened into submission. After almost two thousand years, this Christian vision has permeated popular Western culture. It shows up *constantly* in media depictions of spirits, especially on television. Spirit



hunter/exorcist/vampire slayer characters who display no other indications of religiosity and who may not even be Christian brandish Christian emblems (crosses, Holy Water) and exorcise in Latin because the concept that Christianity and its symbols trump evil spirits is so totally ingrained.

Implicit in this assumption is that no other tradition ever had to remove recalcitrant spirits or is capable of doing so, as if thousands of years of worldwide shamanism had never existed. The alternative subliminal message is that Christianity not only overpowers spirits but other spiritual traditions, too.

After the equivalent of an almost two-thousand-year-old ad campaign, even those who intellectually recognize propaganda may still be afraid. Ironically, this potentially creates a self-fulfilling prophecy: fear attracts the scariest and most malevolent spirits.

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*The concept of each person possessing one single soul is not shared by all or even most spiritual traditions, including Judaism. Instead, each person is assigned multiple souls, although the number and nature of these souls may differ, depending on tradition. Wandering dream souls enable shamanic journeying. Esoteric, mystic rites sometimes earn an extra bonus soul. Souls may fragment after death: one part assuming duties as an ancestral spirit; one part lingering near bodily remains; another journeying to an afterlife realm.*

*There is no one single soul to lose or sell.*

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Personally, I find people far scarier and less predictable than spirits, but ultimately it makes no difference what I or anyone else writes, says, or advises. What is significant is what *you* believe, know, and fear. (And if you're really afraid, you may already have had a bad experience with spirits; it's a vicious cycle.)

So then, exactly how *are* spirits dangerous? In what ways?

In some ways, spirits are not all that different from people, just on a grander, heightened scale. Most people are generally good-hearted,

although we all have a bad day once in a while when we exhibit crankier and more irritable behavior than usual.

Some people are calm, serene, and even-tempered, easy to please. Some are moody, crotchety, or short-tempered, but it is the rare individual, the exception to the rule, who can be described as truly and thoroughly wicked. The same goes for spirits.

Just as one can't deny the existence of the occasional "bad seed" among humans, so some bloodthirsty, malevolent spirits certainly do exist. Some are described in these pages so that they may be identified and avoided. *Any spirit who encourages harmful behavior is by definition a malevolent spirit and should be avoided or banished.*

Malevolent, bloodthirsty, corrupting spirits crave negative human emotions. That's their food. If they find no food, they will ultimately leave, seeking it elsewhere. What attracts them is intense violence, hatred, anguish, jealousy, and most especially, terror. The scent of fear to a malevolent spirit is like the scent of honey to a bear.

Love, kindness, and serenity repel malevolent spirits and are the best measures one can take to avoid them. The presence of positive, benevolent spirits also keeps the malevolent far away. Nature abhors a vacuum. Evil spirits are not unlike those super-germs who appear when benign bacteria are banished. Keep powerful, protective spirits close, and there will be no room for the malignant.

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*Control and banish harmful spirits by calling in bigger guns: aggressive guardian spirits powerful enough to drive evildoers away, foremost among them humanity's defender, Michael Archangel, but also many others representing many traditions. Check entries and the Appendix for further details.*

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*However, it is important to distinguish between those very few spirits who may truly be wicked (determined by a history of their actions) as opposed to the many who are slandered. Just because a spirit has been*

labeled “evil” or “monstrous” doesn’t necessarily mean that this is true. Always establish who has been doing the labeling. Spirits labeled “evil” or “dangerous” tend to fall into several categories. (Some belong to more than one.)

### **Guardian spirits are often categorized as dangerous demons.**

Spirits charged with the task of protecting something (wild nature, animals, or Earth’s hidden treasures) are often categorized as dangerous demons. That’s because what they’re usually protecting Earth from is *us*. They obstruct someone’s desire to take or exploit something, hence frustrated people label them evil, and the label sticks. Examples include guardians of mines like the Knockers or snake spirits like Nagas, Klu, and the many dragons whose sacred functions include protecting sources of freshwater.

### **Guardian spirits also protect shrines, buildings, and sacred areas.**

These spirits are only dangerous to those they perceive (rightfully or wrongfully) as threatening or harming whatever it is they protect. They may, in fact, inflict punishment, but there is nothing random about it. (They are potentially kind and very helpful to others.) If such a guardian has been activated or offended, sincere rituals of propitiation may be in order. Active efforts to protect whatever it is they guard may also calm them down.

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*The vengeance of guardian spirits is a staple of Gothic novels and old movies, such as Wilkie Collins’ 1868 novel, The Moonstone, often considered the first English-language detective story, or The Hope Diamond Mystery, the 1921 film starring Boris Karloff. (Legend has it that the infamous Hope Diamond, long rumored to be cursed and now housed in the Smithsonian Institution, was violently ripped from a statue of the usually benevolent goddess Sita, hence the curse.) The theme remains current: Shekhar Kapur’s twenty-first-century comic book series, Snake Woman (Virgin Comics), is also based on this premise.*

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### **Some spirits demonstrate love aggressively.**

They are perceived as dangerous because they possess aggressively protective inclinations. They are not dangerous toward those they love but may react strongly toward a devotee's enemies or those perceived as harming or obstructing their devotees. The equivalent of sacred bodyguards, these are often among the most desired spirit allies. It is not unknown for people (the aforementioned devotees) to exploit or manipulate a spirit's protective nature.

At one time, I cared for a number of Doberman pinschers. One was particularly fond of me, expressing her devotion via protective gestures. She could be observed wistfully hoping to attack something as a means of proving love. Some spirits are similar in nature but on an extremely heightened scale. Can this possibly lead to trouble and tragedy? Sure. If such a spirit is your ally, it is crucial to maintain good communication, letting them know when you are truly bothered and when you are not. Many Djinn fall into this category, especially those who despise humanity in general but really adore a few select individuals.

### **Many so-called dangerous spirits are aggressively Pagan.**

They are confrontational, not collaborative or meek. In the face of new religions from which they were excluded and/or vilified, these spirits did not go quietly into the night, hence lengthy propaganda campaigns against them. For example, the Russian spirit called the Leshii is frequently described as a "dangerous devil," sometimes even identified with *the* devil. Stories about the Leshii refusing to assist people unless they remove their pendant crosses and stamp on them are told with the intention of making him appear evil and un-Christian. In fact, the Leshii is *not* Christian. He is, however, not evil, unless, by definition, not being Christian is evil.

Many spirits will work with you, regardless of your other spiritual commitments. Not the Leshii: he is as uncompromising as any strict Christian. In addition to serving as guardian of forest trees and animals (potentially bringing conflict with people), he is irritated by those secretly requesting his assistance while publicly renouncing Paganism.

**Many so-called dangerous spirits are actually what are known as volatile spirits.**

These spirits fly off the handle easily. Volatile spirits, like volatile people, must be handled with care. They are not evil, but they are temperamental. Fail to treat them with respect and courtesy and they may lash out. Some take offense easily. Djinn are famously volatile, as are many Fairies. It doesn't take much for them to perceive a slight. However, if approached humbly with love, many volatile spirits are beings of supreme generosity. Examples: Hera, Lilith, Pelé, and Maria Padilha.

Whether a volatile spirit demonstrates temperamental behavior may have a lot to do with you. Be honest with yourself. How are your social skills? Are you the only one in the office able to pacify and get along with a temperamental boss? If you are intuitive and diplomatic and normally put effort into pleasing and getting along with others, volatile spirits may not pose a problem for you.

On the other hand, if you are constantly accused of being disrespectful and having a bad attitude—even if you don't perceive it to be so—it may be wise to give volatile spirits a wider berth. Similarly, if giving orders is second nature to you, as opposed to being of service, why not stick to the many patient, placid, good-natured spirits?

**Some spirits' sacred function involves administering justice.**

This justice is often on behalf of those unable to claim retribution otherwise. Those in positions of power and privilege, who thought they could get away with something until these spirits intervened (frequently sexual transgressions), are quick to label them “evil.”

These spirits are the equivalent of undercover morality police. Many are protectors of women. Thus, in these pages, you will find a fairly substantial number of beautiful female spirits accused of seducing human men as a prelude to scaring, harming, or killing them. (These seductions inevitably occur in lonely, deserted places at night; the men usually begin as willing victims or may, in fact, aggressively initiate the encounter.)

The part of this story that's generally omitted, perhaps because it

makes the legend less salacious, is that targets tend not to be random (at least in the original versions; horror movie depictions don't necessarily stick to tradition). Many are targeted in response to transgressions committed against human women. A classic example are the Vila, famed for punishing men who abandoned women at the altar or who impregnated women, then deserted them, which in conservative societies, effectively destroyed the lives of these women and their children, sometimes literally.

### **Some spirits are amoral and open to bribery.**

They will fulfill *any* human request, providing payment is sufficient. It is not that this spirit is evil, per se; it will, however, not rebuff the requests of angry, jealous, or evil people and so can be dangerous.

Should you perceive that such a spirit has attacked you, these spirits are countered (safely) by calling in more powerful spirits to foil and banish them or (less safely) by offering a larger bribe. They have no loyalty and will switch sides. From their perspective, there is no devotee, just a paycheck. Working with them does not lead to happy endings. Inevitably, these spirits abandon or turn on those who summoned them and so are dangerous to work with. Although they are far from the only spirits of this type, the Haitian spirits called Baka are a classic example of amoral, independent-operator spirits.

### **Some spirits operate protection rackets.**

This is probably the most common “danger” emanating from the spirit realm. As is the nature with protection rackets, once you begin working with them, it may be difficult to stop.

In practical terms, what does this mean? If you have started making small offerings (glasses of rum or water; coffee, or cigarettes; fruit, rice, or toast), on a daily, weekly, or annual basis, you should expect to do so continuously, possibly for the rest of your life. (Practical details on page 41: *The Care and Feeding of Spirits.*)

Unlike mobsters, most spirits are reasonable. If scheduled offerings are delayed because of travel, emergency, or illness, they understand (and may be appealed to remedy situations if they want their service back.)

Careless, haphazard treatment, however, may stimulate spirits to offer reminders of why their services were initially sought.

Most devotees don't find this a problem: most spirits expect very minor payments in exchange for the blessings, prosperity, and miracles they bestow. (And of course, in the manner of protection rackets, should a spirit withdraw its patronage or stop producing assistance, devotees may be justified in withholding offerings.) However, tremendous pleasure and spiritual satisfaction is potentially derived from serving spirits. Often offerings continue whether or not gestures of appreciation are ever rendered.

The flip side of this is that some spirits cause trouble so that they will be paid to eliminate it. This may stem from devious motivations or because they simply lack more effective means of communication. Until the correct spirit is identified and a relationship established, havoc and heartache may prevail. Examples include Aisha Qandisha, Mami Waters, and many Zar Spirits.

#### **SAFETY MEASURES**

Working with spirits successfully involves common sense. Children are taught to look both ways before crossing the street. New drivers are advised to signal their intention to change lanes. Just as there are basic rules of traffic safety, so there are basic rules of spirit safety.

- Most crucially: *If you consistently approach spirits with love and respect, you will virtually never have anything to fear.*
- For utmost safety, work with named spirits, those spirits possessing extensive CVs and histories. They may be volatile or aggressive, but you will know who they are, what to expect, and what to do.
- Nobody likes an ingrate: keep your promises; fulfill your vows; pay your debts.
- Remember, you're asking them for help, not the other way around.
- Don't be greedy; don't ask for what's inappropriate. (Those spirits who deliver the unethical and immoral are often the equivalent of loan sharks. Beware.)
- Don't go looking for bad company. If you habitually spend too

much time with dangerous characters (spirit or human alike), you will get hurt.

**Fear attracts negative spirits;** they feed off fear; it's their energy source and so they seek it. It doesn't have to be specifically fear of spirits; it could be any kind of intense fear. Odds are that, once attracted, they will try to maintain that fear or even increase it, thus making bad situations worse. Appeal to specific benevolent spirits by name to help remedy or remove you from fear-inducing situations. (In other words, actually call the spirit, articulating its name, either aloud or silently in your thoughts.)

**Many spirits will give you what you expect;** they are psychic and can read your heart. If you genuinely expect them to be generous, kind, and well behaved, they are likely to demonstrate that behavior. If your head tells you to request a miracle from Exu, the Afro-Brazilian trickster spirit, because you need it and he can provide it, but in your heart, you believe he's evil, he may, in fact, fulfill your expectations.

**It is pointless to be dishonest with spirits:** they know your secrets. If you have fear, acknowledge it to them. Respectfully, politely acknowledge that they make you nervous and explain why you are addressing them anyway. This provides safety from manipulation, possibly defuses prankster inclinations, and may even be the path to healing your fear. Bravery, if accompanied by modesty, tends to win favor from spirits.

**Being honest with yourself keeps your spirit-related experiences happy and successful.** Explore your fears; strive to face and understand them. If, deep down, you genuinely do believe that all spirits are dangerous and yet you still long to commune with them, stick with archangels and Bodhisattvas, at least for starters. You can be absolutely confident that they will not harm you. They will also keep other spirits at bay, if you ask.

Caution: know your vulnerabilities. If you are prone to abusive



relationships in general, then be as careful with spirits as with people. If you have a history of being exploited or excessively pushed around, choose your spirits carefully. Identify your vulnerabilities and then seek out spirits who will heal them.

The following spirits are safe for everyone:

- Archangels Gabriel, Michael, and Raphael
- Bodhisattvas Jizo and Kwan Yin
- Orisha Obatala
- Taoist spirit Miao Shan

Each is a being of pure goodness and righteousness. Each lacks even the hint of an edge. They are not jealous, volatile, or acquisitive, but endlessly patient. They will not exploit nor harm you.

Worst-case scenario: malevolent spirits have appeared. Low-level spirits will likely be at least temporarily dispersed by:

- Bells and chimes
- The presence of iron
- Firecrackers and other sudden loud noises, like the shattering of pottery and plates
- Clattering metal percussion instruments: castanets, cymbals, sistrums, or tambourines. If you have no such instruments, then bang metal pots and pans.
- Peals of sincere, hearty laughter

Amulets, holy texts, and sacred music, a general aura of fun or happiness, and the presence of benevolent spirit guardians keep more powerful malevolent spirits away. Be aware, however, that spirits who appear fierce or gruff often have good intentions or come bearing welcome gifts. Treating new arrivals with courtesy and politeness is often the best policy. Some may turn into good friends; others will leave peacefully if treated with respect and kindness.

One last precaution: different people experience and encounter spirits in different ways. Some people *see* them, whether in waking life,

visualizations, or dreams; others receive them as bursts of inspiration or via a complex dialogue of symbols and gestures. However, some do hear voices.

It is crucial to remember, especially in a society where hearing voices or communicating with nonhumans can be considered grounds for commitment, that you are *never* obligated to obey any instructions or recommendations from spirit guides, any more than you are obliged to take advice from Dear Abby, your best friend, or your mother.

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*Determining the nature and identity of unwanted spirits often helps determine how to banish them. Fairies and Djinn flee from salt and iron, but other spirits don't. Lilith dislikes iron and rue; salt doesn't faze her. Some spirits flee from specific amulets or from images of other spirits whom they fear. Certain fragrances consistently welcome benevolent spirits and repel the malevolent, including styrax benzoin, frankincense, gardenia, and cinnamon.*

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Working with spirits does not mean surrendering your free will. You are responsible for your actions. If spirits ever suggest something you're not comfortable with, just say no; respectfully, as always, but decline. Speak firmly and politely. Generally, only harmful spirits ever suggest anything truly harmful (to yourself or anyone else).

Modern humans have marginalized spirits to such an extent that danger often emerges from the misconception that spirits don't belong to real life, to daily existence: thus any communication is treated as either innately evil and to be avoided at all cost, or the opposite, something so sacred that it must be blindly obeyed. Neither extreme is true.

Not all cases of hearing voices involve spirits. Sometimes it may genuinely be a sign of mental illness. (Mental illness and spirits are not mutually exclusive. This is a very complex issue; sometimes mental illness attracts harmful spirits or vice versa. Some spirits express anger by causing mental disturbance or may be invoked to heal it. See the Appendix for names.)

Genuine spirit voices tend not to be constant or overwhelming but are usually brief, sudden, and to the point. Spirits arrive, speak, and leave. Visitations typically stimulate a sense of euphoria but may also leave you shaken by the intensity of the experience. They do not, however, cause you to cease functioning.

A key and crucial difference between clairaudient mediumship (habitually hearing spirit voices) and mental illness is that mediums can learn to control their powers like a radio, turning it on and off as needed. Voices engage in genuine dialogue (i.e., they listen and respond reasonably to what you say, too), do not prevent functionality, and do not suggest harmful behavior. Should the situation be otherwise, consult a qualified mental health professional immediately.

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*It is not unusual, especially the first time one experiences real contact with a spirit, to be rendered temporarily speechless, knocked for a loop, or sent into a tailspin. It is a very, very profound experience that has been described as being "lightning-struck."*

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Spiritual professionals such as shamans, mediums, *santeros*, *mambos*, and *houngan* may also be consulted; they will not be quick to dismiss your experiences.

- Treat them with the same respect and courtesy as any other professional.
- Do not be afraid to ask for references or referrals.
- Medical doctors (gifted physical healers) rarely donate their services; spiritual healers are not obligated to do so, either. Cost should be reasonable; there is probably a going rate; find out what it is.
- Expect professional behavior.

Spirit working is associated with folk magic. Another method of working with spirits, associated with High Ritual or Ceremonial Magic, also exists: *Commanding and Compelling* is an informal name for methods of attempting to dominate spirits, ordering them to do your bidding. (The name derives from ritual chants that traditionally begin, “*I command you, I compel you.*”) It is the central theme of many medieval grimoires (books of magic spells, rituals, and invocations) and is the inspiration for many movie and television depictions of spirits. Spirits are forced to serve as a magician’s minions.

Commanding and Compelling is not the same as working *with* spirits. To work *with* spirits means to form bonds of love and loyalty and assumes cooperation. Spirits and people serve each other with mutual affection and respect, forming symbiotic relationships beneficial to both parties. Commanding and Compelling means people bossing spirits around or at least trying to do so.

Commanding and Compelling assumes a hostile relationship between spirits and people. Because the method involves force, trickery, and humiliation and because *no one* likes to be compelled, especially not a powerful spirit, even if the relationship wasn’t initially hostile, it will become so once the method has been tried.

How hostile could it become? Elaborate rituals intended to provide safety are an integral component of this method of spirit summoning and commanding. The magician will ritually cast a magic circle of safety from which it is not safe to emerge until the spirit has departed: the magician is the magical equivalent of a diver in a shark tank. (For those completely unfamiliar with the concept of magic circles, fictional examples of varying degrees of authenticity commonly appear in movies and television, for example in *many* episodes of the television series *Supernatural*.) Amulets (power objects intended to provide safety) must be carefully maintained to prevent the spirit from returning until summoned by the magician from the safety of his circle.

Because the procedure is insulting (much like calling a dog), even normally good-natured spirits react combatively. The magician can never let down his guard because the spirit will be waiting. The classic cautionary tale involves a spirit who only pretended to depart, instead turning invisible and patiently waiting for the magician to step out of his

circle—with predictably fatal results.

The concept of Commanding and Compelling is based on King Solomon's legendary ability to command spirits, but those legends were intended to emphasize his unique powers and gifts, not to imply that anyone with a grimoire and some magical tools who emulates methods attributed to Solomon will achieve the same success. In general, these are very advanced methods, historically favored by theologians and dedicated, full-time, professional sorcerers. They are not safe for amateurs.

Commanding and Compelling came to prominence concurrently with the European witch-craze. It has been theorized that the whole concept was originally a smoke screen. Venerating or working with spirits was forbidden. Punishment involved torture and death. Commanding and Compelling was intended to circumvent this taboo.

Erudite, educated (almost invariably male) devotees who sought relationships with spirits *and* personal safety argued that demons under their dominion were at least temporarily prevented from serving Satan (because they serve the magician instead), and thus the magician was doing the world a favor, even when the demon was being used to abduct virgins or discover treasure. (Fascinated? Many old grimoires containing these rituals, such as *The Black Pullet* or *The Grand Grimoire*, remain in print.) The argument was also made that because Commanding and Compelling involves force, insults, and humiliation, clearly spirits weren't being venerated and so the magician should face no penalties.

These arguments and the grimoires reflecting them may originally have been intended to fool the Inquisition so that devotees could safely, secretly mingle with spirits (while devotees with less education and resources were burned at the stake). Various stray references in several grimoires hint at offerings, sacrifices, and genuine veneration. Books were encoded and served as alibis. Actual techniques were taught orally. Oral techniques were eventually lost, however, and later generations read and understood grimoires literally.

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*Needlessly confrontational behavior rarely makes for good relationships with*

*anyone, spirit, human, or otherwise.*

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### WHAT DOES IT MEAN WHEN PRAYERS AND PETITIONS REMAIN UNANSWERED?

Many different possible reasons exist:

- Maybe the spirit just didn't hear you. Try again.
- Maybe the wrong spirit was petitioned, either because this is not their area of expertise or because, for whatever reason, they lack interest in you. Find a more sympathetic ally.
- Somehow you've displeased this spirit; they are deliberately and consciously not fulfilling your request.
- Silence or lack of response is sometimes a spirit's bargaining chip; the spirit may be holding out for a better offering. (See the entry for *Achilles* for a prime example.)
- Your request has been denied because it is not beneficial for you. You may devoutly believe that you know what is best, but maybe the spirit knows better. Sometimes we ask for things and years later are so grateful not to have received them. Reexamine your situation: perhaps what looks like lack of fulfillment is really a recommendation to consider alternative plans or desires.

Unfortunately life is full of growing pains and harsh lessons. Those who never experience grief, loss, or disappointment may remain shallow, ignorant, or immature. Sometimes it takes pain and hardship to make us live up to our finest potential.

For whatever reason, it is sometimes our destiny to learn and experience what we'd rather never know. Knowledge accrued from pain and disappointment may turn out to be necessary and valuable someday. Spirits are more farsighted than people.

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*Spirits work on different timelines than we do. We live in the urgency of the*

*moment; they see far into the distance. Sometimes what first appear to be disasters turn out to be blessings in disguise. How many people stay in unhealthy relationships or bad jobs, fearful of change? Kicked out of the situation, one is forced to make improvements. If you keep begging a spirit to reunite you with your husband to no avail, maybe it's because you need a different man. You're making the wrong request.*

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- Some spiritual traditions, especially those indigenous to what is now the southwestern United States, consider that if spiritual petitions are ritually correct down to every last tiny detail (including the state of the petitioner's heart), then spirits are obliged and compelled to grant the request. Thus, if a petition is not granted, something was wrong with the ritual. It must be human fault. For this reason, incredible attention is paid to every aspect of ritual, prayer, and petition. Every dance step must be correct, every *t* crossed and *i* dotted.
- The answer may never be known, at least not in this life or realm. Unfortunately, this is part of the mystery of life: not everything can be explained.





## Elements of Working with Spirits: A Spirit Worker's Glossary

**W**orking with spirits possesses its own specialized vocabulary. Let's explore and define some of the most commonly used terms and words frequently appearing throughout this book. Not all terms and concepts apply to all spiritual traditions. Some terms are straightforward and easy to understand. Others involve extremely esoteric concepts. Some information is suitable for beginners. Other elements are advanced. If something fails to make sense now, don't worry. Understanding may accompany further experience.

### ALTAR

The term derives from the Latin *altare*, meaning "a high place" (high altitudes were a preferred location for the earliest altars). In its most general sense, an altar is a space dedicated to the veneration of someone or something. The very first altars were spiritual, but in the modern secular world, altars are also constructed to honor pop or sports stars (whether consciously intended as altars or not). Describing a teenager's room as a shrine to a pop idol accurately describes the finished effect.

Altars may be dedicated to *any* spirit. The concept transcends religious and spiritual boundaries. Altars may be public or private, personal or part of an organized religious institution. Churches, cathedrals, and temples of many faiths often contain individual altars dedicated to specific saints or spirits. Although some spirits are closely identified with specific sites and/or shrines, most are subjects of home altars, too.

Altars are tableaux or arrangements of specific articles. Everything involved in the creation of an altar is carefully chosen. Nothing on an altar is random. Altars may be color-coordinated to suit a spirit. Candles, incense, fragrance, flowers, gifts, food, and drink are offered to a spirit on an altar, in the process becoming part of the altar.

An altar may serve as an individual's tribute to one or more spirits or operate as the equivalent of a visual journal or log of an individual's spiritual path. Spirits, their images, and/or power objects are added, moved, and removed as inspired.

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*The word shrine is sometimes used synonymously with altar. It may also indicate a building or edifice that may or may not contain altars.*

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Although it is common to include images of spirits on altars, this is unnecessary. Those who object to graven images may create altars with only candles, flowers, or neutral objects. An altar reflects the spirit it venerates *and* the needs of the devotee.

Altars come in many styles and sizes. The simplest Spiritualist altars consist of a candle and a glass of water, considered the basic components of spirit summoning, while lavish, complex Vodoun altars are entire rooms filled with lovingly, meticulously arranged treasures. Tiny miniature altars are contained in matchboxes, shadowboxes, or cigar boxes.

Altars may be permanent or temporary. Some rituals or magic spells involve creating a temporary altar. Those making specific but presumably one-time requests of a spirit may wish to set up such a temporary altar: a tableau that exists only for the duration of the ritual or spell or until the request has been fulfilled.

Permanent altars keep the presence and image of the spirit close. Erika Doss' essay, "Saint Elvis" (contained in the 1999 book, *Elvis Culture*), describes shrines constructed for Elvis Presley within the homes of fans and devotees that become entrenched into the décor of the home itself.

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*Altars create a focal point of veneration, potential thresholds or portals to Spirit Land. An altar serves as a point of two-way communication between spirit and devotee, a meeting place.*

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*Information on customizing altars for specific spirits is found in their individual entries. Where there is no specified information, let the spirit inspire you.*

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The following people may prefer permanent tableaux:

- Those who have developed close working relationships with spirits
- Those seeking to develop such a relationship
- Those who simply adore a spirit

Constructing permanent home altars for some spirits is discouraged, especially those spirits intimately associated with illness. Disease spirits transmit *and* remove illness. Appeals are typically directed toward them when healing is desired. Once that is achieved, it is usually considered best not to maintain the spirit's interest for longer than necessary. You don't want them to feel too comfortable in your home.

Altars have a tendency to take on a life of their own. They are not static, but evolve over time with items continually added and (less frequently) removed. A person may maintain one altar for one spirit, or one altar may honor many spirits. Several distinct altars may be simultaneously maintained for different spirits, one spirit per altar. It all depends on the spirits in question and your own spiritual path and needs.

Many, although not all, spirits are gregarious: willing and happy to share space with each other. Exceptions are noted in entries for individual spirits, but a good rule of thumb is that if bitter conflict between two spirits is an integral part of their mythology, it may be best to keep some space between them.

What is the purpose of an altar?

- **Altars summon spiritual assistance.** The components of the altar

serve as signals to spirits that their presence is desired. These components traditionally share in the essence of that spirit or consist of items that are sacred to the spirit or evocative of its presence. The arrangement attracts the spirit's notice, beckons, and welcomes them.

- **Altars enable communication with spirits.** Essentially, they improve reception. Many people choose to speak with a spirit at its altar or while tending the altar. (However, this is not necessary. You may speak with spirits whenever and wherever you please.)
- **Altars serve as a forum for communication.** By adjusting the items upon your altar, you can demonstrate your needs using symbolic language. For example, let's say that a permanent altar is maintained for the Yoruba goddess Oshun, a particularly versatile, powerful, generous, and gregarious spirit. Different-colored candles may be lit so that you can signal your needs and desires. Oshun's personal colors are gold, yellow, and orange. Candles in those colors are burned to honor her. In addition, you might also burn a blue candle for physical healing or emotional relief or a green one if your immediate crisis is cash. (See the Glossary entry for Colors for a list of color associations.)
- **Altars serve as a focal point.** You don't truly *need* an altar. You don't really need anything. Whatever communication transpires between people and spirits actually occurs on the mental or spiritual plane. Working with spirits has traditionally been the province of the poor and can be accomplished at absolutely no expense if necessary. A cry from the heart suffices. All the paraphernalia, fragrances, incense, candles, statues, and *things* are merely vehicles, signals, or tributes. All that you truly need is your ability to concentrate and create a mental connection with the spiritual entity. Once you're experienced, you'll recognize when the connection has been made; it's as if a switch has been turned on or a phone line is suddenly open. This can be done via visualization, dreams, or pure focused thought. However, as simple as that sounds, the reality is that for many people this process can be extremely challenging, especially in the beginning. The altar creates a focal point for one's attention, making it easier to focus upon the

spirit and intensify concentration.

- **Altars create a comfortable home for the spirit**, a preferred rest stop on their journeys, so to speak. If they're happy, they'll linger, potentially offering assistance without being asked, often identifying your needs before you do.
- **Altars serve as tribute and thanks for favors and wisdom granted.**
- **Altars are used to create amulets, healing oil, and Holy Water.** Leave objects, oil or water on the altar overnight or for a specified length of time so that the spirit's aura permeates the medium.

### **Building Altars**

There are home altars and public altars. Altars may be maintained inside or outside. A carefully arranged garden embellished with stones, statues, fountains, or specially chosen objects serves as an altar for nature spirits. Place altars wherever the spirit is likely to be happy. Water spirits enjoy the bathroom, fire spirits the hearth. Spirits of romance like to be in the bedroom.

The most primeval altars and shrines were once arranged in caves, as, for example, cave-bear shrines. Niches built into walls reproduce the concept of the cave.

Most modern altars are placed on tables, shelves, or some other flat surface. They may be placed in boxes or cabinets. Altars in automobiles are placed on dashboards.

Altars may be maintained openly for all to see or kept private. In some cases, this is the preference of the spirit: while altars for Ogun, spirit of iron, may also be maintained on tabletops or shelves, his traditional cauldron containing iron tools is usually kept discreetly in a cabinet. In general, however, where to put an altar and how visible to make it is entirely up to you.

Different forms of altars exist. Here are some examples:

- The Latin American *nicho* is literally a niche. It may be built into a wall but is more usually a simulation of such a niche hung *onto* the wall. A *nicho* contains an image of a sacred being and may be

decorated with flowers, supplementary images, objects, and/or written prayers. The simplest *nichos* are plain wooden boxes or tin frames. Elaborate *nichos* already containing images are available for purchase, as are empty *nichos* waiting to be filled and embellished. *Nichos* may be open for continuous view or have doors protecting the privacy of the spirit within.

- The *kamidana* (usually translated into English as “god shelf”) is a small Shinto shrine intended to house a spirit or deity. (The Japanese Buddhist term for *kamidana* is *zushi*.) Some are very simple shelves (with or without doors), while others are constructed to resemble miniature shrines, sometimes reproductions of famous Shinto shrines. *Kamidana* may also contain scrolls, sacred tablets, or objects associated with the spirit it is intended to honor. *Kamidana* are sold empty, so that devotees may use them to construct their own personal altars. *Kamidana* are hung on the wall or placed on a tabletop.
- Espiritismo altars are based on the teachings of the highly influential French Spiritist Allan Kardec. The basis of the altar is a table covered with a white cloth. In Spanish, this is known as a *mesa blanca*, literally a “white table.” Sometimes this type of altar is just called a *mesa* (“table”) because the inclusion of the white cloth is so implicit it no longer requires stating. This style of altar has become very popular; English speakers use the Spanish terms, as well. (Spiritism/Espiritismo became so popular in Latin America that, even though Kardec was French, Spanish is its *lingua franca*.)

The classic Espiritismo altar serves more than one spirit. Each is offered its own distinct vessel of water (open to the air, not sealed). The altar may then be embellished with dolls, statues, flowers, incense, candles, and/or various offerings (food, beverages, cigarettes, cigars), sacred texts, photographs, and objects.

The longer a practitioner maintains an altar, the larger and more elaborate it may become. Objects tend to accumulate, and so extra space may be required. Shelves may be added over the table; floor space beneath the table may be utilized, too. Sometimes this is simply because of the need for expanded space, but sometimes it reflects the nature of

spirits honored by the mesa:

- Earthbound spirits and anything to do with them are placed *on* the table.
- Celestial spirits, such as angels, are celebrated on shelves *above* the table.
- Chthonic (subterranean; normally living beneath the ground) spirits are maintained on the floor *below* the table. (See *Chthonic Spirits* for more information.)

Some altars proclaim their spiritual affinities: stick a large traditional statue of Guadalupe in the center, and *everyone* will recognize it as an altar. Other altars are subtle, only recognized by those with trained eyes. Altars may be traditional or creative. Here's an example of an unconventional altar requiring little space.

#### A GOBLET ALTAR FOR YEMAYA

Yemaya, spirit of the sea, derives from Yorubaland, now part of modern Nigeria. Among the most significant of African-Diaspora deities, she is also beloved by goddess devotees. This altar incorporates colors and attributes associated with her. Similar altars may be constructed to serve any sea spirit, adjusting details to suit that spirit's preferences.

1. First find an appropriate glass, chalice, or goblet, a crystal one embellished with marine motifs or a nice blue plastic one, reflecting Yemaya's favorite color. The vessel may specifically reference Yemaya or just be beautiful, whatever you think best.
2. Place sea glass, shells, beads, or charms evoking the sea inside the glass.
3. Fill the glass with spring water; then add sea salt. (This saltwater is the only requirement; everything else in the glass is embellishment or offerings.)
4. *Voila!* You have an altar. Keep it clean and pretty, changing water and salt as desired, adding trinkets as inspired.

Some sacredness will eventually attach to all components of an altar,

and many feel that once something has been included on an altar, it should then be reserved for sacred purposes. Some spirits are possessive and resent the loss of anything perceived as theirs. It is always best to communicate very clearly with spirits. Many spirits will allow you to borrow an item or to use their altar as the equivalent of a sacred battery charger, if you let them know.

If you are placing something on the altar that is yours and that you intend to remove later, state that to the spirit explicitly. Ask for permission. How will you receive it? Through divination. A simple method involves a coin toss. Keep a coin on the altar to be used as a conduit to the spirits. Ask whether permission is granted (or any other yes or no question), then flip. The coin will become part of the altar and serve as the spirit's oracle. It is best to use a distinctive coin to lessen the risk of it being casually pocketed or treated as any other common coin. Ancient or valuable coins may be used but are not necessary. A Kennedy half dollar works well. Many coins display images of spirits, and so these may be coordinated. Coins aren't necessary: any small flat double-sided disc may be used, including religious medals, casino chips, or Zar medallions. Alternatively, substitute any divinatory system that suits you.

#### **RITUAL FOR ENHANCED BEAUTY AND CHARISMA**

1. Construct an altar to the appropriate spirit. This ritual is most often associated with Aphrodite, Ezili Freda Dahomey, or Oshun, but potentially any spirit of beauty may be addressed. Men may direct petitions to spirits renowned for male good looks: for instance, Adonis, Apollo, Ganymede, or Shango.
2. Place makeup, jewelry, fragrance, or a handkerchief or glove on the altar. Allow it to stay overnight or longer to absorb the spirit's power and aura.
3. Clearly articulate your intent and desires to the spirit. Explain that the item will be removed, that although it is on the altar, it remains in your possession. It is a good idea to offer a gift to the spirit at the same time. Request its blessing; ask it to empower the item.
4. Wear the item when you need some of the spirit's power transmitted



to you.

## AMULET

An *amulet* is a power object intended to prevent or eliminate danger and harm. The word *amulet* is believed to derive from the Latin *amuletum*, meaning a method of defense. It is etymologically related to the word *ammunition*.

Amulets may have general powers (an iron horseshoe allegedly protects against all manner of harm) or very specific power (a millstone in the farmyard allegedly keeps poultry safe). Amulets come in many shapes, sizes, and forms.

- Amulets may be written: seals and sigils scripted onto parchment banish demons.
- Amulets may be found in nature: pebbles and seashells with natural holes reputedly ward off poverty.
- Amulets are crafted by people: glass beads made to resemble eyes allegedly repel malicious envy (also known as the Evil Eye), while iron beads repel harmful Djinn.

Many amulets are associated with specific spirits:

- Amulets may transmit a spirit's protective power: thus the Italian amulet known as the *mano fica* (the fig hand) radiates the power of Mania, Goddess of Ghosts; wearing this fist-shaped amulet or posting it on a wall allegedly banishes ghosts.
- Amulets may protect against a spirit: written Kabbalistic amulets featuring seals and magical words of power protect infants against the goddess Lilith.
- Some spirits—like Japan's Daruma and Maneki Neko or Thailand's Golden Boy and Nang Kwak—are most commonly accessed in the form of amulets: their very images serve as powerful amulets. (See their individual entries for specifics.)

The words *talisman* and *amulet* are now often used interchangeably, but originally a *talisman* was a power object intended to draw good

fortune (a lucky charm, in other words), while an *amulet* was to protect and ward off harm. Thus, images of Thai goddess Nang Kwak serve as a talisman to attract wealth, while amulets bearing the image of Medusa protect against harmful magic spells.

Amulets and talismans are essentially two sides of a coin: a fertility talisman is used to achieve desired conception, while the corresponding amulet wards off infertility, prevents miscarriage, and banishes the malicious spirits who prey on pregnant women. The most powerful power objects simultaneously perform both functions: lucky talismanic and protective amuletic.

#### APPARITION

An *apparition* is an actual sighting of a spirit that occurs while awake (as opposed to seeing spirits in dreams). The spirit is seen with your actual eyes, not in the mind's eye. The word derives from the Latin *apparere* and is related to *appearance*. Rather than just any old appearance, *apparition* usually indicates a ghostly, unusual, or unexpected appearance. If you have seen a ghost, then you have witnessed an apparition.

By definition, apparitions are visual. Disembodied voices or fragrances may indicate the presence of a spirit but are not apparitions. Apparitions may be witnessed by one person alone, as is frequently the case with ghosts. (Classic fictional example: when Scrooge encounters the ghosts of Christmas past, present, and future in Charles Dickens' 1843 novel *A Christmas Carol*, he does so alone. No one else sees them.) Apparitions may also be simultaneously witnessed by more than one person, sometimes by crowds. (See the entries for *Ma Zu* and *Michael*.)

#### ASPECT

(See *Path*.)

#### ATTRIBUTE

Individual spirits are very often associated with specific *things* and may rarely be depicted without these things. These things are used to identify the spirit. Sometimes the thing itself is sufficient to represent the spirit. These things are called *attributes*. Attributes cut across religious

boundaries; the concept is shared by many traditions.

Attributes are not random. They reference sacred myths and legends and indicate something about a spirit's power. Some attributes are very specific to one particular spirit: a stalk of fennel topped by a pinecone indicates Dionysus. Many attributes are shared: tridents are the attributes of both Poseidon *and* Shiva. The trident alone will not indicate which spirit is indicated.

Attributes often indicate a spirit's interests or the scope of its power. Santa Claus' attribute is a bag of toys. Mercury's attribute is a bag of coins. The cornucopia (a horn overflowing with fruit) is an attribute shared by many spirits, indicating that they are generous and provide prosperity and abundance. Brooms, another popular attribute, often indicate spirits who sweep clean. They provide devotees with spiritual cleansing, purify the atmosphere, and sweep away other malevolent spirits.

Sometimes attributes are subject to interpretation. Cauldrons may indicate any or all of the following:

- Spirits who generously provide for devotees (cauldron as great big cooking pot)
- Magical or shamanic spirits (cauldron as magical tool; the witch's vessel)
- Spirits who provide fertility (cauldron as emblem of the womb)
- Spirits of death and resurrection (cauldron of regeneration)

Attributes serve as a form of communication between spirits and people. A spirit's attributes are added to its altar space to make the spirit feel at home. Attributes can substitute for a spirit's image, whether because an actual image is unavailable or because a devotee is uncomfortable with idols. Spirits will often communicate via their attributes, which appear in dreams or in "coincidental events."

## AVATAR

An *avatar* is the embodiment or incarnation of a spirit, usually in the form of a human but sometimes as an animal. The word derives from the

Sanskrit avataarah, meaning “descent” (of the deity to Earth). The avatar may be understood to be the servant or messenger of the original deity or as successive generations or appearances of a sacred being. The avatar is simultaneously distinct *and* the same as the root deity.

The most famous avatars are the ten incarnations of the Hindu deity Vishnu. The most famous of Vishnu’s avatars is the eighth, Krishna, an exceptionally popular deity in his own right. He is simultaneously a distinct being *and* a form of Vishnu. Phoolan Devi, India’s controversial bandit queen, murdered in 2001, is widely considered to be an avatar of warrior goddess Durga. The concept of the avatar is not exclusive to India:

- Cleopatra identified herself as an avatar of love goddess Aphrodite.
- Cleopatra’s father was considered an avatar of Dionysus, lord of wine (albeit with some disapproval by his subjects).
- Jewish folklore identifies Helen of Troy and the Queen of Sheba as avatars of the bewitching demon goddess Lilith.

(See also: *Malinche* and *Savitri*.)

## CANDLES

These are lit to honor spirits, request favors, communicate with them, repay favors, and fulfill vows. Candles may be burned plain and unembellished with no added ritual, but many magical traditions encourage personalizing candles so that the message they deliver is more potent and specific.

### BASIC INSTRUCTIONS FOR CRAFTING MAGICAL AND SPIRITUAL CANDLES

1. Choose an appropriate candle. Focus on goals/desires throughout the entire process.
2. Address the spirit while holding the candle in your hands. Explain the purpose of this candle: Is it simply to honor the spirit, a gift with no strings attached? Is it part of a request process, repayment, or fulfillment of a vow? Whatever it is, just state its purpose in simple, clear language.

3. The candle may now be burned or further embellished. (In magical parlance, this is called *dressing the candle*.) Let your desires and creativity be your guide. Any or all of the following steps may be taken to dress the candle before burning:
  - Carve words or symbols into the candle. These words or symbols might identify you, the spirit, or someone on whose behalf you are requesting favors. Prayers, psalms, or sacred images (runes, sigils, vèvès) may be incorporated.
  - Add fragrance: rub the candle with oils. Some spirits have favored fragrances. Specific formula oils indicating special needs also exist: oils to draw money, love, or healing. Some manufacturers, both large-scale and artisanal, create special blends intended to invoke and honor specific spirits.
  - Oil will make the candle sticky: it can now be rolled in herbs or glitter as desired.

Any type of candle may be used when working with spirits; however, certain types of candles are manufactured especially for spiritual use. Spiritual merchants offer glass-sheathed candles featuring images of popular spirits printed onto the glass. (Prayers and petitions may also be printed onto the glass.) These candles are frequently designed to burn for seven or nine days and are variously called 7-day candles, novena or *semana* candles (*semana* is Spanish for *week*), devotional, or prayer candles. (Smaller, faster-burning variations may also be purchased or crafted.)

The most readily available commercial candles are dedicated to popular Roman Catholic saints, folk saints, and African-Diaspora spirits because considerable consumer demand exists. If you venerate spirits of other traditions, don't despair. It is also possible to purchase candles sold in blank glass sheaths. These may be burned as is, accompanied only by prayer and petition, but with just a little creativity and glass paint, you can handcraft candles for any spirit you like. No artistic ability is needed; the simplest designs are nothing more than the spirit's name. Photographs or photocopies of appropriate images may also be glued to the outside of glass sheaths, collage-style.

## COLORS

Some spirits have specific color associations. Where applicable, these preferences are included in encyclopedia entries. Altars, offerings, gifts, and candles may be color-coordinated to suit spirits. In other words, if a spirit's sacred color is identified as blue, then burn blue candles or decorate an altar with a blue cloth.

Different colors are understood as mystically representing different needs and desires, and so colors are also coordinated with needs and desires of petitioners, especially with regard to burning candles. Following is a list of standard color associations, but remember, magic and spirituality are intensely personal. If you possess your own associations, then use your own language of colors.

- **Black:** fertility, protection against malevolent forces, healing of chronic illnesses
- **Blue:** peace, tranquility, protection, healing of addictions, psychic and emotional pain
- **Brown:** justice, legal issues, healing fatigue and wasting illnesses
- **Green:** growth, prosperity, abundance, employment, physical healing, especially cancer
- **Purple:** sex, power, lust, spiritual growth and ecstasy
- **Red:** luck, love, good fortune, fertility, banishment of negative entities, protection, healing blood ailments and female reproductive disorders
- **Pink:** love, romance, requests for healing children
- **White:** creativity, forgiveness, new projects\*
- **Yellow:** romance, love, sex, growth, prosperity, good fortune, abundance

(See also: *Maximon.*)

## DREAMS

General mystic wisdom suggests that while sleeping, our souls (or a specific dream soul) actually journey to Dreamland, a specific realm.

While there we can meet other people's dream souls. It is also a rendezvous point where humans can interact with all kinds of spirits, including those of ancestors or other souls of the dead.

Theoretically *any* spirit may appear to you in dreams, but some are more likely than others to communicate with you in this manner. (This is mentioned in individual encyclopedia entries, where applicable.) This is a very frequent mode of spirit-human communication. In order to receive these messages, however, one must actually *have* dreams and be able to remember them in detail. Sometimes spirit-related dreams are so powerful or profound that a person wakes up immediately afterward and is thus able to recall the dream. However, most dreams slip away unrecalled and uninterpreted. (The Talmud compares an uninterpreted dream to an unread letter.)

The average person has five dreams per night, typically of increasingly greater length. Many mystic traditions suggest that the last dream of the series, the one just before waking, usually possesses the most spiritual significance.

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*Keep a dream diary. Note small details in your dreams if you can; the tiniest detail may turn out to have tremendous significance. If you have made a petition to a spirit, then pay special attention to your dreams. It is likely that this is where you will receive your response.*

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Various modern habits have a deleterious effect on dreaming:

- Being awakened abruptly (as with an alarm) causes dreams to be instantly forgotten.
- Pharmaceutical sleep aids or excessive alcohol intake may deaden the ability to dream.

Dreaming is a skill. You can learn to recall your dreams in detail, as well as how to maintain lucidity and control during the dream state so that one is an active participant in the process. Shamanic journeys may

then be consciously accomplished in the dream state. Various books and workshops teach these skills.

#### EPITHET

An *epithet* is a traditional phrase or title used to address a spirit. Epithets are not just random words of flattery, but impart significant information about a spirit. Epithets serve as sacred shorthand. Thus if a spirit's epithets include titles like *The Terrible* or *Worst of the Worst*, consider yourself warned. Sometimes epithets are shared: many of the Virgin Mary's epithets, such as *Star of the Sea* or *Mother of God* also belong to Isis.

Some epithets are included among the individual entries of this book directly below the spirit's name. Epithets are a polite, respectful way to address spirits with whom you are not on a first-name basis. Not all spirits possess epithets. Some have only a few, while others have enough to fill a book. When the Egyptians addressed Hathor as the *Lady of Countless Names*, they weren't kidding.

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*Yoruba oriki express a similar concept: oriki are sacred verbal salutes and eloquent poetic praise descriptions.*

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#### EX-VOTO

An *ex-voto* is an object used to request or fulfill a vow. The term derives from the Latin phrase meaning "from a vow." (Another Roman term used to indicate votive offerings was *donaria*, related to *donation*.)

Ex-votos come in several traditional forms. Typical votive offerings include:

- Votive plaques describing miracles, as, for example, the modern *retablo*
- Small images or charms



The most common modern ex-votos are the small, anatomically shaped charms known as *milagros* (miracles), described on page 89, most commonly tiny metal arms, legs, eyes, or other body parts. The word *ex-voto* is now sometimes used synonymously with *retablo* or *milagro*.

During the Middle Ages, ex-votos, including what would now be called *milagros*, were mass-produced from materials including metals, wood, stone, clay, wax, and bread dough. Later on, paper ex-votos became popular. Fabric has also intermittently been used. Some ex-votos are still mass-produced, but they are also very easily handcrafted. Forms and possibilities are endless.

### FAMILIAR

In magical parlance, a *familiar* is a creature (animal, fish, bird) with whom one possesses an extremely intense, close bond and relationship: a soul partner. The most famous examples are classic witches' familiars: black cats, owls, or bats.

Familiars aren't only for witches. Many spirits have profound associations with specific creatures. Animals may serve as the spirit's messengers or as forms in which the spirit manifests. The spirit may be inextricably linked with that animal, virtually always appearing together.

Animals facilitate encounters between spirits and humans. If you have petitioned a spirit, watch out for appearances of that spirit's familiars. Animals may appear live and in the flesh, but they may also appear in dreams or images. If you petitioned the Egyptian scorpion spirit, Selkhet, on Monday, a postcard unexpectedly received on Tuesday bearing the image of a scorpion would be considered very auspicious.

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*Because you have a good relationship with a spirit does not guarantee safety from all living representatives of that spirit's sacred animals. In other words, because Hekate is your guardian doesn't mean that every dog, her sacred animal, is your friend. Bear goddess Callisto may protect you, but that doesn't mean you can just walk up to any bear with impunity. Always use common sense with regard to animal safety and spirits alike.*

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## FEAST

Some spirits are associated with specific calendar dates, commonly known as their *feast* (whether or not any feasting is actually done).

A spirit's feast is a day of power. If you have the luxury of choosing when to make an appeal, this is often the most advantageous time. Spirits are generally at the peak of their powers and generosity. They anticipate requests; their ears and hands are open. It is also the perfect time to fulfill vows and repay favors.

Spirits possessing feast days include African-Diaspora spirits such as the Iwa or ori shas who are syncretized with Catholic saints. (See the Glossary entry for *Syncretism*.) Many East Asian, Hindu, Egyptian, Celtic, and Roman spirits also possess feasts. Roman spirits may possess multiple feasts; at least one usually commemorates the date an important shrine dedicated to that spirit was consecrated.

Dates for feasts at local shrines are included in individual entries, but be advised that customs are often updated faster and more spontaneously than books. Verify dates before making travel plans. Festivals of Asian spirits are determined by their own respective calendars, not necessarily the standard Western calendar. References to Roman or other ancient feast days are by necessity approximations; calendars have changed many times since those festivals were outlawed.

## FRAGRANCE

Fragrance serves as a mode of communication and as a bridge between realms. Fragrance may derive from living or cut flowers; aromatic woods or resins; incense, perfumes, and essential oils. Fragrance is a traditional offering to spirits. Many favor certain scents. In addition, some spirits signal their presence via aroma. Each Egyptian deity, for instance, possessed a signature fragrance. Hathor is the Lady of Myrrh. The most famous vestige of this once-common tradition is the association of the Christian devil with the scent of sulfur (brimstone). If you unexpectedly smell something that lacks any physical source, pay attention: it could indicate spirits or ghosts.

Certain fragrances are believed to attract the attention of consistently benevolent spirits, including agar (*oud*), cinnamon, copal, frankincense, gardenia, myrrh, sandalwood, and styrax benzoin. (Synthetic reproductions of natural fragrances may fool people, but spirits can tell the difference. If you desire a fragrance's actual effect, use the real thing.)

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*The ghost in the 1944 Ray Milland movie, The Uninvited, signals her presence via the scent of mimosa.*

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Other fragrances are believed to enhance psychic ability—the ability to perceive spirits. These include lilac, rosemary, violet, and wisteria. The fragrance of myrrh is traditionally believed to open portals to spirit realms.

#### ICONOGRAPHY

Literally “image writing,” iconography is the visual language of spirits. Some, although not all, spirits have specific visual images used to identify them. Attributes are incorporated into iconography.

- A giant wearing a shirt that's too small and holding a massive club is the Dagda.
- A woman's body sporting three faces, each pointed in a different direction, is Hekate.
- A beautiful, naked woman emerging from a huge scallop shell is Aphrodite.

Iconography may involve any kind of visual image: paintings, statues, postcards, and so forth. The point is that it is *visual*.

The concept of iconography—images used to portray and identify spirits—is shared by all spiritual traditions except for the very few that completely reject imagery.

Images may reference myths, legends, or history. They convey information regarding a spirit's nature or identify a spirit's specific powers. In eras when masses of people were illiterate, iconography served to identify spirits. No need to read words. You took a look at the picture and you knew who it depicted.

There is a chicken-and-egg quality to iconography. Does iconography reflect how spirits have historically appeared to people in dreams, visions, or apparitions? Or is it that spirits, knowing what people expect to see, match their appearances to iconography so that they are more easily recognized? In either event, familiarize yourself with the iconography of spirits with whom you wish to interact. Spirits with very specific iconography will likely appear in that guise or will at least somehow reference that iconography to make recognition easier.

Iconography can evolve. Inuit sea spirit Sedna is now frequently depicted as a mermaid but previously she was always depicted with legs. Iconography can also be tricky: those for whom an image is extremely familiar may assume that everyone looking at that image sees the same thing and identifies the same spirit, but, in fact, this is not so.

#### **IDENTIFICATION**

You may find references to “Egyptian Aphrodite” in older mythology books. Should these references inspire you to search for stories of Aphrodite's adventures by the Nile, you will be disappointed. “Egyptian Aphrodite” is not “Greek Aphrodite”; Egyptian Aphrodite is Hathor. That reference is an example of identification: the process of identifying one spirit with another.

Although the Hellenistic Greeks were not the only culture to engage in identification, they provide the most famous and accessible examples of what can be a difficult, esoteric concept to comprehend. Once upon a time, when the Greeks considered the deities of their neighbors, they were perplexed. They were not monotheistic; they did not insist on the existence of only one deity, but they did insist on their own deities. Their worldview did not leave room for parallel pantheons or creation myths. So then who were these other deities belonging to foreign peoples? Two choices emerged:

- These might be independent deities who could either be incorporated into the Greek pantheon or ostracized as monsters. Thus Dionysus, originally from Thrace, was identified as Zeus' son who had spent time traveling but had returned to Greece and a throne on Mount Olympus.
- Foreign spirits could be identified as native spirits with different names. Hathor is a beautiful Egyptian spirit of love, romance, and joy with dominion over perfume, cosmetics, and fertility. That description could very easily also apply to Aphrodite; hence the Greeks *identified* Hathor with Aphrodite. The two goddesses were identified as one being with different names and local manifestations.

At best, identification serves as spiritual shorthand giving someone unfamiliar with a spirit a quick sense of that spirit's nature via correspondences. At worst, it oversimplifies mythology, ignoring important nuances that distinguish one spirit from another. Identification also frequently demonstrates the arrogance of conquerors who can't be bothered to familiarize themselves with the deities of their new subjects. It is as if an observer, having noticed that you resemble your sibling, decides to call you by that sibling's name, rather than your own, to save themselves the trouble of distinguishing between you.

Identification might have made theology simpler for the Greeks (and later the Romans), but it makes accurate identification of ancient spirits very difficult today. Information is clouded. Much of what we know about many ancient pantheons derives from Greek and Roman commentators who often did not bother to write down a foreign spirit's name, substituting their own identification instead. When the Romans describe the Celtic veneration of Mars, it is impossible, from our vantage point, to be absolutely certain whether the actual Roman Mars is described or whether it is a reference to a now-nameless local spirit identified with Mars.

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*Modern attempts to explain the Vodou pantheon sometimes describe Ezili Freda as "Vodou Aphrodite." Ezili Freda and Oshun are sometimes identified*

*with each other, as if they were the same, although this is not so. (Both are beautiful West African spirits associated with love and water.) Some sources identify all beautiful female spirits of love with Aphrodite (or Venus, the Roman spirit with whom she is identified), as if she were the only one in the entire world.*

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## IMAGES

Images are visual depictions of spirits, including all manner of statues, paintings, prints, puppets, chromolithographs, and dolls. Legends are attached to many sacred images. Some are reputedly divinely inspired. Others are allegedly the handiwork of angels. The mythic history of many Black Madonna images suggests that they just magically, mysteriously appeared, seemingly out of nowhere, the implication being that they have arrived from the spirit world. *However*, in general, images are depictions of spirits as envisioned by people. People do not create spirits, but they sure do create their images.

Some religions forbid creation of sacred (or any) images or find them controversial. The most famous taboo occurs in the Ten Commandments. The Second Commandment is variously interpreted as “Thou shalt not make graven images,” “Thou shalt not make molten images,” or in plainest English, “Don’t make idols.” Of course, the irony is that just as Moses brought them this commandment, the children of Israel were busy constructing the golden calf.

Judaism never entirely abandoned sacred imagery: Solomon’s Temple periodically contained images of cherubim, the brazen serpent, and, most controversially, statues of the Hebrew goddess Asherah. Orthodox Christianity suffered its iconoclastic schism, bitter disputes as to whether images were permissible, culminating in the destruction of many precious icons. Despite the modern ubiquity of Buddhist statuary, for centuries Buddhism did not engage in sacred imagery. Islam remains the spiritual faith with the strictest injunctions against imagery.

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*If you’re uncomfortable with graven images or any other kind, don’t use*

*them. The image should never be confused with the deity, who is a spirit being. For purposes of altar building, spirits may be represented by their attributes, sacred plants, or any other object with which they are strongly associated. Hera may be represented by a pomegranate; Hekate by a broom.*

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Historically, conquerors destroy sacred imagery of those they have conquered, as do militant missionaries. Destruction of images also frequently accompanies religious disputes. Many French Madonna statues were destroyed during the French Revolution or by militant Huguenot Protestants who were violently opposed to Roman Catholic modes of worship. The most notorious modern example is the destruction of a two-thousand-year-old masterpiece, the world's tallest standing Buddha (53 meters; 175 feet) by the Muslim fundamentalist Taliban in Afghanistan in 2001.

Sacred imagery clearly evokes passion and dispute. What is its purpose?

- Images serve as reminders of the presence of the sacred: they comfort and empower.
- Images of spirits serve to focus inner vision.
- Images serve as the focal point of an altar, the eye upon which you focus.
- Images may serve as a resting place or home for spirits.
- Images serve as portals through which spirits may be more easily contacted. The Diné (Navajo) word for their sacred sand paintings, *Iikah*, may be translated as “the place where spirits come and go” or “a summoning of the spirits.”

Images are not just for contemplation. Some images are not inert, but active, whether literally or figuratively. Specific images are tools that spirits can use to transmit their blessings. The shrine of the mysterious spirit Sara-la-Kali in southern France is the site of the largest annual Romani (Gypsy) pilgrimage. Every May, crowds travel to her shrine to place fabric on her votive statue in order to receive her gift of healing.

Tales of miracle statues are not exactly common, but neither are they infrequent. The ancient Egyptians may have possessed methods of magically animating statues. Japanese folk tradition suggests that dolls can acquire human souls or otherwise become animated and come to life. Such dolls possess extraordinary power for good or ill. They bring blessings, but if mistreated, retaliate against their abusers. There is a shrine in Japan where dolls may be disposed of safely. (See: *Awashima*.)

Miracle statues reputedly bleed or weep (sometimes watery tears, sometimes tears of blood or milk). Madonnas are the most prevalent modern miraculous statues, but they're not alone. Statues of India's elephant spirit, Ganesha, have been witnessed drinking milk. Chilean poet Pablo Neruda (12 July, 1904– 23 September, 1973) collected ship figureheads. One, named Marie Celeste, a mermaid carved of dark oak, allegedly wept tears every winter.

Sometimes it seems impossible to find a suitable sacred image. Images that are readily available commercially tend to depict only the most popular spirits, as well as reproductions of acknowledged art masterpieces.

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*Early Christians of Egypt were particularly enthusiastic about smashing Pagan statues. During the violent destruction of Pagan Alexandria, in the late fourth century CE, the renowned Neo-Platonist Olympius reassured his grieving community that the spirits dwelling in statues had departed to celestial realms when their earthly manifestations (their statues) were destroyed.*

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*The word doll is etymologically related to idol. Many dolls serve sacred or magical functions.*

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Use what works for you. Use what exists. Any attribute of a spirit may be used to represent it. If you are unable to find an image of the Celtic



deity Rosmerta, then substitute a cornucopia, her attribute, instead. Alternatively use something that powerfully evokes the spirit, at least in your mind. Africans enslaved in Roman Catholic Latin America and the Caribbean used images of Christian saints to represent their own spirits because that's what was available. When they wished to represent the great snake deity, Damballah, an image of Saint Patrick was used because that Catholic saint is inevitably portrayed with the snakes he so famously banished from Ireland. Eventually these images may meld. (See the Glossary entry for *Syncretism*.) Those who now resent the intrusion of Christianity into traditional African spirituality may use botanical images or attributes or create brand-new imagery. (Thus, the primordial Vodou priestess Ayizan is represented by a palm branch.)

Spirits are also associated with abstract imagery, including runes, seals, and vèvès, which may be used for various purposes, including contacting and summoning spirits.

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*If you cannot find an appropriate altar image, then craft your own. Find a suitable, commercially available doll and then customize him or her. Create outfits appropriate for the spirit; dye the doll's hair if necessary. Add attributes and adornments.*

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## INCENSE

Incense is a traditional, primordial component of spirit veneration. It is believed that ascending smoke carries prayers and petitions with it, magically delivering it to the correct recipient, like the owls who know just where to deliver mail in the Harry Potter books. Specific fragrances are used to signal to specific spirits. Candles, especially scented ones, may be used in addition to or instead of incense. Wax candles were once prohibitively expensive and so incense, which may be made of any fragrant botanical material, was more popular.

Incense is typically available in three forms:

- Sticks
- Cones
- Loose botanical material intended to be sprinkled over charcoal and then burned

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*The term incense now refers to any material used to produce a fragrant aroma when burned, but it originally referred specifically to gum resins exuded by Boswellia trees. As the word began to be used more generally, these gum resins became known as frankincense, meaning true (frank) incense.*

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Much commercially manufactured incense is now synthetic, particularly very inexpensive brands of cones and sticks. (High-quality stick and cone incense does exist but is not cheap.) Loose incense tends to be real, as it is less labor intensive to create and, by its very nature, less easy to fake. One botanical may be substituted for another, but it is unlikely to be synthetic.

Read the ingredients on incense purchased. It is best to always be aware of exactly *what* you are burning because that way you know exactly *who* you are attracting. Incense is very easy to handcraft, even sticks and cones. Instructions are readily available online and in books.

## **MANIFESTATION**

Spirits may appear in many forms, or *manifestations*. While some spirits have unlimited forms, most possess very specific manifestations, which have been catalogued over the ages. Some appear in only a few forms; others, renowned shape-shifters like Freya or Proteus, appear in many guises. If a spirit wishes to be recognized, it will manifest in a familiar form. If you call upon a spirit, familiarize yourself with its popular manifestations so that you may recognize a visitation or response to your request.

Manifestations may indicate mood: some spirits have happy guises or fierce faces, but it is important to recall that, regardless of a spirit's

outward appearance, its inner essence remains true and consistent. Thus Hekate *is* Hekate, regardless of whether she appears as a young woman, old crone, or dog, in the same manner that you are *you*, regardless of whether you dress in red, purple, or black, regardless of whether you color your hair or drastically change your appearance via plastic surgery.

The Hawaiian language has a specific word for the physical forms assumed by spirits: *kinolau*. Thus, the Hawaiian spirit Ku may manifest as a man, breadfruit, or caterpillar. These forms are among his *kinolau*. Maile vines and lama trees are among the *kinolau* of Laka, beautiful, graceful spirit of hula.

## MANTRA

A *mantra* is a mystical or religious syllable, word, phrase, poem, or prayer, usually in Sanskrit, the ancient, sacred language of India. Mantras are associated with the various spiritual traditions born in India. Mantras are contemplated, chanted, or serve as focal points of meditation. Mantras have various intents and uses.

In the context of this book, mantras are magical syllables associated with spirits. Some spirits possess specific mantras. Spirits may be able to exert their power through the syllables and sound vibrations of a specific mantra. The mantra may serve as a portal that focuses, directs, and unleashes a spirit's energy.

Mantras may be written or carved but are generally chanted. Chant slowly, enunciating carefully, and savor sound, syllables, and vibration.

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*Examples of mantras are found in the encyclopedia entries for Nang Kwak, Tara, and Amida Buddha.*

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A key word concerning mantras is *repetition*. Specific numbers of repetitions are chanted in order to achieve various goals. Chanting a spirit's mantra may achieve any or all of the following: • Summoning

that spirit

- Attaining greater knowledge and/or understanding of that spirit
- Receiving blessings, protection, or other gifts from that spirit
- Feeling closer and more spiritually attuned with that spirit

## MARRIAGE

People treat spirits with varying degrees of devotion, ranging from casual to intense. The most intensively profound relationship between a spirit and a human is *marriage*. The term is intended literally, not metaphorically. Actual wedding ceremonies may occur. There are tales of half-spirit/half-human children. Jewish tradition records debates regarding whether spirit-human marriages are legally binding.

The marriage is between a spirit and a human. Neither ceases to be what they are; the spirit doesn't have or need a human standin. No ritual possession is involved. (In other words, the relationship is not between two humans, one of whom is possessed by a spirit, although that type of relationship exists as well.) Although the spirit may or may not be physically present, the relationship is no less real. It is typically an ecstatic, sexual relationship, a true merger of sex and spirituality.

Although this is an extremely complex, esoteric topic, one that can be difficult to comprehend, it is *not* a rare concept in shamanic-oriented spiritual traditions around the world.

This tradition of marriage between spirits and humans is current; it is happening *right now*, but its roots are primal. Scottish Clan MacLeod is descended from the marriage of a mortal king and a Fairy woman. Jewish folklore suggests that in addition to his human wives, Sarah, Hagar, and Keturah, the biblical patriarch Abraham also had a spirit wife and children. Fairy tales of mermaid or seal-spirit wives recall ancient practices. (See: *Melusine*.)

Not all spirits will engage in this type of relationship with people. Among those most associated with marriages are Djinn, Iwa, Sidhe, and Zar. (See their individual encyclopedia entries for further information about these spirit pantheons.)

Some traditions (Vodou; Zar) have formal marriage rituals. In other

traditions, no official ritual is required; the spirit will advise what to do. Male spirits most commonly marry female humans and vice versa, but marriages also cut across gender lines. For example, the fierce, proud Haitian Vodou lwa Ezili Dantor engages in marriage with both female and male devotees, as she pleases.

Typically, a person with a spirit spouse keeps a room or space in the home reserved for conjugal visits. The room serves as an altar of love and is decorated to suit the spirit's preferences and nature. One night a week may be reserved for the spirit spouse, especially among devotees who also possess a human spouse. (The true act of devotion may be from the spouse who shares a wife or husband with the spirit.)

Marriage may be inspired by love, passion, or infatuation, but it is also associated with mystical training. The spirit spouse provides magical and spiritual secrets and powers. Historically, many shamans have had Otherworld partners and continue to do so. (See: *Aisha Qandisha*; *Lalla Mira*; and the *Jade Maidens*.)

## **MEDIUM**

A *medium* is any person who serves as a conduit to the spirits. It is a relatively general term. Various techniques exist. Mediums may or may not be shamans or engage in ritual possession. Some deliver messages in trance, others while completely awake and conscious. Mediums may use tools such as divination devices, automatic writing, or planchettes. A person presiding over a séance is called a medium.

## **MENSTRUAL BLOOD**

According to many traditions, menstrual blood is the single most powerful, magically charged item on Earth. It is because of this power, some have theorized, that women were isolated during their menstrual periods. Fear of their inherent power is what led to women's eventual oppression and subjugation. Women were not isolated because they were "unclean," but because their tremendous power had to be curtailed and quarantined. Menstrual rites were among the earliest secret ceremonies, open only to those sharing in these blood mysteries. (In tribal areas, as in offices, dormitories, and anywhere women live very closely together, cycles may become synchronized with each other and with lunar phases

and tides. A period isn't exclusively personal: it is potentially a communal experience shared by women and nature alike.)

Menstruation was understood as among the primordial powers of the universe, forming a trinity of power with the moon and water, and considered the basis for magic as well as fertility, the source of life. Menstruation (and pregnancy) was not understood in today's clinical manner: it was a magical, miraculous process. As women did not menstruate while they were pregnant, menstrual blood was believed retained to help form the baby in the womb. Menstrual blood was the blood of life, as opposed to blood signifying wounds and death.

Menstrual blood was the first blood sacrifice, poured on Earth as a libation. No one was hurt; no one died. By its very nature, however, it kept spiritual power in the hands of women; men were excluded. Animal and human sacrifices were eventually initiated.

What is the point of this information in the context of spirits? Although many people's understanding of menstruation may have changed, spirits are old-fashioned. Different spirits are attracted to different types of offerings and sacrifices. Some spirits will be honored and pleased to receive an offering of your menstrual blood, particularly primordial Earth deities, like Gaia, or spirits associated with women's mysteries, like Jahi, primordial menstrual goddess.

Other spirits, however, not only don't want your menstrual blood, they don't even want to see you or hear from you until your period is over. This applies especially to spirits associated with iron-working, such as Ogun or Kanayago. In other words, *do not petition them, do not visit their shrines, do not give them anything on a home altar until menstruation has completely ceased and no trace of bleeding remains*. If this offends you, then these spirits are not for you. Find others.

## MILAGRO

The word *milagro* literally means "miracle" in Spanish (in Portuguese: *milagre*). A milagro is a type of ex-voto, essentially a charm offered in exchange for a miracle. Milagros symbolize the specific miracle requested. Most involve healing, and so the standard milagro is a little image in the form of a human body part: an eye, ear, leg, arm, or other

part of the anatomy. Choose a milagro that symbolizes your needs. (Milagros are *not* actual body parts; they resemble charms on a charm bracelet and may be incorporated into jewelry. Some collect them just because they are pretty, evocative, and usually inexpensive, not for spiritual use.)

The terms *milagro* and *ex-voto* are sometimes used synonymously, but there are many types of *ex-votos*. Milagros are currently the most popular type of *ex-voto*; the Spanish name has entered the English language, perhaps because no specific English word exists that expresses this concept. (Words *do* exist in other languages; for example: the modern Greek word *tamata*.)

The standard modern milagro is made from some inexpensive silvery metal, but they may also be made from bread dough, wax, or precious gems and metals. More expensive milagros are *not* more effective. Expensive ones are usually intended as repayment for favors received rather than used for the initial request. Most are tiny representations, but life-sized versions are popular in Brazil.

*Milagro* is a modern name, but the concept is ancient. Similar offerings to spirits are among the oldest archaeological finds, dating back at least to the Bronze Age. Some of the most ancient have been found in Iberia (Portugal and Spain) and in what is now Switzerland. Tiny bronze artifacts, virtually identical to modern milagros, are on display in Spain's archaeological museums. They are also common artifacts found in ancient Celtic healing shrines. (The presence of these artifacts is often used to identify whether a shrine was associated with healing, and specifically what kind of healing: eye-shaped *ex-votos* found in Celtic shrines indicate that the deity in residence was credited with healing vision and eye ailments.)

Milagros traditionally accompany petitions as part of an exchange. Presented to spirits in public shrines or on private home altars, they are pinned to a sacred image's clothing or to special poles or petition boards provided for the purpose. They can, however, simply be placed upon an altar. Depending on the specific spirit petitioned, they are also traditionally buried in Earth or tossed in bodies of water (spring, lake, river, ocean, well), in similar fashion to tossing coins into wishing wells.

Milagros are traditional components of repayment vows to spirits. Sometimes an inexpensive milagro is presented as part of the original petition, together with a vow to give the spirit a more expensive version, should the petition be fulfilled. Sometimes a miniature milagro is given to mark the request, with a true-to-life-sized version promised as repayment. Extravagant milagros tend to be associated with requests for true life-or-death miracles: a cure for terminal illness, for example. Examples of priceless milagros offered in gratitude and testimonial are on display at the shrine of Babalu Ayé (Saint Lazarus) in El Rincon, Cuba.

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*Milagros are most associated with healing, but not always. A heart-shaped milagro may indicate heart disease, but it could also demonstrate a plea for love or the need for a romantic miracle.*

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## **MIRRORS**

Mirrors are traditionally perceived as gateways to the spirits, thresholds between realms. They serve as boundaries and as portals of communication. Mirrors are windows to spirit realms, to be opened or kept shut as desired. Mirrors, once rare and precious, are magical tools masquerading as ordinary household goods.

Mirrors are traditional medium's tools used to contact and communicate with spirits. Those spirits consistently depicted holding mirrors (La Sirène and other mermaids) may be understood to be advertising their oracular powers, their willingness to teach oracular skills, or engage in oracular relationships. The mirrors they hold are invitations to other realms. Tezcatlipoca, the Smoking Mirror, is a spirit master of shamanism and sorcery.

Spirits live beyond or behind mirrors, or sometimes even within. *Through the Looking Glass*, Lewis Carroll's 1871 tale of falling through the mirror, the sequel to *Alice in Wonderland*, draws upon shamanic roots. Ghosts and other spirits sometimes manifest in mirrors: phantom images



appear that may or may not also communicate. Spirits who cross the threshold, emerging from mirrors, like Bloody Mary or Lilith's Daughters, tend to be up to no good. (This is the premise behind the horror series *The Ring*.) Some spirits are described as failing to cast reflections in mirrors, perhaps indicating that they belong on the other side.

Mirrors are magical tools used to trap or banish spirits. Associations of spirits with mirrors are the basis behind admonitions to cover mirrors following a death in the home. No need for departing souls to be trapped or for anyone else to follow. These associations are also among the reasons why women were discouraged from gazing into mirrors. Excessive vanity is the official reason: the possibility that women might commune with spirits or be influenced or possessed by them is another.

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*Mirrors do not have to be glass; the technical definition of a mirror is an object having a nearly perfect reflecting surface. The earliest mirrors were made of polished stone, metal, or obsidian, a type of naturally occurring volcanic glass.*

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*When serving as a divination device, mirrors are used in the same fashion as crystal balls.*

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## **M**YSTERY

Although spirits by definition are mysterious and the word *mystery* is sometimes used as a synonym for *spirit*, some spirits are described as *having* Mysteries. What does this mean?

While some knowledge is accessible and available to all, some spiritual traditions reserve certain rituals, information, and secrets for initiates. Spiritual traditions that place emphasis on information being reserved for initiates are known as *Mystery traditions*. Often they center

on one or more spirits: the spiritual traditions are described as being that spirit's Mysteries. For over two thousand years, ancient Greece's most famous religious festival was held annually in the town of Eleusis, not far from Athens. The festival honored Greek grain goddess Demeter. Rituals and ceremonies were secret, with knowledge reserved for initiates: the festival is thus referred to as the Eleusinian Mysteries or Demeter's Mysteries.

Invariably, with Mysteries, information is passed orally from initiate to initiate. By definition, Mysteries were not written down lest they fall into the hands of the uninitiated and cease to be mysteries. When a Mystery religion was suppressed or when a generation of its leaders was killed, chains of transmission were irrevocably broken. In the context of the twenty-first century, this means that we don't know exactly what happened during Adonis or Demeter's rituals. We can assemble the pieces together as best we can; we can initiate new or similar forms of veneration, but we cannot know for sure exactly what occurred during these Mysteries. (See: *Adonis; Baubo; Bona Dea; Despoena; Fauna; Maia.*)

## MYTH

Myth, the root of *mythic* and *mythology*, means "sacred." *Mythology* technically means "sacred story" or "sacred study." In modern casual language, *myth* is often used as a synonym for *false* or *untrue*, but that usage itself is what is not true. *Myth* is *not* used in that sense in this book. *Myth* doesn't mean "it didn't happen." It means that what is being discussed is sacred, not mundane.

Myths are complex narratives that can be understood on many levels. Myths may or may not be literally true (some are; some are not), but that does not mean they are false or do not contain truth. Spirits and the mysteries of the universe cannot be reduced to simplistic terms. Myths are stories intended to nourish human souls: they have something of the same nature as dreams and may best be interpreted in the same way that one interprets dreams.

Myths are symbolic stories, a means of expressing something whose meaning may transcend language, something too profound to be conveyed by words. Myths serve many functions. Epic myths explain the creation of the world or the afterlife, but others explain traditions: why

people do whatever it is that they do.

Myths are the sagas of spirits. It is a rare myth that does not contain some sort of spirit. (This is the traditional dividing line between myths and legends: myths involve sacred characters, while legends are not required to do so.) Myths tell us who spirits are, what to expect from them, and how best to behave in their presence.

Myths are our earliest stories, dating back to primeval times, but until relatively recently in the scope of history, myths were not written down. Many have been lost or suppressed. In some cases, only fragments survive.

Sometimes one spirit possesses many myths. Sometimes these multiple myths are complementary, but often they are contradictory. All of the following is told of Aphrodite:

- Aphrodite is born from the merger of blood from Uranus' severed genitals and sea foam.
- Aphrodite was conceived when Uranus' blood impregnated the sea spirit Thalassa.
- Aphrodite is the daughter of Zeus and his wife, Dione.
- Aphrodite is a West Asian spirit, similar to Astarte, Anat, and Inanna-Ishtar, who was later incorporated into the Greek pantheon.
- Aphrodite is Astarte incorporated into the Greek pantheon.

Analyzing myths and exploring the asserted relationships between spirits can be very revealing about spirits and humans alike. Humans and spirits share historical circumstances. Human history is often encoded in myths. The reluctance of so many Greek goddesses to wed may preserve information about human gender relationships of the time when those particular myths were born.

## NECROMANCY

This literally means "divination via the dead." (Similarly, *cartomancy* is "divination using cards.") In other words, the dead are contacted to reveal information about the future and explain the past and present. In twenty-first-century popular culture, *necromancy* is a sensationalized

word, sometimes used as a synonym for grave desecration. However, most necromantic rituals require no contact with a corpse or cemetery. If you have ever attempted to consciously dream of a dead loved one, then you have engaged in necromancy. Necromantic rituals include:

- Séances
- Spirit boards, like Ouija boards or similar devices
- Sleeping on a grave, in a crypt, or in a cemetery in order to receive a dream visitation
- Sleeping with a dead loved one's photograph or clothing beneath your pillow in order to receive a dream visitation

Whether actual contact with the dead is required depends upon how a spiritual tradition perceives the dead. The ancient Greeks believed that the longer someone was dead, the harder it became for them to communicate or sympathize with the living; thus some *very* old traditional Greek magic spells attempt to wrest information from the corpse before burial or immediately afterward. However, this is unusual. Most necromantic rituals involve divination, dreams, or direct requests to souls of the dead or to those spirits who control and commune with them.

## ORACLE

*Oracle* means “answer,” the ability to receive needed information about the future right now in the present. (Oracles can also reveal and explain secrets of the past.) Some spirits serve as oracles directly, through divination devices or at their shrines. The word *oracle* also refers to those shrines. Delphi is among the most famous oracles in the world. *Oracle* may indicate an oracular shrine, its presiding spirit who technically provides the oracle, *and* the human diviners who deliver the oracle. Regardless of how or where they do it, spirits who consistently deliver prophecies are classified as *oracular spirits*.

Some spirits bestow oracular power on people. The most famous case involves Apollo, who blessed the Trojan princess Cassandra with this gift, simultaneously cursing her with the proviso that no one would ever believe her unfailingly accurate predictions. (See: *Daphne*; *Nanshe*.)

## PANTHEON

*Pantheon* literally means “all deities” and is used to indicate the collective spirits of a particular spiritual tradition, mythic cycle, religion, or culture. Thus the Olympian Spirits comprise one pantheon; their competitors, the Titans, form another. Titans and Olympians together also belong to the greater Greek pantheon, alongside various unaffiliated spirits.

In terms of practical spirit working, various issues arise regarding pantheons. First, is it permissible to blend pantheons, or is that just being sloppy and all over the place?

Pantheons have never been graven in stone; they evolve and change. They are only static to those who perceive them solely as historical matter reflecting the past. In other words, there may be no such thing as a “pure” pantheon. As people interact with each other, their spirits come into contact with each other, too. Spirits negotiate, form alliances, or have conflicts with each other in the same manner as people.

Pantheons reflect relationships between spirits and also between spirits and people. The very existence of a clearly demarcated pantheon may indicate a group of spirits venerated by a specific group of people and an attempt by those people to create a cohesive mythic cycle involving these spirits. In other words, the pantheon is already a blend of previously individual spirits.

Sometimes pantheons reflect the natural order of spirits and relationships between them, but sometimes pantheons more accurately reflect the needs of people. Pantheons are sometimes cobbled together in an attempt to form a coherent mythic cycle incorporating deities of different traditions or attempts to find a place for new spirits. People tend to like order, but spirits tend to be disorderly. Pantheons are frequently attempts by people to create divine order and clarity.

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*Restructuring myths and pantheons is a way of maintaining relationships with powerful spirits and also of putting these spirits in their place. Spirits inevitably serve as role models. Cultures that value female submissiveness will*

*encourage female spirits to keep their power under wraps or emphasize stories (myths) that highlight desired qualities in a female.*

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Mythic descriptions of wars between pantheons may obliquely describe conflict between nations, each possessing its own religious beliefs and pantheons of spirits. Tales of one pantheon conquering another (as, for example, the defeat of the Titans by the Olympians in Greece) may reflect human political or social realities.

As many human societies became increasingly male dominated (as in Greece, for instance), women were identified, not as individuals, but as some man's wife, daughter, or sister. Likewise, previously autonomous goddesses followed suit, formally incorporated into pantheons in relation to male deities: Hera became Zeus' wife; Artemis and Athena his daughters. Amphitrite became Poseidon's wife. The most significant surviving myths of Thetis detail her marriage to a mortal and her role as Achilles' mother, although she is a very great goddess on her own.

Historically, people have always blended pantheons, especially in urban areas. The Bible is filled with complaints regarding "whoring after" foreign spirits. The Magical Papyri of Alexandria, Egypt, which document spiritual practices from the early centuries of the early Common Era, record magic spells that simultaneously address spirits of Greece, Egypt, Mesopotamia, and elsewhere.

*The Encyclopedia of Spirits* contains spirits from all over the world. Must an individual work exclusively with spirits deriving from their own religious or ethnic background? That's completely up to you. Some people feel especially close to spirits reflecting their own background or feel safer with them. However, historically, veneration tends to be cross-cultural. Spirits may or may not recognize distinctions that are so important to some people.

Another thing to consider is that spirits may know more about you and your ancestral, genetic history than you do. As with pantheons, it is possible that there is no such thing as a "pure-bred" human being. Each individual's ancestry goes back to the dawning of human life on Earth; family trees and DNA are full of surprises. Spirits may recognize ancient

ancestry, history, or loyalties that we no longer recall or recognize. The spirits responding to your call may reveal mysteries of your own deep ancestral roots. Or maybe they just like you or feel protective toward you for reasons having nothing to do with ancestry.

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*One ritual recorded in the Magical Papyri simultaneously invokes Adonis, Anubis, Ereshkigal, and Hermes. Each of those spirits derives from a different pantheon: Canaanite, Egyptian, Sumerian, and Greek, respectively.*

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Can you place spirits from different traditions and pantheons on one single altar? Again, that is up to you, whatever you feel is appropriate. An altar is a reflection of your own spiritual journey. It can serve as the crossroads where your spirits meet. They are already interacting in your life. If you can envision them all hovering around you, then they know each other and can safely be placed on an altar together. If, however, you feel that this is awkward or somehow wrong, then follow your spiritual instincts and create individual altar space as you deem most appropriate.

## **PATH**

Spirits are sometimes described as having *paths*. Classical mythology sometimes uses the word *aspect* to describe this same phenomenon. A commonly used modern Spanish term is *camino*, meaning “road.” Sometimes the word *manifestation* is used, although that word may also indicate the various physical forms in which a spirit appears.

Paths may be understood as facets of one being, different sides of the same personality. Now a human being may have a charming side and a grumpy side, but when it comes to spirits, the subject is more complex, more akin to full-blown multiple personalities. Different paths may involve different appearances and manifestations. Thus, Yor uba love goddess Oshun is almost invariably envisioned as a gorgeous, regal, generous queen. It is how she is virtually *always* encountered. *But* Oshun also very occasionally manifests as the ragged buzzard-mother, poor and

decrepit. That manifestation is one of the paths of Oshun.

Paths may be different manifestations of a single spirit as if one spirit had fractured into many distinct personalities, *but* paths may also be understood as closely related spirits or as individual members of a spirit tribe or family. Thus, history records different Ba'al: the Ba'al of Lebanon, Ba'al Peor, and Ba'al Zebub, just to name a few. Are they all the same? Are they different local manifestations of the same spirit, different paths of the same spirit? Or are they different members of the Ba'al family? Is the name *Ba'al* being used as a generic name to identify various unrelated but similar spirits whose original names may now be lost? (See the Glossary entry for *Identification*.) Any or all of these may be true.

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*Paths are often identified by a secondary name following the spirit's main name, although sometimes these second names are merely descriptive or are epithets.*

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Are all the different spirits named Ezili (there are many) one and the same, are they sisters, or are they just separate distinct spirits bearing the same name? There is no one right answer; people have been debating and arguing these points for millennia and will continue to do so.

Paths are not fixed or static; they change and evolve. A path that lacks relevance to a spirit or its devotees may become dormant. Likewise, new paths are continuously born. Sometimes when an exceptionally charismatic human being dies, he or she emerges as a path of a deity. The person is understood as expressing the power of the spirit or even as merging with that spirit. (Or possibly, the person may be considered an *avatar* of the spirit. See the Glossary entry for *Avatar*.) Examples:

- The path of Ogou Dessalines evokes Haitian emperor Jean-Jacques Dessalines.
- The path of Simbi Makaya evokes Haitian revolutionary leader and shaman Makaya.



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*This is a difficult, advanced, esoteric concept: it will not be relevant to all who wish to work with spirits. If you don't understand it yet, don't worry. The concept of paths is, however, significant and frequently discussed both in scholarly works regarding spirits of the classical era and in the context of African-Diaspora spirits, who are among the most widely venerated spirits today.*

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## **P**ATRON

The word *patron* literally means “father,” but in the context of spirits, the word indicates dominion. A patron of tuberculosis has dominion over that illness and those affected by it and may be invoked for assistance.

Spirits may also patronize people or at least certain types of people. Patrons are expected to behave like ideal parents: protecting, guiding, and providing enhanced opportunities and prosperity. Ganymede is the patron of wine stewards. He protects those serving in that profession; they may appeal to him for assistance, professional or otherwise. There are spiritual patrons for virtually anything that you can imagine. Spirits serving as your patrons may have spiritual obligations toward you. (At any rate, this may be worth nicely suggesting to them, should the need arise.) They are counted among your personal spiritual allies.

In her 1993 book *Warrior Marks*, author Alice Walker describes being requested to serve as patron of a charitable organization. She responded that it was impossible for her as a woman to be a patron, but that she would happily serve as *matron*. Having once read Walker's words, I have never again been able to use *patron* for women, not even the variant intended to feminize an inherently masculine word *patroness*, essentially “lady father.” Thus, female spirits in this book are designated *matrons*, spiritual mothers, not fathers. (An argument has been made that

*patron* really derives from the Latin *patronus*, indicating a defender or protector of clients, but the word still retains its *paternal* air.)

## **P**ILGRIMAGE

*Pilgrimage* involves journeying to a shrine or sacred site associated with a

spirit. The concept of the pilgrimage is shared by many spiritual traditions. Pilgrimages are modern—somewhere on Earth *right now*, whenever you are reading this, a mass pilgrimage is taking place—but the concept is ancient, too. According to Egyptian legend, Seth, Spirit of Chaos, chopped his brother Osiris' body into fourteen parts, scattering them along the Nile. Shrines were later built marking the sites where these parts were found: an ancient pilgrimage route involved journeying to each one. According to Jewish legend, when the biblical Caleb was sent to scout out the land of Canaan, he first paid a visit to the Cave of Machpelah in Hebron to request help from the ancestors buried there. Caleb's own tomb is now a pilgrimage site, too.

Pilgrimages may be arranged to coincide with feast days. A pilgrimage to a sacred site associated with a spirit is a very traditional way of repaying spiritual favors. (See: *Ba Chua Xu; Guadalupe; Sati.*)

#### POSSESSION

The word *possession* means, in simplest terms, that a spirit is inside the body of a human. While there, it speaks through the human's mouth (the voice may or may not change; communication may be in the person's usual language or in an unknown tongue), and it takes control of the person's body.

Two types of possession by spirits exist: voluntary and involuntary. It is the human who either willingly volunteers to serve as a host or is invaded.

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*Spirit possession is usually possession by invitation as opposed to the violent spirit invasions depicted in Hollywood movies like The Exorcist.*

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Involuntary possession means the spirit is not welcome; it has just made itself at home. Such a spirit often behaves destructively toward its host or others, but in general, the phenomenon is nowhere as dramatic as what is depicted in movies or horror fiction. The spirit behaves like a parasite, but on a grander scale, sometimes causing illness or coma.

Often these are spirits who, for one reason or another, seek a human host in which to hide. They are trying to lie low, although often unsuccessfully.

Certain types of spirits are most likely to engage in involuntary possession, for instance Jewish dybbuks or

Japanese fox spirits. In general, invasive spirits who engage in involuntary possession need to be exorcised.

Involuntary possession is rare. Voluntary possession, on the other hand, occurs every day, all around the world.

Voluntary possession, more accurately called *ritual possession*, very rarely occurs outside formal ritual. Spirits very rarely possess the noninitiated, someone who has not been taught to handle the experience. Ritual possession is a skill that is learned and taught. It is not something that the average independent practitioner needs to worry about.

How is it possible for spirits to speak directly to people, deliver prophecies, and provide healing? The easiest, most efficient way is through the bodies of their devotees. During ceremonies and ritual, spirits are invited to join people, to enter into human bodies, and to speak through human mouths. The person who is possessed by a spirit is temporarily *in possession* of whatever powers that spirit possesses, healing via touch or demonstrating perfect clairvoyance.

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*The difference between ritual possession and shamanism involves who is doing the traveling. Shamans travel to the realms of spirits. During ritual possession, the spirits travel to us. Many shamans engage in both soul journeying and ritual possession.*

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This type of ritual possession exists around the world and is shared by *multitudes* of spiritual traditions. It is not an uncommon phenomenon. Voluntary possession is temporary; a spirit may be present in a human body for minutes or possibly hours, but very rarely longer. Spirits rarely

make surprise appearances (although sometimes unexpected spirits turn up during ceremonies). Contrary to sensationalized versions, it is usually people who seek possession, more than spirits. Spirits often must be seduced or cajoled before they deign to appear. Singing and dancing lures and entices spirits into bodies of devotees. Other ritual enticements include music (especially drumming), costumes, masks, incense, and offerings (gifts or bribes for the spirits).

Why is possession sought?

- To be in the presence of the sacred
- To obtain the blessings of the spirits
- Because spirits are able to provide healing and oracles in this fashion
- Because possession is perceived as the supreme blessing a spirit can bestow upon celebrants

For the brief time that a spirit inhabits a human body, that person is the spirit. What happens to the human soul within that body? It's hard to say, but it emerges unharmed immediately after the spirit's departure. Most people have no memory of what transpired during possession or of messages they delivered. The general consensus among spiritual traditions is that somehow the human personality is pushed down or pushed out of the way by the spirit.

The Dinka people of the Sudan describe ritual possession as being "caught by the Creator." The typical term used for a possessed person is *horse*. The human becomes a vehicle for the spirit the way horses are vehicles for people. The title of Maya Deren's 1953 book and film, *Divine Horsemen: The Living Gods of Haiti*, references this phenomenon. The exact terminology, that the possessed person serves as a spirit's "horse" or "mount," exists in rural India and elsewhere as well.

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*Ritual prostitution may be understood as a form of ritual possession. Ancient priestesses channeled goddesses while engaging in divine rites with kings.*

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## RUNES

Runes are symbols possessing magical, mystical, and divinatory properties. Runes are letters belonging to magic alphabets. *Rune* is often translated as *mystery*. The earliest known runes date back to circa 8000 BCE.

Runes serve various functions:

- Runes are a divination system.
- Runes are an alphabet (each rune has a name and a sound; it may be spoken aloud).
- Runes are a source of magical power and a component of many spells.
- Runes are a conduit to spirits.

Specific runes are identified with specific spirits. Thus the rune named Teiwaz, which bears the shape of an arrow, represents the Norse deity Tyr. (Exactly which rune is affiliated with which spirit may be subject to debate.) (See the Glossary entries for *Seals and Sigils*; *Vèvès*.)

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*The word rune is sometimes used as a generic catchall for any arcane, mysterious writing, but in the twenty-first century, runes are most profoundly associated with Northern Europe, specifically what is now Germany and Scandinavia.*

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## SEALS AND SIGILS

These are images that possess various magic powers and are used for various purposes. Many spirits possess a specific image (a seal or sigil) that transmits its essence and may be used to summon or theoretically control them. Sigils and seals are usually geometric but may be representational. They are integral to medieval methods of commanding and compelling spirits.

The word *sigil* derives directly from the Latin *sigillum*, meaning “seal” (hence *sigil* and *seal* are used synonymously). Many sigils incorporate Hebrew letters and words and may or may not derive from Kabbalistic traditions and ancient Jewish magic. (Medieval Christian demonologists also commonly incorporated Hebrew into sigils.) The word *sigil* may also relate to the Hebrew word *segulah*, which has various, complex meanings. A *segulah* may be a talisman, treasure, virtue, remedy, or something possessing the power to heal or effect spiritual change.

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*The most famous sigil is the Seal of Solomon, also commonly called a Jewish star, which is a hexagram, two interlocking triangles, representing the perfect union of the male and female principles.*

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#### SÉANCE

A *séance* is a ritual intended to invoke, summon, and communicate with spirits. The word derives from the French *seoir*, “to sit,” because the standard *séance* ritual involves a group of people seated around a table. (A *séance* is sometimes called “a sitting.”) *Séances* are an intrinsic component of Spiritualism and Spiritism.

*Séances* occur in different styles and with varying degrees of theatricality. At the height of the Spiritualist movement’s popularity, *séances* were often associated with disembodied sounds, rapping, table turning, and spectral phenomena, but *séances* can also be very still, peaceful, and quiet. In general, the flashier the *séance*, the easier it is to fake. If you want to see what a *séance* looks like without attending one, they are frequently depicted, with varying degrees of realism, in movies. Examples include *The Uninvited*, *Séance on a Wet Afternoon*, and *The Others*.

#### SHAMAN

A *shaman* is a person who can travel back and forth between the human realm and realms of spirits. Don’t buy a bus ticket; that isn’t how it’s

done. Although it can be physically strenuous, this is spiritual traveling. Shamanism involves soul journeying, usually while entranced.

What does it mean to soul journey? It means literally to send out one's soul. The individual is believed to possess various souls: the shaman develops and exerts extraordinary control over a traveling soul, which can leave the body and consciously travel, communicate, and bring back messages.

What do shamans do while they're away? They may battle or socialize with spirits. They retrieve missing pieces of other people's souls. They travel to other realms to obtain needed information, like how to heal illness or avert disasters.

Some shamanize just to commune with spirits, but shamans also serve their communities. Traditionally, communities provided economic support for a shaman so that they were able to devote themselves to this task full-time. (The flip side of this economic support is that the shaman may be on call around the clock, 24/7.) It is an eminently practical system: as with spirits, shamans are patronized as long as they demonstrate results. If the ailing consistently fail to recover, if the weather is consistently bad, if the crops fail, if the spirits seem unhappy, another more successful shaman will be found.

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*Shamanic techniques describe methods used by shamans. Many who are not shamans successfully utilize some techniques.*

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The word *shaman* is a Tungus word (Tungus is an indigenous Siberian language), and shamanism is closely identified with cultures of the extreme north. However, shamans exist wherever people do. There is no specific English word to express this concept, and so the Tungus word has entered our language and become somewhat generic.

Shamans are traditionally called by the spirits to work with them; they are chosen. Lengthy preparation and study is typically involved. This is not something that can be learned over a weekend, although certainly

some techniques may be relatively easily acquired.

- Shamans may learn secret spirit languages.
- They may possess special songs or chants that open gates of spirit realms.
- They may work with their own personal spirit guides, unknown to other people.

Shamanistic literature, including fairy tales and myths may be considered the equivalent of road maps. They advise what to expect and what to do at specific junctures of the journey. These descriptions may be incorporated into visualizations.

### **SPIRIT BOARDS**

Spirits Boards are tools used to contact and communicate with spirits. Synonyms include *witch board* and *talking board*. *Ouija boards* are a type of spirit board. *Ouija board* is sometimes used as if it were a synonym for *spirit board* (and it is often the only kind of spirit board many have ever seen), but *Ouija board* is a trademarked name for a specific spirit board currently marketed by Parker Brothers game and toy manufacturers. *Ouija boards* are found wherever games are sold. Other spirit board variations may be harder to find.

The standard modern spirit board is a flat board (or other flat surface) printed with letters, numbers, words, and symbols. A movable pointer rolls over the board and points to this printed material, usually in response to questions. The big question is: *how* is the pointer moving? Are people's hands moving it? Is it the force of gravity, a tiny breeze, or some other scientific explanation? *Or are* spirits responsible?

Spirit boards originally came into prominence in the nineteenth century as tools associated with Spiritualism. No need to wait for an invitation to a séance or pay a medium's fee. Spirit boards enabled an individual or small group to contact spirits independently in the privacy of their own home. Spirit boards achieved great popularity and were sold as novelty items as well as serious spiritual tools.

The standard American spirit board is based on the planchette. *Planchette* is a French term meaning "little plank." It is a small board



supported on wheels or castors that moves in order to spell out messages or answer questions. A pencil or other writing implement may be attached so that words or letters form, or the planchette may be rolled over words, letters, or symbols. The American spirit board is a simplified version. (To confuse matters, the rolling pointers of American spirit boards are also sometimes called planchettes.)

Although these spiritual devices first achieved mass popularity in the nineteenth century, they are based on ancient divinatory techniques. Chinese variations, known as spirit or sand writing, have been documented at least as far back as the Tang era (618–907 CE). (See: *Tzu Ku*.) They remain popular today. This is the basic method:

- A question is written on a piece of paper, which is then burned.
- A stylus, suspended over a shallow tray filled with sand, is operated by mediums until a character, letters, or word(s) may be deciphered.

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*The Changing Light at Sandover, an over five-hundred-page epic poem by Pulitzer prize-winning poet, James Merrill (3 March, 1926–6 February, 1995) was inspired by what he called his “twenty-year adventure around the Ouija board,” during which he spoke to dead friends and a wide assortment of spirits.*

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*One can observe a ouija board in action in director Roland West’s 1930 film, The Bat Whispers (among the inspirations for the modern superhero Batman).*

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Spirit boards have accrued something of a bad reputation, possibly because they are commonly operated by those with little or no metaphysical or spiritual training, the equivalent of children playing

with matches. Spirit boards are sold in toy stores, but they are real, genuine, divinatory devices.

When working with spirits, it is always best to be as clear and specific as humanly possible. Ouija or other spirit boards are an excellent communications device should you have an appointment with a spiritual entity whom you already trust. When summoning spirits, ask for the spirit you seek by name; don't just put out a general call. Herein lies the danger of the Ouija board: spirits sitting around with nothing to do tend to be the ones no one else has called for and probably for good reason. (And always remember, fear attracts the fearsome.)

### **SPIRIT MONEY**

This is traditionally used in Chinese spiritual traditions to propitiate and communicate with spirits. The theory is that by burning special paper, messages are reliably sent to the spirit realm. Thousands of varieties of mystical paper (also called *Joss*, *Fu*, *Paper Horse*, or *Spirit Money paper*, among other names) exist, many very beautiful and magically powerful. Some, although not all, feature images of spirits. Spirit money, which resembles cash bills, is relatively easy to find in stores catering to traditional Asian clientele (or to tourists in Chinatown). Joss paper is also sold among scrapbooking supplies. Some spirits prefer paper offerings in the forms of dresses, cars, or other material goods. (See: *T'ai Shan, Lady of; Weaving Maiden*.)

### **SYNCRETISM**

*Syncretism* is an esoteric concept. Sometimes, for one reason or another, one spirit may assume the identity of another spirit (in spiritual parlance: wear its mask). That spirit may answer to the other spirit's name or use its iconography. For example, if you go to a *botanica* and ask to buy a statue of the West African deity Babalu Ayé, you will likely be given a statue labeled Saint Lazarus. No mistake has been made. The image of the Roman Catholic saint is used to represent Babalu Ayé, who may also answer to the name Saint Lazarus. They are syncretized.

Syncretism tends to be the fruit of desperation. Babalu Ayé's syncretism to the beggar saint began when Africans, kidnapped during the slave trade and brought to labor in the Western Hemisphere, were

forbidden to venerate their own deities. Of course, when do you need your deities most but during a cataclysmic disaster? On one hand, enslaved Africans could not afford to abandon their spirits; on the other, they could not afford to openly break these rules, as punishment was devastatingly severe. What do you do in this situation? Throughout history, people's response to similar circumstances has been syncretism: secretly venerating one spirit while openly professing veneration of another.

Enslaved Africans were generally *not* taught to read, write, or given sophisticated Christian conversion instruction. They were, however, given Christian imagery to venerate. People for whom an image is very familiar may assume that everyone sees what they see, but in fact different people may look at the same image but *not* see the same thing. Roman Catholic Saint Patrick is inevitably portrayed with at least one snake. When devotees of the serpent-deity Damballah saw images of Saint Patrick, what impressed them was the snake. Unfamiliar with the legend, they did not automatically assume that the saint was banishing the pictured snake; instead a venerable, dignified man was depicted *with* a snake, together, in company. Damballah became syncretized to Saint Patrick.

Syncretism provides safety and discretion. In late nineteenth-century Cuba, authorities arrested a devotee of the orisha Shango, charging him with sorcery. He defended himself saying that his home altar was, in fact, dedicated to Saint Barbara, to whom Shango is syncretized, thus he was not a witch but a devoted Christian.

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*Two people may look at an image of a beautiful woman dressed in blue and disagree: one sees the Christian Mary, while the other recognizes the same image as the Vodou lwa Ezili Freda Dahomey. If they bring over a third person to look at the same image and decide between them, that person may see the Yoruba orisha Yemaya. Similarly, someone viewing a statue of a mother with babe in arms carved from black wood will recognize the Egyptian goddess Isis and her son, baby Horus. Someone else sees that same statue and recognizes Mary and baby Jesus. Yet another person will recognize the Vodou*

## THEURGY

Theurgy is a Greek term for various spiritual rituals and magical practices intended to evoke spirits so as to benefit from them. Theurgy involves practical working with divine powers, typically via ritual, dance, and music. A practitioner of theurgy is a *theurgist*, literally a “god worker,” “deity worker,” or “spirit worker” (although in modern casual usage, the term is sometimes used as a synonym for *magician*, *wizard*, or *sorcerer*, who may or may not have anything to do with spirits).

The term *theurgy* was coined by the classical philosopher and prominent Platonist scholar Iamblichus of Apamea (c. 240—c. 325 CE). Iamblichus taught what he called *theurgy* (working *with* the sacred or working *with* gods) as opposed to *theology* (the study of the sacred or study of the gods, essentially talking *about* gods). Iamblichus wanted his students to *know*, rather than to *believe*. Devotees of Theurgy included the Emperor Julian (reigned 3 November 361–26 June 363 CE), who attempted to return the Roman Empire from Christianity back to Paganism.

Dictionary definitions of *theurgy* also include “the performance of miracles with spiritual assistance” and “magic performed with help from beneficent spirits.”

## VÈVÈS

Vèvès are specific designs that honor, incarnate, and summon the lwa, spirits of Vodou. Each lwa possesses its own vèvè, which is used to identify and summon them and which expresses something of its personality or essence. Papa Legba’s vèvè incorporates a crossroads; Damballah’s is serpentine. Vèvès are traditionally traced on the ground with powdered substances (usually cornmeal) during rituals. Contemplating a lwa’s vèvè adds to greater understanding of its nature.

The word vèvè derives from an archaic Fon term for palm oil, used to make similar spirit-summoning ground paintings. (Fon is a language of Benin, the African nation also called Dahomey, birthplace of Vodou.)

The basic structure of the vèvè derives from traditional Congolese and Fon sacred ground paintings. Haitian Vodou was also profoundly influenced by Freemasonry and iron-working traditions; these influences are visible in vèvè designs.

## VISUALIZATIONS

*Visualizations* are guided journeys to the spirits. Visualizations are consciously initiated and are at least begun while awake. (Some people fall into trance states or sleep during the visualizations, but many others do not, remaining conscious for the whole experience.) Visualizations harness the power of the mind to access realms of spirits.

### How to Conduct a Visualization

1. Decide where you wish to travel or who you wish to meet.
2. Familiarize yourself with enough details to envision the process. In other words, where are you most likely to encounter the spirit you seek? At the beach? At the mall? Beneath the ground, in a mountain cave, or high up among the clouds? In order to plot your journey, you must have at least something of a mental map.
3. Choose a time when you have privacy. Ritual space may be prepared: some cast circles or employ spirit-beckoning fragrances.
4. By definition, visualizations are visual. Close your eyes, relax, and then visualize yourself as you begin your journey to this spirit. What are you wearing? How do you look? A visualization is the equivalent of a waking dream; *anything* can occur. Journey to the spirit; engage in whatever you came to do (discussion, petition, romance), and then respectfully take your leave.
5. Some schools of thought suggest that you should always ask for a gift from the spirit before returning home. It is not healthy to end a visualization before you see yourself, in your mind's eye, return to your starting point. If you're interrupted, then go back later and complete the journey. Although for some, visualization never progresses beyond pleasant fantasy, it can also be an incredibly profound, spiritual experience, a gateway to the divine.

(See also: *Adrano* and *Baleine, La* for specific examples of visualizations.)

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*Visualizations can have specific intent: you seek a certain realm, dead relative, or spirit. Alternatively, it can be an open-ended journey of exploration where you are unsure of who or what you will encounter. It is always wise to gird yourself with protective talismans and amulets. Wear them in real life and/ or visualize them as part of the visualization process.*

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\*White, representing the power of the blank slate, may also substitute for any other color, if necessary.

## Using This Book

This encyclopedia contains brief descriptions of various types of spirits as well as many individual named spirits. In order to present such a vast scope of spirits, each entry is by necessity limited in space. Frankly, each spirit in this book deserves a thousand-page book of its own. (Keep that in mind when considering vows.)

The goal of this *Encyclopedia of Spirits* is to give a sense of each spirit's basic nature in order to enable readers to identify the spirits they seek and enough practical information to work with them. Think of the entries as matchmaking profiles.

Many of these spirits possess elaborate, complex, detailed mythologies. These myths often contradict each others as well as their own. Sometimes one spirit is loved by two (or more) different communities of people, possessing different spiritual beliefs, as for example the Black Madonna, venerated by Roman Catholics and goddess devotees alike. Sometimes spirits possess both official *and* unofficial myths and histories.

Spirits in this book are generally organized alphabetically by name. Frequently no standardized spelling exists. Many names of spirits were originally written in other alphabets or in languages no longer used. Some names were never written down until recently. Even names written down thousands of years ago may prove puzzling: ancient Egyptian and Semitic languages lack written vowels, so a certain amount of guesswork exists as to pronunciation. Regional and linguistic differences in pronunciation also exist. In other words, there may not be one single right way to spell or say a spirit's name. Let that give you confidence. Your version may be as correct as anyone else's.

The spellings of spirit names in this book were variously chosen to facilitate either pronunciation or comprehension by English-speaking readers, rather than for consistency of tradition. Thus the spelling *Hekate* is used, rather than *Hecate* (to emphasize the hard sound of the name's

middle consonant) while *Oceanus* is used, not *Okeanos*, so that readers can see the word “ocean” within this sea god’s name. All these spellings are correct, however. My apologies to the classicists among us who would prefer that spellings hew consistently to just one tradition.

Some spirits are affiliated with specific creatures. This book reflects traditional metaphysical classifications which are far less precise than those of modern science: all sorts of creatures including mammals, mythic, reptiles, fish, and insects are frequently lumped together under the blanket term, “Animal”. Basically, metaphysically-speaking, anything that isn’t a human or bird might be classed as an “animal” even though clearly many aren’t. (Birds often play a unique function as mediators between people and spirits and are thus usually considered separately.) Likewise, the moon and sun are lumped in with the planets, although obviously from an astronomical perspective, they are not planets.

Where information exists regarding colors, offerings, favorite foods, numbers, feast days, and so forth, it is included. That information is inconsistent. Information about working with widely venerated spirits or those whose veneration was never entirely suppressed is highly detailed. In other cases much information has been lost or destroyed, particularly with spirits of pre-Christian Europe and pre-Islamic Arabia. Don’t despair if information about the spirits you seek is scanty. You may have just found yourself a research project (there’s another potential vow!), or alternatively, information may be obtained directly from the spirit via dreams, oracles, and visualizations.

#### **VODOU, VODOO, VODO: A SPELLING GUIDE**

- *Vodou* refers to the African-Diaspora religion as practiced in Haiti. (It is synonymous with *Vodoun*: the final “n” is not pronounced, but serves to emphasize the nasal quality of spoken French.)
- *Voodoo* refers to the specific spiritual traditions that evolved in New Orleans. (Usage of this spelling in any other context tends to be pejorative.)
- *Vodo* refers to the specific spiritual traditions as practiced in the Dominican Republic. (It may or may not be synonymous with *Gaga* or *Twenty-One Divisions*.)



- *Hoodoo* refers to a North American folk magic tradition.



## Spirits: A-Z



## A

### Aatxe

#### *Young Bull*

**Also known as:** Aatxegorri (The Young Red Bull)

**Origin:** Basque (Euskara)

Aatxe is among the spirits in Mari's entourage. He may be her lover; her enforcer, punishing those who displease her; or he may even be among Mari's many forms. (See also: *Mari*.) Aatxe lives deep within mountain caverns but emerges on stormy nights. (The implication is that he is responsible for these storms; the storms signal his presence and occur when he wishes to emerge, not the other way around.)

Aatxe is a guardian spirit. He guards Earth's riches, especially buried treasure. He is also something of a justice spirit. Disrespectful behavior toward Earth, spirits, and sacred rituals causes him to see red. He also has little patience for lying and cheating. If you encounter him, you must be brave and honest with him, as well as very polite.

**Manifestations:** His most common manifestation is as a red bull or as a bull whose body is formed from red flames, but he is a master shape-shifter and can theoretically appear in any form. Favored forms have historically included dragon, goat, horse, pig, and man.

**Sacred territory:** The Pyrenees

**Color:** Red

**See also:** *Etsai*; *Mari*

### Abata

**Also known as:** Abatan

**Classification:** Orisha

Abata is the Swamp Queen, orisha of swamps and marshes. She has the power to control accumulation of wealth (or the lack thereof). Yoruba tradition identifies her as the female compatriot of orisha Erinle or his wife. Erinle has dominion over thresholds where fresh-and saltwater merge, as happens in mangrove swamps. Swamps are associated with secrets and hidden treasure and so it is unsurprising that Abata is less well-known than her partner.

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*Some Cuban traditions perceive Abata as male and as Erinle's brother or even as a path of Erinle, not as an independent, distinct orisha.*

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- Erinle and Abata may be venerated together on an altar.
- Offerings and petitions may also be brought to Abata's home in the swamp.

**Iconography:** Abata may be represented by the image of a snake.

**Colors:** Light blue, coral, gold, green, pink, and yellow

**Animal:** Snake (Abata may manifest in human or snake form.)

**See also:** *Erinle; Orisha;* and the Glossary entry for *Path*

## **Abchanchu**

**Classification:** Vampire

The Abchanchu roams Bolivian roads in the guise of a doddering, frail old man. He appears confused and disoriented, like someone's helpless old grandpa, and so inevitably a Good Samaritan volunteers to help him. That's the Abchanchu's ploy. As soon as opportunity allows, out pop the

fangs; his fragility is revealed to be an illusion as the Abchanchu attacks. Under the influence of Dracula-inspired movies, travelers are advised to dab garlic oil on amulets to keep the Abchanchu away. True essential oil of garlic smells so strong that it will likely keep *anything* away: the power of amulets, sacred texts, and dried garlic flowers carried in a charm bag may be sufficient and definitely more pleasant.

**See also:** *Vampire*

## Abeona

**Origin:** Italian, pre-Roman

Abeona is the spirit of literal and metaphoric departures. She protects children in general, but especially the first time they leave home. Abeona may be petitioned to provide for a child's safety. Her name derives from a root verb indicating "to depart" or "go forth," but which also references death, and so she may also be petitioned to provide protection beyond the realm of the living. She has dominion over *all* kinds of departures: marriage, the military, educational opportunities, and death. She may be petitioned to safeguard children in comas, whose souls may be understood as having temporarily departed, as well as in any situation in which a child has become distant or is no longer truly with you. Abeona works in conjunction with a sister spirit, Adeona, goddess of safe returns. Together, they teach babies to walk. Abeona also guards travelers.

**Petitions:** She is traditionally invoked by parents on behalf of their children and by travelers on behalf of themselves. Ideally, present the petition and make the offering before the journey begins so that she oversees the very first steps. Petition her in conjunction with Adeona if children do not begin walking at the expected age.

**Altar:** Create sacred space for her that incorporates gate and road imagery.

**Offerings:** Traveler's talismans

**See also:** *Adeona*

## Abiku

**Origin:** Yoruba

The Abiku appear in two varieties:

- Some are vicious perpetrators.
- Some are liminal souls hovering between realms.

The same word is used to denote various beings; what unites them is child mortality. The first type of Abiku is a nocturnal, insatiably hungry, vampiric spirit: it consumes the life-force, killing its victim. Although it preys on animals and adults, what it really craves are children, the younger the better, and most especially newborns. This Abiku may be considered a disease demon. Descriptions of its appearance are vague; no one wants to get close enough to really take a good look, or alternatively, those who do come close do not survive. This type of Abiku is avoided, never summoned. They *cannot* be propitiated; they are *never* satisfied. They can be banished and kept out of specific spaces (a room; a home) via the power of iron, amulets, and more powerful spirits. (Children are encouraged to stay inside safe zones at night if an Abiku is suspected to be nearby.)

The same word is also used to name souls described as born to die. They are born, die young as an infant or child, only to be born again and die again in a repetitive cycle. The Abiku is reborn to the same mother; a family will know whether or not they possess an Abiku as repeat miscarriages, stillbirths, or deaths of children constantly recur. Sometimes if a family suspects the presence of an Abiku, the child's body is deliberately scarred to see whether any new child bears the identifying mark.

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*Many Abiku are gifted spirit mediums, as the veil between realms is consistently thin for them. Abiku societies are exceptionally powerful shamanic societies. The constant danger is that, once in the spirit realm, the Abiku will not return.*

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Abiku children are liminal beings someplace in between spirit and human. They hover on the threshold between realms, constantly summoned back and forth. Many Abiku love the realm of spirits, described as a paradise. They long to stay with spirits yet are constantly reborn as humans. As quickly as they can, they return to the Spirit World.

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*The beautiful orisha Oshun, who has dominion over fertility and women's reproductive organs, has the capacity to heal and remedy an Abiku situation. If the Abiku is caused by a curse, she can remove it. There is an Abiku shrine at Oshun's sanctuary in Oshogbo, Nigeria, visited by mothers of Abiku children.*

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Others are more ambivalent. They love spirits but also feel familial bonds and long for their human relatives. The pain they inflict on their mothers may cause the Abiku intense grief. Sometimes certain spirits love the Abiku child, and unseen to all but the Abiku, constantly hover near them, tempting the child to join them. (Similar tales are told of European Fairies.)

An Abiku's nature cannot be changed—it cannot stop being an Abiku—but the soul *can* be protected and grounded to Earth. Over the centuries, the Yoruba have devised methods of keeping Abiku alive: amulets, especially those crafted from metals like iron, copper, and silver, serve to protect and preserve the Abiku. Seductive spirits may constantly hover around the Abiku, luring it away: the jangling sounds of metal force these spirits to maintain their distance.

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*Abiku of one sort or another haunt modern Nigerian literature, including Wole Soyinka's poem, "Abiku," and novels like Chinua Achebe's Things Fall Apart; Debo Kotun's Abiku; and Ben Okri's 1991 Booker Prize winner, The Famished Road.*

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Various root causes may explain *why* a child is an Abiku or *why* an Abiku haunts a particular family. The last three of the following potential causes may be indicated if the Abiku is experienced as repeat miscarriage or stillbirth.

- The Abiku hovers between worlds, simultaneously at home in both and neither.
- The Abiku is torn between ties to human relatives and ties to spirit partners, especially soul mates, from whom they cannot stand to be parted.
- A sorcerer has cursed a woman or family, torturing them with the Abiku's incessant birth-death-rebirth cycle.
- The Abiku itself is the soul of someone angry at the woman or family.
- Abiku are mischievous child souls lacking the empathy and maturity to understand the suffering they cause. They think it's fun to go back and forth between realms.

Spirits who beckon Abiku are propitiated by food offerings at remote forest shrines (palm oil, nuts, yams; often burned, not just left to disintegrate). Abiku who are torn between worlds are pampered and coddled. Parents and caregivers are admonished not to scold the Abiku child severely or deny their desires. The Abiku thus leads a very privileged life: the goal is to keep the child so happy that she or he wishes to stay in *this* life and not leave for other realms.

**See also:** *Fairies; Oshun*

## **Abka Hehe**

*Woman of Heaven; Heaven Mother*

Abka Hehe, primordial Manchurian goddess, forms a triad with two other Manchu spirits: Banamu Hehe (Earth Mother) and Ulden Hehe (Light Mother). (*Hehe* is "Mama" in Manchu; also sometimes translated as "woman.") *Everything* comes from Abka Hehe, including the other two



goddesses of the triad. Once they emerged from her body, the three then created more spirits, people, and all living beings. Abka Hehe epitomizes all that is good. She is the guardian of the entire universe, an immortal, invincible spirit who defeats and banishes evil. Abka Hehe sent the Eagle Goddess to Earth in order to raise the first shamaness. (Traditional Manchu culture distinguishes between female and male shamans. They are perceived as possessing distinct powers.)

Coinciding with the start of Manchu rule over China in the seventeenth century (the Qing Dynasty, pronounced “Ching”), Abka Hehe was replaced in the Manchu pantheon by Abka Enduri, the Man of Heaven. In order to maintain control over China, which was unhappy about being ruled by a foreign minority, attempts were made to bring traditional Manchu shamanic culture into alignment with Confucianism, which encouraged male dominance.

Abka Hehe is immortal; she remains in the shadows, battle-ready. Petition her for help with disasters and for relief when the world seems to be falling apart.

**Manifestation:** She wears a battle skirt made of willow leaves. (In one variant of the Manchu creation story, Abka Hehe was battling a demon when leaves of her skirt broke off, fell to Earth, and transformed into the first people.)

**Bird:** Magpie

**Offerings:** Traditional Manchu offerings for spirits include wine, beans, grains, cooked fish and meats, especially pork.

**See also:** *Ao Qin*

## Abnoba

**Origin:** Celtic

Abnoba is the Goddess of the Black Forest, now in modern Germany, a region with many therapeutic springs including the famed Baden-Baden. The etymology of her Celtic name is related to “wetness” or “river.” It is very closely related to Avon, a popular name for rivers; some conjecture

that at least some of those rivers are named in her honor.

Very little information about Abnoba survives. The Romans identified her with Diana. A

Roman altar was dedicated to *Diana Abnoba* at the warm mineral springs of Badenweiler at the Black Forest's edge. As her altar was located at a therapeutic bath, it is probably safe to assume that she was similar in nature to Celtic female deities associated with healing springs, like Sequana or Sulis, but possessing stronger associations with wild nature, hence the association with Diana. Like Diana, Abnoba may have associations with fertility and women's rites.

Roman historian Tacitus (circa 56–circa 117 CE) writes that Abnoba also names a mountain from which the source of the Danube River flows. Two streams within the Black Forest do form the Danube's source, but the location and modern identity of this mountain has not been identified. It is possible that Abnoba is also the spirit of that mountain, one or both of those streams, the Danube itself, or any or all of the above.

**Petition:** Petition Abnoba to help preserve wild nature, forest plants, and animals.

**Favored people:** Those possessing strong associations with the Black Forest or perhaps even woods in general form her constituency.

**Altar:** Decorate it to evoke a deep forest. Include pine and fir cones (the most prevalent trees in the Black Forest) and images of forest animals.

**Offerings:** Efforts on behalf of what was once her domain; Black Forest Cake; Black Forest ham; spring water; pilgrimage to one of the springs near the Black Forest

**See also:** *Diana; Sequana; Sulis*

## Abtagigi

*She Who Sends Messages of Desire*

**Also known as:** Kalili; Kilili

Abtagigi is the Sumerian spirit of sacred sexuality. She awakens and stimulates erotic impulses. Babylonians and Assyrians used the Semitic form of her name, *Kalili*, in the same manner that they called Inanna, Ishtar. Abtagigi-Kalili is among the spirits in Inanna-Ishtar's entourage. Ancient Sumerian rulers maintained their power by annually enacting the Great Rite, consummating (literally) their relationship with Inanna-Ishtar, who was temporarily in possession of her high priestess' body.

The resemblance of the name *Kalili* to *Lilith* cannot be ignored. Sister spirits, both are concerned with the power inherent in sexual desire as well as esoteric aspects of sexuality and sexual energy, but Abtagigi-Kalili works within the temple while Lilith, a spirit of wild nature, remains outside.

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*Abtagigi is sometimes described as an evil spirit of harlotry, but that perspective derives from those who associate sex with sin.*

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Abtagigi possesses the secrets of the Great Rite and may be petitioned by those who seek them. She protects sex workers. She may also be petitioned to awaken or reawaken sexual desires, especially for those for whom sex has been profaned by abusive, humiliating, or traumatic experiences. She is a powerful spirit and may be requested to punish those who profane the sexual act.

**Altar:** Place Abtagigi's altar in the boudoir or in a shrine dedicated to love.

**Offerings:** Aphrodisiacs; incense and fragrance that inspire desire

**See also:** *Inanna-Ishtar; Kadesh; Lilith*

## Abuk

**Origin:** Dinka

The Dinka are pastoralists from Southern Sudan. Their indigenous religion is monotheistic: a single Creator formed Earth and all its inhabitants, including spirits who communicate via voluntary possession. Abuk is the first woman, created alongside her male counterpart, Garang. She is simultaneously an Eve-like figure, the primordial ancestress and a goddess with dominion over the yin aspects of life: water and its distribution, women and anything to do with them, fertility and what grows, whether these are babies in the womb or fruits of the garden.

Abuk presides over what are traditional Dinka women's activities: growing millet and brewing millet beer. Her son Deng is a sky deity with dominion over rain, storms, and fertility, similar in scope to Ba'al, Zeus, or Shango. Abuk remains the most popular name given to Dinka girls.

**Petition:** For success in your endeavors, abundance, safety, and good health

**Animal:** Snake, especially small grey snakes. (She may manifest in this form; it may be used to represent her on an altar or in ritual.)

**Plants:** Millet, sesame

**Offerings:** Beer, ideally home-brewed; millet; fruits, vegetables, and herbs from your garden

**See also:** *Ba'al; Shango; Zeus;* and the Glossary entry for *Possession*

## Acat

**Origin:** Maya

When the Conquistadores arrived in Central America in the sixteenth century, they were appalled to discover that not only did the indigenous people venerate spirits in the form of graven images; they also created indelible images of these spirits on their skin. Acat is the patron of tattoo artists. He presides over the tattooing process, especially for those who perceive tattooing as a spiritual rite.

Acat sponsors tattoo artists. Request that he bless your instruments;

guide your hands; send you the right customers. If you are on a quest for just the right tattoo, Acat can help. Request his protection from infection, mistakes, or harm.

**Favored people:** Tattoo artists, those who study sacred tattoos

**Altar:** Blend images of spirits, traditional Mayan imagery, and images of modern tattoos (flash, photographs, drawings).

**Offerings:** The obvious offering is a personal tattoo, but you can also offer tamales, tropical fruit, and traditional Mayan food.

## **Acca Larentia**

**Also known as:** Acca Laurentia

**Origin:** Etruscan or Italian

**Feast:** The Larentalia on 23 December

Various contradictory legends are told of Acca Larentia. Their common denominator is that she is an important benefactress of Rome. One story says she was a sex worker who amassed a fortune and bequeathed it all to Rome. Another suggests that she was the beautiful prize given to Heracles for winning a game of dice. She was locked in his temple. When the deity (or his priests) had enough of her, she was advised to marry the first rich man she met. She did, eventually inherited his estate, and bequeathed *that* to the Roman people. The most popular version of Acca Larentia's myth is that she was the wife of Faustulus, the shepherd who found Romulus and Remus and thus the foster mother of the founders of Rome.

Acca Larentia is associated with the Lares, household guardian spirits. Their festival is celebrated right after hers. She may or may not be the same spirit as Larunda. Acca Larentia is traditionally petitioned for abundance and prosperity.

**Favored people:** Sex workers; financially independent women; urban gardeners

**Sacred site:** Gardens, especially vegetable or herb, within or near cities

**See also:** *Heracles; Lares; Larunda; Mania*

## **Achachilas**

**Origin:** Aymara

The Achachilas are mountain spirits, protective ancestral spirits of the Aymara whose ancestral home is the Andes Mountains. The Achachilas are ancestors who keep a vigilant eye over their descendents, offering assistance as needed and requested. They appear in dreams and offer warnings so that unfortunate or dangerous situations may be averted. They also have power over precipitation: rain, hail, frost, and so forth.

**Manifestation:** An old man dressed in traditional Aymara clothing

**Favored people:** Their descendents, the Aymara people, although others with powerful affiliations may attempt a request

**Realm:** They live in caverns within the Andes.

**Offerings:** The Achachilas are propitiated by feeding stray dogs and by libations of water and alcoholic beverages poured on mountainous ground.

### **PROTECTION RITUAL WHILE TRAVELING IN THE ANDES**

1. Request that the Achachilas guard your vehicle on hazardous roads.
2. While petitioning, sprinkle the tires with an alcoholic beverage.
3. The Achachilas are present in the Andes; if you already have a bond with them, they may be petitioned for assistance elsewhere, too.

## **Achelous**

*He Who Washes Away Care*

**Origin:** Greek

Achelous is king of Greece's river spirits. He was venerated throughout Greece and southern Italy. Achelous' primary role was to ensure the successful maturity of young men. He also begets bodies of water, including streams, rivers, and springs, and so is the spirit to petition if you desperately need a new source of water.

River spirits are traditionally associated with fertility, and Achelous is certainly fertile. He is the father of Nymphs, Sirens, and *many* sea spirits. Achelous and Heracles competed for the same woman. While battling, Heracles ripped off one of Achelous' horns. (That he was capable of battling Heracles is testament to Achelous' own power.) Achelous' blood spilled on Earth, fertilizing her: the Sirens emerged from this union in similar fashion to the birth of Aphrodite. (Alternative myth: Achelous is their father; their mother was a Muse; and they were conventionally conceived.) Achelous was an extremely important spirit:

- Zeus himself instructed that offerings be made to Achelous.
- Achilles is described as venerating Achelous.

Masks were made in Achelous' image. Small images of his head were worn as amulets. A spirit of prosperity, some theorize that his is the true horn of plenty.

**Manifestations:** He typically appears as a bull with a human face, but he is a skilled shape-shifter, sometimes appearing as a man with a bull's face. He is a horned spirit, but one horn is broken or missing. He may appear in the guise of a merman with a long, curved fish tail or a long snake tail. Water flows from his long beard like a waterfall.

**Altar:** Achelous doesn't like being alone. He is traditionally honored together with his daughters, the Nymphs. Alternatively, surround him with mermaids or Sirens.

**Attribute:** A single horn

**Animal:** Bull

**Offering:** Young men used to cut their hair and dedicate it to Achelous in exchange for guidance and protection or as fulfillment of a vow made to him.

**See also:** *Achilles; Nymphs; Sirens*

## **Acheri**

**Origin:** India

Acheri are deadly disease spirits who manifest in the most innocuous of forms: as little girls. They may be ghosts of small girls felled by disease or merely spirits who consistently take this form. The Acheri lives amid mountain peaks but descends to human habitations at night. She preys on those her own size: if she casts her shadow over children, they become fatally ill.

The Acheri will not harm those who wear the color red. Tie a scarlet thread or ribbon around a child's wrist for protection.

## **Achilles**

**Origin:** Controversial

Achilles is most famous as the Greek hero of the Trojan War. He is the son of Thetis, a powerful sea goddess who tried to make her son immortal and came very close. One myth has her dipping baby Achilles into the sea while holding his heel. Everywhere ocean water touched became invulnerable; his only remaining weak spot was the heel she held. The term, *Achilles' heel*, indicating someone's sole profound vulnerability, has entered common language: this is its origin.

Achilles, star of the *Iliad*, is the subject of innumerable myths, films, fiction, and plays. He's standing in the alley in Bob Dylan's 1966 song, "Temporary Like Achilles." His golden good looks and warrior skills are godlike; he is brave, strong, reckless, passionate, and impulsive. His prime characteristics are rage and pride. A revisionist perception is found in Christa Wolf's 1988 novel, *Cas san dra*, where he is *not* the hero.



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*Achilles may be petitioned for help with hemophilia or any other health condition involving difficult-to-control bleeding. He may also be able to provide assistance with AIDS, toxemia, or other blood-related disorders.*

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In Greek mythology, Achilles is a liminal character, someplace between human and deity. He has a direct line to the divine via his mother. He goes into battle wearing armor crafted for him by Hephaestus. He is a god among men, albeit often a self-centered, merciless one. He is kind to his men and those for whom he feels responsible. He is a master healer who can staunch wounds and bleeding.

Achilles is omnisexual. He is extremely close to his mother. His primary relationship is with his cousin/lover, Patroclus, whose death at Troy filled Achilles with such grief and rage that he rejoined the war he had previously spurned.

In death, Achilles became a full-fledged deity. Some believe he always was one; that beneath the Greek myths is a Thracian sea-spirit whom the Greeks claimed as a hero. That Thrace fought on the side of the Trojans may explain some of Achilles' ambivalence to the war. Achilles' sacred island is what the Greeks called Leuce Island (*White Island*), but is now Snake Island in the Black Sea, off the coasts of Romania and Ukraine. Once upon a time it was called Achilles' Isle and was the center of his veneration. In some versions of his myth, after death, Achilles married Medea. They live on Snake Island together.

Thetis brought Achilles' and Patroclus' ashes to this little island and had a sanctuary built. Some myths suggest that she herself raised the island specifically for this purpose. Ruins of a large square temple found in 1823 are believed to be his shrine, which featured an oracle and was tended by sea birds who flew out to sea, wet their wings, and returned to sprinkle the shrine clean. (The shrine was also staffed by priests.)

Achilles is Master of the Black Sea. He protects, guides, and advises those who navigate its waters. He appears in dreams offering advice regarding healing or even to personally perform healings. He is a

bargainer and may not take someone's first offer, holding out for more. In life, he was a prince and a hero, son of a powerful goddess: as a spirit, he does not come cheap. His old shrine on Snake Island was filled with offerings of precious metals and jewels. He may expect comparable offerings to be maintained on an altar for him. (This can be a personal altar. In other words, you are the caretaker for his property.) Alternatively, perhaps a substantial offering on behalf of preservation of the sea will suffice. Inadequate offerings are met with silence. Up the ante: when he's satisfied, there will be a clear response.

**Plant:** Yarrow (*Achillea millefolium*)

**Birds:** Gulls and other sea birds

**Altar:** Achilles is a gregarious spirit. Keep him in company with those he loves: Patroclus, his mom, Medea. Keep a nautical, marine theme. Place a vessel of saltwater on his altar, as well as some miniature boats and mermaids to frolic with. (Young, handsome mermen, too; he likes variety.)

**Offerings:** To honor Achilles, honor Patroclus. That's the key to getting into Achilles' good graces. Otherwise, keep the offerings generous, lavish, and impressive. If you wish to offer him food, make it a feast.

**See also:** *Aeacus; Aegina; Chiron; Hephaestus; Iphigenia; Medea; Orpheus; Thetis*

## Adamu

*Red*

**Origin:** Chaldea

The similarity of Adamu's name to the biblical Adam is no accident: their names are etymologically the same. As Adam is the primal father, so Adamu is the female principle, source of life, the female womb, which is the metaphoric "red earth" from which new life is formed. Adamu is a primordial spirit of fertility, an ancient blood goddess who oversees menstruation and childbirth.

Petition her to regulate menstrual cycles, to stimulate desired menstruation, for fertility, and to delay menopause as needed.

**Color:** Red

**Offering:** Pour libations of menstrual blood onto Earth or bury afterbirth as thanks.

## Adeona

**Origin:** Italian, pre-Roman

Adeona is the Spirit of Safe and Speedy Returns. She is indigenous to the Roman region but predates the Romans. (In other words, they found her there.) She often works in conjunction with her sister, Abeona, Spirit of Departures. Together they provide for the safety of travelers in general, but especially of children away from home for the first time. Adeona ensures that they return home safely. Abeona and Adeona can be petitioned together to guard a child who journeys back and forth from home daily.

If a child is forcibly removed from home whether by kidnap or other means, Adeona is an appropriate spirit to petition for protection and a speedy, safe return.

**See also:** *Abeona*

## Adonis

**Origin:** Levantine

Adonis, a breathtakingly handsome spirit, whose very name epitomizes male good looks, is the son of a myrrh tree. How does a tree give birth to a baby? The most evocative explanation, given Adonis' eventual fate, is that a wild boar slashed the tree open, performing a Caesarian section with its tusks. Aphrodite rescued the baby, who was already so radiantly beautiful that she placed him in a closed jeweled casket and gave him to Persephone for safekeeping in Hades. Persephone couldn't resist peeking into the box and was instantly smitten.

Adonis grew up in Hades' palace. The Greek Magical Papyri, documents from early Common Era Alexandria, classify him as a chthonic deity, a spirit of the dead, invoked alongside Persephone, Hermes, and Anubis: spirits able to pass back and forth between realms of life and death.

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*Adonis, the subject of a Mystery religion, was venerated almost exclusively by women. Information regarding his rites, beyond their most public aspects, remains mysterious.*

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When Aphrodite returned for Adonis, Persephone refused to give him back. The result was an Olympian custody battle. The solution entailed dividing the year into thirds: Adonis was to spend four months with Aphrodite; four months with Persephone; and he was given four months to do as he pleased. (Legend has it he spends those four months with Aphrodite.)

Adonis is fun, gorgeous, a divine lover in every sense of the phrase. He is a deity of pleasure. (Some perceive him as a pig god; divinity in the form of a sensuous, passionate boar.) He loves loving, and he loves hunting. He likes making time with women but is omnisexual.

While out hunting, Adonis was gored and castrated by a wild boar, bleeding to death on the shores of the Adonis River in Lebanon. The river, now called Nahr Ibrahim, ran red with his blood. The blood that flowed onto Earth transformed into red windflowers.

Explanation for the motivation behind his death varies. In other words, *who* sent the boar? Some say Aphrodite's passion for Adonis evoked Ares' jealousy and he attacked Adonis in boar guise. Another version says that Artemis, irritated by Aphrodite, sent the boar, striking at her rival through her lover. (Alternatively, Adonis as a hunter should have been paying homage to Artemis, the Hunting Goddess, not the Goddess of Love, and so Artemis reacted with rage.) Yet another version suggests that Persephone, impatient with the custody arrangement,

decided to make Adonis a permanent resident of Hades. If Persephone is indeed the culprit, then her plans were foiled. The ultimate message of Adonis' myth is that a love exists that is so powerful that it transcends and prevails over death.

In the context of classical Greek mythology, Adonis is a footnote, Aphrodite and Persephone's boy-toy. In real life, Adonis was a *very* important Phoenician (Canaanite) deity. His name is a variant of the Jewish *Adonai* and means "My Master." (It may not be a personal name but a title. His real name may have been revealed only to initiates of his Mystery tradition.) That he was birthed and killed by a boar may help explain common Semitic pork taboos.

*Every year* Aphrodite led women in mourning for Adonis. *Every year* the Adonis River ran red with his blood. (Red earth runoff from the Lebanon Mountains provides the scientific explanation.) The key to his veneration is that *every year* Adonis is resurrected. Like Persephone, he eternally enters Death, only to return alive. Author Lucian of Samosata (circa 125–180 CE), who wrote in Greek but was of Syrian origin, wrote that grieving women were consoled by the revived Adonis.

**Feast:** His festival, the Adonia, was celebrated throughout the Mediterranean. Details are now vague, other than it was divided into two parts and celebrated exclusively by women: Part One was dedicated to mourning; women wailed and wept over images of the dead Adonis. Part Two celebrated his resurrection.

It is unclear now whether the two parts of the festival were consecutive or whether a lengthier gap of time separated them. In essence, he may have *two* feasts. At least one of the festival days occurred in early summer. Some theorize that Adonis died near the Summer Solstice and was resurrected at the Spring Equinox. During the festival, women gathered on rooftops at night, drinking and singing. They planted *Gardens of Adonis*: quick-germinating seeds planted in shallow containers, even clay shards. The little gardens were watered daily, stimulating speedy growth. On the eighth day, the Gardens of Adonis, never more than sprouts, were tossed into the sea with images of Adonis, concluding the festival.

The Adonia, always considered subversive by Greek and Roman

authorities, occurred openly into the fifth century, among the most persistent of Pagan festivals. His was always a Mystery religion and so was better prepared than most to go underground when Pagan traditions were banned. Adonis may lie beneath masks of John the Baptist and Saint Anthony, whose festivals are also celebrated in June. His spirit lurks amid Greek and Italian Easter customs: women let bowls of lentils or wheat sprout in darkness, then bring them into the light (often inside a church), on the Thursday before Easter. (See the definition of Syncretism in the Glossary for further information.)

Adonis may be petitioned in the context of séances or any sort of necromantic attempt to contact the dead. He passes easily between realms and can deliver messages back and forth. He is able to determine *where* to search for missing people: the realms of the living, dead or both. Petition him to reveal needed information.

**Flowers:** Scarlet windflowers; wild anemones (*Anemone coronaria*) are his blood; also Adonis Rose (*Adonis vernalis*)

**Fragrance:** Myrrh

**Altar:** Don't venerate him alone: he likes company. Incorporate Aphrodite, Persephone, Astarte, Nymphs, or other spirits onto his altar.

**Sacred days:** He is petitioned anytime but especially at the Vernal Equinox, Summer Solstice, Midsummer's Eve, Easter, the Feasts of Saint Anthony and John the Baptist.

**Offerings:** Give him sex toys or things a hunter would appreciate. Offer him aphrodisiacs. Serve him *arak*, the ancient alcoholic beverage. Feed him special Easter cakes and bread. He is a luxuriant spirit, not ascetic: offer sensuous gifts. *Don't* feed him pork.

**See also:** *Anubis; Aphrodite; Ares; Artemis; Astarte; Attis; Chthonic spirits; Hermes; Mylitta; Myrrha; Osiris; Persephone; Set; Tammuz*

## Adrano

**Also known as:** Adranos

## **Origin:** Sicily

Adrano is Sicily's sacred guardian. Together with his sons, the Palici, he protects Sicily and Sicilians. Adrano is the presiding spirit of Mount Etna.

Adrano's temple on Mount Etna was guarded by a pack of one thousand Cirnechi dogs. The Cirneco, also known as the Sicilian greyhound, native only to Sicily and renowned for its beauty, intelligence, and hunting skills, is believed to descend from Egyptian Pharaoh hounds. Cirnechi dogs have lived in Sicily for over three thousand years. They once roamed wild throughout the island and held sway over Mount Etna. Hounds greeted pilgrims, escorting them to Adrano's shrine but allegedly attacked those who arrived with bad intent, especially thieves. The Cirneco (plural Cirnechi) is Adrano's sacred dog and very closely identified with him. Coins from the third century BCE show Adrano on one side and a Cirneco on the other.

**Manifestations:** The cult image in his shrine on Mount Etna depicted him as a warrior holding a lance. Coins from the third century BCE depict Adrano as a mature, bearded man. He is almost always in the company of one or more dogs, who obey him implicitly.

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*The modern town of Adrano, at the foot of Etna, is named in his honor. Whether Adrano is an indigenous Sicilian or whether he arrived with the Phoenicians is subject to debate. If he did come from Phoenicia, Adrano may be the one who first brought Cirnechi hounds to Sicily.*

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**Offerings:** The obvious offering is anything on behalf of the Cirnechi, his beloved dogs, and Sicily in general. Although the breed has now been revived, it almost disappeared until restoration efforts began in the early twentieth century.

## **Visualization**

1. If you can obtain a coin bearing Adrano's image, hold it in your left hand as a talisman during your journey. Keep it on his altar or in a safe place when not in use.
2. Before you begin, look at some pictures. Familiarize yourself with the appearance of Mount Etna and Cirnechi dogs.
3. Visualize yourself leaving home and traveling to Mount Etna. Take any route you prefer. (This is a visualization: travel by foot, boat, plane, broomstick, or magic carpet, your choice.) Likewise, you can see Mount Etna as she is today or at any time in the past or future.
4. When you arrive at the base of the mountain, take off your shoes and begin to walk up. The ascent *must* be made on foot. (Carry your shoes, place them in a backpack, or leave them at the bottom.)
5. Pay attention to your surroundings. Mount Etna is inhabited by many spirits: it is possible that you will encounter others besides or even instead of Adrano.
6. At some point on the slope, Adrano's dogs will greet you. Imagine being greeted by one thousand dogs! The dogs may suddenly appear or you may first hear their barking. They will lead you to Adrano. When your time with him has ended, ask him for a gift. Then the dogs will escort you back down the mountain.
7. When you arrive at the base, put your shoes back on and go home the same way you came.

**See also:** *Aetna; Hephaestus; Palici*

## **Aeacus**

**Also known as:** Aiakos

**Origin:** Greek

**Classification:** Chthonic spirit

Aeacus, son of Zeus and Aegina, was king of the Isle of Aegina. Zeus imprisoned his mother on an uninhabited island, and so Aeacus had no one to rule. He prayed to Zeus, who transformed the island's ants into



people, called Myrmidons or “ant people.” (Aeacus’ grandson Achilles later led a troop of Myrmidons to battle in Troy.) An alternative version with the same conclusion suggests that the island was decimated by plague and that’s why Aeacus beseeched Zeus to repopulate it. This myth may recall the decimation of Aegina’s original inhabitants or Aegina’s subjugation by Athens. In 431 BCE, Aegina’s inhabitants were expelled in favor of Athenian colonists.

Aeacus allied himself with his father’s pantheon. The Olympians adored him and called upon him to arbitrate their disputes. Aeacus was considered an exceptionally honest man in life—just, fair, and ethical. He was eventually venerated as a deity with shrines in Athens and Aegina, where he is believed to be buried. He had two sons with Chiron’s daughter, Endaïs: Peleus, father of Achilles, and Telamon, father of Ajax. Aeacus raped a Nereid named Psamanthe (“sea sand”). Attempting to escape him, she transformed into a seal. Their son, Phokos, (literally “seal”) demonstrated superior athletic and martial skills. His jealous half brothers murdered him and were then exiled by their father.

When he died, Aeacus journeyed to Hades like anyone else, but unlike everyone else, he did not become a twittering shade. Instead he was appointed a judge. He lives in Hades’ palace and is trusted to be the keeper of the keys to Hades and to hold onto Hades’ scepter when the Death Lord doesn’t feel like carrying it.

In the mortal realm, Aeacus is petitioned for justice. If you have a dispute, legal or ethical, that extends beyond the grave, Aeacus may be petitioned for assistance. Aeacus has close family ties to water spirits: aside from his judicial functions, he is also traditionally invoked for protection from pirates.

**Altar:** Aeacus is very proud of his family: surround him with their images including Zeus, Achilles, and Aegina. Alexander the Great claimed descent from Aeacus via his mother: add his image, too.

**See also:** *Achilles; Aegina; Hades; Nereid; Thetis; Zeus*

## Aegina

**Also known as:** Aigina

**Origin:** Greek

**Classification:** Nymph or Naiad

Aegina, presiding spirit of the island in the Saronic Gulf bearing her name, is the daughter of river spirit Asopus and Metope, a Nymph. In the guise of an eagle, Zeus abducted Aegina, carrying her to an island, which he then named in her honor. Although stories sometimes describe Zeus having a “romantic interlude” with Aegina, it was clearly a resisted abduction. She had to be brought far away and to what may have been a deserted island for the relationship to be consummated. Her father attempted to rescue her, but he was driven back by Zeus’ thunderbolts. Aegina has at least two children: a mortal son, Menoetius, and Zeus’ son, Aeacus. She is Achilles’ great-grandmother via Aeacus and the grandmother of Patroclus, whose father was Menoetius.

Aegina is extremely well-connected with close relatives among sea and river spirits, as well as in the afterlife. If what you need or desire involves deities of many realms, Aegina may be requested to serve as your mediator or broker. Her image was very popular in fifth-century BCE vase paintings. She is a protective spirit who bestows prosperity and may be appealed to help end family feuds.

**Animal:** Goat

**See also:** *Achilles; Aeacus; Apollo; Ariadne; Naiad; Nymph; Zeus*

## **Aegir**

*Lord of the Sea*

**Also known as:** Eager

**Origin:** Norse

Aegir literally means “sea.” In Norse cosmology, Aegir is the presiding spirit of the ocean. He may also be understood as actually *being* the ocean.

Aegir is incredibly ancient, primeval even. His nature as a deity is unclear: he is sometimes called a Jotun (Giant), but he may be so old that he predates Jotuns or any other known classification. Regardless of *what* he is, he is on generally good terms with other Norse spirits. They socialize in each other's halls and realms. Aegir is a wonderful, generous host: invitations to his undersea parties are deeply coveted, at least by deities and perhaps by shamans or those engaging in visualization, although dreaded by seafarers.

Aegir's palace beneath the sea is also a realm of the dead. Those who die at sea or whose bodies end up in the ocean are believed to journey to his realm. However, as afterlife realms go, Aegir's is particularly pleasant. There's usually a huge party going on, with plenty of food and drink. Allegedly Aegir brews the best mead and ale in the whole world.

Aegir is beloved but feared. He protects seafarers, but he can also raise storms with huge waves and cause shipwrecks, if he chooses. Once upon a time, Saxon pirates threw prisoners overboard in the belief that this kept Aegir appeased. Aegir sometimes appears standing on the surface of the waters far out at sea; he makes himself visible to mariners, sometimes with protective intent, sometimes not.

Petition him for safety on the seas and to reveal the secrets of the deep. Aegir knows *everything*; he is a well of knowledge and can theoretically fill any request or recruit another deity who can.

**Favored people:** Aegir is patron of brewers.

**Manifestation:** A large vigorous man with a long, flowing mane from which water flows. He's proud of his beard and grooms it, adorning it with charms, seashells, sea plants, and beads. Aegir's beard is the equivalent of a mermaid's hair.

**Attribute:** A *gigantic* cauldron in which he brews mead and ale. (No matter how big you envision, it's bigger.)

**Consort:** Ran (also his sister). They have nine daughters, the Nine Wave Sisters.

**Rune:** Laguz

**Sacred territory:** All seven seas, but also Laeso Island near Denmark (once known as Hleseý Island, famed in the Middle Ages for its sea salt industry)

**Offerings:** Be generous. He's a king. Give him objects reminiscent of the sea. Give him fine old coins (sailors once carried them so that in case they drowned, they wouldn't arrive at Aegir's hall empty-handed). Serve him mead and ale, acknowledging that you know it's nowhere near as good as what he serves at home. (If you're lucky, he'll let you taste his brew someday.) An altar may be built for him, or offerings may be brought to the sea.

**See also:** *Heimdall; Ran*

## **Aeolus**

*King of the Winds; He Who Reigns Horses; The Many Colored*

**Also known as:** Aiolos

**Origin:** Greece

Aeolus is Lord and Warden of the Winds. He commands them, raises and calms them. His name derives from a Greek word indicating "variable" or "changeable," like the winds he rules. Aeolus also rules the Aeolian Islands near Sicily, named in his honor and renowned for beautiful weather. His personal residences include a huge cavern on the island of Vulcano, where the winds are kept until released, and a palace on Stromboli, where Aeolus hosts an eternal party attended by his wife, six sons, and six daughters. The siblings are married to each other: no in-laws to worry about! Aeolus has a big, happy family. They party all day, then sleep near each other at night.

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*Aeolus' musical instrument is the Aeolian harp, also known as the Wind Harp. The Aeolian harp is played by the wind, not human hands. Beyond the beauty of its sound, the instrument may be used to communicate with Aeolus:*

*spontaneous sounds, as well as sounds in response to speech or events, are interpreted. Installing an Aeolian harp enables Aeolus to speak.*

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The most famous myth involving Aeolus involves the bag of winds he gave Odysseus. When Odysseus and crew first arrived at Aeolia, his floating island (generally identified with Stromboli), Aeolus wined and dined them for a month (the copious quantities of wine may account for the sensation of floating). He liked Odysseus and gave him a bag containing all unfavorable winds to hold on to until he reached home. (If they were in the bag, they couldn't blow around and interfere with Odysseus' ship.) Odysseus did not disclose the contents of this bag to his crew; instead he held on to it very tightly, keeping it with him at all times.

For nine days, there was perfect sailing weather. Finally, with home in sight, Odysseus relaxed and fell asleep. His men, awaiting this moment and convinced that he was hoarding treasure, opened the bag. The winds flew straight back to Aeolus, Odysseus' boat in tow. Odysseus again begged for help but Aeolus, now perceiving that Odysseus must have offended some powerful deity, refused to have anything more to do with him and sent him on his way immediately. Lacking winds, the crew rowed.

As Lord of Winds, Aeolus is clearly significant to sailors, but he may be petitioned for far more than just a nice breeze when you're out sailing. He was venerated throughout the Greek and Roman Empires as the deity whose breath (the winds) restores nature to life, a spirit of resurrection. He is the wind of change, the winds that sweep clean.

Visit Aeolus' palace in dreams or visualization (further visual details are in Homer's *Odyssey*) and request his assistance. He is a generous, benevolent spirit, but, as Odysseus discovered, wants nothing to do with anyone who is not in good graces with the general Spirit Realm.

**Animal:** Horse

**Offerings:** Once upon a time, lavish offerings were given to Aeolus by dropping them down a sacred well. Offerings may now be given to the

wind. Write your desire on a piece of paper or a tree leaf and let it blow away. Aeolus *has* everything: he is a wealthy spirit who enjoys entertaining others. Genuine gifts of the heart may be sufficient.

**See also:** *Alcyone (1)*

## **Aeronwen**

**Also known as:** Aeren; Aeron; Aerfen

**Origin:** Wales

Aeronwen, a goddess of fate, determines the outcomes of battles: she decides which side wins and which individuals survive. Aeronwen may be petitioned for safety on the battlefield. Little concrete information survives regarding Aeronwen. She may be the same spirit as the Welsh war goddess Agrona whose name derives from a root word for “carnage.” Aeronwen may or may not also be the same goddess as the Irish Morrigan.

**Color:** Black

**Number:** 3

**Bird:** Raven

**Sacred site:** Glyndyfrdwy, Wales, where she had a shrine on the banks of the River Dee. The name of this location may be translated as “Black Water” or “Water of the Goddess.” Allegedly human sacrifices were offered to her: victims were drowned. Complaints by generations of churchmen affirm that the waters of Glyndyfrdwy were considered sacred long after the arrival of Christianity. In 1400, Welsh patriot Owain Glyndwr (Owen Glendower in English) chose Glyndyfrdwy as the location where he declared himself Prince of Wales, beginning a fourteen-year rebellion against English rule. Aeronwen may also be associated with the Aeron River.

**See also:** *Branwen; Henwen; Morrigan*

## Aesir Spirits

The Aesir are a pantheon of Norse spirits. Their realm is Asgard. Among the central themes of surviving Norse mythology is the confrontation and eventual merger of two pantheons, the Aesir and the Vanir. Norse mythology is generally told from the perspective of the Aesir, or rather from the perspective of later Christian chroniclers who identified more with the Aesir than the Vanir. *Aesir* is believed cognate with *Asia*. Many scholars believe they originated in what is now Turkey. Alternatively, the word is seen as related to *Ashura*. Important Aesir spirits include Odin and Thor.

**See also:** *Angerboda; Ashura; Balder; Freya; Freyr; Frigg; Jotun; Loki; Sif; Skadi; Vanir*

## Aetna

Aetna is the volcano goddess of Sicily's Mount Etna, the spirit for whom the mountain is named. Etna is the highest mountain in Italy south of the Alps and Europe's most active volcano. In ancient days, Mount Etna was hot property, not just in the volcanic lava sense but also in the real-estate sense of that phrase. Because it was so coveted, it's difficult to unravel Aetna's own personal myth. Various deities claim to be married to her, thus laying claim to her sacred mountain.

- Her original consort, or at least the earliest documented, is Adrano.
- Later myths suggest a marriage between Aetna and Zeus or Aetna and Hephaestus.

Aetna is the one with ultimate control over the volcano, and perhaps over Sicily. As is the nature of volcano goddesses, she is fiery, temperamental, passionate, and generous. Aetna is a powerful goddess: when Demeter and Hephaestus argued about property rights on the island, it was Aetna who brokered their truce.

Aetna may hide beneath the mask of Saint Agatha. (See the Glossary entry on Syncretism for more information regarding masking.)

**See also:** *Adrano; Demeter; Hephaestus; Palici; Zeus*

## Afarit

**Also known as:** Afrit; Ifreet; Ifrit

*Afarit* names a type of malevolent spirit. (The same word refers to the individual Afarit and the entire species; it is both singular and plural.) True Afarit are primordial fire spirits who existed on Earth thousands of years before people, genuine Old Ones. They have traditionally been held responsible for solar eclipses: the Afarit consumes the sun, causing it to disappear. It reappears when the Afarit eventually vomits.

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*In modern Egypt, the word Afarit has evolved into a catchall for any type of revenant, ghost, or apparition, although the word remains unfailingly negative. Afarit is used as a synonym for evil spirit. There is no such thing as a “friendly Afarit.”*

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Afarit are not minor disruptive spirits but are exceptionally dangerous, powerful, smart, and malevolent. They don't like people. Afarit possess powers of bilocation: they can be in more than one place at the same time. They can render themselves visible or invisible at will. Their appearance is subject to their whim, but they are generally described as “huge” and “terrifying.” Should they possess or afflict someone, that person may show signs of psychosis and/or extraordinary physical strength. The person who is possessed or afflicted by the Afarit may demonstrate what resembles steroid rage or steroid psychosis but with no physical explanation for the condition.

The spilled blood of murder victims creates a portal for Afarit. They emerge at the place on Earth where the blood was spilled. To prevent this emergence, hammer a virgin nail (a nail that has never before been used) into the spot. Remove the nail and release the Afarit.

Afarit may be considered their own unique class of spirit or are sometimes considered a subcategory of particularly dangerous Djinn. Afarit are *always* dangerous, malicious, and powerful. Many authorities



perceive them as lacking any redeeming qualities (beyond the fact that they are incredibly powerful, causing reckless sorcerers to wish to command them).

Afarit are most associated with Egypt, North Africa, and the Middle East, but they can travel where they will. They are especially fond of abandoned cemeteries, lingering among ancient Egyptian tombs and the Great Pyramid.

### **To Attract and Command an Afarit**

This technique derives from Moroccan Jewish traditions and is begun after the conclusion of the Sabbath on Saturday night. The Sabbath officially ends after sunset and so timing is different each Saturday night and must be verified before beginning the ritual. Most Jewish calendars include information regarding when the Sabbath begins and ends each week.

1. Light an oil lamp.
2. Cover it with a *couscouillère* (*tasksut*), a kitchen utensil with seven holes, used to prepare couscous.
3. Recite the appropriate invocations. If this is done correctly, a seven-headed Afarit will appear, each head poking through a hole in the *tasksut*.
4. At this point, things can either go very well or not. *Very well* means that the Afarit submits to your will and follows your command. *Not very well* ... well, you can imagine. The outcome depends somewhat on the summoner. It is crucial to remain calm, collected, and courageous.

### **Afréketé**

**Also known as:** Avléketé; Avréketé

**Origin:** Benin (Dahomey)

Afréketé is the youngest child of Aghueh and Naéte of the Dahomean sea pantheon. A town named Avléketé near a saltwater lagoon just east of

the port city of Ouidah (Whydah) is named in her honor. She is a guardian deity, offering protection to those traveling over the water plus gifts of abundance, knowledge, and fertility. She protects the treasures of the sea.

Although originally a female spirit, African-Diaspora traditions in the Western Hemisphere may consider her male. Something of a trickster, she plays a similar role to Elegba in some of these traditions.

She is syncretized to Michael Archangel.

**Favored people:** The multidigitated: those born with extra fingers and/or toes. Extra digits are considered marks of her favor and bring good luck and wealth.

**Manifestation:** Afréketé may appear as a woman or a mermaid.

**Altar:** Decorate an altar with the motifs of the sea.

**Element:** Saltwater

**Colors:** Blue, white

### **Lucky Hand Root**

Lucky Hand Root is the folk name given the roots of certain orchids that resemble little human hands with extra fingers. These roots are carried as amulets to attract wealth and gambler's luck. Place a lucky hand root on an altar dedicated to Afréketé and request that she bless and empower it for you. Tell her explicitly what you would like the amulet to do. Under her dominion, this root can also be used as a traveler's charm. Place it in a blue cloth charm bag, tied with a white ribbon, and carry for good luck. Use a percentage of your winnings or money obtained through the use of the charm to honor Afréketé.

**See also:** *Agwé; Eshu Elegbara; Michael*

## **Aganyu**

**Also known as:** Agaju; Agallu; Agayu

**Classification:** Orisha

Aganyu is the primordial spirit of the forces of Earth, especially violent, powerful, cataclysmic upheavals. When tectonic plates move, that's Aganyu. He is the orisha of volcanoes. Lava is his breath. Aganyu is a violently passionate orisha. Like a volcano, his emotions build, bottle up, and then explode. He is not necessarily intentionally dangerous, but his power is too overwhelming for most people to deal with directly, and so he often communicates via the orisha Shango, with whom he is very close. Depending on the version of his myth, Shango may be Aganyu's son or brother. (Likewise depending on myth, Yemaya may be Aganyu's sister and/or wife.)

Aganyu is generally a solitary spirit who dwells in the wilderness. He is the patron of travel and transportation and is syncretized to Saint Christopher, whose feast day he shares. He demonstrates displeasure by causing aneurisms, high blood pressure, sudden strokes, and traffic accidents. He may also be petitioned to alleviate any of these situations or prevent them. Shango serves as a mediator; an altar may be built for both orishas.

**Favored people:** Aganyu has a soft spot for children to whom he may be very kind and protective; he is also patron of porters and stevedores.

**Birds:** Red rooster, guinea hen

**Animals:** Bull, goat

**Color:** Red

**Day:** Wednesday

**Feast:** 25 July

**Numbers:** 9, 16

**Offerings:** Nine fruits, nine crackers with red palm oil, and/or nine plantains drizzled with red palm oil; nine handkerchiefs or silk pocket squares each in a different solid color

**See also:** *Orisha; Shango; Yemaya*

## Agasou

**Also known as:** Agassou; Agassu; Roi d'Agasou (Haiti)

**Origin:** Dahomey

**Classification:** Lwa

Agasou, the Leopard Spirit, is guardian of Dahomean traditions. Various theories regarding his root identity include:

- Agasou is an ancestral leopard spirit.
- Agasou is the founder-king of the Dahomean Empire, son of human Princess Aligbono, daughter of King Tado, and the leopard spirit, Kpo. (*Kpo* literally means “leopard,” the totem animal of the Dahomean royal family.)
- Agasou is a war chief from the neighboring Yoruba city-state Oyo, exiled for aggression and nicknamed Kpo for his ferocious nature.
- Agasou is that war chief exiled, not for aggression, but because his magic powers made others nervous: he could transform into a leopard.
- Agasou is a war chief nicknamed Kpo who had a clandestine affair with either King Tado's wife or daughter, fathering a male child. When King Tado died, the child's mother tried to place her son on the throne, but the people rebelled, preferring the king's nephew, son of the king's sister. The leopard's son fled to the Dahomean city, Allada, which he eventually took over. • Agasou may not actually be the ancestor of the Dahomean royal family, but may, in fact, have been venerated *before* their arrival in the region. The supplanted Gedeve people venerated a leopard spirit.

In Dahomey, Agasou is considered an ancestral spirit, patron of the Dahomean royal family. In Haiti, he is generally venerated as the lwa of home, family, lineage, and ancestry. He serves as a lieutenant in Lord Agwé's army. Legend has it that Ayida-Wedo asked Agasou to bring Vodou and the power of the ancestors to Haiti from Africa (Giné). Agasou immediately fulfilled this request, assisted by a crab. It is traditional for his devotees to refrain from eating crab. In Haiti, Agasou is understood to be a king.

He is syncretized to Saint Louis, the canonized king of France.

**Manifestations:** He manifests as a man or leopard. Even as a man, there may be a reference to leopards: leopard-skin clothing or leopard-pattern fabric, for instance.

**Iconography:** Agasou is represented by images of Saint Louis or a leopard.

**Consort:** Silibo Vavou

**Sacred animals:** Leopard, crab

**Colors:** White, brown, and the spectrum from yellow to gold

**Day:** Thursday

**Feast:** 25 August

**See also:** *Agoussou; Agwé; Ayida-Wedo; Gedé; Loko; Silibo*

## Agathodaemon

### *The Good Spirit*

**Origin:** Egypt

**Also known as:** Agathodemon; Agatho Daimon

Agathodaemon is a benevolent spirit of healing, protection, luck, and good fortune who manifests as a snake. Veneration of Agathodaemon traveled from Egypt to Greece and Italy. He is a consistently benevolent spirit. In Egypt, he evolved into a Gnostic guardian angel.

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*Agathos means good; it is a title, not a personal name.*

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Agathodaemon is a companionable spirit: among the deities with

whom he happily shares altar space are Serapis, Tyche, and Hermes. He may be fond of Sicily's Saint Agatha who may or may not be an ancient serpent-goddess in disguise. Agathodaemon survives in modern Egypt, too, albeit undercover: each of Cairo's quarters allegedly possesses its own snake-shaped guardian spirit, its own Agathodaemon.

**Manifestations:** Consistently serpentine: he may appear as an ordinary snake or a hovering, winged serpent.

**Offering:** Wine

**See also:** *Agathos; Hermes; Serapis; Tyche*

## Agathos

**Also known as:** Agatho Daemon

The Romans and Hellenistic Greeks did not like deities in the shapes of animals. They liked their spirits to resemble humans. Adopted Egyptian spirits thus adapted in form.

- Agathos may be Agathodaemon in human form.
- He may be an emanation of Agathodaemon who developed into an independent spiritual entity.
- He may always have been a distinct spirit.

Agathos is Lord of Vineyards and watches over fields of grain, peace, prosperity, and plenty. He bestows wisdom, good health, and good luck. Agathos was venerated at home, traditionally by a family together. He shows his favor via a family's good fortune (or lack thereof). Agathos guarantees that a family has sufficient food and drink.

**Favored people:** Barkeepers; those who own vineyards or grow artisanal grain

**Manifestations:** Agathos manifests as a snake or a handsome young man.

**Attributes:** Goblet; ear of wheat; poppies; cornucopia; staff or wand entwined by a snake

**Consort:** Agathos may be married to Tyche Agatha, spirit of good fortune.

**Offering:** Toast Agathos with a glass of wine at each meal; if you're not drinking, then just set one aside for him.

**See also:** *Agathodaemon; Tyche*

## The Aglaurides

### *Housemates of the Serpent*

**Origin:** Athens

The Aglaurides are the three daughters of Aglauros, a Nymph, and Cecrops, snake spirit and first king of Athens:

- Aglauros: “Dweller on Tilled Land”
- Herse: “Dewfall”
- Pandrosos: “All Bedewed” or “All Bedewing”

The eldest daughter shares her name with her mother. Aglaurides means “children of Aglauros,” emphasizing their maternal lineage and indicating that they were born before Athens was dedicated to Athena, the point when children first began to be named after their fathers. They are sometimes known as the Cecropids, after their father who was famed as the first to discover the secret of paternity and insist on monogamy, at least for women.

Cecrops was a devotee of Athena; the girls tended her shrine. Athena entrusted them with a round, closed casket, asking them to guard it vigilantly and forbidding them to ever open it or look within. You know how this fairy tale goes. For a while, the Aglaurides were obedient, but finally Aglauros became too curious and peeked inside. What she saw was either:

- A snake (possibly a *really* big snake)
- An infant guarded by a snake
- A human/snake composite: baby on top, snake below the waist; or a snake with a human face

Herse peeked, too. Both were instantly struck mad. They leaped suicidally from the high rock that would eventually become the Acropolis. (An alternative version has them chased off the rock by the snake that emerged from the basket.) It is unclear why daughters of a snake-man would react so negatively to what was contained within Athena's basket; perhaps some details have been omitted. Allegedly the sisters still haunt the cliffs and have been witnessed dancing near Pan's cave.

It is theorized that the Aglaurides sisters are goddesses who actually precede Athena in the area. Their family may have initially introduced veneration of Athena, who was then a snake goddess. The story of the girls' suicide may refer to Athena's transition to Olympian spirit and her banishing of the earlier facets of her personality and veneration.

**See also:** *Aglauros; Arachne; Athena; Erichthonios; Medusa; Pallas; Pan*

### **Aglauros**

Aglauros, eldest of the Aglaurides, was Athena's first Athenian priestess, but she was also the subject of a Mystery tradition. Scholars theorize that Aglauros was venerated at the Acropolis *before* Athena took up residence. (Thus, the earlier spirit had to "die" in the myth to make room at the top for a new spirit.) She may be obscure now, but Aglauros was once widely venerated, not only in Athens but also in the city of Salamis, Cyprus, and the island of Salamis in the Saronic Gulf.

Having jumped to her death, Aglauros was venerated as guardian of those willing to give their lives for the good of others, particularly young soldiers. (An alternative version of Aglauros' myth has her giving her life to save Athens.) Athenian youths swore their oath of arms in Aglauros' sanctuary. In Cyprus, young men were sacrificed to her: they were made to run around her altar until impaled by a priest with a lance.

Aglauros shared her shrines with Diomedes, her husband. She also engaged in a secret love affair with Ares, Athena's competitor, which produced a daughter, Alkippe ("Bold Mare" or "Courageous Mare") who was allegedly an exact double of her mother, a perfect replica.

Aglauros is a friendly spirit; aside from Ares and Diomedes, she is also



venerated alongside Aphrodite, Ariadne, and Dionysus.

**Sacred animal:** Snake

**Sacred site:** A cave on the eastern side of the Acropolis

**See also:** *Aglaurides; Aphrodite; Ares; Ariadne; Athena; Dionysus; Pallas;* and the Glossary entry for *Mystery*

## Agni

**Origin:** India

*Agni* literally means “fire”: the name is etymologically related to *ignite*. Because *Agni* is fire, he is a deity with whom people have daily contact. He is fire *and* he is the spirit of fire. When you gaze at a flame, you gaze at *Agni*.

*Agni* is an equal-opportunity spirit. He loves all people, regardless of wealth, power, influence, or lack thereof. He lives in any home with a hearth, no matter how humble or poor. Light a candle and there he is! He is *everyone's* friend. *Agni* is the fire that cooks food and provides warmth and safety. He was at one time a critically important deity. Over two hundred hymns in the Rig Veda are dedicated to him. Eight of its ten books start with praise for *Agni* as Vedic Lord of Fire. *Agni* serves as mediator between people and other spirits, accepting and delegating burned offerings. An offering that fails to ignite has been rejected by *Agni*. He protects people both before and after life:

- An incantation in the Rig Veda requests that he protect fetuses from physical and magical danger.
- *Agni* has the power to grant immortality or cleanse one's sins at the moment of death.
- He is a psychopomp, guiding souls to other realms.

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*Souls of the deceased are believed to ascend with smoke from funeral pyres, hence the ancient preference of many Indo-European peoples for cremation as*

*opposed to burial or other methods of disposing of cadavers.*

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Agni is the spirit of unquenchable erotic fire. He may be invoked by lovers seeking flames of passion and by men seeking to invigorate or enhance their virility: to burn all night like a constant fire.

**Manifestations:** Agni is fire and lightning. He also manifests in the form of a three-legged, two-headed man. Each head has seven tongues of flame. He has two or seven arms. His faces are red; his eyes and long, wild hair are black. His face shines from butter smeared on it.

**Consort:** Svaha, a solar deity

**Attributes:** A flaming spear, torch, axe, prayer beads

**Color:** Red

**Planets:** The Sun; the stars are sparks from his fire.

**Bird:** Parrot

**Mounts:** A ram (as in Aries, the first fire sign) or a chariot pulled by flaming horses

**Offering:** Ghee (clarified butter); place a cotton wick in ghee and burn it like a candle.

## **Agoussou**

**Also known as:** Miché Agoussou (Monsieur Agoussou)

**Origin:** New Orleans

**Feast:** 13 June, the feast of Saint Anthony

Agasou, the lwa originally from Dahomey, arrived in New Orleans via Haiti. During his journey, pronunciation (and spelling) of his name evolved while much of his leopard symbolism and royal connections were lost. What remained intact were his dignity, power, and virility.

Miché Agoussou is invoked for love. As Vert Agoussou (*Green Agoussou*), he is syncretized to Saint Anthony, breadwinner and romantic saint. He may also be invoked to empower men's sexual charisma and potency.

**Color:** Red (for love)

**See also:** *Agasou; Lwa*

## Agrat bat Mahalat

*The Dancing Roof Demon; Mistress of Sorceresses*

**Also known as:** Igrat bat Mahalat; Ograt bat Mahalat; Agrath bat Mahalath

*Agrat bat Mahalat* (Hebrew for “Agrat daughter of Mahalat”) is a queen of demons. She commands 180,000 malicious spirits (18 legions of 10,000 each). She also rides through the air in her big chariot leading smaller bands of angels of destruction. Lilith is her rival and competitor.

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*According to a legend, Agrat came upon King David sleeping in the desert and coupled with him while he dreamed. She conceived and bore Ashmodai, King Solomon's brother, rival, and alter ego.*

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Agrat may be a fierce demon queen, but she is also a spirit of wisdom. She trains witches, procures succubi, and is believed to be the spirit who communicated magical secrets to Amemar, a fifth-century CE Jewish scholar. Agrat is allegedly more interested in human men than women, or at least they are the ones who are strongly cautioned against her. Men are traditionally advised not to be alone, sleep alone, or enter the water during the times of the week when Agrat is most powerful, lest they fall under her spell.

**Days:** Agrat is at the peak of her power on Wednesday and Friday nights. At other times, Agrat inhabits places uninhabited by people

(that's where you'll find her), but on those two nights she can go where she will and do as she likes. Once upon a time, Agrat was free to come and go as she pleased, wherever and whenever she wanted, but a compromise with Hanina ben Dosa, first-century Galilean rabbi, wonderworker, exorcist and general thorn-in-her-side restricted her powers. He agreed to halt his attempts to completely banish her, and she agreed to start keeping regular hours.

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*Metatron and Sandalphon are great angels: the angelic incarnations of the prophets Enoch and Elijah respectively.*

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**Numbers:** 5 and 7

### **A Fifteenth-Century Spell to Receive a Visit at Night from a Succubus**

This spell derives from a fifteenth-century manuscript, which recommends that it be cast on Saturday or Tuesday evenings, before or after Agrat goes riding with her host.

1. Have a separate, private room ready with clean, white sheets.
2. The supplicant should wear clean, white clothing.
3. Fumigate the room and the bed with aloes wood (agar; oud) saying:

*I adjure you, Agrat bat Mahalat, Queen Demon with the great, strong, and terrible Name,*

*With the name of the Holy Angels and with the name of Bilar the heroic, King of Demons*

*That you send me (Name) daughter of (Name), the beautiful maiden from among the maidens who follow you,*

*Whose number is like the number of the days of the year*

*And with the names of Metatron and Sandalphon.*

The end of the spell reads:

*“And the knowledgeable will understand.”*

**See also:** *Ashmodai; Lilith; Mahalat; Solomon, King*

## Agwé

*King of the Sea; Shell of the Sea; Tadpole of the Sea*

### **Classification:** Lwa

Agwé, King of the Sea, commands a beautiful ship named Immamou and is married to the alluring mermaid, La Siréne. Agwé is a military spirit, a stickler for protocol and procedure. Salute him. Don't be too informal with him. Call him *Lord Agwé* or *Admiral Agwé* or, at the minimum, *Sir*.

- Lord Agwé protects seafarers.
- He bestows wealth, abundance, and prosperity.
- Anything lost at sea or resting on the ocean floor is his to give (or not).
- He is a martial spirit, an admiral who leads the lwa and devotees to victory at sea.
- Agwé receives ultimate credit for chasing off European colonials following the Haitian Revolution: they fled by sea, where Admiral Agwé drove them.
- Lord Agwé serves as a psychopomp, leading dead souls to Ginen, the Vodou realm of the dead, which is beneath the sea.

Request Lord Agwé's protection while *in* the water or *on* the water. It is traditional to make a small offering when embarking on an ocean voyage, promising a larger one upon safe arrival. This may be done to request aid for oneself, but also on behalf of others. Tell him specifically what is needed and who or what must be protected.

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*Formal services for Lord Agwé are unique: they are actually held at sea and are among the most lavish and elaborate of all Vodou ceremonials. Offerings*

*are brought out to sea on a carefully ornamented wooden raft. His presence is requested by blowing a conch shell. Divine Horsemen, an excerpt of film shot by Maya Deren in Haiti between 1947 and 1954, includes rare footage of a ceremony for Agwé.*

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Lord Agwé arrived in Haiti with his enslaved Dahomean devotees. (His name in the Ewe language is *Aghueh*; in Fon, it's *Hu*.) Those who arrived safely are considered to have done so via his grace. Many victims of the slave trade were brutally tossed overboard during the voyage: Lord Agwé was there to guide them to the next realm.

Lord Agwé is syncretized to Saint Ulrich, who is usually portrayed with a fish.

**Manifestations:** Lord Agwé is usually envisioned as a fair-skinned black man with sea-green eyes. The sea-green eyes are his identifying feature. He is usually dressed in a naval uniform (his rank is admiral), but he may also manifest in the form of any creature of the sea.

**Iconography:** Images of Saint Ulrich are used to represent him. Alternatively, a King of Cups tarot card may be used.

**Attributes:** Ship, oar, conch shell, anchor

**Colors:** Blue, white

**Consort:** La Sirène; Lord Agwé is considered the epitome of a good husband, and theirs is a romantic, happy marriage. They are often venerated together and will share an altar.

**Sacred creatures:** Fish, eels, and frogs, but technically he has dominion over everything in the sea (flora and fauna), as well as everything *on* the sea (ships and boats).

**Offerings:** Ideally offerings are brought directly to the sea. (If impossible, he will accept offerings at rivers, springs, or other sources of living water.) Send offerings out to sea by placing them on a small boat. Alternatively, toss them (respectfully!) into the sea or leave them for the

tide to take. Home altars may also be built. Lord Agwé has a unique offering table: offerings are actually placed on a boat (a model boat placed on a table or a real one). Give him anything to do with the sea: small boats, seashells, painted ornamented oars, charms in the shape of fish or sea creatures. He likes military uniforms; things associated with the navy please him. As for food offerings, give him only the best champagne, caviar, deluxe pastries, cakes, and desserts. He has a discerning palate: if you are financially challenged, a small serving of the best you can afford is preferable to something substandard. Also offer a glass of seawater: not to drink but to evoke his realm. This may be water actually brought from the sea or a glass of pure spring water to which sea salt has been added.

**See also:** *Afréketé; Ezili Freda Dahomey; Lwa; Rada; Sirène, La; Yemaya*

### **Agwé La Flambeau**

**Also known as:** Agwé La Flambo (Kreyol)

This is a fiery path of water spirit, *Agwé*, literally “Agwé the Torch” or “Flaming Agwé.” Lord

Agwé is a military commander; Agwé La Flambeau’s military ships are equipped with cannons. Alternatively, visualize underwater volcanoes spewing fire.

Lord Agwé is petitioned for literal safe passage, including ocean voyages. Agwé La Flambeau is also invoked when what you need is metaphoric safe passage. Ask him to guide you safely through Life’s stormy waters. The 8 of Swords or 6 of Swords in a tarot deck may be used to represent him. (Use a deck in which the Minor Arcana are illustrated.)

### **Visualization**

1. You are on a wooden boat sailing through rough seas. Other boats nearby are on fire. You can feel the heat and sparks.
2. Lord Agwé La Flambeau guides you to safety.
3. Visualize yourself reaching your destiny safe and sound.

**Offerings:** Create an offering boat just as you would for any path of Lord Agwé, but set this one on fire like a Viking funeral ship. In addition to his standard offerings, offer Agwé La Flambeau the natural products of volcanoes: obsidian glass, pumice stones, pieces of lava. Food offerings, likewise, are similar in nature to that of his conventional path, but perhaps a little spicier. Also offer flambéed dishes: set a match to alcoholic offerings. (Be careful! Pay attention to fire safety.)

**See also:** *Agwé; Lwa; Petro*

## Ahuiateteo

*Lords of Excess*

**Pronounced:** *Ah-wee-ah-teh-tay-o*

**Also known as:** The Macuiltonaleque

**Origin:** Aztec

The Ahuiateteo embody the dangers and consequences of overindulgence, including excessive drinking, gambling, and sex. Each of the five spirits bears a calendar name incorporating the number five:

- 5 Flower (Macuilxochitl)
- 5 Lizard (Macuilcuetzpalin)
- 5 Vulture (Macuilcozcacuahtli)
- 5 Rabbit (Macuiltochtli)
- 5 Grass (Macuilmalinalli)

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*Macuilxochitl (5 Flower), another name for Xochipilli, Prince of Flowers, is the chief Ahuiateteo, Lord of the Lords.*

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For the Aztecs, the number five symbolized excess: one too many.



When you've had five, you've had too much (the fifth cigarette; the fifth drink; the fifth cup of coffee; the fifth hand of cards ...). Punishment for excess was perceived in Aztec cosmology as a natural consequence. The Ahuiateteo were in charge of making sure punishment was administered, usually in the form of illness. The Ahuiateteo are also invoked by fortune-tellers and diviners to help read the writing on the wall.

**Number:** 5

**Direction:** South

**See also:** *Xochipilli*

## Ahuizotl

**Pronounced:** *Ah-wee-zo-tul*

**Origin:** Aztec

The dreaded Ahuizotl lives at the bottom of deep lakes and pools of freshwater. It cries like a baby to lure people near, then pulls its victim underwater. Several days later, the victim's drowned corpse surfaces, missing its eyes, teeth, and nails.

The Ahuizotl, about the size of a dog, resembles a cross between a monkey and a dog, but with canine pointy ears. It has a hand on the end of its tail with which to grab victims. The Ahuizotl can come out of the water onto land, but allegedly it doesn't travel far from the water's edge.

The Ahuizotl is a guardian spirit of freshwater fish and thus the natural adversary of fishing people. However, in the process of guarding its charges, it seems to have developed a fondness for munching on humans and is clever enough to trick even those with no designs on fish to come close enough to kill. There is also a theory that the Ahuizotl is a cryptid (an animal that, although discussed, has not yet been proven to exist), perhaps some kind of killer otter.

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*Ahuizotl is also the name of the Aztec ruler who reigned just before*

*Moctezuma II and the arrival of the conquistadors. Considered among the fiercest, most successful Aztec military leaders, the Ahuizotl for whom he is named may have been his nahual, his sacred soul animal.*

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**See also:** *Kappa; Tezcatlipoca*

## **Ahura**

### *The Shining Ones*

**Origin:** Iran (Persia)

The Ahuras are a class of spirits, first venerated by the Magi. In the context of Zoroastrianism, the Ahuras are spirits of goodness, righteousness, and benevolence, in opposition to the Daevas, another class of spirit. Their king is Ahura Mazda.

In a dualistic spiritual tradition (meaning that everything is understood in the context of an opposition—high versus low; cold versus hot; generous versus stingy; and so forth) the Ahuras are good, noble, benevolent spirits in contrast to the opposing Daevas.

Some scholars theorize that Ahuras and Daevas were originally the same type of spirit; as the philosophy of dualism spread, the terms *Ahura* and *Daeva* were used to distinguish between benevolent and malevolent spirits. Alternatively, some think that the Daevas are an older pantheon eventually suppressed and demonized by devotees of the Ahuras. *Ahura* is etymologically related to *Ashura* and possibly to *Aesir*.

**See also:** *Aesir; Ashura*

## **Aiatar**

**Also known as:** Ajatar; Ajattara (Finland); Ai; Aijo; Aijater (Estonia)

Aiatar is most frequently described as a malevolent disease spirit living in the forests of Estonia and Finland and on the tundra. Proximity is

sufficient to cause illness: no direct contact is necessary. She is an ancient Finno-Ugric spirit banished by Christianity; hence, she lingers in desolate areas where people are unlikely to bother her. Transmission of disease is her way of saying “keep away!”—similar to a skunk’s emissions. Aiatar is sometimes called the “devil in the forest” or “the devil’s mother.”

Post-Christianity, Ukko, the Old Man, leader of the Finnish Pagan pantheon, was identified with the devil, his name sometimes used as a synonym for Satan. It is possible that Aiatar is *his* mother. Among his symbols and sacred animals is a snake.

**Manifestations:** Aiatar may appear as a dragon, as a snake, or as a woman suckling snakes.

**See also:** *Aitvaras; Ukko*

## Aibheall

*Bright; Sparkling; Beautiful; Effulgent*

**Pronounced:** *Ee-vahl*

**Also known as:** Aoibheall; Aibell; Aivell

**Origin:** Ireland

**Classification:** Tuatha Dé Danann; Sidhe; Fairy Queen

Aibheall is the Fairy queen of northern Munster, Ireland; guardian spirit and possible ancestress of Clan O’Brien. She is the Banshee of the O’Brien clan, but rather than wail, she signals her presence and the forthcoming death via the sounds of her golden harp. Before the battle of Clontarf in 1014 CE, Aibheall manifested to Ireland’s High King, Brian Boru, warning him of his death and advising which of his sons would rule after him. She may be a spirit of Ireland’s sovereignty.

Aibheall owns a cloak of darkness, which renders its wearer invisible. Her harp signals death: it is not heard by everyone—only by the one about to die or others associated with the death (family members). When

Cu Chulain heard the strains of the harp at his final battle, he knew his end was near. Post-Christianity, Aibheall was demoted to a Fairy queen. Cliodna is her rival. Do not venerate them side-by-side.

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*Aibheall stars in Brian Merriman's eighteenth-century poem, "The Midnight Court," in which the Irish poet is summoned to the Fairy queen's court, as well as in many other songs and poems.*

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**Sacred site:** Craig Aoibheal, the grey rock, the highest point on Craig Liath near Killaloe in County Clare. A sacred healing well nearby is also associated with her.

**Sacred animal:** White cat

**See also:** *Banshee; Cliodna; Fairy Queens; Maeve*

## **Aïdo-Hwedo**

**Also known as:** Aïdo Wedo

**Origin:** Dahomey (Benin)

Aïdo-Hwedo, the primordial cosmic serpent, is the primeval creative force, the power that enabled the Creator to form the universe. Aïdo-Hwedo existed before Creation. Because Mawu-Lisa, Dahomean creator, was carried in Aïdo-Hwedo's mouth during the process of Creation, Earth's shape corresponds to a serpent's movements. When Earth was complete, Mawu realized there was too much; Earth was too heavy and required something on which to rest. Aïdo-Hwedo was directed to coil into a circle and become a cushioning support for Earth.

Earth is extremely heavy; Mawu created the sea so that Aïdo-Hwedo may rest in comfort. When Aïdo-Hwedo shifts, Earth quakes. S/he eats iron bars forged by red undersea monkeys.

When all the iron bars are gone, as eventually they will be, hunger

will drive Aïdo-Hwedo to eat her own tail and Earth will collapse into the sea.

Dahomean Aïdo-Hwedo encompasses both male and female: two serpents so intensely bonded and inseparable that from an esoteric perspective they are *one* even though they are also a pair (in the same sense that marriage unifies two individuals). One serpent supports Earth; the other lives in the sky as the Rainbow. Arriving in Haiti amid the slave trade, Aïdo-Hwedo split into two, although the two parts remain inseparable:

- Damballah Wedo: male snake
- Ayida-Wedo: female rainbow serpent

**See also:** *Ayida-Wedo; Damballah; Matronit; Shekhina*

## Aife

**Also known as:** Aoife

**Origin:** Celtic

Aife is featured in the Ulster Cycle of Irish mythology, where she is described as living in Scotland as the rival of Scatach. Both spirits are sorceresses, shamans, and mistresses of the martial arts. More information survives regarding Scatach; Aife must have been a formidable warrior if she was capable of competing with her. Some theorize that Aife is Scatach's sister, possibly even her twin; hence, their intense rivalry. Cu Chulain, Scatach's student, battles Aife, against Scatach's wishes. She thinks Aife will beat him, and Aife almost does. Cu Chulain defeats her, however, not through skill or prowess, but by trickery, forcing three concessions from her:

- She must make peace with Scatach.
- She becomes Cu Chulain's lover.
- She bears Cu Chulain's son.

Aife personally trains her only son, Connla, before sending him to his father, Cu Chulain, with tragic consequences.

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*Three Irish mythic figures share the same name, spelled Aife or Aoife (pronounced Ee-fuh). Irish mythology, long an oral tradition, was finally written down by Christian redactors, generally monks who loved the stories they told but who played down the Pagan elements, especially in regard to female divinities. Female characters described as princesses or other human women are often ancient goddesses in disguise. In this book, Aife the woman warrior is listed under Aife. The two characters associated with transformation and the sea are listed under Aoife.*

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Invoke her for assistance with martial arts training. Invoke her to protect those you love, especially in battle or any sort of physical combat.

**Offerings:** Scatach (who would know) says that Aife loves her horse and chariot above all else: gifts evoking them should meet with favor.

## Ailinn

**Also known as:** Ailinne; Ailenn

**Origin:** Ireland

Ailinn is best known today as the female half of what is called the “Irish Romeo and Juliet.” Ailinn, the granddaughter of the king of Leinster, and Baile, heir to the throne of Ulster, fell in love.

Their families will not permit their love and so plans to rendezvous are made, but before this can be accomplished, each meets a mysterious stranger who advises that their beloved is dead. The reason behind this malice is never clear, nor is the identity of the mysterious stranger, variously identified as a ghost or the proverbial wicked Fairy.

Ailinn and Baile both die, but true love bears fruit: a yew tree resembling Ailinn grows from Baile’s grave while an apple tree with apples bearing the image of Baile’s face grows from Ailinn’s. Wands crafted from these trees were used to cut tragic love songs in Ogham

script until one day, when the wands were brought close to each other, they magnetically sprang together. No one was ever able to part them, and they became part of Ireland's treasures stored at Tara.

There may be more to this story than tragic romance. The story may be so vague because hidden within is a suppressed primordial Irish goddess, not a romantic heroine. Dun Ailinne (*Hill of Ailinne*), located near Kildare, was a site of *major* spiritual and political significance beginning in the Bronze Age; it was the largest Irish royal fort (hillfort) except for Emhain Macha in the north, also named for a goddess.

Preservation of sacred fire was central to the rites at Kildare, home of the goddess Brigid. Evidence indicates that similar fires existed at Dun Ailinne from an earlier date. Dun Ailinne incorporated a royal cemetery and nearby royal residence, which was abandoned between 695 CE and the end of the eighth century, coinciding with Kildare's rise to importance as a Christian site. Old Irish poems indicate rivalry between Kildare and Dun Ailinne and between Brigid and Ailinn, their respective goddesses. It is theorized that the fire was eventually transported to Kildare when Dun Ailinne lost favor or that the two sites were rivals even in Pagan days.

**See also:** *Aveta; Brigid; Macha; Oghma*

## Aine

*Bright; Delight*

**Also known as:** An; Ana; Anu

**Origin:** Ireland (Munster)

Aine, ancient Ireland's preeminent goddess, is a spirit of love, desire, and fertility, protecting humans from illness. As late as the ninth century, she was called Ireland's "Magna Mater." Aine was never forgotten and never lost her influence. Post-Christianity, she was reclassified as a Fairy queen. She also sometimes masquerades as Saint Anne.

Beautiful Aine is an autonomous spirit, answering only to herself, taking lovers as she chooses, men and spirits alike. She has had liaisons

with many men, bearing human children. She married Gerald, Earl of Desmond. Stories vary as to whether Aine captured him or whether he, discovering her bathing in the river, stole her cloak (like a swan maiden's feathers or a seal spirit's skin), refusing to return it until she married him. Their son, Geroid Fitzgerald, lives beneath Lough Gur. He rides out once every seven years on a white horse, but, legend says, he will someday emerge to rid Ireland of all invaders.

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*Aine, also known as Anu, may or may not be the same deity as Danu, divine ancestress of the Tuatha Dé Danaan. She may or may not also be identical to Black Annis and/or Aynia.*

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Aine is invoked for assistance with love and romance as well as for protection. She can heal infertility as well as many other ailments and can bestow the gift of fertility to women and men.

**Manifestations:** She manifests as a beautiful woman or a red mare. Aine sits on what is called the Birthing Stone in Lough Gur in mermaid form combing out her long hair. She makes appearances on Cnoc Aine in the form of a wizened old woman. Those who greet her politely and graciously meet her mild demands receive good fortune. Those behaving otherwise learn the meaning of the word *trouble*.

**Planet:** Sun

**Color:** Red

**Animals:** Horse, cow

**Element:** Fire

**Direction:** South

**Time:** Aine is at the peak of her power at the Summer Solstice. Her rituals are held on Midsummer's Eve. Torches of hay and straw were waved over crops, cattle, and women to transmit her blessings of



protection and fertility. The festival of Lughnasa, now associated with Lugh, may originally have been dedicated to her. (See also: *Lugh*.) Lughnasa Day is 1 August: the three days prior are dedicated to Aine, an older, more primordial deity than Lugh: the entire festival may once have belonged to her.

**Places:** Aine lives in a marvelous castle at Cnoc Aine (anglicized: *Knockainy*; literally “Aine’s Hill”), near Munster’s Lough Gur. A twelfth-century text reports that this hill was given to Aine until the world’s end. Lough Gur belongs to her, as do *The Paps of Aine*, a pair of breast-shaped mountains, considered her embodiment. She is also embodied in the isle of Knockadoon, whose form resembles a squatting, pregnant woman giving birth.

**See also:** *Arianrhod*; *Aynia*; *Becuma*; *Black Annis*; *Fairy Queen*; *Mermaids*; *Tuatha Dé Danaan*

## Airmid

**Origin:** Ireland

**Classification:** Tuatha Dé Danaan

Airmid, sacred healer and herbalist, is the daughter of Dian Cecht, divine physician of the Tuatha Dé Danaan. She and her father preside over a magical healing well, in which wounded, battle-fatigued warriors are dipped, emerging healed in body, soul, and mind. Airmid is a miracle healer: she and her brother, Miach, healed Nuada so that he could once more reign over the Tuatha Dé Danaan, which was wonderful for Nuada and the Tuatha Dé but humiliating for her father, whose children had publicly demonstrated their superiority as healers. Dian Cecht engaged in a competition with his son, which culminated in Miach’s death.

Three-hundred sixty-five healing plants grew from Miach’s grave, allegedly one for every illness. Airmid carefully picked, dried, and arranged these plants on her cloak or apron, ready to heal all. Her father overturned the cloth; herbs were scattered, some lost forever. Allegedly, had he not done this, all remedies would now be known. Instead these remedies are secret, arcane knowledge, known only to Airmid, but if

petitioned she may communicate secrets of healing.

**See also:** *Dian Cecht; Miach; Nuada; Tuatha Dé Danaan*

## Aisha Qandisha

### *The Holy Woman*

**Pronounced:** *A-esh-ah Kahn-deesh-ah*

Beautiful Aisha Qandisha lingers near deserted Moroccan springs after dark. Men sometimes mistake her for a lady of easy virtue, but beware: that can be a fatal error. The clue that she is not an ordinary lady of the evening lies in her feet. Allegedly, even when appearing otherwise human, one foot or leg still resembles that of a camel, donkey, or goat.

Aisha Qandisha is as adored as she is feared. She is a *great* spirit venerated by Algeria's Ouled Nail, a Berber tribe who are famed for their beautiful and independent female dancers, as well as by various Islamic Brotherhoods, including the Gnawa and Hamadsha. Aisha Qandisha reveals herself through ritual possession, prophesying and answering questions via entranced mediums. Aisha Qandisha causes death, illness, and madness but also restores health and bestows wealth, abundance, fertility, and luck. She is a Lilith-like figure, simultaneously dangerous and benevolent.

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*Running from Aisha Qandisha rarely works. Thrust a steel knife into Earth instead. This halts her so that you can banish her or hold her and negotiate. Ask her for anything: safety, protection for you and yours, health, wealth, occult knowledge, or supernatural skills. She will name a price. Moroccans traditionally bargain in the marketplace. Aisha may expect to spend some time negotiating. If you don't like her first price, make a counteroffer.*

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Who is she? Good question. One theory is that she is among the most

powerful and renowned of all Djinn. Another is that she is Astarte reduced to hanging out at hot springs now that her temples are shut, enlisting her own devotees and supplying her own human sacrifices (self-ser vice!). She may be Kadesh, the sacred harlot. Aisha may have been brought to Morocco by Jews or Phoenicians, or she may be an indigenous Berber water spirit.

Those evening encounters at springs aren't random. She knows exactly who she's looking for. The standard Aisha Qandisha legend suggests that if a man runs from her, she calls him by name. She knows who he is. If he can reach the company of others, he'll be safe. If she catches him, she may drag him into the river to drown. Alternatively, she'll ask him to make love to her. If left unsatisfied, she may then drown him, but sometimes if a man pleases her, she bestows generous gifts and spiritual protection.

Some though not all men who survive encounters with Aisha Qandisha pine for her, losing interest in human relationships. They may be treated and healed by the various Brotherhoods who venerate Aisha Qandisha. Aisha Qandisha engages in three types of relationships:

- Very brief relationships in which she causes harm
- Warm relationships in which she offers assistance. Maintain a home altar for her or offer an annual lavish offering or pil grimage.
- Very intense relationships, especially with men whom she may marry. (See the Glossary entry for Marriage.)

She can be a *very* demanding spirit who insists that devotees dress only in her sacred colors or that male devotees never cut their hair or fingernails. She may order that men wear only old, worn, dirty clothing (essentially isolating them from conventional society). No need to volunteer any of this. If she wants something, *she'll* tell *you*.

Should one already possess a human partner or hope to have one in addition to Aisha, it is very crucial that this be brought up and negotiated when she first proposes marriage. Terms may be negotiated. Both sides may request gifts and lay down rules for the relationship. Aisha Qandisha may impose sexual restrictions on male devotees:

- They may have sex only with her.

- They may have sex only with her and a human spouse.
- They may have sex only with her and her female devotees.

Aisha Qandisha is associated with mud, Earth, springs, and rivers. She may render a man impotent, control his virility, or conversely bestow superhuman sexual powers. She preserves and enhances good health, good fortune, fertility, and virility when she chooses. She causes and heals the following:

- Paralysis, especially if sudden or unexplained
- Sudden deafness, blindness, and/or muteness
- Children's illnesses
- Menstrual problems or infertility

Aisha Qandisha may cause any of the above ailments if annoyed or displeased. She may also be petitioned to remove and heal them, whether or not she is the cause. (She has dominion over these ailments and can undo another spirit's damage or curse.) If she fulfills a request or petition, make sure to pay her what was promised and quickly or she will attack. She's a temperamental, volatile spirit, quick to scratch, strangle, or whip those who displease her or don't obey her commands fast enough.

**Manifestations:** Aisha Qandisha usually looks like a gorgeous woman, but typically with some little giveaway that she's more than that, such as one goat, camel, or donkey foot. She wears long robes as camouflage; the animal leg may not be immediately apparent. She also appears as a wizened hag with pendulous breasts. Alternatively she manifests with a woman's head, breasts, and legs and a goat's body, or as a pregnant goat with a woman's legs. Her hair often forms snake-like curls. When Aisha wishes to travel incognito, she takes the form of a wasp. Apparitions of Aisha tend to occur near water or fig trees.

**Colors:** Black, red, chartreuse green

**Incense:** Black benzoin resin (*Styrax benzoin*)

**Birds:** Black, red, and multicolored ("seven-colored") hens

**Animals:** Wasp, pig—a subversive animal for a spirit haunting the

fringes of the Muslim world. Those entranced by her sometimes roll around in mud or squeal like a pig.

**Sacred sites:** Caves, forests, freshwater springs, rivers, and the seashore; Aisha Qandisha has a grotto beneath a giant fig tree near the tomb of the Moroccan holy man, Sidi Ali ben Hamdush. It is traditional to light candles for her before sleeping in the grotto in attempts to establish contact with Aisha or receive a healing dream.

**Sacred trees:** Fig; henna shrubs

**Consort:** Hammou Ukaïou

**Elements:** Water, earth (especially watery earth: mud, marshes, the shore)

**Offerings:** Amber, honey, cowrie shells, bread, olives. Burn candles for her. Adorn yourself with henna in her honor. When making vows to Aisha, it's traditional to tie bits of fabric to a tree (preferably fig) as testament.

**See also:** *Aisha Qandisha: Paths; Astarte; Diablesse; Djinn; Hammou Ukaïou; Kadesh; Lalla Mira; Lilith; Llorona, La; Mami Waters*

### **Aisha Qandisha: Paths**

Aisha Qandisha may be one single spirit who demonstrates different sides of herself to different individuals or groups of people. Alternatively, there may be a family or sisterhood of Aisha spirits, similar to the various Vodou Fredas or Simbis, who may or may not all be the same spirit. Another theory suggests that the various paths of Aisha Qandisha are actually her daughters. (See the Glossary entry for Path for further information on this concept.)

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*Lalla Aisha's different paths are distinguished by the time of day preferred for outings. Some paths of Lalla Aisha only venture out at twilight or after dark. Others prefer the cool of the morning. While the standard description of Aisha*

*Qandisha classifies her as a Berber or Semitic spirit, some paths emphasize her origin in sub-Saharan Africa.*

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Each path of Aisha has a slightly different personality, responds to different songs, and expects slightly different offerings. Each Aisha has a Moroccan saint whom she favors; she may reside or be invoked near that saint's shrine. Devotees of the saint propitiate her. In this context she is almost inevitably addressed as *Lalla Aisha*, literally *Lady Aisha*.

### **Paths of Aisha Qandisha**

#### LALLA AISHA DGHUGHA

Lalla Aisha Dghugha, also known as Lalla Aisha Dghughiyya, is associated with the Hamadsha Brotherhood and their presiding saint, Sidi Ahmed Dghugli, whom she served. Some say she was his spirit wife. She strolls after afternoon or evening prayers. Lalla Aisha appears at her small muddy pit in the corner of Sidi Ahmed's tomb in Beni Ourad, especially during dance rituals. Black hens are vowed to her at this shrine. *Do not kill the chicken!* (These are her sacred birds; she can be very protective of them.) A live black hen is given to the shrine keeper at this particular shrine. *He kills the hen: the blood is poured out for Lalla Aisha, and then the chicken is cooked and distributed to the poor.*

**Colors:** Black, red

**Incense:** Harmal (*Peganum harmala*); red benzoin

**Animal:** Horse

**Attribute:** Cowrie shells

#### LALLA AISHA GNAWIYYA

Lalla Aisha Gnawiyya is Lalla Aisha as venerated by the Gnawa Brotherhood, who consider her a Djinn or Melk. She strolls at night.

**Colors:** Black, yellow

#### LALLA AISHA HASNAWIYYA

Lalla Aisha Hasnawiyya is associated with Beni Hsen, near Rabat. She walks only in the early evening (the first few hours after evening prayers).

**Colors:** Black, red

**Incense:** Tar (*Qatran*), which allegedly banishes Djinn, although clearly not Lalla Aisha

#### LALLA AISHA SUDANIYYA

Lalla Aisha Sudaniyya literally means “Sudanese Lady Aisha.” “Sudan” does not refer to the modern East African nation but to Africa south of the Sahara. She is venerated by the Hamadsha Brotherhood and has a grotto at the shrine of their saint, Sidi Ali ben Hamdush, in the village of Beni Rachid. Sidi Ali lived (and the Hamadsha emerged) during the reign of Moulay Ismail, who imported countless black slaves to labor on building projects and serve as his private guard, creating a profound sub-Saharan African influence and presence in Morocco. Lalla Aisha Sudaniyya may or may not be the same spirit as Lalla Aisha Dghugha:

- She may be a spirit from sub-Saharan Africa.
- She may be a woman who worked for Sidi Ali ben Hamdush as a servant or slave, then disappeared after his death.
- She may be the daughter of Chemharouch, King of Djinn.
- She may be the child of a spirit, Ighud, Shep herd of the Wind, and a human mother.

Her grotto near Sidi Ali’s tomb is banked on one side by the root system of an enormous fig tree. Pilgrimage to her grotto, especially in conjunction with pilgrimage to Sidi Ahmed and Sidi Ali’s tombs, allegedly provides miracle healings of infertility, children’s illnesses, and diseases caused by Lalla Aisha herself. Tie bits of rags, ribbons, or fabric to the tree as testament to vows made to Aisha. (The traditional vow is to promise to return and offer a black hen if she fulfills your request.)

**See also:** *Aisha Qandisha; Chemharouch; Djinn; Lalla; Melk*

#### Aitvaras

**Origin:** Baltic

The Aitvaras traditionally serves as a family guardian. They are powerful spirits with dominion over wealth and relationships who bring happiness, good fortune, and abundance to those they love, often quietly and anonymously. *However*, if angry or offended, the Aitvaras causes fires and disasters. The Aitvaras lives in forests or celestial realms, but it may be persuaded to join a family at home. An Aitvaras attached to a family can be sent to steal from other people. The Aitvaras was traditionally sent to raid barns or granaries but can theoretically retrieve anything.

The Aitvaras does not get along with Perkunas. Perhaps predictably for a spirit that usually manifests in the form of a flaming snake, it was demonized post-Christianity.

**Manifestations:** An Aitvaras may appear as a golden rooster; a large fire-breathing dragon; a small grass snake with a long tail, which emits light as he flies through the air (yes, a flying snake); a huge snake with a flaming head; or a snake formed entirely of fire.

**Sacred tree:** Wild pear tree

**Offering:** Serve an Aitvaras cooked meals that haven't been tasted by anyone else, even during the cooking process.

**See also:** *Perkunas; Snake Spirits*

## Aiyélála

**Origin:** Ilaje; Ijaw (Nigeria)

A commoner engaged in sex with an Ilaje nobleman's wife, a criminal offense. Discovered, he fled, seeking refuge among the Ijaw people, who granted him asylum. The Ilaje demanded his return (and death). Now an issue of pride, the Ijaw refused. This dispute threatened to escalate into warfare: negotiations were held.

The Ilaje and Ijaw formulated a shared moral code, condemning witchcraft, war, and theft. However, the Ilaje would not compromise



regarding the escaped commoner: either he had to return to face the death penalty or a substitute had to die for him, and so an enslaved woman was produced to serve as ransom. Before she was executed, she was expected to pray and follow ritual procedures, but this woman, described as devoutly religious, could not. All she could say was “*Aiyélála*,” which translates as “the world is incomprehensible,” a cry of protest against the injustice of her fate. Following her death, she was deified and called *Aiyélála*. (Her real name is a ritual secret. She is a historic person, a deified mortal. Details of her life are secret, revealed only to initiates.)

*Aiyélála* is associated with witch trials. Ordeals to determine whether malicious witchcraft has occurred are held at her shrine. She is an arbiter of social morality and justice. *Aiyélála* is petitioned to provide justice and to punish those who have caused harm or broken crucial social codes. She is also invoked for prosperity.

**Shrine:** Her primary shrine is on the small island where she was executed. Public altars are erected near riverbanks, and people maintain home altars as well.

**Allied spirits:** Babalu Ayé; Eshu Elegbara; Shango

**Favored people:** Those who fish professionally or who ply the sea for their trade

**Sacred sites:** Lagoons

**Color:** White

**Bird:** Parrot

**See also:** *Babalu Ayé; Eshu Elegbara; Orisha Oko; Shango*

## **Aizen Myo’o**

### *King of Lust*

Ragaraja, Buddhist Lord of Passion, traveled from India to Japan, where he transformed into Aizen Myo’o, venerated by Japan’s esoteric Buddhist

sects as King of Love, Lust, and Desire, patron of erotic love and sacred sexuality. He helps convert earthly, physical desires into transcendent love and spiritual awakening.

Aizen Myo'o is King of Lust because he helps control it, explore it, or transform it into enlightenment. He is petitioned for assistance with the physical and emotional frustrations of suppressed sexuality. Aizen Myo'o is revered as patron of gay love, but he may be invoked for assistance with any kind of love or romance, including self-love.

**Favored people:** Aizen Myo'o guards prostitutes and sex workers. He is venerated by those for whom sex is a business, including sex shop owners and those working with any form of pornography or erotica. He is also venerated by singers, musicians, and landlords.

**Iconography:** Aizen Myo'o has three eyes, six arms, and either one or two heads (with three eyes per head). He wears a crown with a Shishi dog over his wild hair.

**Attributes:** Bow and arrows; bell; stick; thunderbolt; lotus

**Color:** Red

**Shrine:** Kakuonji Temple in Kamakura, Japan

**See also:** *Ragaraja*

## Ajé-Shaluga

**Classification:** Orisha

Ajé-Shaluga, orisha of wealth, trade, and cash, may manifest in male or female form. In Nigeria, Ajé-Shaluga is generally, although not always, understood as male, but some Cuban traditions consider her female. In West Africa, small white cowrie shells once served as currency. Ajé-Shaluga's attribute is the large tiger cowrie, which was not currency, but finding one unexpectedly is considered a sign of Ajé-Shaluga's protection, favor, and blessings. Those favored by Ajé-Shaluga never lack and are never poor. In various myths, Ajé-Shaluga assists other orishas, too. During Oshun's period of intense poverty, she owned only one dress,

which she, a fastidious spirit, washed daily in the river. Ajé-Shaluga saw her from the watery depths, fell in love with her, and emerged, bringing gifts of cowries (cash) and golden treasure, setting her on the road to financial stability and wealth.

**Attribute:** Tiger cowrie shell

**Element:** Water

**Spirit allies:** Ajé-Shaluga is a river spirit closely associated with Yemaya, Olokun, and Oshun. (See their individual entries.)

## Ajitz

**Pronounced:** *Ah-heetz*

**Origin:** Maya

*Ajitz* is a Mayan word meaning “shaman,” “healer,” “wizard,” or “holy man” and is also the name given the spirit of a deified shaman. During the Spanish Conquest of Guatemala, Mayans, particularly those identified as traditional spiritual leaders, were converted to Christianity or killed for resisting. But not this particular shaman, who disappeared into the jungle carrying a doll in his own image and an axe, symbolizing his power to clear paths and cut through obstacles. He eventually reemerged as the spirit Ajitz, who is evoked to banish evil spirits and provide devotees with spiritual protection.

In Guatemala, traditional Spanish dance dramas depicting the conflict between Christians and Moors evolved into the Dance of the Conquest, depicting the battle between Christians and Mayans. The victors initially created the dance, and so the Christians clearly won. Over the years, however, the dance drama evolved and now features Ajitz in the role of a shaman who neither converts nor dies but survives. The dancers who impersonate him wear red painted masks and red clothes and carry axes and red dolls.

**Iconography:** Traditional wooden masks depict him with black eyes and hair, mustache, and beard. Statues are maintained on home altars. He is

usually depicted enthroned but may stand, axe in hand, ready to strike. He is also represented by dance masks.

**Attributes:** Axe, his own image, scales

**Color:** Red

**Offerings:** Occult tools, botanicals, cigars, alcoholic beverages

**See also:** *Maximon*

## Ajysit

*Milk Lake Mother; Birthgiving Mistress*

**Origin:** Yakut (Siberia)

Ajysit is a goddess of laughter, fate, fertility, and childbirth. She is involved in the whole birth process, beginning at conception. She may be petitioned specifically for a male child. Ajysit assists during labor; her presence helps ensure safety. She eases the pain of labor and brings the soul to the child. She records every new birth in a golden book, together with the child's future fate.

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*If delivery is unsuccessful, it is unnecessary to perform rituals or create a feast for Ajysit, who departs quietly and discreetly.*

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**Realm:** Ajysit lives atop a seven-story mountain.

**Creatures:** Ajysit has dominion over domestic animals. The cow is her sacred creature.

**Rituals and offerings:** A special offering table is created in the delivery room. She prefers offerings of butter. She expects various post-birth rituals to be performed involving the midwife, the new mother, and other women, particularly those also seeking fertility. (Ajysit is very

receptive to fertility petitions at this time.) A feast is prepared in Ajysit's honor. For three days following the birth, the new mother is sequestered. Her female friends come to visit her and share butter with her. After the three days are up, the mother's bedding is tied into the top of a tall tree. Ajysit departs until the next birth.

## Akalli

**Also known as:** Acacallis; Akakallis; Acalle

**Origin:** Minoan; Cretan

Akalli, Ariadne's older sister, is the eldest of Pasiphae and Minos' children. While still a young teenager, she met the youthful Apollo while he was undergoing purification rituals. Instantly smitten, he seduced her: she is described as his "first love."

Akalli conceived, but instead of being pleased, her parents were livid, apparently perceiving Apollo as not good enough for their daughter. Akalli was forbidden to marry him or continue the relationship. She is the mother of various sons whom she did not raise but who became founders of cities, heroes of Crete and North Africa.

Akalli's own personal myth is curious and complex. In addition to Apollo, she had relations with Zeus and/or Hermes. Although deities now considered important and powerful pursue her, her parents are always displeased. One myth suggests that, while pregnant, Akalli was banished to Libya to live incognito. The son born to her there is sometimes called "the first man," implying that she is the primordial mother.

Implicit in her myth is that none of these deities are worthy of her; Apollo is described as very young and a newcomer to the region. Akalli may be a *very* ancient and powerful, pre-Hellenic goddess venerated in the region before any of her suitors. The Olympian deities' enthusiasm for her may indicate their desire to align themselves with her, to absorb her spiritual power and constituency. Her parents' dismay may indicate an attempt to maintain independence or indigenous traditions. Akalli's sojourn in Libya may reflect history: Cretans fleeing invaders are

believed to have established colonies in Libya. Her name has two meanings:

- *Without walls*, as in traditionally unwallled Minoan cities or a vulnerable, undefended woman
- A narcissus flower

**Offerings:** Narcissus flowers, especially wild narcissus; honey

**Shrine:** She was venerated at Lera Cave, Crete.

**See also:** *Apollo; Ariadne; Hermes; Narcissus; Nymphs; Pasiphae; Zeus*

## **Akerbeltz**

### *Black Goat*

**Origin:** Basque (Euskara)

Akerbeltz, goat spirit and horned deity, lives in the mountains and caves of the Pyrenees. Akerbeltz is generally considered a virile, male spirit closely associated with Mari. He may be her companion, alter ego, or even twin soul; however, some perceive Akerbeltz to actually be a path of Mari. (See the Glossary entry for Path.) Regardless of their relationship, Akerbeltz is ancient: Roman inscriptions reference him. Akerbeltz protects flocks from danger and disease; he raises storms and leads a host of spirits. During the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, the Inquisition engaged in devastating witch hunts in Basque country; they identified Akerbeltz with Satan and accused women of offering him their souls.

**Manifestation:** Akerbeltz manifests as a black goat; the goats presiding over sabbats in Spanish artist Francisco Goya's *Witchcraft Paintings* may be understood as portraits of Akerbeltz.

**Days:** Monday, Wednesday, and Friday

**Offerings:** Bread, eggs, coins

**See also:** *Mari (1)*

## Akiba-Sanjakubo

### *Lord of Fire*

**Also known as:** Akiha-Sanjakubo; Akiba Sanshaku

**Origin:** Japan

Sanjakubo was born when his mother petitioned Kannon for fertility. He may be an avatar of Kannon. As a tiny boy he demonstrated powerful spiritual gifts and inclinations. He was a priest by the time he was six or seven, becoming a *yamabushi* (a shamanic mountain priest), studying esotericism, mysticism, and the secrets of fire.

One day, after meditating for a week, he had a vision: a flame rose from incense smoke. Within that flame, Sanjakubo saw what he first thought was Fudo, Lord of Wisdom, but it was in fact, he realized, a Tengu in similar guise. This Tengu held Fudo's attributes but was mounted on a white fox, thus combining elements of Buddhism and Shinto. As Sanjakubo gazed at the vision, he realized that what he was seeing was his own reflection. Summoning the white fox, he flew to Mount Akiba, where he took up residence in a temple dedicated to Kannon, developing his own spiritual tradition, which spread, became very popular, and was eventually called by the name of the mountain from which his teachings emanated: Akiba.

Sanjakubo evolved into Akiba-Sanjakubo, Lord of Mount Akiba, Spirit of Fire Prevention. He is invoked to prevent fires, weaken already existing fires, and minimize the heartache and damage they cause. He is also invoked for traffic safety and longevity and petitioned against poverty and general disaster.

During Japan's Warring Era, Akiba-Sanjakubo was also venerated as a spirit of military victory. Samurai offered their swords to his shrines in petition and gratitude.

**Iconography:** A beaked, winged Tengu haloed in fire; snakes entwine his body

**Attributes:** Sword of wisdom and the cord of rescue

**Mount:** White fox

**Sacred day:** 23 December (the anniversary of his death)

**Numbers:** 23, 24; offerings are traditionally given on the 23<sup>rd</sup> day of each month

**Sacred sites:** Akiba-Sanjakubo has shrines throughout Japan. He himself established the shrine in Akiba-koen Park in Tochio, Nigata Prefecture, where an annual festival honoring the anniversary of his death sometimes including fire-walking rituals.

**See also:** *Fudo; Inari; Kannon; Tengu*

## The Akkan

**Origin:** Saami

*Akka* is a Saami word meaning “grandmother.” The Akkan (plural) are a family of fertility spirits consisting of a mother and her daughters, our grandmothers:

- **Maderakka:** “Old Woman”: the mother
- **Sarakka:** “Dividing Woman”: the first daughter
- **Juksakka:** “Bow Woman”: the second daughter
- **Ugsakka:** “Door Woman”: the third daughter

---

*Petition Sarakka for female children and Juksakka for male. If petitioned, Ugsakka and Juksakka have the power to change a child's sex before birth.*

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Maderakka is a spirit of general fertility and abundance. Three of her daughters are specifically involved in human reproduction. They make women and animals fertile in exchange for offerings of food and drink. With the exception of Sarakka, they are venerated exclusively by women. These spirits work cooperatively together and may be venerated



and invoked together. Each serves a function from conception through childbirth. Mother and sisters appear on Saami drum paintings.

- Maderakka creates and guards souls.
- Sarakka opens the womb to permit conception.
- Juksakka, a guardian spirit who dwells beneath the earth's surface, represents the fierce mother who protects her children from harm. She protects living and unborn children.
- Ugsakka lives beneath the threshold and guards mothers and children within the home.

**Offerings:** Daily offerings of food and drink at the hearth or stove

**Animal:** Reindeer

## Akua

**Origin:** Hawaii

The Akua are the major deities of the Hawaiian pantheon, spirits of celestial origin led by four spirits: Kane, Kanaloa, Ku, and Lono. Kane is considered ruler of this pantheon. Akua may manifest in any material form: human, animal, vegetable, or mineral.

**See also:** *Aumakua*

## Al

**Origin:** Armenia

The Al is a type of generally malevolent, anti-fertility spirit held responsible for miscarriage and deaths of very young children. The Al is described as suffocating or strangling babies, but this may manifest as crib death (SIDS).

Those considered vulnerable to Als include pregnant women and infants from the moment of conception until seven months of age, at which point they are either immune or the Al loses interest. Iron amulets

protect against Als, although they themselves bear iron. Those considering themselves invulnerable sometimes seek to control them. Allegedly sticking a pin into the Al's clothing places it under your command. Beneath these ominous stories may lie forgotten (and now wrathful) pre-Christian deities.

**Manifestations:** Als are frequently invisible, but when they show themselves they are described as having brass fingernails, iron teeth, tusks like a boar, and hair like snakes, similar to Gorgon Medusa.

**Attribute:** Iron scissors

**Metal:** Iron

**Places:** Als prefer damp, dank places; they like stables and remote roadsides.

## **Al Karisi**

*The Red Wife; The Scarlet Woman*

**Origin:** Turkish (pre-Islamic Turkic shamanism)

Al Karisi is a deadly, vampiric spirit who craves the inner organs of horses and humans. Newborns and their mothers are believed to be especially vulnerable, although Al Karisi targets children, too. Al Karisi is a stealth killer. Although deadly and terrible, she's also nonconfrontational, preferring magical attack to brute force. Despite her reputation as a bloodthirsty spirit profoundly associated with the color red, her victims are *not* torn apart; her attack does not resemble a violent crime scene, but manifests in sudden, abrupt, unexplained death (like SIDS; crib death) or as chronic, wasting illness that won't respond to medical treatment.

The goal is to keep Al Karisi away from potential victims. Amulets, sacred texts, and the presence of vigilant human guardians provide protection. Al Karisi possesses powers of hypnosis or the ability to paralyze victims, who then lose their ability to speak, move, or scream. Once she is in the room, the victim, although conscious and fully aware,

is unable to signal for help, scream, flee, or fight back. Avoidance thus is the best policy although Al Karisi can theoretically be stopped by staking her through the heart with a wooden stake or silver needle. Should one encounter her, one should avoid looking in her eyes to forestall paralysis.

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*Al Karisi prefers sleeping victims. Efforts may be made to keep newborns and new mothers awake as much as possible. Placid, sleepy babies, so desirable elsewhere, may be more vulnerable than those who are alert and wakeful.*

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**Manifestations:** Al Karisi is a master shape-shifter. She is inevitably described as female and may appear as a large, terrifying woman dressed in red. She also appears as a bird, cat, dog, or fox. Most terrifyingly, Al Karisi can alter her appearance so that she resembles someone her victim knows, usually a family member, gaining her access where otherwise she might be kept out via prayers and talismans.

**Color:** Red

## Al Uzza

*The Mightiest One; Most Powerful*

Very little information regarding pre-Islamic Arabian religion and spirituality has survived. These are the facts regarding Al Uzza:

- She was an extraordinarily popular deity, possibly the preeminent Arabian goddess.
- She was the primary female spirit venerated by the Nabataeans in Petra (now Jordan).

The Nabataeans were renowned stargazers, possessors of extremely sophisticated astrology. A surviving zodiac wheel contains a large image of Al Uzza in the center, apparently presiding over the wheel of the year. Al Uzza seems to have been associated with wells and springs, life-saving

water in a desert region.

Al Uzza had a shrine on the road leading to Mecca where she was believed to reside in acacia trees, emerging from them when invoked. She was extremely beloved in Mecca; her idol was among those destroyed by the Prophet Muhammed at the Kaaba. She may also have been worshipped in the Sinai Peninsula.

The Romans identified Al Uzza with Isis and Aphrodite.

**Iconography:** Surviving imagery depicts her as a beautiful woman, but Al Uzza was also venerated in the form of a black stone with a cleft.

**Planets:** Venus; the moon

**Element:** Water

**Tree:** Acacia

**Place:** Mecca; she may have been its guardian spirit before Islam.

**Sacred site:** Archaeological evidence suggests that Petra's Temple of the Winged Lions was dedicated to her.

**See also:** *Allat; Manat; Mari (2)*

## **Ala**

### *The Queen of Life and Death*

**Also known as:** Ale

**Origin:** Ibo (Nigeria)

Ala is the daughter of Chi (also known as Chuku), the Supreme Creator, originator of spirits, people, animals, and all that lives. Chi is a remote Creator; Ala is the most significant Ibo spirit, mother, and guardian of the Ibo, their sacred custodian, a spirit of ethics and morality. She formed the Earth. Ala provides all that sustains life. If her children are peaceful and well behaved, Ala provides bountiful harvests from human wombs and from Earth, which is her womb. She is the Mistress of Life and Death.

Ala places babies into human wombs. When people die, they return to Earth, her womb. When Earth first emerged from primeval chaos, it was Ala who decreed that the dead should be buried in Earth. She guards and rules buried ancestors.

Petition Ala for human fertility and agricultural abundance.

**Iconography:** Painted clay representations of Ala traditionally depict her with a child seated on her knee, emphasizing her roles as mother and child-bringer.

**Attributes:** Yam knife; brass leg bracelets

**Element:** Earth

**Food:** Yams

**Metal:** Brass

**Sacred bird:** Hornbill

## **Alakshmi**

*Best; Eldest; First; Senior Wife*

**Also known as:** Jyestha

**Origin:** India

**Official story:** Lakshmi is the spirit of joy, wealth, fertility, happiness, and abundance. Alakshmi is her older sister, alter ego, companion, and antithesis. She brings the opposite of Lakshmi's desired gifts: poverty, unhappiness, want, and sterility. Jealousy and envy follow in her wake.

**Alternative history:** Alakshmi predates Lakshmi in southern India, and as late as the ninth century CE, she was a very popular, beloved deity. Hidden in the official story may be a protest against the Aryan domination of southern India. As Lakshmi's fortunes increased, those of Alakshmi declined. Her image is now kept tucked away in a corner, if it is kept at all, turned to the wall or facedown lest it attract misfortune, poverty, and death. Yet wives are still recommended to propitiate her

daily.

Hindu legend says that Alakshmi dressed in red rose from the sea of churning milk before Lakshmi emerged. Her hair is matted like an ascetic's (or in the context of traditional Hindu culture, in the manner of a woman uninterested in pleasing a man). Her cheeks are sunken; her breasts are shriveled.

Lakshmi married Vishnu; Alakshmi was given in marriage to a Brahman ascetic. It wasn't a good match. The sounds and sights of Vedic worship aggravated Alakshmi so much she clapped her hands over her ears. She refused to accompany him to the forest where he wished to live, devoting himself completely to spirituality. Her angry husband abandoned Alakshmi in a place where local (non-Vedic) spirits were worshipped and heretical rituals practiced, ordering her to support herself on offerings from female devotees and stay away from places where Brahmans live and pray.

- Propitiate Alakshmi if you suffer from misfortune and strife and wish her to remove it.
- Men who desire prosperous wives and children as well as their own personal wealth are advised to honor her.
- Women petition her for fertility and protection.
- Merchants tie offerings of lemons and green chiles outside their stores to simultaneously propitiate Alakshmi and prevent her from entering their establishment.

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*There's a bit of a fear factor here: if you don't petition her, she may give you what you don't want. However, Alakshmi is also renowned for sweeping obstacles from the paths of devotees.*

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**Manifestations:** If Lakshmi is the epitome of beauty, then Alakshmi is her opposite. Descriptions of her appearance vary, dependent on whatever the person describing her perceives as unattractive. She is sometimes described as "elephant-faced."

**Iconography:** A large, thickly built, plain woman dressed in red or blue-black garments, seated on a chair or throne. Her iconography belies her legend: although not alluringly beautiful, neither is she horrible to look at. She may hold one hand in the gesture (*mudra*), dispelling fear and offering protection; wear a jeweled crown; and display a red *tilaka* mark on her forehead indicating that she is married.

**Attributes:** Broom; water pot

**Flower:** Lotus

**Mounts:** Donkey; ass

**Birds:** A crow or owl, perceived as a bird of misfortune. Lakshmi is often depicted with an owl hovering near: that owl is Alakshmi.

**Colors:** Red, black

**Metal:** Iron

**Offerings:** Women desiring children, grandchildren, and/or wealth are advised to feed Alakshmi daily, giving her offerings of their own meal after they have fed their husbands but before they themselves have eaten. She prefers sour, pungent, and astringent foods.

**See also:** *Lakshmi; Manasa; Sita; Vishnu*

## Alala

**Origin:** Greek

Alala is the Goddess of the Battle Cry. Her father is Polemos, a Greek war spirit. Father and daughter travel in Ares' entourage. The name *Alala* is the sound of the battle cry (screaming her name manifests her), but it may also be literally interpreted as "speechless." The battle cry emerges when someone is pushed past the point of being verbally articulate.

Alala is a protective guardian (at least for those whom she favors). Alala likes to haunt old battlegrounds and may be found there. Alternatively call her when you need her. Be aware that she may arrive

with an entire host of battle spirits.

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*You can hear Alala on the television series Xena: Warrior Princess, where her name is Xena's battle cry.*

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**See also:** *Ares*

## **Alastor**

*Avenger*

**Origin:** Greek

When is a blood feud sated? At what point is revenge sufficient? Alastor might say “never.” Alastor may be an individual spirit of vengeance or a class of avenging spirits. The term is sometimes used as an epithet for deities like Zeus and Nemesis in their roles as purveyors of justice. What began as justice spirits evolved into feared spirits of questionable intent associated with vendettas and blood feuds.

Alastor's revenge isn't just any revenge: it's bloody, scary, out-of-control, raging revenge. Euripides' Cassandra threatens Agamemnon by claiming the powers of an alastor (and as she is a shaman, this may be no idle threat).

Alastor is identified with the concept of children paying for the sins of their fathers, a common theme in Greek mythology. Although theoretically Alastor is a justice spirit, an alastor is also a feared possessing spirit that relentlessly drives its host to seek vengeance. The spirit may enjoy the bloodshed. (The clue is that the host displays obsessions and feels compelled to do what he or she does not wish to do or knows is wrong.) Psychic disharmony caused by the trauma of the original crime renders the individual vulnerable to the alastor. Thus when Orestes is advised by an oracle to avenge his father by murdering his mother, he initially questions whether this advice really came from



Apollo or from an evil-intentioned alastor. By the Middle Ages, *Alastor* was identified as a demon or a class of demons.

**See also:** *Apollo; Demon; Erinyes; Nemesis; Zeus*

## Alberich

**Origin:** Frankish

Alberich's history and identity are mysterious as befitting someone with his possible family connections. His name means "Elf Ruler" or "Elf King," and he may, in fact, be an Elf. The name may also indicate a human who is the master of Elves in the same way that King Solomon is a master or king of Djinn.

- Some legends describe Alberich as a spirit.
- Others suggest that he was an incredibly powerful Frankish sorcerer, perhaps able to attain immortality.

Elf or human, he is described as the brother of Merovech, founder of France's Merovingian royal dynasty. Although his mother is known, the identity of Merovech's father has always been mysterious. Rumors have swirled regarding possible Other worldly parentage. Those identified as candidates for paternity include Neptune, Wotan (Odin), or a sea monster. Alternatively as readers of *The Da Vinci Code* or *Holy Blood, Holy Grail* know, Merovech is long rumored to be descended from Jesus, whose Davidic lineage is shared by King Solomon. Where Alberich fits into this family tree is unclear.

Alberich is subject of lore and legend, sometimes considered King of Dwarves, too. A character named Alberich appears in various Richard Wagner operas. Wagner was no stickler for mythic accuracy: his Alberich is a composite of Alberich and Andvari.

**Realm:** Alberich lives in a beautiful, luxurious subterranean palace.

**See also:** *Andvari; Djinn; Dwarves; Elves; Oberon; Solomon, King*

## Alcyone (1)

## *The Queen Who Wards Off Evil*

**Also known as:** Halcyone; Alkyone

**Origin:** Greek

Official story: Alcyone is a daughter of Aeolus, but not one of the daughters who married a brother and lived happily ever after. Instead, Alcyone married Ceyx, son of Hesperus, and went to live with him in his kingdom in Thessaly. Passionately in love, they were so happy in their ideal marriage that they compared themselves to Zeus and Hera. You'd think Zeus would be honored by this compliment, but instead he felt threatened and his rage was evoked. When Ceyx sailed off to consult the Oracle of Delphi, leaving Alcyone at home, Zeus raised a thunderstorm and Ceyx drowned.

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*The name Alcyone refers to more than one ancient Greek spirit. Although their names look identical in English, the meanings may be variously interpreted. Interpretations in this book are based on those of Robert Graves, author of The Greek Myths.*

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His ghost appeared to Alcyone; grief stricken, she threw herself into the sea. The deities (maybe her father; possibly even Zeus and Hera) took pity on the lovers, and both were transformed into kingfisher birds. A related legend sprang up about kingfishers: every winter, the female kingfisher buries her dead mate, then builds a thorny nest, which she pushes out to sea. She lays her eggs on the nest floating on the ocean. Aeolus reigns in the winds for the seven days preceding the Winter Solstice and the seven days following it, keeping seas and skies peaceful so that the eggs can hatch peacefully.

This story is palpably untrue: forget about pushing it into the sea, kingfishers don't even build nests. They lay their eggs in holes near water. The ancient Greeks who lived closer to nature than most of us do now, knew this very well. The little story about the kingfisher's nest,

eggs, and dying mate is the clue that there's more to this tragic love story than first meets the eye.

Mythologist Robert Graves theorizes that within this story lurks a pre-Hellenic goddess, the sacred king who served her, and his ritual death by drowning. Inhabitants of the Aeolian Islands venerated Alcyone, a moon goddess and ancestral spirit who was not necessarily literally Aeolus' daughter but a spirit who shared territory and veneration with him. The Aeolians were eventually forced to accept the Olympian religion, with Zeus as their chief god. Aeolus, famously a spirit who wants no trouble with any other spirits, survived the transition, but Alcyone, a sterner spirit, dared to compare herself to Zeus. (Kingfishers aren't ethereal little birds; they're feisty carnivores who feast on frogs and beat their prey to death, slamming it against stones, trees, or other hard surfaces.) The myth recalls her and is testament to her power: Zeus may raise storms but she calms them, keeping winds and waters still near her ancient holy day, the Winter Solstice. Zeus may rule, but Alcyone still asserts her sacred rites.

Alcyone protects mariners and travelers on the sea from rough weather and shipwrecks. She is guardian of lovers and matron of marriage. She bestows *Halcyon Days*: days of peace, plenty, and happiness: *nothing but blue skies*, metaphorically speaking.

**Planet:** Moon

**Bird:** Kingfisher

**Days:** The Halcyon Days: Winter Solstice; seven days preceding, and seven days after

**Color:** White

**Altar:** Keep a vessel of saltwater on her altar; decorate it with lunar and marine imagery; give her a prince to keep her company (but make sure she's the dominant presence).

**Offerings:** Present in a Halcyon Days English enamel box or use a box to fulfill a vow.

**See also:** *Aeolus; Alkonost; Hera; Hesperides; Olympian Spirits; Pasiphae;*

*Zeus*

## **Alcyone (2)**

*Strong Helper; Sea Hound; Sea Bird*

**Also known as:** Alkyone

**Origin:** Greek

Alcyone, daughter of Atlas, is the leader of the seven sister spirits, the Pleiades. She had a long love affair with Poseidon, by whom she has many children.

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*Alkyone is the name assigned the brightest of the Pleiades, the cluster of stars in the constellation Taurus.*

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**Color:** Blue

**See also:** *Atlas; Maia; Pleiades; Poseidon*

## **Alicanto**

**Origin:** South America

The Alicanto, a magical, nocturnal bird, looks nondescript in daylight, but at night, golden light gleams from its wings. Its luminous eyes are like lasers. The Alicanto is a beacon in the darkness. Miners and gold prospectors long for a glimpse of the Alicanto, as it allegedly leads to treasure. According to legend, the Alicanto subsists on gold and silver. It does not fly but runs with its arms extended (not because it absolutely can't fly, but because its metallic diet renders it too heavy for flight; presumably a less well-fed Alicanto flies quite well).

The standard myth is that if the Alicanto is unaware of your presence,

it will lead you to treasure, but if it sees you it will lead you to jagged cliffs and your doom. That underestimates the Alicanto, a magic bird. The Alicanto is well aware of the presence of onlookers as well as the value of precious metals (spiritual as well as economic).

- If the Alicanto favors you, it will lead you to treasure.
- If the Alicanto is displeased with you or is the vehicle of some punishment against you, then the bird leads you to danger.

The crucial thing to recall with the Alicanto is that no one is required to follow it. The Alicanto may be invoked in visualizations or appear in dreams.

**Home:** The Alicanto allegedly lives in small caves or crevices within mines.

## Aljan

**Also known as:** Aljani; plural: Aljanu; feminine: Aljana

**Origin:** Hausa

Aljan technically is a local pronunciation of *Djinn*, but is usually intended as a synonym for Bori spirits. Urban Hausa people often prefer to identify Bori spirits as Aljanu, implying that Bori spirits *are* Djinn, giving them a Muslim context as opposed to names that hark back to traditional Hausa religions.

**See also:** *Bori; Djinn; Sarkin Aljan*

## Alkonost

**Origin:** Russian

Alkonost is one of several magical Russian spirit birds. Her identity is complex and mysterious. She is the bird of paradise and a wind spirit: she raises storms. She originally lived in the Pagan Russian paradise on the Otherworld island of Buyan. Post-Christianity, she was transferred to the Garden of Eden where she serves as God's personal messenger,

traveling to Earth to sing marvelous songs to saints, foretelling their happy future in Paradise and endeavoring to bolster their spirits when they waver.

Alkonost has a sister spirit, Sirin, her alter ego, whom she resembles very closely. Once upon a time, they were considered sacred birds of fortune, venerated side by side as protective spirits:

- Alkonost guards good fortune by day.
- Sirin protects it at night.

Carved wooden images of Alkonost and Sirin traditionally graced entrances to Russian peasants' cottages. In older visual depictions, especially those intended for peasants, it's almost impossible to distinguish between the two spirits without reading captions identifying them. Over time, however, Alkonost was classified as entirely "good," an angelic figure, while more ambiguous, seductive, Sirenlike qualities were assigned to Sirin:

- Alkonost promises saints eternal life in Paradise.
- Sirin is a gloomy harbinger of death.

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*Their names derive from Greek myth: Sirin means Siren; Alkonost may derive from Alcyone. Older Russian names, if they existed, are forgotten.*

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When Viktor Vasnetsov (1848–1926), a Russian artist specializing in mythic themes, painted their portraits in 1896 as *Birds of Joy and Sorrow*, it was easy to tell which sister was which. Alkonost sits on the right side of the canvas with white eagle wings and a fair complexion. Swarthy, black-haired Sirin perches on the left, gazing downward, sporting black vulture wings.

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*Alkonost is the name of the legendary private publisher active in Petrograd from 1918 to 1923, specializing in Symbolist authors like Anna Akhmatova*

*and Alexander Blok.*

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**Manifestations:** Bird with a woman's face or head; sometimes as a winged woman

**Attribute:** Crown

**See also:** *Alcyone (1); Gamayun; Harpies; Lilith; Sirens; Sirin*

## **Allat**

*The Female Divine; The Goddess*

**Also known as:** Al-Lat; Alilat; Allatu

**Origin:** Arabia

*Allat* is the feminine version of the name *Allah*. It may be a title, not a name. She is a pre-Islamic spirit who was once among the primary deities venerated at Mecca. Allat, Al Uzza, and Menat are the trinity of goddesses mentioned in the Koran. They are the subject of the so-called "satanic verses," which originally allowed prayers of intercession to be directed to the three Pagan goddesses. The Prophet Muhammed eventually retracted those verses. The incident was the inspiration for Salman Rushdie's controversial 1988 novel *The Satanic Verses*.

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*Allat is a spirit of abundance with dominion over human reproduction.*

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Allat was popular throughout Northern Arabia and in Syria. Her chief sanctuary was at Ta'if, near Mecca, where she was venerated in the form of a large, unhewn block of white granite. Women ritualistically circled her rock, naked, expecting Allat to hear and grant their petitions. Allat was venerated by the Nabataeans at Petra in the form of a four-sided

stone, and by the people of Hatra, capital of the first Arab kingdom, now in Iraq. She may have had dominion over trade routes, protecting those who traveled them.

She was identified with Athena and Minerva, but Herodotus compared her to Aphrodite.

**Manifestation:** Allat appears in the guise of a beautiful, mature, fertile woman.

**Iconography:** On coins from the Roman province of Petraea, she appears as a robed woman holding a bundle of cinnamon sticks and standing beside a camel.

**Planet:** Sun

**Animal:** Camel

**Offerings:** Fruit and fragrance (incense, perfume)

**See also:** *Al-Uzza; Aphrodite; Athena; Ereshkigal; Menat; Minerva*

## **Almaqah**

*Lord of the Horned Goats*

**Also known as:** Ilmuqah

**Origin:** Sabaean

Very little information survives regarding pre-Islamic spirits of Arabia, but Almaqah appears to have been the preeminent deity of the South Arabian kingdom of Saba, now in modern Yemen. He was also venerated in what is now Eritrea. The Sabaeans called themselves “Almaqah’s children.” Sabaean inscriptions invoking him date from the seventh century BCE. The great temple of Marib, in Yemen, sometimes called the Eighth Wonder of the Ancient World, seems to have been dedicated to him. (Archaeological evidence is still pending.) He seems to have dominion over precipitation, controlling storms, rain, and flooding. He is the guardian of irrigation, crucial to a desert nation.



**Planet:** Moon

**Sacred animals:** Bull, goat, ibex

**Attributes:** Cluster of lightning bolts and an S-shaped weapon

**Emblem:** He is represented by a geometric image of a circle rising above a crescent: this is usually interpreted as a sun over the crescent moon, however it could also be a full moon within cattle horns, similar to crowns of Hathor and Isis.

## Alpheios

**Origin:** Greece

**Classification:** River spirit

Alpheios, son of Oceanus and Tethys, is Lord of the Alpheios River, the longest river in the Peloponnese. The Alpheios comes second in Hesiod's catalog of great rivers, just after the Nile. As befitting the spirit of such an impressive river, Alpheios was once an important, significant deity. He received sacrifices of bulls, and his image was carved on the west pediment of the temple of Zeus at Olympia. Alpheios was renowned as an amorous, virile, sexually aggressive spirit, pursuing Artemis and other spirits, in particular the Nymph Arethusa.

Petition him for virility, male fertility, and lots of children. He may also be petitioned for assistance with protecting and feeding those children.

**See also:** *Arethusa; Artemis; Zeus*

## Alseid

**Origin:** Greece

**Classification:** Nymph

The name *Alseid* derives from *Alsos*, literally "grove." Technically, Alseids are Nymphs of groves but are also sometimes associated with

grassy meadows, mountain glens, and lightly forested areas. Groves are groupings of trees and Alseids tend to appear in groups, too, as opposed to more solitary Nymphs. They have a good time together: they have a reputation as pranksters and enjoy playing tricks on travelers.

Eurydice, Orpheus' love, may be an Alseid.

**See also:** *Nymph; Orpheus*

## Alu

**Origin:** Babylonia

Alu are a type of Babylonian spirit. Their name may be translated as "Storm" or "Tempest" but is also sometimes considered a synonym for *demon*. In addition to destructive storms, they cause illness and nightmares, including night paralysis. The Alu's presence may be sufficient to cause this effect, or it may physically press down heavily or otherwise suck out the sleeper's breath. Alu roam the streets at night looking for trouble. They lurk in dark corners, desolate places, and ruins.

**Manifestations:** Alu commonly manifest as black dogs, but they may appear in half-human/half-animal form.

**See also:** *Al; Demon*

## Aluluei

**Origin:** Micronesia (Caroline Islands)

Aluluei is Lord of Knowledge and Navigation. He taught his people how to make outrigger canoes, which traditionally carry a wooden image of Aluluei. One day, a large canoe in the water caught the eye of Aluluei's daughter. She waded out to get a better look. Inside were three deities:

- Segul, Lord of Sea Captains
- Valur, Lord of Fish
- Werieng, Lord of Birds

Welcoming her aboard, they gave her a navigational chart, marking all birds, fish, and islands. She brought this to her father who, while a great navigator, lacked this information. Rather than hoarding, he shared it with people, teaching them sea lore.

Aluluei possesses all knowledge of the sea and sailing. Invoke him when you need him to share or reveal some information.

**Manifestation:** Aluluei has two faces: one facing forward to see where he's going and one facing backward, watchful of danger approaching from behind. His upper body is that of a man, but his lower body is that of a stingray.

**Colors:** Red, black, white

**Animal:** Stingray

## Aluqa

*Aluqa* is sometimes translated as “night spirit,” but it literally means “sucker” or “leech.” *Aluqa*, an ancient pan-Semitic word, also names a specific Djinn or demon. The *Aluqa* exists throughout the entire Semitic world: *Aluqa*, the Hebrew variant of the name, appears in the Bible and hence is the most familiar version, but variations exist in Arabic (*'Awleq*), Aramaic (*Elaqta*), and Akkadian (*Ilqu*). *'Alaqt* is the variation found in Ethiopia.

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*The Aluqa is associated with the leech whose two daughters continually cry  
“Give!”*

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*Give!” in Proverbs 30:15.*

*Aluqa* and her daughters are identified as lethal succubi who visit men at night, consuming their life-force *and* blood, ultimately leaving their victims so drained that they waste away or commit suicide in despair. It is, however, not difficult to repel an *Aluqa*. Iron amulets or implements

like knives, scissors, or nails tucked beneath a pillow stop the Aluqa from drawing near.

**Manifestations:** The vampiric Aluqa is inevitably described as alluringly beautiful. She may travel in the form of an insect.

## **Amadan**

*The Fool of the Forth; The Stroke Lad*

**Also known as:** Amadan Mor; Amadan na Bruidne; Amadan na Briona

**Origin:** Ireland

**Classification:** Sidhe

Amadan may be the most dreaded of all Sidhe. To be touched by Amadan is to be felled by a stroke. Amadan's stroke is no mild stroke; inevitably it is severe, devastatingly debilitating and resists all manner of healing. Even Bidy Early (1798-April 1874), among the greatest of Ireland's Fairy doctors, was unable to heal Amadan's victims. Victims may simultaneously suffer lost wits.

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*Lady Gregory (1852–22 May 1932) chronicled Amadan in her book, Visions and Beliefs in the West of Ireland. Eyewitness reports derive from those who have escaped him or have seen him touch others. Amadan injures through touch; his presence alone does not cause harm. His attack doesn't derive from a casual, careless brush against someone: instead he reaches out and deliberately touches someone, who is then immediately seized with a sudden stroke.*

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Because Amadan may be a crazy fool, there is no reasoning with him, no successful method of appeal. The best course of action is to avoid him if you see him coming, although, as he is a shape-shifter, this is a

challenge. (He is visible, at least some of the time.) Lady Gregory suggests that constant repetitions of the prayer, “*The Lord be between us and harm,*” counteracts his power, at least until you can escape or he leaves. Unlike most disease spirits, Amadan does not heal the affliction he transmits.

**Time:** He is most active and at the peak of his powers in June.

**See also:** *Sidhe*

## **Amaru**

**Origin:** Andean

The Amarus (plural) are ancient Andean snake spirits, guardian deities of the Incas. *Amaru* is a Quechua word literally translated as “snake,” but they may be dragons. Spirits of wisdom, the Amarus served as advisors to the Incas and their predecessors.

Legend has it that Amarus continue to protect the Incas. Following the Spanish conquest, a party of Incas fled from Cuzco, their capital city, and traveled east through the mountains, carrying sacred artifacts, building bridges as they went. Enchantments were placed upon these bridges so that no one could follow in their footsteps. (Attempts to follow them produce enchanted eternal sleep, à la *Sleeping Beauty*.) These Incas ventured deep into the rain forest, building a secret hidden fortress-city called Paititi (“Home of the Jaguar Father”), guarded by Amarus in conjunction with giant felines. (Conspiracy theorists claim that the Vatican knows the location of the city.)

Someday, it is prophesied, the Incas will return, retracing their route back to Cuzco. Their return will be accompanied by devastating natural phenomena, such as earthquakes and hailstorms. The Amarus will roar, frightening away those who have usurped the Incas’ power, and once again the Incas will rule.

## **Amaterasu**

*The One Who Makes the Heavens Shine; Heaven-Illuminating Great Deity*

**Also known as:** Amaterasu-omikami

**Origin:** Japan

**Classification:** Kami

Amaterasu is the beautiful, radiant kami of the sun, but she is more than just the shining sun: she is a great goddess who provides for people and protects them. Amaterasu was the first to cultivate rice, albeit in heaven. (Her grandson, Ninigi, eventually brought rice to Earth from her celestial paddies.) She also invented and taught people the arts of weaving and cultivating silkworms. Rice, silk, fabric: all are gifts of Amaterasu (and are appropriate offerings to bestow upon her).

Her most famous myth involves her withdrawal to a cave. Susano'o, Amaterasu's brother, Spirit of Chaos, went on a rampage. He trampled Amaterasu's rice fields, filled in her irrigation ditches, and threw excrement into her palace. Amaterasu protested strongly, but Susano'o's response was to profane her weaving workshop by throwing the corpse of a skinned horse, the sacred solar animal, at her weaving maidens. The impact of the horse's body caused one of Amaterasu's handmaidens to fall against her wooden spindle, piercing her vagina, killing her.

Livid, grieving, and just plain disgusted, Amaterasu shut herself up in a cave and refused to come out. The world was plunged into darkness, a never-ending solar eclipse. Despite the pleading and cajoling of various kami, Amaterasu remained in the cave, swearing she would never emerge. Although attempts were made, Amaterasu was too powerful and radiant: she couldn't be forced out. The world began to wither and die. Famine spread.

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*The primordial spirit Izanagi entered Yomi, Realm of Death, in an attempt to rescue his female compatriot, Izanami. Amaterasu was born from Izanagi's left eye as he bathed after his successful escape from Death, the first of three children. (Her brothers are Tsukiyomi and Susano'o; she would eventually feud with both.) Alternative myths suggest that Amaterasu was born from*

*Izanami's menstrual blood or that the two primal spirits created her in conjunction, intending her to be an all-powerful ruler.*

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Eight million despairing kami camped outside Amaterasu's cave and debated what to do. Uzume, Spirit of Joy, hatched a plan. Mounting a drum, she began to dance, distracting the kami, who momentarily forgot their woes and joined in the mirth, laughing, singing, dancing, and drumming. Inside the cave, Amaterasu wondered what was going on. She called out, only to be told that there was a new goddess in town. She poked her head out of the cave to see. Instantly a magical sacred mirror was thrust in front of her: she was entranced by her own beauty. Before she could even think of returning to the cave, she was pulled out and the cave sealed up. After some negotiation, she returned to her previous role, but this time as chief of the Shinto pantheon.

Amaterasu is the divine ancestor of the Yamato clan. As they grew in prominence and influence, so did she. Or vice versa. Her grandson, Jimmu Tengu, became Japan's first emperor and founder of the Imperial Dynasty. Although considered the literal ancestor of the Japanese royal family, she is also the spiritual mother of Japan in general. *Japan* means "Land of the Rising Sun"; the sun on the Japanese flag may be understood to refer to Amaterasu. (After World War II, the Japanese emperor was forced to disavow celestial ancestry.)

Amaterasu's shrine at Ise in the Yamato region of Honshu is Shinto's holiest shrine. Her sacred mirror may be enshrined there. The cave to which she withdrew, Ama-no-Iwato ("Heavenly Cave of Darkness"), is in the vicinity, too.

Since the eighth century CE, every twenty years all buildings in the Ise shrine complex are replaced by exact replicas. Last rebuilt in 1993; the next rebuilding is scheduled for 2013. With each rebuilding, Amaterasu (and her shrine mate, Toyouke) are empowered and reinvigorated. Once the new shrine is complete, old buildings are dismantled but not destroyed. Sacred pieces are distributed to other shrines.

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*Ôkami is a videogame developed by Clover Station for the Play Station 2 and released in 2006. The main character is the goddess Amaterasu in the form of a white wolf.*

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**Attributes:** Mirror, sword, jewel (Japan's three sacred treasures); also bow and quiver of arrows, in case Susano'o bothers her again.

**Planet:** Sun

**Sacred sites:** Japan in general, but especially Ise. She also has thousands of other shrines throughout Japan. Amaterasu is the local deity of Tokyo's Nishi-Waseda district.

**Sacred days:** 17 July and the Winter Solstice, when the sun begins to wax

**Tree:** Cryptomeria

**Flower:** Chrysanthemum

**Animal:** Horse

**See also:** *Amatsumara; Awashima; Izanagi; Izanami; Kami; Lady Horse head; Susano'o; Tsukiyomi; Ukemochi; Uzume*

## **Amatsumara**

**Origin:** Japan

**Classification:** Kami

Uzume didn't lure Amaterasu out of her cave alone; she had help. The mirror used to entrance Amaterasu didn't appear out of thin air, nor was it an ordinary mirror.

It was crafted by celestial kami smiths, including Amatsumara. Without him, the world might still be in darkness.



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*Amatsumara means “eye divination,” an indication of the sacred function traditionally played by mirrors. His other, longer name, Amenomahitotsu no kami, literally means “the one-eyed celestial iron-working kami,” reminiscent of those other smith spirits, the Cyclopes.*

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Amatsumara, an iron-working smith kami, refined the iron used for making mirrors. Together with kami Ishikoridome, he forged the sacred mirror that lured Amaterasu from her cave. They are ancestral kami of smith and mirror-working clans.

**Favored people:** Iron workers, metal smiths, mirror makers, and diviners

**See also:** *Amaterasu; Kajishin; Kami; Uzume*

## **Amatsu-Mikaboshi**

*August Star of Heaven*

**Also known as:** Ama-no-Kagaseo

Amatsu-Mikaboshi is often described as the Japanese “god of evil,” implying that he is a Satanic figure, but that is imprecise. Shinto has no “Satan,” and Amatsu-Mikaboshi is neither a “god” nor “evil”; instead, he is a primordial force that existed before this world was formed.

Amatsu-Mikaboshi is a nebulous presence, and attempts to explain who or what he is are no less nebulous. At some point, he may have been the only force in the world: Amatsu-Mikaboshi may be the primordial great void. He ruled the universe, if only because nothing else existed. Somehow during creation of the modern universe, his power was broken but never completely disappeared. Instead, his aura or residue remains.

An alternative myth suggests that Amatsu-Mikaboshi was one of the imperfect children discarded by Izanami and Izanagi. Either way,

Amatsu-Mikaboshi is *in* the world but not *of* the world. He has no clear, official part or function to play. He doesn't even have a corporal form in which to manifest. He is a bitter, coldly angry, disenfranchised presence. He has no shrines and is not of much relevance to the average person (although his name appears in many comic books and role-playing games, where he is usually cast as a villain). He is an esoteric, abstract presence in the universe rather than a spirit with whom one can communicate directly. He may be the spirit of the most distant heavens: the celestial void or abyss.

Shinto is a spiritual system that values harmony. Amatsu-Mikaboshi is associated with lingering energies and emotions, especially excessive ones that destroy harmony or create imbalance in the world (as, in essence, he does). He doesn't necessarily share or incite these emotions: instead intense, uncontrolled emotions are perceived as sharing his essence. They are magnetically attracted to Amatsu-Mikaboshi, as he is to them, because they are made of the same stuff and potentially have the same effect: destructive disharmony. Thus excessive anger, envy, even love, which potentially leads to unhealthy obsessions, is perceived as belonging to Amatsu-Mikaboshi and expressing his essence. In later Buddhist perspective, this excess emotion was perceived as "sin"; hence Amatsu-Mikaboshi developed a reputation as Master of Sinners. He may or may not be associated with Yomi, a Shinto death realm.

One theory suggests that Amatsu-Mikaboshi, a single, all-encompassing power, was broken and dispersed by the introduction of yin and yang forces into the universe (in Japanese: *in* and *yo*). *Onmyoji* (practitioners of a Japanese shamanic magical tradition) are masters of yin-yang and have sought to harness the power of Amatsu-Mikaboshi, possibly giving him a corporal form. In this form, he may be known as Ama-no-Kagaseo, the Brilliant Male.

**See also:** *Izanagi*; *Izanami*

## Amberella

**Origin:** Baltic

The beautiful princess Amberella fell in love with the Prince of the Sea and joined him in his underwater palace, abandoning human life for immortality. Sometimes she misses her old life, though, and has regrets. When she does, she sends gifts to those she left behind: pieces of amber.

Alternative versions of her myth are less happy. One version suggests that she was no human princess but the daughter of Perkunas, the Thunder Lord. He did not approve of her eloping with a sea spirit and sent a thunderbolt crashing down, destroying the prince's castle, constructed from amber. Bits of that palace are still washing ashore.

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*Although amber is the product of trees, because it was often found tossed up by waves, it was associated with the sea. Amber is the vehicle with which to communicate with Amberella. She is a completely benevolent spirit and may be requested to assist with love (especially forbidden love), fertility, pregnancy, and relief from poverty.*

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In another legend, Amberella is no princess at all but the beautiful daughter of a poor fisherman, abducted by the Prince of the Sea. When she begs to see her family one last time, he carries her up to the surface of the waters but will not permit her to come closer. All she can do is throw pieces of precious amber to shore to demonstrate her love. Now, whenever her husband causes tempestuous, destructive waves, she signals her compassion and sympathy through gifts of amber.

Amber is considered magically beneficial during pregnancy. Place amber jewelry on an altar dedicated to Amberella, requesting her blessings before you wear it.

**Manifestation:** Beautiful Amberella may have legs or a mermaid's tail. She wears an amber crown and is bedecked with amber jewelry

**Altar:** Decorate her altar with sea treasures (shells, sea glass, small stones), as well as images of mermaids and sea creatures. Add amber to personalize it for her.

**See also:** *Ausriné; Mermaid; Perkunas*

## **Amentat**

*Lady of the West*

**Also known as:** Ament; Amentit; Imentet; Imentit

**Origin:** Egypt or Libya

Amentat is the friendly spirit who welcomes dead souls to the ancient Egyptian realm of the dead, Amenty, the Western Land. She may or may not be a path of Hathor. She may be a spirit whose veneration and identity were eventually absorbed by Hathor. She may or may not be identical with Amunet. Amentat resides in a tree on the edge of the desert from whence she can guard and observe the gates to Amenty.

She is invoked for a peaceful death and for assistance in the afterlife.

**Iconography:** Amentat wears the hieroglyph indicating “west” on her head. She may have wings. Her image appears frequently on ancient Egyptian tombs and sarcophagi.

**Attributes:** A scepter and an ankh (symbolic of life, because in Egyptian cosmology life continued after death, at least for those who passed the final judgment)

**Bird:** Hawk

**Spirit allies:** Isis and Nephthys

**See also:** *Amunet; Hathor*

## **Amida Buddha**

**Classification:** Buddha; Bosatsu

Is belief enough for salvation? The answer is affirmative, according to Amida Buddha. *Amida* is the Japanese name for *Amitabha*, who vowed to save—without exception!—even the lowest, most perverse, wicked

person. Amida Buddha rescues souls and brings them to Pure Land, the Western Paradise over which he presides. Calling the name of Amida Buddha in trust and devotion, especially at the moment of death, allegedly *guarantees* salvation and passage to the Pure Land. Amida heads an entourage of angels, spirits, and Bodhisattvas to welcome believers to the Western Paradise.

Amitabha is the focus of what is known as Pure Land Buddhism. The belief that repetitive recitations of his name enables humans to reach the Pure Land after death (as opposed to going to Hell or another less desirable realm) was first documented in China in approximately the fourth century CE.

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*Mountains are sacred in many spiritual traditions. In Japan, it was believed that performing rituals in the mountains enabled one to attain great magical and spiritual powers. Practitioners of this belief became known as yamabushi (mountain priests). Eventually they developed an organized, structured religion whose formal doctrine derives largely from esoteric Buddhism, especially Pure Land.*

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Although the tradition exists throughout the Buddhist world, it evolved differently and controversially in Japan. Buddhist Pure Land tradition mingled and merged with traditional shamanism and Shinto to form an esoteric tradition called Nembutsu.

Nembutsu evolved into a system by which one could not only save one's own soul but could also send malevolent spirits and angry ghosts to Pure Land, purifying them and effectively banishing them in a kindly manner. Through magic and prayer, dangerous spirits and ghosts werenot only banished and exorcised but *saved* and sent to a better place, Amida's Pure Land.

Women's traditional strong leadership roles in shamanism and Shinto were incorporated into Nembutsu, which was initially served not only by male priests but also by itinerant, mendicant priestesses called *utabikuni*

(singing nuns). During later crackdowns on Nembutsu, their spiritual associations were denied. Many became secular singers; others were gradually forced into prostitution; and the name *utabikuni* is now often used derisively.

**Favored people:** Theoretically everyone, but Amida is also the special guardian of those born in the Chinese Years of the Dog and Pig.

**Direction:** Northwest

**Color:** Red

**Chant:** Chant Amida's invocation or post the words (ideally in Sanskrit or Japanese, depending on tradition, but Amida is so kind that English may be sufficient, too) to protect against ghosts and evil spirits. Chant just before death to enter the Western Paradise: *Namu Amida Butsu* ("Hail Amida Buddha").

**See also:** *Akiba-Sanjukubo; Bosatsu; Buddha; Bud dha Amitabha; Ksitigarbha; Tengu*

## Ammit

*The Eater; Devourer of the Dead; Eater of Hearts; Bone Eater; Devourer of Millions; Greatness of Death*

**Also known as:** Amit; Ammut

**Origin:** Egypt

The ancient Egyptians believed that after you died, your soul (or one of them) entered a divine hall of judgment, where your past deeds were examined and your heart was weighed. If you were found worthy, you entered the Western Paradise. If you failed the tests, Ammit ate you and your life was forever terminated: no eternal paradise for you.

Ammit sits beneath the Scales of Justice like a dog waiting for food to fall from the table. (Although usually depicted with a crocodile head, sometimes Ammit sports a canine head.) Those whom the infernal court finds lacking are promptly fed to Ammit. She is a neutral spirit: she does

her job, eating, processing, and eliminating wickedness (or just lack of goodness) from the universe. She bears no grudge against anyone; she just wants to eat. There is no point in petitioning her or attempting to make deals (but the Egyptian Book of the Dead does contain spells that protect against her). She holds her position precisely because she is resistant to appeals.

**Manifestation:** Ammit bears a striking physical resemblance to Taweret.

**Animals:** Hippopotamus; crocodile

**See also:** *Ma'at; Osiris; Taweret*

## Ammon

*The Hidden One; Lord of the Libyans; Lord of the Setting Sun and Moon; The Time Lord; Earth Father; Giver of Breath; Giver of Life; Vizier of the Humble Who Answers the Voice of the Poor*

**Also known as:** Amon; Amun; Amen; Amoun

**Origin:** Egypt, Libya, and Nubia vie to claim him

Ammon is Lord of the West: literally speaking, that means Libya, which lies on Egypt's western border, but from the perspective of ancient Egyptian cosmology, *west* indicates night because the sun sets in the west, as well as the realm of Death. Thus, Ammon controls the gates to the realms of night. He is the Double Lion of Truth ("doublelions" indicate "yesterday" and "tomorrow").

Ammon was among the preeminent deities of ancient Egypt, a state-sponsored god. Pharaohs ruled by his grace. Hatshepsut claimed Ammon was her actual physical father (he had visited her mother), hence bestowing on her the right to rule. Her successor insisted that Ammon supported his royal claim instead.

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*When Ammon came into being, nothing existed but him. He is self-generated:*

*he gave birth to himself. He is the Time Lord. He is an oracular spirit because he controls time: past and future.*

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Ammon's most famous oracle was at the Oasis of Siwa (variously in Egypt or Libya, depending on politics), known as early as 7,000 BCE. When Alexander the Great arrived in Egypt in 331 BCE, among his first stops was Ammon's Oracle to seek sacred confirmation of his title of King of Egypt. The oracle declared him to be of divine origin, pleasing and comforting Alexander immensely. Alexander never revealed the full prophecy he received but continually sent generous offerings to the shrine.

Ammon was so beloved, widely venerated, and influential for millennia that many different nations claimed him as their own. The general modern scholarly consensus is that he originated in Libya and may be an indigenous Berber (Amazigh) deity. However, he was adored in ancient Nubia: some suggest that as his origination point. The Phoenicians loved him, too. Clearly, Ammon was able to make himself at home among many cultures, philosophies, and peoples. He is an adaptable spirit, often seen in the company of other spirits.

There are two sides to Ammon; the father of pharaohs was also the deity of the masses:

- He protects the rights of the poor in courts of law.
- In his path of Ammon of the Roads, he protects travelers.
- He is the deity of oases, both literal and metaphoric.
- Ammon provides sweetness, safety, and abundance amidst danger and deprivation.

**Manifestations:** A man, a ram, or a man with a ram's head. He may also manifest in the form of any of his sacred creatures.

**Iconography:** As the official Egyptian state-deity, Ammon was depicted as a young prince wearing ostrich plumes and displaying a massive, erect phallus.

**Sacred sites:** Ammon had major temples in Luxor, Karnak (Thebes), and



Siwa. The oasis at Siwa (also known as Siouah or Suwa), dotted with bubbling saltwater wells and freshwater springs, straddles the threshold of Egypt and Libya. He also had shrines at other oases, including Bahariya Oasis, El-Kharga Oasis, and El-Dakhla Oasis. Ammon had temples throughout Nubia, but his home is at Jebel Barkal, the flat-topped sacred mountain between the third and fourth cataracts near Napata, north of modern Khartoum.

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*Ammon was the presiding spirit of one of ancient Egypt's most beloved holidays, "The Beautiful Feast of the Valley." Celebrated with dancing and picnicking among tombs, this holiday was an annual reunion of the living, the dead, and the spirits who watch over them. It was celebrated during the Egyptian lunar month of Shomu, preceding the Nile inundation.*

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**Sacred animals:** Ram, goose, bull, snake

**Color and gemstone:** Lapis lazuli

**Spirit allies:** Ammon is the chief deity of the Theban Triad, along with Mut and Khonsu. In Nubia his image stood alongside Amentat, Apedemak, Arensnuphis, Bes, Horus, Isis, Khonsu, Mut, Tefnut, Thoth, Satis, and Sebiuwerker.

**Elements:** Water, earth, air (wind, breath)

**Offerings:** Incense; offer him one of the several perfumes named in his honor.

## **Amonet**

*The Mother Who Is Father*

**Also known as:** Amunet; Amaunet; Ament; Imentet; Amentat

One spirit emerged in the primordial past incorporating both male and

female genders. Eventually it split into two, with Ammon as the male spirit and Amonet as the female. She is usually described as his “female counterpart,” but he could just as easily be described as her “male counterpart.” Amonet possesses the same powers as Ammon.

**Manifestations:** A snake-headed woman, a cobra

**See also:** *Amentat; Ammon; Mut*

## **Amphitrite**

*Loud Moaning*

**Origin:** Greek

The great goddess Amphitrite is the mistress and owner of the Mediterranean. Poseidon saw her dancing with the Nereids on the isle of Naxos and raped her. He then wanted to marry her, making the relationship permanent. She fled to the western end of her territory, allegedly taking shelter with Atlas or Oceanus, who may be her father.

Delphin, a dolphin spirit, spied on her, revealing her hiding place to Poseidon, who begged her to marry him. Ultimately it was the dolphin who persuaded her to emerge. As her consort, Poseidon is King of the Sea. Their marriage is ambivalent. Like Zeus, Poseidon is perpetually unfaithful. Unlike Hera, Amphitrite takes this in stride. (In many ways, Amphitrite is the watery counterpart of Hera. Crabs are sacred to both goddesses.) Amphitrite does not spend much time on Olympus, preferring to stay in her own realm.

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*Petition Amphitrite for safety on the sea, prosperity, abundance, and true love. She has powers of healing and fertility and access to all the treasures of the sea. She may be invoked to punish unfaithful and/or abusive spouses as well as rapists.*

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**Manifestation:** A beautiful woman with an elaborate hairdo. She may wear a hairnet and lavish jewelry (As befitting someone who spends most of her time in water, she doesn't usually wear a lot of clothes.) She may sport horns in the form of crab claws and/or wear a crab headdress.

**Iconography:** Amphitrite often holds one hand in a pinching gesture, like a crab.

**Attribute:** Golden spindle

**Realm:** Amphitrite lives in a golden palace at the bottom of the sea.

**Sacred animals:** Technically all sea creatures but especially crustaceans, fish, seals, and dolphins; a crab serves as her messenger.

**Number:** 3

**See also:** *Amymone; Ariadne; Atlas; Delphin; Hera; Nereid; Oceanus; Poseidon; Scylla; Triton; Zeus*

## Amymone

**Origin:** Greece

**Classification:** Naiad; Nymph

There are two different versions of Amy mone's story, or possibly two different myths about someone named Amymone who may or may not be the same. In both cases she is credited with receiving the sacred springs of Lerna as a gift from Poseidon.

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*This Amymone may or may not be the same Amymone who was the only one of Danaus' fifty daughters not to kill her husband and who also allegedly received the Lernaean Springs from Poseidon. Amymone, as well as some of the Danaids, were venerated in the region.*

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According to what may be a pre-Olympian myth, Poseidon once ruled the Argolis region of southern Greece together with Demeter and Persephone. When rulership was given to Hera, Poseidon stormed off in a huff, taking all the freshwater with him: all the local springs dried up. He lurked in the region, keeping his eye on things.

What eventually caught his eye was the beautiful Nymph Amymone. When a satyr attempted to assault her, Poseidon intervened and rescued her. Perhaps somewhat out of character, he did not continue the assault himself but instead wooed her with the promise of springs. She succumbed to his charms, and he revealed the hidden springs of Lerna in which she now resides. An entrance to Hades may be found at Lerna, once the site of Demeter's Lernaean Mysteries.

**Iconography:** Romantic images of Poseidon and Amymone are a popular motif on ancient Greek vase paintings.

**Attribute:** A pitcher

**See also:** *Amphitrite; Demeter; Hades; Hydra; Persephone; Poseidon*

## Ana

**Classification:** Keshalyi; Fairy

**Origin:** Romani (Gypsy)

Ana is the beautiful, kind, generous, benevolent Queen of the Keshalyi. (See also: *Keshalyi*.) She lived happily in a fabulous castle in her Transylvanian mountain paradise until the King of Demons fell in love with her. (These aren't Christian "demons," but malevolent spirits called *Loçolico* in Romani.) She spurned his advances and marriage proposal until the king and his evil horde stormed her palace and began literally devouring her Fairy entourage. To spare the rest, she agreed to be his bride.

A goddess of fertility, Ana is marvelously fertile herself. Unwillingly, she conceived, over and over again. The fruits of her union with the King of Demons are horrific disease spirits. A lengthy horror story/fairy tale cycle recounts each pregnancy, naming the child and the diseases it

causes. (Details found in individual entries.)

Utterly horrified and in despair following the births of her ten children, Ana finally convinced the King of Demons to liberate her. In exchange, she agreed that whenever a Keshalyi reaches 999 years of age, she will marry one of his Loçolico. Consumed with remorse and shame, utterly degraded, Ana now hides within her palace, only occasionally venturing out and only in the form of a golden toad. However, if encountered, recognized, and approached with veneration and gentle, good manners, Ana can fulfill *any* wish. She bestows fertility to even the most infertile and can heal *any* illness, including those caused by her children.

**Realm:** Her castle is in the Carpathian Mountains.

**See also:**

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*Bitoso; Keshalyi; Lilyi; Loçolico; Lolmischo; Melalo; Tçulo* The saga of Ana and the King of Demons is the history of the introduction of disease. However, the detailed saga is also used by shamans and Fairy magicians for diagnostic purposes and to affect magical cures via negotiation and control of the spirits.

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## Anacaona

### *The Golden Flower*

**Also known as:** Anakaona

**Origin:** Taino

When Columbus arrived in the Western Hemisphere in 1492, the island now called Hispaniola, encompassing modern Haiti and the Dominican Republic, was inhabited by the Taino. It was divided into five departments or kingdoms, each ruled by its own king, or *cacique*. Anacaona was a Taino queen born in Yaguana (now Léogâne, Haiti), capital of Xaragua, the most densely populated and prosperous Taino

kingdom.

Her brother was Béhéchio, King of Xaragua. Her husband, Caonabo, King of Maguana (now San Juan de la Maguana in the Dominican Republic), was kidnapped by Columbus' soldiers along with other Taino leaders and shipped off to Spain in 1493, but he never arrived. According to legend, the Tainos sank their ship as an act of resistance.

After her husband was abducted, Anacaona returned to Xaragua. She was a strong, charismatic leader; her brother apparently deferred to her. She ruled as a queen. When a new Spanish governor, Nicholas Ovandó, arrived with approximately 2,500 troops in 1502, Xaragua was the only unconquered Taino kingdom left on Hispaniola.

Ovandó requested a meeting with Anacaona. She prepared a reception for him and his entourage. It was a trap: during the reception, Ovandó gave a signal and his men attacked. Eighty Taino leaders were killed. Although initially spared, Anacaona was eventually captured and tortured. In September 1503, she was brought to Santo Domingo and hung, with her body left exposed as a message to her people.

In happier times, Anacaona composed songs and narrative poems and is herself the subject of a romantic poem by Alfred Lord Tennyson. She is considered the spirit of indigenous resistance to invasion and may be petitioned as such.

Anacaona may lie beneath the mask of the Metresa, Anaisa Pyé.

**See also:** *Anaisa Pyé*

## **Anahita**

*Without Blemish; The High Powerful Immaculate One; The Strong Undefined Waters; Bearer of Roses*

**Also known as:** Anahit (Armenian); Anai tis (Greek); Anakhita (Turkish)

**Origin:** Persian (Iran)

**Classification:** A goddess in ancient Iran and Armenia; modern Zoroastrianism considers her a Yazata.

Anahita, goddess of fertility and war, has dominion over all liquids including seminal, vaginal, and amniotic fluids. She purifies and strengthens sperm, empowers the womb, and bestows ample milk supply. Anahita is unusual as she is specifically invoked to heal male reproductive disorders, a condition the ancient world typically didn't acknowledge: infertility was usually perceived as stemming solely from women.

She was once very widely venerated: Artaxerxes II built shrines for her in Babylon, Baktra (Balkh), Ekbatana (near modern Tehran), Persepolis, Sardes, and Susa. In Armenia, she was called Anahit and Vardavar: Bearer of Roses. Young noble women engaged in sacred sexual rites prior to their marriages at Anahita's shrine at Erez in Akilisene.

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*Anahita is the sole significant Zoroastrian goddess. An entire chapter (Yasht V) of the sacred text the Avesta is devoted to her. It is Anahita who teaches Zarathustra to fight for justice and how to perform sacrifices.*

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- Anahita is petitioned for victory in battle.
- She presides over successful breastfeeding and fertility, and she heals reproductive disorders.
- References to *Persian Artemis* or *Persian Diana* almost invariably indicate Anahita.

**Manifestation:** A tall, powerful, beautiful maiden, wrapped in a gold embroidered cloak, adorned with earrings, a necklace, and a gold crown. She wears thirty otter skins.

**Iconography:** Romans absconded with the solid gold votive statue of Anahita at Erez.

**Mount:** Her chariot is pulled by four white horses named Wind, Rain, Cloud, and Hail.

**Birds:** Dove, peacock

**Element:** Water; Anahita rules rivers and lakes.

**Metal:** Gold

**Flowers:** Roses, tulips

**Planet:** Venus. The ancient Iranians considered her the personification of that planet.

**Time:** Armenians timed her feast to coincide with the blooming of roses.

**Place:** *Athor Anahta* (Anahita's Throne), a mountain in Sophene (an ancient Armenian kingdom, located in what is now southeastern Turkey) is among her homes.

**Altar:** Decorate with vessels of spring water, living green plants, and white roses.

**Offerings:** She is a particularly watery spirit, concerned with cleansing and purifying sources of water. Your efforts on behalf of protection and preservation of fresh water sources should be appreciated. In the meantime, give her white or gold roses and tulips.

**See also:** *Artemis; Astghik; Diana; Yazata*

## Anaïs

**Origin:** Haiti

**Classification:** Lwa

Among Vodouistes, the image of the Black Madonna of Czestochowa is understood to portray the lwa Ezili Dantor. If the Madonna is Ezili, then who is the baby in her arms? That baby is Anaïs, Ezili Dantor's beloved daughter. Ezili lives, breathes, and, crucially, works for Anaïs. Just as they appear together in the image, so the two spirits may be venerated together and will happily share altar space. Propitiate Anaïs in order to get into Ezili's good graces.

Anaïs serves as her mother's mediator. Those who seek Ezili may address themselves to Anaïs requesting that she please deliver their



messages to her mother. Give both lwa their own offerings. Anaïs is her mother's translator and interpreter. According to some myths, Ezili can no longer speak, her tongue having been sliced out after the Haitian Revolution. She is only able to articulate sounds. Anaïs understands her mother perfectly and can provide communication services. Invoke Anaïs if you are having a hard time communicating with Ezili Dantor.

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*Ezili Dantor may also have other children, possibly as many as seven; however, Anaïs is the only consistent child. She, not any other of Ezili's children, is identified as the child accompanying the Madonna in the icon of Czestochowa.*

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**Manifestation:** Anaïs appears as a child or a young woman.

**Iconography:** The image identified as the Christ Child in the icon of Czestochowa may be understood to represent Anaïs. (For those wishing to avoid Christian iconography, there are also many depictions of Ezili and Anaïs by modern Haitian artists.)

**Offerings:** Pineapples; piña coladas; Anaïs-Anaïs cologne (Ezili Freda's favorite)

**See also:** *Anaisa Pyé; Black Madonna of Czestochowa; Ezili Dantor; Ezili Freda Dahomey; Lwa*

**Anaisa Pyé**

*Queen of Love*

**Classification:** Lwa; Metresa

**Origin:** Dominican Republic

Anaisa Pyé is among the most beloved of the spirits of the Twenty-One Divisions, a beautiful, laughing, joyous, flirtatious spirit of love.

Although she and Anaïs (see above) may originate in the same spirit, they are different paths who manifest and behave very differently. (Some consider them to be completely independent spirits.)

- Anaisa Pyé may be a Dominican or Gaga variant of Ezili Danto or her daughter, Anaïs. (Gaga is a Vodou-derived spiritual tradition brought by Haitian sugar-cane workers to the Dominican Republic where it further evolved and transformed.)
- Anaisa Pyé may be an avatar of Taino Queen Anacaona.
- Anaisa Pyé has seven paths: in her Indian path, she is called Anacaona.

Although Anaisa may be identified with Ezili Danto or her daughter, she is not identified with the Black Madonna of Czestochowa. Instead she is closely identified with the votive image of Saint Anne with her small daughter, the future Virgin Mary. Anaisa is officially syncretized to Saint Anne, but it's the small girl in the picture (sometimes called "Little Anne") with whom she's really identified. According to myth, Anaisa, Ezili's daughter, was sent to convent school at age three where she was raised by strict nuns. She rebelled at age thirteen, leaving the convent. (This echoes Mary's presentation at the temple at age three and marriage at age thirteen.)

Anaisa Pyé is a jealous Metresa who demands total devotion. She resembles a jealous, possessive lover. Make that a dangerous, jealous, possessive lover: you can never leave or abandon her. Anaisa Pyé is an exceptionally generous, responsive spirit with a tremendous number of devotees. She has the capacity to serve many people, but don't start with her unless you are willing to totally commit to her. She takes disinterest from former devotees *very* personally.

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*Communicate with Anaisa via perfume. She frequently signals her presence via fragrance. Consecrate a bottle of perfume to her—buy a bottle for her altar and a matching one for yourself to wear when you wish to invoke or communicate with her.*

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In general, she is more willing to share altar space with male spirits than with female. The feeling is mutual: it's best to keep her away from other female spirits under the assumption that she's openly flirted with all their husbands. She has a particularly tense relationship with Metresili (echoing the rivalry between Ezili Freda and Ezili Dantor). Snake spirit Lubana, with whom she works closely, is the exception.

Anaisa prefers men but serves women. She heals female reproductive disorders. Devotees petition her for enhanced beauty, sensuality, and desirability. (Just being in Anaisa's presence on a consistent basis may result in these gifts. Simply making consistent—and continual—offerings to her may help even without any direct contact from her.) She is invoked for all domestic, romantic, and marital issues.

Invoke Anaisa Pyé by pouring beer into a champagne flute (or other fancy glass) and adding seven drops of Florida Water or other perfume.

**Feast:** 26 July (Feast of Saint Anne)

**Day:** Every day! Anaisa Pyé expects *total* around-the-clock devotion, none of this once-a-week stuff.

**Consort:** Belié Belcan. (Venerate them together by placing an image of Michael Archangel beside that of Saint Anne.)

**Element:** Water

**Colors:** Spectrum of yellow to gold. (She allegedly wears pink when she visits the cemetery; she would probably appreciate a pretty rose-gold.) Her colors aren't flat but shimmery, sparkling, radiant, and vivid.

**Number:** 7 (the number of days in the week)

**Altar:** Make sure it's beautiful. Light yellow candles and bring her lots of flowers.

**Offerings:** Champagne, beer served in an elegant champagne flute, sweets, delicate fruits like miniature bananas or champagne grapes, marzipan fruits, chocolate-dipped fruits, cigarettes; also jewelry, perfume, scented soaps and cosmetics

**See also:** *Anacaona; Anais; Belié Belcan; Black Madonna of Czestochowa;*

*Ezili Dantor; Ezili Freda Dahomey; Lubana; Lwa; Metresa; Metresili; Twenty-One Divisions; and the Glossary entries for Path and Syncretism*

## Ananke

### *Necessity*

**Also known as:** Anance; Anankei

**Origin:** Greece

Ananke, spirit of destiny, is the goddess of whatever is “necessary” and cannot be amended. In the context of Ananke, *necessary* refers to unalterable fate. It is not a synonym for “desirable” or for what one thinks one needs.

Her history and family background is mysterious and subject for debate. She might be the daughter of Kronos and Tyche. She might be the mother of the Fates (Moirae).

According to the Orphics, ancient devotees of the teachings of Orpheus, Ananke needs no parents: she is the self-generated primordial mother who emerged at the beginning of time. (See also: *Eurynome*.) A serpentine being, her first act was to embrace her male counterpart, a serpentine being the Orphics called Khronos, “Time,” who may or may not be the same spirit as the Titan Kronos. (Different spellings are used here to distinguish them.) Entwined, they resemble a strand of DNA. Together they form the world. Ananke and Khronos, forever entwined, are the driving force of the universe, controlling the fate of all living beings, including spirits.

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*In Plato’s Republic, a soldier, miraculously returned from the dead, describes what he saw in the afterlife: Ananke turns a spindle of diamonds while the Sirens sing in perfect harmony.*

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**Place:** Ananke once had a shrine on the Acropolis at Corinth.

**See also:** *Enki; Gaia; Khronos; Kronos; Moirae; Orpheus; Sirens; Titan;*

*Tyche; Zeus*

## **Anansi**

### *King of Stories*

**Also known as:** Nanzi; Nansi; Bro' Nansi; Brother Nansi; Mr. Nancy

**Origin:** Ashanti

Anansi, divine trickster and sacred spider, mediates between humans and spirits. He is a master of illusion and deception. Crucially, Anansi is the owner of stories.

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*Anansi stars in Neil Gaiman's 2006 novel, Anansi Boys, and steals the show in his 2001 novel, American Gods, where, as Mr. Nancy, he manifests as an elderly black man with a pencil mustache, lemon-yellow gloves, and a checked sport jacket.*

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In the Western Hemisphere, Anansi is the star of Anansi stories. Many are wickedly funny little fables. This may lend the impression that the little spider is a trivial deity, but nothing could be farther from the truth. Kweku Anansi, sacred clown, is the child of Asaase Yaa, the Earth, and Nyame, the Sky. He serves as their eyes and ears on Earth. Anansi is a water spider, serving his parents (and people) by bringing rain to stop destructive fires and determining the boundaries of flooding rivers and seas. In some myths, Anansi creates or hangs the sun, moon, and stars. In others, he teaches people all kinds of valuable survival information.

Beckon and propitiate Anansi by telling stories full of exciting twists and turns. If you are not yet a good storyteller, ask for his help. If you are a performance artist, stand-up comedian, or any kind of speaker who is not holding your audience in the palm of your hand, petition Anansi for assistance. He's the master. (Cultivate a sense of humor: he will take

you for a ride while providing instruction.)

**Favored people:** Storytellers; those who live by their wits

**Manifestations:** As a man, a spider, or anywhere in between. He can be any kind of spider he chooses, tiny or supernaturally large. (If you're scared of spiders, be warned: he may have some fun with your fears.) *Ananse* is the Ashanti word for "spider" and Anansi's identification with spiders is profound. Even if he appears as a man, look for some little arachnid sign: a tie tack, ring, or clothing motif, something.

**Consort:** Mrs. Nancy's name is Konori or Konoro, but in Jamaica, she's called "Crookie," possibly derived from the Hausa word for "female spider," *koki*.

**Day:** Wednesday

**Element:** Water

**Spirit ally:** Anansi's frequent companion (and occasional victim) is his son, Ntikuma (Jamaican spelling: *Tacooma*). The Ashanti proverb "No one tells stories to Ntikuma" describes someone who has heard it all.

**Offerings:** He likes treats, liquor, and cigarettes but should be entertained with stories, songs, and jokes, too. He won't stay where he's bored. (Alternatively, he'll liven up the atmosphere himself.) If you can't make them up, find clever jokes and stories and read them aloud.

**See also:** *Asaase Yaa; Aunt Nancy; Bori*

## Anat

*The Girl; Lady of Heaven; Mistress of All Spirits; Strength of Life; Lady of Mercy*

**Also known as:** Anath; Anta; maybe Astarte

**Origin:** Semitic

Anat, Queen of Heaven, Lady of Love and War, has dominion over love,

sex, war, battle, fertility, and maternity. She has dominion over death, too. She's the spirit who can slay the Grim Reaper. (She cleaves him with a sickle, maybe even his own.)

Her mythology survives via fourteenth-century BCE Ugaritic cuneiform tablets. (The Ugaritic people may or may not be the biblical Canaanites, but if not, they are very closely related.)

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*Anat is the lowest common spiritual denominator in what is now the Western reaches of the Middle East. She was venerated by ancient Amorites, Canaanites, Egyptians, Hebrews, Phoenicians, and Syrians. It is the ultimate irony to imagine that peace might theoretically be achieved in this spiritually and politically turbulent region if only everyone would once again venerate the war goddess Anat.*

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Calling Anat violent is like saying a tsunami is wet—a drastic understatement. Many of her myths involve Anat killing someone or something. She's so fierce, she actually kills Death after he messes with her brother. She personally grinds up Death's bones and scatters them to the winds. Anat muzzles sea monsters. She kills to the left and slays to the right. Don't get in her way when she's angry: like Ogun or Kali, once Anat's dander is up, she's almost impossible to stop.

Anat's name is contained in the word *anathema*. Her rage is never far from the surface. She has tremendous wells of frustration and anger and is easily provoked.

She is simultaneously a goddess of reproduction and war, life and death. Sex and violence in her myths are graphic, even by modern standards. Anat does not merely lead devotees into battle; she exults in gore and bloodshed, wading waist-deep in blood.

In Egypt, Anat was considered to be the Pharaoh's spiritual bodyguard. Pharaohs named their dogs after her to emphasize their ferocity. They named their racehorses after her, hoping to gain the goddess' favor and blessings because Anat doesn't lose.



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*Although some perceive Anat and Astarte as distinct goddesses, general consensus is that Astarte is a title for Anat, just as Ba'al is a title for her brother/lover, Hadd. (Astarte is the title; Anat is her proper name.) The ancient Egyptians, however, considered Anat and Astarte to be two separate, closely related spirits, possibly sisters. When two distinct spirits are recognized, then Astarte is milder than Anat. In the language of modern Vodou, Anat would be the Petro to Astarte's Rada.*

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She may be fierce and bloodthirsty, but Anat will go to hell and back for those she loves: nothing stands in her way. There is no obstacle that she cannot pulverize. She has proven that she can even beat death. Should you find yourself in trouble with any of the various Death spirits (Holy Death, Grim Reapers, and so forth), Anat has the help you need—if she chooses to give it. Anat is petitioned for courage and victory in combat, but she is also a goddess of fertility. Petition her to prevent miscarriage and stillbirth, as well as for general fertility.

### **Iconography:**

*Phoenicia:* Anat is depicted as a beautiful woman in a chariot drawn by seven lions. She wears a crown of myrtle leaves and is accompanied by doves. Both Phoenicians and Hebrews depict her with cow horns and a Hathor-style hairdo.

*Syria:* Anat is depicted as a cow.

*Egypt:* Anat is depicted as a naked woman riding bareback, brandishing weapons or robed in flames, armed with a sword and bow. She may wear a belt of severed hands. She is often portrayed caressing or blessing a young child with her left hand.

**Attributes:** Battle shield; frame drum; sickle; bow and arrows; sword

**Parents:** Asherah and El, according to Ugaritic myth

**Consorts:** This depends on tradition: Baal (Ugaritic); Set (Egyptian); YHWH (Jewish)

**Sacred animals:** Cows, doves, deer, dogs, dolphins, gazelle, horses, lions, vultures

**Trees:** Acacia, myrtle

**Planets:** Moon, Venus. She personifies Venus as the morning and evening star. In the daytime, Anat leads her followers to war. At night she inspires them sexually.

**Petitions:** Anat loves gambling passionately and may attempt to cajole you into a game. *Never* gamble with her. Ever. Not even in dreams. She never loses. Ever.

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*Anat plays a frame drum and can be communicated with through drumming.*

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**Offerings:** Call Anat with the fragrance of coriander. She likes weapons. Give her hand-shaped Milagros. (See the Glossary entry for Milagros.) She accepts offerings of sweet baked goods, like cookies or small cakes, particularly if you make them yourself. Create them in her image, in the image of her attributes or a lunar shape. She likes statues of herself. Ancient devotees decorated her image with rouge and henna as a substitute for blood, adorning their own hands and feet with henna in her honor. Make sure to give her constant, ongoing respect, loyalty, and devotion. She is a hot-tempered, insecure, albeit extremely loyal spirit; you will have to reassure her of your devotion on a regular basis.

**See also:** *Anat-Bethel; Anat-Yaho; Asherah; Astarte; Ba'al; Petro; Rada*

## **Anat-Bethel**

**Origin:** Jewish

Anat was venerated side-by-side with YHWH. In this path she is known as Anat-Bethel. It is unclear whether the epithet *Bethel* specifically relates to that ancient holy city whose name literally means “House of

El” or “House of the Lord.” Anat and YHWH were venerated together in Bethel but also shared temples in Egypt (Hermopolis, Memphis) and so were not tied exclusively to one location. It is possible that Anat *is* the House of El in the same manner that Hathor *is* the House of Horus (a metaphor meaning “Womb of Horus”). This may indicate that the female deity’s womb is reserved for the seed of the male deity or that she is his mother, depending on interpretation. The term *Bethel* was used by Phoenicians in North Africa to refer to megalithic sites, including those incorporating burial mounds.

**See also:** *Anat; Anat-Yaho; Astarte; Hathor; Horus; Tanit*

## Anat-Yaho

**Origin:** Jewish

Anat-Yaho is a path of Anat as the consort of Yaho, among the public names of the Jewish Supreme Creator. (YHWH is related, but not the same name. Yaho is not the ineffable name.) They shared temples in Egypt, particularly in Elephantine Island where there was a large Jewish military outpost in the fifth century BCE.

Anat-Yaho may be identical to Anat-Bethel, or they may be understood as distinct paths of Anat. (See the Glossary entry for Path.) Although in the context of modern, conventional Judaism, many may consider talk of Anat as God’s consort controversial or subversive, it is worth noting that the Jewish temple in Egypt, in which they were openly and very publicly venerated together, paid dues to the main Temple in Jerusalem—and those dues were accepted! (Ancient records survive.)

**See also:** *Anat; Anat-Bethel; Asherah, Lady of the Sea; Hochma*

## Ancestors

Dead relatives serve as guardians and intercessors, watching out for you from beyond the grave. Personal ancestral spirits may be the most accessible of all spirits. They are your ancestors; they have their eyes on you; they are easily invoked. Ancestral spirits are dependent on you:

ancestors do not exist without descendants. This makes them simultaneously extremely receptive and helpful (and they're your family: they love you), but also dangerous and demanding (they're your family, your elders: they feel entitled to boss you around). The concept of the ancestral spirit exists around the world and in virtually all cultures and spiritual traditions. If you lack your own personal traditions, others are easily adapted.

Essentially the dead are not really "dead": they've just transitioned to new homes and new forms, but their souls still require nourishment, love, and attention. Lacking this, spirits of the dead become hungry, angry, and destructive. It is crucial to keep the spirits of the dead appeased.

- Happy, honored, well-fed deceased family members serve as helpful, benevolent protectors.
- Hungry, ignored deceased family members transform into dangerous ghosts.

Ancestors who feel neglected may signal their frustration and unhappiness by causing misfortune if only because, cynically but possibly accurately, they believe that if things are not going well, you'll remember them and give them offerings in exchange for their help.

Ancestors are your specific lineage or extremely close relatives. Thus a beloved aunt, uncle, or cousin is considered an ancestor, even if not literally so. However, there must be some *blood* connection. Random people you respect, close family friends, godparents, saints, or anyone else may be venerated or serve as your spiritual guardians, but they are not, by definition, ancestors.

Even if ancestors were not overly helpful while living, in death they are dependent upon you and may be deeply invested in your success: their suffering was not in vain if you succeed and thrive. They live through you and wish the best for you although you may have to let them know what is best and where their help is needed. In return, they wish to be remembered, loved, venerated, fed, and cared for on a regular basis.

To which ancestors do you appeal? Whichever ones you prefer or those for whom you feel the closest bonds. Your actual descent, your

DNA if you will, goes back to the dawn of human time. If you are alive, then you are the product of a long chain of ancestors who all lived long enough to reproduce: no mean feat considering the global history of illness, infant mortality, warfare, and natural disasters. If you are not comfortable with your immediate ancestors, then go back further. It is not necessary for you to know who they actually were, nor do you need to know their names. Visualize them hovering near, waiting to be honored and put to work. Ask them to identify themselves in dreams and visualizations.

**Amulets:** Ancestors—or what’s left of them— may be incorporated into protective amulets. Some believe that a small quantity of one’s parents’ ashes, bones, or teeth, taken from their cremation, will bestow protection. Alternatively, dirt or small stones taken from their gravesite may have the same effect.

**Place:** Ancestors are with you always. It is customary to maintain home altars for them. However, it is also traditional to visit them at graves (if known): keep the grave clean, bring flowers and gifts, and picnic among the tombs (in essence, go to *their* house for a change, instead of always expecting them to visit you).

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*It is traditional in many cultures to allow the dead to have a grace period, usually a year, to adjust to their new status (and “life”) as a dead soul before making requests for assistance.*

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**Days:** Any date of personal significance: their birthday or anniversary of death. Ancestors may be particularly receptive on your birthday or days that are significant to your particular family. If being together on Christmas or New Year’s was extremely important while relatives were alive, they may return (or be beckoned closer) on that day. Alternatively, virtually every culture has (or had) days specifically devoted to commemorating the dead:

- The Romans celebrated the Paternalia, a private holiday when families

honored their personal dead. Paternalia occurred just before the Feralia: a public holiday intended to appease, pacify, and allay *all* the dead.

- The Catholic Church designates All Souls Day (2 November) as the day on which souls of the dead are recalled.
- The most accessible modern commemoration of the dead is the Mexican Day of the Dead festival coinciding with All Souls Day (but often a complex, days-long festival).

**Altar:** The Spiritist *mesa blanca* (white table) may be adapted to honor ancestors. Alternatively, any kind of altar or offering table may be used. Include photographs of relatives if you have them or objects symbolizing those relations for you instead. (See the Glossary entry for Altar for details and instructions.)

**Flowers:** Specific flowers, such as chrysanthemums, are associated with the dead and are considered appropriate offerings. In Mexico, marigolds (*Tagetes* species; not *Calendula*; in Nahuatl: *cempazuchitl*) are the Flowers of the Dead. In Romania, the fall-blooming crocus (*Crocus banaticus*) fulfills this function. Interestingly, the center of this crocus is a vivid yellow, similar in color to Aztec marigolds. In Japan, red spider lilies (*Lycoris spp.*) are associated with death, funerals, cemeteries, and the loss of loved ones.

**Offerings:** The most basic Western offering (Spiritualist or occultist) is a glass of water and a white candle. The most basic East Asian or Buddhist offering includes flowers, fruit, and incense. More elaborate offerings will also be appreciated: serve the ancestors food they like, a food representative of your ancestry and their time on Earth. If that isn't possible, offer them something that you love and consider special.

## Andraste

**Origin:** Celtic

Andraste is invoked for courage, luck, safety, and victory in battle. Her name may mean “invincible,” “unconquerable,” or “victory.” She is the

goddess invoked by Boudica, the British warrior queen during her rebellion against Rome in 60 CE. Because of this rebellion, information survives regarding Andraste—albeit from the pens of Romans, enemies of her devotees.

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*Dio Cassius was a biased reporter born long after Boudica's revolt. It's difficult to judge the accuracy of his statement: it is not even clear whether he means Andraste's rites were truly similar to the Dionysian spiritual traditions of actual Maenads or if the word Maenad had degenerated into an insult word, signifying nothing but wild, bloodthirsty women.*

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Roman historian Dio Cassius (born circa 160 CE, died after 229, the publication date of his last book) spent over twenty-two years researching an eighty-volume history of Rome. He wrote that Boudica ritually released a hare to invoke Andraste when initiating her military campaigns. Dio Cassius describes the rites of Andraste as resembling those of Maenads, the female devotees of Dionysus. He did not intend this as a compliment. The comparison was given in the context of describing Boudica's massacre of Roman women in London.

Dio Cassius writes that following the sack of London, Boudica's female prisoners were sacrificed in Andraste's grove: victims' breasts were cut off and stuffed into their mouths before they were vertically impaled on great skewers. (What happened to male prisoners—if there were any—is unclear.) Roman senator and historian Tacitus (circa 56 CE—circa 117 CE), who lived closer to Boudica's time, also describes the scene but not in terms of sacrifices to Andraste. He suggests that Boudica and company were already aware of their fate and eventual defeat and so were exacting revenge in advance. The Romans identified the goddess Andraste with their own goddess, Victoria.

**Place:** The only thing truly known about Andraste's rites is that she was venerated in a grove. If you seek her, this is the place to start.

**See also:** *Dionysus; Nike; Victoria*

## **Andvari**

**Origin:** Norse

**Classification:** Dwarf

Andvari loves treasure. In the past, he didn't need to forge it because he could find or even produce it with his magic ring, Andvaranaut (literally "Andvari's Gift"). This golden ring can locate gold and possibly generate it. It was the prize of Andvari's collection, and his collection was *amazing*, featuring various magical armors, weapons, and items of unspeakable value. You may notice that sentence was written in the past tense because Andvari's treasure was stolen by Loki, who needed to pay a ransom demand. (See also: *Loki*.)

Andvari was initially not that upset about losing his hoard assuming that he could regenerate it with his ring. However, when Loki forced him to surrender the ring, too, Andvari was devastated. He may have lost his wealth, but his magical powers weren't stolen: he put a curse on the ring, dooming anyone who came into its possession. The story of Andvari and his ring appears in the epic *Volsung Saga*. It was adapted by Richard Wagner into his Ring series of operas although Wagner merged Andvari's character with that of Alberich, using the latter's name in his operas. Wagner may have desired royalty: Andvari, unlike Alberich, is not a king, although at the peak of his wealth he possessed more gold and treasure than many kings put together.

Andvari allegedly remains a bitter spirit, but if he evokes a chord in you, he may be appealed to for advice regarding finances and investments.

**Manifestation:** He can shape-shift into the form of a salmon when he wishes, enabling him to live beneath the water as well as on land.

**Attribute:** The physical object with which he is most associated is his ring, whether or not it is now in his possession.

**Elements:** Water and earth



**Metal:** What else? Gold.

**Home:** Although he is at home on land, Andvari kept his trove in an underwater cave beneath a waterfall. Despite Wagner's operatic associations with the Rhine, the real Andvari probably inhabits a Scandinavian river.

**See also:** *Alberich; Lorelei*

## **Anemoi**

**Origin:** Greece

The Anemoi are Greek wind spirits. Brothers, they may manifest as actual winds or as winged men. Alternatively, they are horses kept in Aeolus' stables. Most mythic sources describe Eos and Astraeus as their parents. (Some sources consider Astraeus to be another name for Aeolus.) The Anemoi are divided into two groups.

### **ANEMOI MAJOR**

- Boreas: North Wind
- Eurus: East Wind
- Notus: South Wind
- Zephyr: West Wind

### **ANEMOI MINOR**

- Apeliotes: Southeast Wind
- Kaikias: Northeast Wind
- Livos (Lips): Southwest wind
- Skiron (Skeiron): Northwest Wind

**See also:** *Aeolus; Astraeus; Boreas; Eos; Eurus; Notus; Zephyr*

## **Angerboda**

*Witch of the Iron Wood; Mother of Wolves; Mother of the Apocalypse; Hag of the East Winds*

**Also known as:** Gullveig

**Origin:** Norse

Angerboda's name is related to "foreboding." This witch goddess is a mysterious, fiercely independent, private spirit. It is not clear which, if any, of her known names is her true one. She may or may not be the same goddess as Gullveig. The two star in different but related myths that if strung together form a cohesive narrative. (There are also those who perceive them as independent, completely distinct spirits.)

Not only is Angerboda's identity unclear, but she is also virtually impossible to classify: she may be a giantess, a troll-queen, a member of the Vanir pantheon, or some or all of the above. She may be Loki's twin sister. She may be something so old, she defies definition. She is a shape-shifter, which accounts for some of this confusion.

Angerboda is a spirit of death and destruction as well as birth and life. She is Freya's personal messenger. When a childless king and queen petition Freya's help, she sends Angerboda to them in the form of a crow, bearing an apple of fertility. The queen quickly conceives and bears a healthy child.

The Vanir spirits are not confrontational; when the Aesir arrived in their territory, they initially observed them from a distance. The Aesir constructed halls, including Valhalla, from such massive quantities of gold that they shimmer and shine. The Vanir lack halls, living in a misty realm spun from magic spells. The gold awakened a fascination and longing: the Vanir dispatched Gullveig to get some.

*Gullveig* means "power of gold." She may be Angerboda's alter ego. She may also be known as Heid, the "shining" or "gleaming" one. Gullveig asks the Aesir for a gift of gold for the Vanir into whose territory they have moved. The response? The Aesir call her a witch and condemn her to death. Thor seizes and binds her. Gullveig/Angerboda is pierced with spears like a pig on a spit and roasted on a pyre. She burns, her ashes are scattered, and yet miraculously she reappears, alive and good as new. The Aesir recapture her and repeat their actions. Angerboda/Gullveig is burned and resurrected three times. (Norse deities are *not* immortal: she was expected to die, further confirming her identity as a witch to the Aesir.)

Twice Angerboda returned to life in Valhalla, but the third time she found herself in her home, the Iron Wood. She never reenters Asgard because the Aesir still long to destroy her. The Vanir, appalled at her treatment, declared war on the Aesir and attacked via magic spells, precipitating a brutal war between the pantheons.

Angerboda's children include Hel, Queen of Death, the Midgard Serpent, the Fenris Wolf, and the wolves responsible for solar and lunar eclipses. Other sons are identified as werewolves. She is the grandmother of trolls.

- Angerboda is a weather deity, capable of raising storms.
- As the Hag of the East Winds, her songs drive ships right into storms.
- She can be petitioned for lessons in magic and to foretell future events.

**Favored people:** Witches and those who protect wolves

**Manifestations:** A beautiful woman so radiant that she shines; an old emaciated iron-grey hag; a crow

**Spirit allies:** Venerate her together with her children, grandchildren, Loki, and Vanir spirits, especially Freya. Do not venerate her side-by-side with Aesir spirits.

**Realm:** The Iron Wood (*Iarnvid*), the deep forest at the world's edge

**Sacred creatures:** Crow, wolf, snake

**Metal:** Iron

**Mount:** She rides a wolf using a snake for reins.

**Altar:** Decorate it with wolves and snakes, pieces of iron, and petrified wood. Give her the gold she once sought.

**See also:** *Aegir; Aesir; Balder; Freya; Gerda; Hel; Herta; Loki; Odin; Thor; Vanir*

## Angerona

**Also known as:** Diva Angerona

**Origin:** Rome

**Feast:** 21 December

Angerona, primordial goddess of the Roman region, is the spirit of silence and secrets, and so perhaps it is appropriate that she is now veiled in mystery. She is Rome's protectress; the guardian of its secret name, which could not be publicly revealed or even uttered aloud lest enemies learn it and gain power over the city. (Some suggest that Rome's true name is that of this goddess.) Angerona is also a painkiller, relieving physical, emotional, and psychic suffering. She communicates telepathically.

**Iconography:** Her classical image depicts a woman with a bandage across her mouth, holding her finger to her lips indicating the need for silence. Historically, many have found it a disturbing image: more Romantic versions delete the bandage. (Modern, harder-edged devotees might substitute duct tape.)

**Day:** Her festival, the Angeronalia, also known as the Divalia, was celebrated on 21 December, and so she is sometimes described as the spirit of the Winter Solstice, but in Roman days, before calendar reform, the Winter Solstice occurred on 13 December.

**Spirit allies:** Official sacrifices to Angerona were offered in the Temple of Voluptas, where Angerona's votive statue was kept.

**See also:** *Voluptas*

## **Angitia**

The Marsi, an ancient Central Italian tribe, claimed descent from Circe's son. Their chief deity was his daughter, Angitia, a snake-charming sorceress who learned her craft directly from her grandma. Very little concrete information survives regarding Angitia.

The Marsi made an alliance with the Romans in 304 BCE but revolted two years later. The Romans ultimately reasserted their authority; the Marsi lost political autonomy and were absorbed into the Roman Empire

but retained their magical reputation. Their presence as fortune-tellers plying their trade on Roman streets is documented as late as the second century CE. The Marsi were also reputedly magical, shamanic physicians whose specialty was healing those bitten by venomous snakes and rabid dogs.

Angitia was *not* incorporated into the Roman pantheon, the Romans not being favorably inclined toward witchy, snake-charming goddesses, but she was never forgotten. Post-Christianity, her powers were transferred to San Domenico. Much of what is known regarding Angitia is derived from rituals rededicated to him, especially *The Festa dei Serpari* (“The Procession of the Snake Catchers or Snake Charmers”) in Cocullo, Italy. Her rites may also have survived among the *sanpaolari*, eighteenth-century shamanic healers and snake charmers whose specialty was healing snakebite.

**Sacred site:** A sacred grove was dedicated to her on the shores of Lake Fucinus, as was a temple where the arts of herbalism and snake charming were practiced and taught. The lake was drained in 1875; during the process votive offerings to Angitia were discovered.

**See also:** *Circe; Medea*

## Angus Mac Og

*The Young Son; Angus of the Birds*

**Also known as:** Aengus; Oengus; Aonghus

**Classification:** Tuatha Dé Danaan

**Origin:** Ireland

Angus Mac Og is the Lord of Love: he helps lovers in need and in peril. For Angus, there is no such thing as an impossible love: he helps true love defy all odds. When love goes wrong, he comforts and protects the heartbroken.

Angus is the fruit of illicit love. The Dagda and Boann had a passionate encounter. To hide her pregnancy, Boann forced the sun to

stand still for the duration of her pregnancy; thus Angus was conceived and born on the very same day. (Another version suggests that it was the Dagda who placed the sun on hold first to keep Boann's husband from returning home and then to allow time for pregnancy and childbirth.) After birth, his father took him home where Angus became a champion hurler.

Angus stars in his very own love story. In *The Dream of Angus*, written down in the eighth century, Angus literally falls in love with the woman of his dreams. He has some work to do before he can attain her, but attain her he does because no love is impossible for Angus. Needless to say, he and his beloved live happily ever after. (See also: *Caer*.)

Petition him if your love faces impossible obstacles. Angus can inspire you to discover solutions to your desperate romantic dilemmas.

**Favored people:** Lovers and those who wish to be lovers; he may be patron of hurlers, too.

**Consort:** *Caer*

**Palace:** Brugh na Boinne, now called New-grange, a giant megalithic tomb estimated to have been erected circa 3200 BCE.

**See also:** *Boann; Dagda, the; Etain; Tuatha Dé Danaan*

## Animal

**Also known as:** Animal Totem; Animal Ally

Animal spirits provide us with protection, knowledge, and psychic inspiration. They appear in dreams and visions. Often the most accessible spirit allies, it is not unusual for children to discuss their invisible animal friends and guardians (who are not invisible to the child).

An animal ally may be the spirit of an individual animal or the presiding spirit of a species of creature. Each species has a presiding spirit: the Spirit of the Dog or the Lion or the Saber-Toothed

Cat (as opposed to Muffy the ghost cat who lives only in your attic).

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*Some animal alliances are ephemeral: a spirit may appear in a dream but once. Others are intense relationships, akin to a familiar spirit.*

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An alliance with a spirit being (as opposed to a regular member of the species), enables us to acquire wisdom, skills, and protection from animals with whom it might not be otherwise safe, practical, or even possible to have actual physical contact. Communication is usually via dreams, visions, and symbols.

Animal totems are the most prevalent spirit allies. Everyone has them, usually several. If you've had limited or no contact or awareness of these allies, be a little patient. They may be hibernating near you, waiting for your call: sometimes it takes a little while before they'll broach contact, especially if your ally is shy and cautious or if it's what might be considered a "scary" animal. They don't wish to overwhelm or scare you. Let them know if you're ready.

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*In some traditions, if you've been bitten by an animal or survived an attack, that species is obligated to provide you with spiritual assistance. In some shamanic traditions, if an animal attacks you, it was sent to see if you are strong enough to handle its power.*

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Pay attention whenever that animal or its image enters your life, even momentarily. Dreams of your totem are significant. When pondering a dilemma, have you ever flipped open a magazine and just "coincidentally" found an image of your totem? Pay attention to the context. You may be receiving advice and clues.

Just remember: what is being discussed is a *spirit* animal. One should never assume that because one has an alligator spirit ally that one is now immune from alligator attack. Always be cautious with living, breathing animals.

**Offerings:** Tattoos; protect actual living members and/or care for them; do what you can to encourage others to care for them and protect them, too.

## **Anjani**

**Origin:** India

Anjani is Hanuman's monkey goddess mother. Hindu myth suggests she was once a beautiful Apsara, Parvati's handmaid. One day something scared her and she leaped into the arms of Parvati's husband, Shiva. Parvati reacted badly. In fairness, Anjani may have been flirting, as is the nature of Apsaras. Parvati transformed her into a monkey, banishing her to the forest where Kesari, a monkey spirit, became her consort and eventually Hanuman's foster father.

Vayu, the wind, was in love with Anjani. There are various legends of Hanuman's conception: Vayu and Anjani may have conceived him the old-fashioned way. Alternatively, as a gift and an honor, Vayu may have brought her a bit of Shiva's semen. Other theories suggest that Hanuman was a primordial sacred monkey, a tribal jungle deity only later incorporated into Vishnu- and Shiva-oriented spiritual traditions. Anjani is also a powerful monkey goddess.

Anjani may be venerated alongside her son or requested to intercede with him. She is a spirit for those who love monkeys as well as those who are severely punished for misinterpreted actions and minor sexual improprieties.

**See also:** *Apsara; Hanuman; Parvati; Shiva; Tara; Vishnu*

## **Ankou**

**Origin:** Brittany

First you'll hear the creaky wheels. The cart he drives is old and decrepit: it can be heard from miles away. Another harbinger of Ankou's approach is a cold, bone-chilling blast of wind or a sudden, abrupt drop



in temperature. Ankou is a soul harvester; a Breton Angel of Death. When Ankou ventures out, he *never* returns home empty-handed.

Although Ankou resembles the Grim Reaper, he (or she) is not an incarnation of Death. Instead Ankou is Death's servant. Ankou is a psychopomp, albeit a creepy, scary one, not a gentle, comforting one, delivering souls to Death's ferryman who then transfers them to the Isle of the West (a scenario not unlike that portrayed in Woody Allen's 2006 film, *Scoop*). Ankou may travel alone or accompanied by two skeletal footmen. When they are around, Ankou may take it easy and just do the driving, allowing the footmen to do the heavy lifting, tossing souls into the wagon of doom.

Various legends explain Ankou's identity and how he came to be what he is now. The simplest suggests that the last person to die on New Year's Eve or the person who dies closest to New Year's Eve serves a one-year term as Death's assistant. It's a rotating position with each town or region possessing its own Ankou.

A more elaborate myth suggests that there is one specific spirit named Ankou who was born a rich, cruel, capricious man—a count or prince but definitely a landowner. Let's call him Monsieur A. His passion was hunting. Instead of going to church on Sundays he went hunting. One Sunday he pursued a magnificent white stag. The color should have been the tip-off. In Celtic regions, white animals are sacred or affiliated with the Otherworld, the Realm of Death, or both. Perhaps he didn't know or perhaps he didn't care. Or perhaps hiding in this story is a pre-Christian Celtic death spirit (hence the refusal to attend church) whose totem ally may be that white stag.

During the chase, Monsieur A encountered a strange figure dressed completely in black, riding a white horse, also pursuing this same stag. They were on Monsieur A's land and so he challenged the stranger, wagering that whoever killed the stag would keep the meat and hide *and* determine the loser's fate. The stranger agreed. No matter how quickly Monsieur A rode, he was unable to approach the white stag, which was instead captured by the dark stranger. Rather than accept defeat graciously, Monsieur A reneged on the terms of the wager he himself had proposed: he ordered his lackeys to seize the stranger, asserting that he'd have *two* trophies. The stranger laughed and said he could have the

stag. Furthermore, if he loved hunting so much, he could do it all the time but for human souls, not animals. Monsieur A was instantly transformed into Ankou.

Although Ankou is now usually envisioned as male, there are occasional female manifestations. (Ankou is a shrouded skeleton: unless you're a forensic scientist, it may be hard to determine gender.) Some theorize that the oldest manifestations of Ankou were more exclusively female and that today's folkloric figure is a vestigial survival of a death goddess associated with Brittany's prehistoric mound builders.

If you hear Ankou's cart, the thing to do is hide but should you actually encounter him, it's crucial not to look him in the face, the sight of which may cause instant death.

**Manifestation:** Ankou is a skeleton wearing a black shroud, wooden shoes, and a broad-brimmed black traveler's hat similar to that worn by Odin, Mercury, or Saint James.

**Mount:** Ankou traditionally drives an old cart pulled by four black and/or grey horses. Sometimes only two horses pull his cart: one cadaverous, the other young, healthy, and strong. However, that cart may have become too decrepit even for Ankou. Recent sightings indicate that Ankou has upgraded to a death-mobile and now drives a hearse.

**Attribute:** Scythe

**Time:** The Yule season and especially New Year's Eve, when people were traditionally advised to stay inside lest Ankou seize them. This may be an attempt to scare people into staying home and not participating in nocturnal rites derived from old outdoor Pagan traditions. Ankou is particularly active whenever the Wild Hunt rides; they may coordinate their schedules.

**See also:** *Artemis; Diana; Rhiannon; Santissima Muerte; Wild Hunt*

## Anna Perenna

According to Virgil's *Aeneid*, Dido, Queen of Carthage, killed herself after she was abandoned by Aeneas. According to another legend, after Dido's

death, Carthage was invaded and her sister, Anna, had to flee. She ended up in Latium (Italy) where Aeneas, her sister's former lover, was ruler. He welcomed the refugee, offering hospitality in his home. His wife, Lavinia, was profoundly jealous.

Dido appeared to Anna in a dream, warning her to flee again. Wandering, Anna encountered a river deity who carried her off. (This could be a euphemism. Other versions suggest she entered the river of her own volition. One way or another, she ended up in the drink.) People searching for her followed Anna's footprints to the river, where they ended. Anna emerged from the river, explaining that she was now a water goddess and that her new name was Perenna, meaning "eternity."

Anna Perenna is the spirit of the year, bringing peace and prosperity in her wake. She offers the gift of longevity. She was particularly loved by Roman Plebeians, with whom she sided in opposition to Patricians.

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*In another version of her myth, she was always a water spirit and her name derives from Annis Perennis, the eternal stream or the never-ending stream.*

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**Planet:** Moon

**Days:** The Ides of March: first full moon of the Roman year or 15 March

**Feast:** 15 March

**Petition:** Drinking games were held in Anna Perenna's honor on her feast day. Allegedly she will bestow a year of life for every glass downed in her honor.

**Place:** She is the presiding spirit of the River Numicus, possible site of her deification. Anna Perenna had a grove of fruit trees where her feast day was celebrated with picnicking and pleasure.

**See also:** *Car*

## Annwn, Hounds of

**Also known as:** *Cwn Annwn*

**Origin:** Wales

These are the spectral hounds associated with Annwn, the Welsh Otherworld. They belong to Arawn, Lord of Annwn. Sometimes he sends the pack out alone, but they also travel with him, especially in his guise as leader of the Wild Hunt. The dogs may also be accompanied by Matilda of the Night. The hounds leave Annwn for various reasons:

- To foretell or announce death
- To retrieve or escort souls to Annwn
- To reveal (or consume) corpses

Post-Christianity, the hounds of Annwn were reclassified as hell hounds, but Annwn is more accurately described as a paradise. It is not a realm of punishment. Some believe that hearing the hounds bay is a harbinger of death. The hounds serve as psychopomps, accompanying, protecting, and guiding dead souls to Annwn.

**Manifestation:** In the *First Branch of the Mabinogi*, the hounds are described as shining white with red ears. Other sources described them as small, speckled greyish-red dogs.

**See also:** *Arawn; Matilda of the Night; Psychopomp; Wild Hunt*

## Antaura

**Origin:** Greek

Antaura, a disease demon, lives in the sea. She enters a human head, infecting it with lingering, protracted migraines. She is counteracted by Artemis of Ephesus. Artemis prevents Antaura from entering humans and may divert her toward cattle instead.

If one suspects Antaura of causing harm, the next step is to invoke Artemis. The confrontation between them is the subject of several amulets found in a third-century CE coffin in Roman Carnuntum, now

Austria. The amulets themselves should be sufficient to ward off Antaura.

**Manifestations:** She is described as shouting like a deer and crying like an ox.

**Elements:** Wind (Air); water

**Animals:** Deer, ox

**See also:** *Artemis of Ephesus*

## Anteros

**Origin:** Greek

Anteros is the spirit of requited love, literally “love returned.” He is Ares and Aphrodite’s son, brother of Eros. According to myth, Eros was a lonely boy who needed someone to love and so his parents gave him a brother. The brothers are frequent companions.

Anteros was a favorite subject of Victorian sculptors who perceived that he represented mature, responsible love, unlike the frivolous, ephemeral emotions generated by Eros. The statue soaring above the Shaftesbury Memorial Fountain in London’s Piccadilly Circus portrays Anteros but is commonly mistaken for Eros or even “the angel of Christian charity.”

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*Anteros is petitioned for happy, reciprocal relationships. He also avenges unrequited love and may be petitioned by the bitter, disappointed, and vengeful.*

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**Manifestation:** He looks very much like his brother, Eros; they are easily confused. He is a handsome, winged, usually naked male spirit holding a bow and arrows. Anteros may be distinguished by butterfly wings.

**Iconography:** He may appear on his own or with his mother and brother: Aphrodite holds scales; Eros sits in one pan, while Anteros sits in the other.

**Attributes:** Lead arrows, golden club

**See also:** *Aphrodite; Eros; Eroses*

## Antevorta

**Origin:** Etruscan

**Feast:** 11 January, 15 January

Antevorta is the spirit of the future. Her sister, Postvorta, is the spirit of the past. They are traditionally invoked together: as long as you know what's going on in the present, the two sisters can provide any other needed information. They travel in Carmenta's entourage.

- Antevorta has dominion over childbirth and women's reproductive organs and disorders: invoke for healing and protection.
- Antevorta, meaning "before change," is also known as Prorsa or Porrina, indicating "head first" or "straight ahead," the correct position for a baby's birth: request her help if a baby is not in correct position.

**Favored people:** Diviners, fortune-tellers, meteorologists, all who earn their living via predictions

**Iconography:** She is depicted with her sister in an image reminiscent of Janus: each sister faces in a different direction. One looks forward (Antevorta); one looks back.

**Planet:** Moon

**Element:** Water

**See also:** *Carmenta; Janus; Postvorta*

## Anubis

## *Foremost of the Westerners*

**Also known as:** Anpu

**Origin:** Egypt

Egyptian goddess Nephthys seduced her sister's husband, Osiris, and conceived Anubis. (The name *Anubis* may be interpreted as "Royal Child.") After his birth, Nephthys left him in the Necropolis, where jackals raised him. After Osiris' death, Isis came looking for her husband's son. She adopted Anubis, who became her faithful companion as she searched for Osiris' body. During the journey, Anubis invented embalming and mummification: Osiris was the first mummy.

That's one version of Anubis' myth. The other is that he is an ancient deity who ruled as Lord of Death *before* Osiris and is older than Osiris. Jackal-headed figures abound in prehistoric North African rock art and may represent Anubis. As Osiris gained popularity, Anubis became subservient to him, at least officially. It was crucial that new myths incorporate Anubis into the new pantheon because, although Osiris may bear the title of Lord of the Dead, his role is largely passive. Anubis does most of the work. He is the most active participant in the death process. Anubis presides over rituals involving corpse and soul:

- Anubis is guardian of the door through which the deceased enter the hall of judgment.
- He leads the soul to the field of celestial offerings.
- Anubis presides over the weighing of the heart ritual: the ceremony of judgment that determines the soul's fate.
- He himself places the heart on the scales of justice and personally feeds the souls of those who fail to pass the test to Ammit, the monster who devours them.
- He supervises the mummification process, ensuring that it is ritually correct.
- Anubis supervises the crucial opening-of-the-mouth ceremony, the ritual which ensured reanimation of the soul.

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*Egyptian funerary priests wore jackal masks, perhaps channeling Anubis.*

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Anubis traveled to Rome with Isis, where he was venerated as the ruler of hosts of infernal spirits. The Romans considered Anubis generally protective but also invoked his help with curses. The Romans carried Anubis throughout Europe: Anubis amulets are found as far as a grave on the Isle of Anglesey.

Anubis opens the path allowing spirits and humans to travel between realms. He serves as a guide if requested. Anubis will stand guard for you. Point his image in the direction of what must be protected or from whence you fear danger will emerge.

- Anubis knows the date of everyone's death and may be petitioned to reveal it.
- Anubis locates lost articles but only if you have a statue of him: touch his ears and request his help.
- Anubis guards the dead, protecting against grave robbing and desecration.
- He guards mediums, ensuring that only benevolent spirits approach.
- Anubis may sometimes wear the mask of Saint Christopher.

**Favored people:** Mediums, diviners, and those working in the funeral industry; Anubis protects children.

**Manifestations:** A black jackal or hound, a man with a jackal's head

**Iconography:** Although he is called a jackal, he is not portrayed as a realistic jackal; the Egyptians were not interested in realistic portraiture but in conveying spiritual and mystic truths via color and image.

**Animals:** Jackal, dogs; some see the image of Anubis as really resembling Egyptian hounds more than jackals: he may be the ancient prototype of modern Pharaoh Hounds.

**Color:** Black



**Emblem:** Bloodstained black-and-white oxhide hanging from a pole

**Star:** Sirius, the Dog Star

**Spirit allies:** Wepwawet; Isis; Horus; Nephthys; Thoth

**Offerings:** *Canis simensis*, the Ethiopian jackal or wolf (like Anubis, there is dispute as to its true identity), is extremely endangered: offerings on its behalf or on behalf of Pharaoh Hounds in need (Pharaoh hound rescue) may be appreciated; alternatively an altar in your home or in a funeral parlor or cemetery; Anubis enjoys a drink: beer, wine, or spirits; give him macabre funeral-and death-themed toys and figures.

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*Anubis offers immortality in the 1933 Boris Karloff movie, The Ghoul.*

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**See also:** *Ammit; Horus; Isis; Ma'at; Nephthys; Osiris; Qebhut; Thoth; Wepwawet*

## Anuenu

**Pronounced:** *Ah-noo-ay-noo-ay*

**Origin:** Polynesia

Anuenu is Hawaii's Lady of the Rainbow and spirit of rain, sister of Kane, Ku, and Lono. She serves as the messenger of the spirits, especially as the liaison between spirits in Tahiti and Hawaii.

She has dominion over the Menehune, who may be Dwarf spirits or the people inhabiting Hawaii before the arrival of taller people from what are now called the Society Islands (French Polynesia). She is a kind, friendly, benevolent spirit who once saw a child fall from a high cliff and sent a rainbow to cushion his fall so that he landed safely. Anuenu is beloved by modern healers, especially those working with transmission of energy and the healing power of color.

**Manifestation:** The rainbow itself or as a beautiful woman wrapped in rainbow colors

**Sacred area:** The Manoa Valley in Oahu is her home and playground.

**See also:** *Akua; Iris; Kane; Ku; Lono*

## **Anuket**

*The Clasper; The Embracer; Bestower of Life; Lady of Nubia*

**Also known as:** Anukis; Anoukis; Anqet

**Origin:** Nubia

Anuket's name, interpreted as "the embracer," indicates the way Nile waters hug land, leading to fertility and joy. Anuket is a river goddess with dominion over prosperity and sexual delight; references to "clasping" and "embracing" are also intended in the sexual sense. She grants fertility to humans and animals.

Anuket first emerged in Northern Nubia. Her origins date back at least to the Old Kingdom. She and Satis may originally have been sisters, but they were incorporated into the Egyptian pantheon as mother and daughter. Depending on the version of the myth, Anuket is Khnum's second wife and Satis is their daughter, or Satis is the wife and Anuket the child. Either way, they are happily venerated together or as a triad with Khnum.

**Manifestations:** She manifests as a beautiful woman or a gazelle, her sacred animal.

**Iconography:** Anuket may be portrayed with four arms, representing the union of the male and female principles. She wears a crown of reeds, topped with ostrich feathers.

**Attributes:** Papyrus scepter; cowrie shell

**Element:** Water

**Bird:** Red Parrot

**Places:** Her sacred shrine was on the isle of Seheil, by the Nile's first cataract. Anuket shares residence with Khnum and Satis at Elephantine.

**See also:** *Heket; Khnum; Satis*

### **Aoife (1)**

**Origin:** Ireland

Aoife is the second of Ailill of Aran's three beautiful daughters. He offers them in marriage, one after the other, to Lir, Lord of the Sea. When her older sister dies, Aoife weds Lir, becoming stepmother to her sister's children, two boys and a girl. She is jealous or feels threatened, and so, just like the proverbial "wicked stepmother," she plots their demise. She transforms them, via enchantment, into swans, cursed to spend three hundred years on Ireland's Loch Darravagh, three hundred years in the strait between Ireland and Scotland, and three hundred years over islands in the Atlantic. When her crime is revealed, Aoife's enraged foster father transforms her into a demon of the air.

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*For the warrior spirit, mother of Cu Chulain's son, please see Aife.*

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**See also:** *Aife; Aoife (2); Lir; Sidhe*

### **Aoife (2)**

**Origin:** Ireland

Two women loved the same man, son of Manannan and grandson of Lir, Lord of the Sea. Iuchra decided to eliminate her competition, transforming her rival, Aoife, into a crane in which form she must remain for two hundred years. During that time, Aoife can never reach land.

Aoife, the enchanted crane, lived in Manannan's Otherworld realm. The full impact of the curse is that she can't live either a woman's life or that of a true crane, flying free. Instead she is a liminal being, neither here nor there. When she dies, Manannan skins the crane, using her skin to fabricate his magical crane bag, the treasure in which he places his other precious treasures (and gods of the sea inevitably possess wonderful treasures). Although not explicitly stated in the myth, clearly Manannan recognizes that this crane is no ordinary crane and may even be complicit in Aoife's transformation.

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*In Celtic lore, cranes, traditionally associated with shape-shifting women, are considered aggressive, protective birds of sea, land, and sky. Was Aoife forcibly transformed into a crane, or was she exposed for the ancient crane spirit that she already was?*

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- Appeal to her to assist with shape-shifting, whether magical or metaphoric.
- Those requiring new identities in which to lay low may request her assistance.
- Ask her to protect you from jealous rivals.

**Offerings:** Many crane species are severely endangered; efforts on their behalf are an appropriate offering.

**See also:** *Aoife (1); Manannan*

## **Aphrodite**

*Born from the Foam; The Golden One; Far-Shining; She of the Beautiful Buttocks; The Shape-Shifter; She Who Postpones Old Age; The Dark One; The Black One; The Gravedigger; The Queen; Lady of the Sea; The Black Queen*

According to Olympian myth, when Uranus, Spirit of the Sky, was

castrated, his severed member, dripping with sperm and blood, dropped into the fertile sea. Aphrodite was born of this merger of sea and sky. She came ashore at Cyprus, carried to land on a large scallop shell. Fittingly for a sex goddess, the Greek word *kteis* means “vulva” as well as “scallop.”

Aphrodite, although now most associated with Greece, is originally a Semitic fertility/war spirit, akin to Astarte or Ishtar:

- She may be native to Cyprus, gateway between Mediterranean Asia, Europe, and Africa.
- She may originate in Syria or Assyria.
- Herodotus wrote that Phoenicians brought her to Cyprus from Ashkelon, now in Israel.

Although the ancient Greeks adored Aphrodite, they were uncomfortable with the typical Near-Eastern merger of sex, fertility, and war spirit all bundled up in the form of a beautiful woman. In order to incorporate Aphrodite into the Olympic pantheon, the Greeks compartmentalized her, suppressing her warrior attributes. (This is made explicit in the *Iliad* when she is ordered off the battlefield.) Aphrodite’s main function in Greece became love, romance, sex, and protection of mariners. By the end of the Classical Era, many were uncomfortable with her raw sexuality: she was reenvisioned as Aphrodite Urania, Goddess of Heavenly Love.

Aphrodite can raise and placate winds. Not only does she have power over people, animals, and plants, she has power over spirits, too, or at least most of the Greek pantheon. Exceptions are Artemis, Athena, and Hestia, who are immune to her powers. All the rest succumb to her allure. If you find yourself in trouble with them, appeal to Aphrodite for help. (In terms of altar space, keep Artemis and Athena away from Aphrodite, and do not petition them together.)

Be sure to fulfill all vows in a timely manner. She is not always a patient spirit. If she loves you and demonstrates favor, you will be expected to offer consistent attention and gifts. Aphrodite usually demonstrates anger via animal attacks or bad luck in love.

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*Aphrodite, a powerful, tremendously generous goddess, may be petitioned for virtually anything. Aphrodite, sometimes called the Oldest Fate, may have power over destiny. She may be able to change fate.*

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**Favored people:** Lovers, practitioners of sacred sex and sex magick, sex workers, those involved with erotica. She is the matron of mariners and sailors (literally and on seas of love and life).

**Manifestations:** Aphrodite most commonly manifests as a mermaid or a blindingly beautiful woman who shines so bright that she dazzles the eye. Roses bloom beneath her feet. She likes company and often travels with an entourage of spirits. She will likely be accompanied by at least one of her sacred creatures (typically a disparate band of animals who wouldn't be expected to peaceably appear together, the tip-off that you're in the presence of a goddess). She can, if she chooses, manifest in any of their forms, too.

**Iconography:**

- Early statues portray her wearing a *polos* hat and/or robes patterned with roses or stars.
- Later statues depict her in various stages of undress.
- She was venerated in the form of a conical stone at Paphos.

She is sometimes depicted as a black statue; vestiges of her veneration may survive in some Black Madonnas. Images of Aphrodite holding her baby son, Eros, may inspire some Madonna and child imagery. (See also: *Black Madonna; Isis.*)

**Attributes:** Scallop and cowrie shells, sea anemone, fishing net; Aphrodite possesses a magic belt that serves as an irresistible love magnet: she is generous and will share this girdle as well as secrets of romance and erotica, accessed via visualization and dreams.

**Colors:** Yellow, gold, copper, black

**Birds:** Dove, sparrow, swallow, swan, goose, partridge

**Sacred animals:** Aphrodite is Queen of Beasts and loves *all* wildlife, but some are especially sacred to her: bear, bee, deer, dolphin, goat, leopard, lion, rabbit, toad, turtle, wolf.

**Element:** Water

**Metal:** Copper

**Mounts:** Aphrodite rides a goat or young male deer on land, a dolphin at sea, and a swan or goose in the air. Doves pull her chariot.

**Number:** 6

**Planet:** Venus, the Sun

**Plants:** Apples; pomegranates; poppies; linden trees; myrtle; all kinds of roses, especially rock roses (*Cistus spp.*) and dog roses (*Rosa canina*), which grew from the tears she wept for Adonis and still carry her perfume; another sacred flower is *Ornithogalum umbellatum*, the Star of Bethlehem or Grass Lily

**Time:** The Summer Solstice: ancient devotees celebrated the day by decorating small toy boats with flower garlands, then sending them out to sea bearing petitions for Aphrodite.

**Places:**

- Aphrodite's most sacred place is Cyprus. *The Rock of Aphrodite*, reputed to be the spot where she first came ashore, stands near Old Paphos on the southwest coast of Cyprus.
- The Ionian island of Cythera: this is the land nearest where her father's severed genitals hit the water and thus her point of conception. After the Trojan War, her mortal son, Aeneas, built her a temple here.
- Corinth, once her chief sanctuary on the Greek mainland.
- Her great temple in Erice, Sicily, is now the home of the Black Madonna of Custonaci.

**Shrines/altars:** It is crucial that her altar be beautiful. Decorate with ocean motifs, flowers, greenery, and representations of her attributes and sacred creatures. Alternatively create a garden in her honor, which

becomes an outdoor shrine, an altar on Earth. (She once had sacred botanical gardens in Athens.)

**Offerings:** Call Aphrodite with the scent of frankincense and myrrh. Other favorite offerings include perfume, roses, myrtle, honey, and wine. Ancient worshippers offered triangle-shaped honey cakes. *Commandaria*, a Greek dessert wine, was traditionally served at her festivals.

**See also:** *Adonis; Anteros; Ares; Artemis; Asherah; Astarte; Athena; Black Madonna; Dione; Dionysus; Eros; Hephaestus; Hermes; Hestia; Inanna-Ishtar; Kronos; Lady of the Beasts; Lakshmi; Leucotheia; Mami Waters; Mermaid; Nereus; Olympic Spirits; Priapus; Psyche; Uranus; Venus; Zeus*

## Apollo

*Descended from the She-Wolf; Wolf-Like; Lord of the Storehouse; Lord of the Sun; Distant Deadly Archer*

**Also known as:** Apollon; Apellon; Phoebus Apollo; Aplu

Apollo is the Golden Boy of the Olympian pantheon, a spirit of healing, hunting, music, poetry, and prophecy. He radiates such dazzling charisma that he was eventually venerated as a solar deity. Although he never completely took over Helios' functions, Apollo overshadowed him.

To call someone an "Apollo" is to imply that they are blindingly handsome. He is a beautiful killer. Apollo is a master healer because he is a master of epidemic, plague, and disease, lifting and inflicting as he wishes. He attacked the Greeks with plague during the Trojan War. Apollo is blamed for sudden death. His arrows kill instantly.

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*Apollo is the Divine Child carried in his mother's arms to Delphi, where he slew its guardian serpent (and Hera's ally). Some see vestiges of Apollo and Leto in Madonna and Child iconography: a beautiful woman holding a radiant divine child stands upon a dead or at least extremely suppressed serpent.*

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The most familiar Olympian myth explains that Apollo was born on the isle of Delos, where his mother, Leto, one of Zeus' many conquests, was hiding from Hera, Zeus' jealous wife. However Apollo is also described as coming from Hyperborea, a land to the north. Alternative myths suggest that Apollo and his mother arrived in Greece together in the form of wolves, or that

Leto, in the form of a pregnant wolf, made the trek alone, giving birth to Apollo in Greece.

Hyperborea's location has never been identified, nor is it clear if it is even an actual physical destination or a spirit realm. One theory suggests that it is in the extreme north, near the Arctic Circle. Another suggests that Apollo comes from Rügen Island in the Baltic: he first encountered the Greeks via amber trade routes. Alternatively, he is originally a Hittite spirit from Anatolia (Asia Minor), perhaps the underlying reason for his support of neighboring Troy.

Apollo is the Greek male deity with the greatest number of male lovers. In general, his relationships with men are happier than those with women. Apollo is the patron and sponsor of young men, teaching them music, divination, and various sports.

Apollo does not have an official "wife" or female consort. Although incredibly handsome, brilliant, rich, and royal (not to mention a god), most of the women he pursues flee from him, some committing suicide rather than submit to him. Others don't flee but meet fatally tragic ends anyway. What's going on?

On closer examination, the women Apollo pursues are rarely mere mortals. Although now trivialized as Nymphs or princesses, many were powerful goddesses. The big three of the Olympian pantheon—Zeus, Hades, and Poseidon— all "marry" female deities, thereby cementing their own right to power. Apollo's path to power, on the other hand, is reminiscent of the character Sylar from the television series, *Heroes*. He absorbs and takes over the power of others. (See also: *Daphne*; *Gaia*.) Having killed the serpent at Delphi, for example, Apollo becomes able to manifest as a snake.

Apollo's veneration spread to Rome, where he was initially worshipped as a healing spirit: a Roman temple was dedicated to Apollo

Medicus in 433 BCE. Veneration of Apollo became widespread after Augustus Caesar claimed him as his personal patron. In return for Apollo's favor, Augustus built him a magnificent temple on the Palatine near his own palace. Apollo, who is the spirit with dominion over colonization, became the face of Western civilization and was praised as the calm, rational Lord of Reason (as opposed to his half brother, Dionysus).

The Romans carried Apollo with them through Gaul, identifying him with the many Celtic spirits associated with therapeutic baths and springs. Apollo assumed the identities of many, including Belenus and Grannus. He was married to local goddesses like Damona, Ianuaria, Rosmerta, and Sirona. In Celtic Gaul, Apollo is worshipped as a healer specializing in eye disorders. Apollo restores physical vision and bestows second sight.

Apollo protects his devotees and their cattle and livestock. He is loyal to those he loves. Apollo is a master healer who can heal anyone except those he himself has slain. He is the spirits' doctor, too, healing them when they are ailing.

**Favored people:** Healers, musicians, psychics, diviners, and mediums, good-looking young men, philosophers, Leos, those who protect and care for wolves

**Manifestation:** A breathtakingly handsome young man with long golden hair. He assumes the guise of his sacred creatures, traveling as a wolf on land and a dolphin at sea.

**Iconography:** Frequently depicted naked or near naked, Apollo is *always* envisioned as young and never with a beard like Zeus, Poseidon, or most other Greek male deities.

**Attributes:** Bow and arrows; lyre; the wreath of laurel leaves that he wears may be understood as Daphne's hair.

**Spirit allies:** Artemis, Leto, Hyacinth

**Mottoes:** "Know Thyself" and "Nothing in Excess"

**Planet:** Sun

**Plant:** Saint-John's-wort; bay laurel; apple trees; mistletoe (especially on apple trees); poplar trees

**Number:** 7 (he was born on the seventh day of the seventh month)

**Sacred days:** The seventh day of each month is sacred to him; this is literally the seventh day of the solar calendar and also the waxing half moon of the lunar; Roman games held in Apollo's honor were celebrated from 6–13 July.

**Animals:** Wolf; griffin; mouse; rat; dolphin

**Bird:** Raven, carrion crow

**Mount:** Swans pull Apollo's chariot.

**Gem:** Amber

**Sacred places:** Delphi; Delos; he had shrines in Anatolia (now modern Turkey) and Italy; Apollo is associated with various healing sanctuaries in Gaul, especially in Burgundy.

**Altar:** Apollo's altar should be neat, clean, orderly, and not cluttered. He is a gregarious spirit: surround him with those he loves, especially his male lovers, Leto and Artemis; add images of wolves, mice, and ravens.

**Offerings:** Wine, incense; gifts of solar imagery; petition with intense seven-day vigils.

**See also:** *Akalli; Aradia; Aristaeus; Artemis; Asclepius; Belenus; Daphne; Damona; Dionysus; Grannus; Hera; Herta; Hyacinth; Kura; Leto; Olympian Spirits; Rosmerta; Sirona; Zeus*

## Apsaras

**Also known as:** Apsarasas; Pari

**Origin:** India

Apsaras are beautiful female forest and water spirits. First documented in the Sanskrit Vedas, they star in myths from India, Thailand,

Cambodia, Laos, Mauritius, and elsewhere. They are frequent subjects of Cambodian classical dance. Apsaras live in trees, specifically banana or figs, which can symbolize male and female genitalia respectively. This is no coincidence. Apsaras are spirits of sex and fertility, companions of the Gandharvas, male spirits of air and music.

- Gandharvas are musicians; Apsaras are celestial dancers.
- Apsaras serve as attendants to Kama, Lord of Love.

They are generally but not consistently benevolent. Contact reputedly results in either increased good fortune or insanity. Famously, Apsaras bestow luck in games of chance.

**Manifestations:** Apsaras manifest as incredibly beautiful women or mermaids. They ride clouds and/or transform into bird-women when they wish to fly.

**Attributes:** Golden comb, mother-of-pearl mirror, and magical knives

**Element:** Water

**Sacred places:** The lake Grand Bassin in Mauritius was once called *Pari Talao* (Lake of the Apsaras). Apsaras were witnessed frolicking there; the lake became a sacred pilgrimage. In 1897, a Hindu priest had a vision of the lake springing from the Ganges River: it has been renamed Ganga Talao (Lake Ganges) and rededicated to Ganga.

**Offerings:** They adore jewels, mirrors, and shiny things.

**See also:** *Anjani; Dakinis; Gandharvas; Ganga; Hanuman; Kama; Lady Banana Ghost; Mermaid; Pari-May; Peri; Sirens*

## Apu

**Origin:** Andes Mountains

Apus are spirits of Andean mountain peaks. An Apu is simultaneously:

- The sacred spirit of a mountain
- The mountain itself
- The spirit who lives atop the mountain

Paradoxically, the Apu is inseparable from the mountain even though the spirit itself is completely mobile and perfectly capable of traveling far. *Apu* literally means “lord.” Female Apus are addressed as “Mama.” Most are male, but some are female, including Mama Simona of Cuzco; Mama Putukusi of Machu Pichu; and Mama Veronica (Quechua name: *Wakay Willca*) near Cuzco. Theoretically every mountain peak in the Andes has its own Apu, but the most famous are the twelve associated with Cuzco:

- Apu Ausangate
- Apu Salkanaty
- Mama Simona
- Apu Pikol
- Apu Manuel Pinta
- Apu Wanakauri
- Apu Pachatusan
- Apu Pijchu
- Apu Saqsaywaman
- Apu Wiraqochan
- Apu Pukin
- Apu Senq’a

**Manifestation:** Apus frequently take the form of mischievous, playful, but helpful children. For instance, Apu Ausangate, considered the most powerful Apu of Cuzco, manifests as a blond, fair-skinned child wearing white clothes and riding a white horse. Don’t let their chosen form fool you: they are ancient and powerful spirits.

**Gifts:** Small stones resembling animals or plants are sacred gifts from the Apus and may be used to bring whatever the stone resembles into your life. (Resemblance may be enhanced by carving.) These gifts are not limited to one person: they may be given to others or passed down through generations of a family. They may also be purchased at Andean pilgrimage sites. Modern versions of these amulets include miniature trucks, tools, and even passports.

**Ritual:** Travel to the Apus to request their blessings and protection.

**Offerings:** Coca leaves; libations of water and alcoholic beverages

## Arachne

Arachne, master weaver of fabrics and tapestries, was the daughter of a man involved in the rare purple dye industry. Only royalty and the spiritual elite were permitted to wear the colors produced by this prohibitively expensive dye. Various versions of her story exist, but somehow she ended up in a tapestry-making contest with Athena, credited by the Greeks as the inventor of weaving.

Some versions suggest that Arachne was boastful and arrogant, and Athena felt obliged to put her in her place. In other versions Athena's motivation is jealousy. Arachne may be the original goddess of weaving. After both wove tapestries, the general populace was permitted to choose the winner. Arachne won with a cynical tapestry mocking the lifestyles of the Olympians, especially Zeus' prodigious love life.

Whether Athena was enraged by the tapestry's subject or whether she was enraged that Arachne won, she was not a gracious loser, nor did she ask for a rematch. Instead exactly what happened next also depends on the version of the story:

- Athena transformed Arachne into a spider.
- Athena hanged Arachne and then changed her into a spider.
- Athena slashed Arachne's face with a shuttle; Arachne attempted to hang herself; Athena, allegedly motivated by pity, prevents her suicide by changing the rope into a web and Arachne into a spider, the ultimate weaver.

Arachne is a spider goddess of weaving. If she is anything like other weaving goddesses, she has a hand in weaving or transforming human destiny, too. Arachne may be among the spirits of Tarantism, the Italian dance cult, whose members are forced to dance until they drop, allegedly because of a spider bite. The entranced dancers also swing like spiders.

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*Spiders are classified as belonging to the Arachnid family.*

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**Favored people:** Weavers, artisans, fabric artists, those who love spiders

**Manifestations:** A spider, woman, or hybrid of the two; even as a woman there will be some sort of arachnid reference.

**Iconography:** Artist Gustave Doré (1832–1883) envisioned Arachne with a beautiful woman's head and torso and spider's legs.

**Color:** Purple

**Flower:** Purple wolfsbane (beware: extremely poisonous!); spider lily

**Offerings:** Images of spiders; silk and other luxury fabrics; your own handiwork

**See also:** *Athena; Fates (1); Weaving Maiden*

## Aradia

**Origin:** Italy

In the beginning was Diana, primordial Spirit of Darkness. She divided the world into complementary opposites: yin and yang, male and female, light and darkness. The light half evolved into her brother, Lucifer. Diana desired him, wishing to unite and merge, but Lucifer wanted light to remain completely distinct from darkness. Diana pursued him but he resisted.

Lucifer slept with his favorite cat. Diana switched places with her and so she seduced her brother, in the guise of a black cat. From this union, the world's first witch was conceived: Aradia, Messiah of Witches. Diana sent her daughter to Earth with the mission of teaching witchcraft, the sacred arts of Diana, Queen of Witches. That's the first coming of Aradia the Messiah according to the mysterious grimoire, *Aradia or The Gospel of the Witches*. Aradia returned for a second coming, too.

*This* Aradia was born in Volterra, Italy, on 13 August 1313 (13 August is Diana's sacred day) and stimulated a revival of Italian witchcraft and pre-Christian traditions long driven into hiding by the Church. She learned the Old Ways from her family and taught them to others. She was caught by the Inquisition and burned but not before leaving the manuscript that is allegedly the framework for the testament *Aradia or The Gospel of Witches*, published in 1899 by folklorist C. G. Leland. No documentation regarding either Aradia exists prior to publication, but in 1508, Italian Inquisitor Bernardo Rategno noted that a rapid expansion of witchcraft had occurred one hundred fifty years earlier, corresponding in time with Aradia's second coming.

The story of Diana as Creator of the World, Mother of Witchcraft, does not correspond with anything from classical mythology, although that in itself proves nothing. Many myths and deities are known from but one single source. This could be another instance of a lone survival of an ancient myth, or it could be an attempt to defame witches.

The name *Lucifer* ("light-bringer") predates Christianity and was a title given to various Roman deities, female and male. It was originally intended as benevolent, but during the medieval period when *Aradia* was allegedly written, Lucifer was exclusively identified with Satan, the proud handsome fallen angel. Inquisitors branded Diana as the bride of Lucifer in order to damn and defame her and her devotees. (Alternatively, some think Lucifer has also been defamed. See: *Peacock Angel*.)

The name *Aradia* resembles *Herodias*, among medieval Italy's favorite witch-goddesses. Leland, for his part, thought that Aradia was a distortion of Lilith, the real first woman, not the New Testament's Herodias. Italian Jews who brought Lilith to Italy do identify her with black cats.

In the late twentieth century, Aradia emerged as an important Wiccan goddess. She is a major spiritual inspiration for modern Wiccans and practitioners of witchcraft. Rites and descriptions are found within her book and testament.

**Number:** 13



**Offerings:** Strega liqueure; walnuts; rue and tools of witchcraft and divination

**See also:** *Apollo; Artemis; Diana; Eurynome; Herodias; Irodeasa; Jahi; Juno; Lilith; Lilith-Zahriel; Nyx*

## Arang

**Classification:** Ghost

**Origin:** Korea

Arang's father, a magistrate from Seoul, was dispatched to the Miryang Region during the reign of King Myeongjong (1545–1567). He brought his only daughter with him. The position came with a completely furnished and staffed home.

Arang loved to go moon-gazing at Youngnamru Pavillion. A respectable young lady could not go out alone: the female servant assigned as her chaperone conspired with another who wished to rape Arang. So one night, the chaperon slipped away, leaving Arang gazing at the moon. When the man attempted his assault, Arang fought back and was stabbed to death. The servants hid her body in a bamboo grove, then returned home, claiming that Arang had been kidnapped or had eloped. (Different versions of this extremely popular Korean legend exist.)

No ransom demand was ever made. No word of Arang surfaced. Her father searched but eventually, assuming that she had eloped with a stranger, resigned his position in shame. Heartbroken, he returned to Seoul. Every man hired to fill his position died within twenty-four hours of taking office. Rumors of a curse spread. Eventually no one wanted the job: the position was left unfilled.

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*Another version of Arang's tale (but not the official version) describes her as a maid killed by her employer's son when she resisted rape.*

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One day a civil servant napping at the Youngnamru Pavillion, the scene of the crime, dreamed of a woman in white who told him, "Finally, I have met the man who can avenge me." She explained that she had appeared to each new deputy, hoping that he would avenge her, but instead all had dropped dead of fright. There was no curse. The ghost meant no harm. All the men were just so terrified of her, their hearts literally stopped. Or at least so she claimed.

The civil servant asked Arang to identify her murderer, but she just waved a red flag and disappeared. When he awoke, he asked for and received the position vacated by Arang's father. The first thing he did was obtain a list of all his employees, including household staff. Noting that one man was named "Red Flag," he had him interrogated. Eventually the servants confessed. Arang's body was found, the knife still in her breast. Proper funeral rites were arranged. The magistrate who avenged her lived and prospered.

Arang is invoked to protect young or vulnerable women and to punish rapists. She may also be invoked to encourage malefactors to confess their crimes.

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*The 2007 Korean horror movie, Arang, does not retell the traditional legend but takes inspiration from the old story.*

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**Sacred site:** Local people deemed it wise to build a shrine for Arang. The Arang Pavillion (*Arangkat*) stands on a bluff overlooking the Miryang River. It once stood within a bamboo grove, but the grove has been largely cleared away.

**Sacred dates:** Rituals to honor and propitiate Arang are held annually on the sixteenth day of the fourth lunar month.

**Offerings:** Fruit; wine; incense; candles; and pilgrimages to her shrine

**See also:** *Ghost; Mae Nak; Oiwa; Okiku*

## Arawn

**Origin:** Wales

Arawn is King of Annwn, a Welsh paradise described in the First Branch of the Mabinogi. Annwn is a realm of death, a dwelling place and way station for those who have completed their earthly incarnation, but it is not the only Otherworld. As Otherworlds go, it is particularly pleasant. Arawn is a hospitable and gracious host.

According to Welsh myth, Arawn is a loyal and beneficial ally. Following his advice allegedly *always* leads to prosperity. Post-Christianity, Arawn transformed into a Wild Hunter, flying through the sky on winter nights.

**Attribute:** Arawn owns a huge diamond-and pearl-studded cauldron fueled by the breath of nine virgin girls. This cauldron will not cook food for cowards. It was eventually stolen at great cost by a party that included King Arthur.

**Animals:** Pig, dogs

**Dates:** Arawn travels with his Wild Hunters and hounds during the Yule season. He also favors eves of saints' feasts, including Saint Agnes' Eve; Saint David's Eve (David is patron saint of Wales); Michaelmas; Saint John's Eve, and Saint Martin's Eve, not to mention, of course, All Souls Eve.

**See also:** *Annwn, Hounds of; Hafgan; Rhiannon; Wild Hunt*

## Ardat Lili

**Origin:** Sumeria

Ardat Lili is a dangerous storm spirit from ancient Sumeria, a vampiric succubus who visits men at night. She inspires them to masturbate as she conceives other demons from men's nocturnal emissions. She is very ancient: surviving information is limited and unclear. She may be an ancient incarnation of Lilith, Lilith's handmaiden, or a closely related spirit.

**See also:** *Lilith; Lillu Spirits; Vampire*

## **Ardoksho**

**Also known as:** Ardoxsho

**Origin:** Bactrian; Kushan

The Kushan Empire once stretched from Afghanistan to Northern India. For several centuries in the early Common Era, it controlled trade routes between east (China) and west (Iran, the Middle East, and Rome). This seems to be where Ardoksho originates, but arguments are also made that she comes from Iran. Ardoksho is a goddess of abundance, sometimes identified with Hindu goddess Lakshmi. Her image appears frequently on Kushan coins. Carrying a coin with Ardoksho's image allegedly attracts money, abundance, and good fortune (or at least that's the legend the coin dealers tell).

**Iconography:** She is depicted as a majestic woman seated on a throne.

**Attribute:** Cornucopia

**See also:** *Lakshmi*

## **Arduinna**

**Origin:** The Ardennes

Arduinna is the goddess of the Ardennes, the once heavily forested region, primarily in Belgium and Luxembourg but also in France and Germany, that shares her name. Arduinna protects human hunters and wild boars, maintaining the sacred balance between them. The Ardennes was long a Pagan stronghold: in 565 CE, Saint Walfroy is documented preaching to people in the region, advising them to abandon Arduinna. The Romans identified her with Diana.

**Manifestation:** Arduinna rides naked through the woods on a huge boar. Alternatively she wears a short, belted tunic. She is very closely identified with her animal familiar: even when she manifests outside the

forest, there may be some sort of porcine reference.

**Iconography:** A huge statue of Arduinna-Diana was destroyed in 590 in Carignan, France, near the present sanctuary of the Black Madonna of Avioth.

**Attribute:** Hunting knife

**Mount:** Boar

**Planet:** Moon

**See also:** *Black Madonna of Avioth; Diana; Maria Lionza*

## Ares

*Father of Victory; Lord of the Dance*

**Origin:** Thrace

**Classification:** Olympian spirit

Ares, Lord of War, is the Greek Olympian spirit who garners the least respect. Even Zeus told him that he was the Olympian he loved least. He made people nervous and was considered a dangerous, though useful, spirit.

Ares *loves* war passionately. He loves brawling, the heat of battle, a good fight. Ares may fight on either side or both: he enjoys the fighting itself. He may instigate a fight just for the fun of it (even if he's the only one having a good time). Ares is not a cool-headed strategist sitting in the war office; he may be a military leader, but he's the first to jump into the fray, a howling, screaming warrior.

Official Greek myth describes Ares as a son of Zeus and Hera, or as only Hera's child. One version suggests that she was so annoyed when Zeus gave birth to Athena and Dionysus that she determined to give birth independently, too. She conceived Ares without male input.

Ares was reared by Priapus, who taught Ares dancing first, warcraft later. Ares had a long love affair with Aphrodite (she bore him four children), although she is officially married to his brother, Hephaestus.

Ares and Aphrodite may be venerated together.

Mythology books tend to disparage and belittle Ares. He's treated as a minor Olympian, frequently compared unfavorably to Athena. The truth is more complex. In the *Iliad*, Ares reproaches Zeus for giving birth to Athena, describing *her* as crazed and frantic, reversing the usual image of Ares as bloodthirsty and Athena as the spirit of cool wisdom.

Athena helps Heracles kill Ares' pets, the Stymphalian birds. Several of Heracles' labors seem at least tangentially directed against Ares. Ares gave Hippolyta, Queen of the Amazons, the golden girdle that was the object of Heracles' ninth labor.

Historians suggest that Ares entered Greece from Thrace. (See also: *Bendis; Dionysus; Orpheus.*) Devotion to him spread through Macedonia to Thebes, Athens, and especially Sparta, where he was embraced. Ares was also deeply venerated in Scythia, Thrace, and Colchis (now modern Georgia). Ares is closely identified with Amazons, who worshipped him as an ancestral spirit.

Ares is not ashamed to fight alongside a woman. He encourages Aphrodite's warrior aspects and lends her his own war-chariot. Ares lacks an official wife or consort. His closest female companion is his sister, Eris. However, he may just not be monogamous. He maintains long stable relationships with several women, including an Amazon Queen.

Ares is a devoted father. When his daughter Alkippe was raped by one of Poseidon's sons, Ares promptly killed him. Poseidon accused him of murder. Ares was tried before the Olympian pantheon and acquitted. In a cosmology where rape was common, Ares objects and protects his daughter.

Keep Ares' image outside your doors or just inside to keep watch and chase enemies away. He is petitioned for victory, courage, protection, and martial skills. He is a sociable spirit and likes the company of other spirits. He has a quick temper, but it usually blows over quickly, too. The exception is Athena: there's a long grudge, competition, and jealousy between them. Keeping them near each other invites fireworks.

In general, his Greek shrines were outside city limits for two reasons:

- Ares was considered dangerous; it might not be safe to keep him too

close to home.

- He was expected to provide the first defense: keeping enemies from even entering the city.

**Favored people:** Warriors of all kinds; those born under the sign Aries

**Manifestation:** A handsome, virile man. In Scythia, he was venerated in the form of a sword.

**Iconography:** Frequently depicted naked but for shield and helmet. A statue of Ares in chains was kept in Sparta, indicating that the martial spirit would never leave Sparta.

**Attributes:** Sword, spear, helmet, shield

**Animals:** Dogs, horses

**Birds:** Vultures; woodpeckers; eagle owls and barn owls; the Stymphalian birds

**Mount:** His chariot is pulled by four fire-breathing stallions.

**Color:** Red

**Spirit allies:** Ares leads a host of battle spirits including his sister, Eris, and his sons Deimos (Terror) and Phobos (Fear). He has a good relationship with Amazons. Ares may lead an army of disease spirits.

**Planet:** Mars

**Plant:** Garlic

**Metal:** Iron

**Sacred site:** Ares and his fearsome host haunt old battlegrounds, reminiscing over good times. He had a temple with a sacred grove in Laconia, Sparta, where an annual festival, restricted to male devotees, was held for him. He also has a private island off the coast of Colchis, a haven for Stymphalian birds who survived Heracles' massacre.

**Offerings:** It is traditional to make an offering on the eve before an anticipated battle (military or otherwise). Give him wine, hard liquor,

miniature weapons, and/or images of horses.

**See also:** *Aglauros; Alala; Amphitrite; Aphrodite; Athena; Enyo; Eris; Hephaestus; Hera; Heracles; Mars; Poseidon; Priapus; Tabiti; Zeus*

## Arethusa

**Also known as:** Arethousa; Aretusa

**Classification:** Nymph or Nereid

**Origin:** Greece

Arethusa bathed in a beautiful, crystal-clear river. She thought she was unobserved but Alpheios, spirit of the river, saw her and fell madly in love. He emerged from the waters to embrace her, but she rejected him and fled, appealing to Artemis for help.

Artemis rescued her, bringing her to Ortygia, Sicily, where Arethusa was transformed into a stream. The story doesn't end there: Alpheios was genuinely enamored. He searched high and low for Arethusa, and when he finally discovered her, he sent his waters to merge with hers. According to legend, Greece's Alpheios River emerges in the springs of Arethusa in Sicily.

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*The Arethusa is a freshwater spring surrounded by saltwater harbors. The fish in her spring were sacred, and it was forbidden to eat or otherwise molest them.*

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Arethusa didn't spend her time in Sicily hiding. She became an important guardian goddess of people and land, matron spirit of the city of Syracuse. (Her myth also legitimizes the presence of Greek colonists in Sicily.) She reproached Demeter for inflicting famine on Sicily while mourning Persephone's loss. Arethusa had a view into Hades from the bottom of her spring and told Demeter that she could see Persephone,



who looked unhappy.

Arethusa may be petitioned for healing, protection, and prosperity.

**Manifestations:** Arethusa manifests as a beautiful woman and as the spring of Arethusa.

**Iconography:** Arethusa appears on many coins from Syracuse, usually in the company of dolphins.

**Creature:** Dolphin (once common in the harbor near Syracuse)

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*The story of Arethusa is told in the fifth book of Ovid's Metamorphosis and in the poem "Arethusa" by Percy Bysshe Shelley. Shelley's version has a happy ending: Arethusa and Alpheios are reconciled, living happily together having "grown single-hearted."*

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**See also:** *Alpheios; Demeter; Nereid; Nymph; Persephone*

## Argante

### *Silver*

**Classification:** Arthurian

Argante, the Silver Queen, appears only once in surviving Arthurian sources, where she is identified as the Queen of the Isle of Avalon. Her name derives from an Old Celtic word for "silver," *Arganto*. She appears in the first English vernacular version of the Arthurian saga, the *Brut* of Layamon, written near the end of the twelfth century. Layamon, an English parish priest, lived near the Welsh border by the Severn River. He wrote for a popular audience rather than an exclusively scholarly or noble one.

In the *Brut*, Arthur's last words express his plan to go to Avalon to see Argante, the queen, whom he describes as the fairest of maidens, the

comeliest of fays. She will heal him so that he can return to his British kingdom. Some now believe Argante to be a title or other name for Morgan le Fay. Others perceive her as Avalon's co-queen or perhaps its sole ruler, completely independent from Morgan.

**See also:** *Fairy; Morgan le Fay*

## Arhats

### *Worthy Ones; Destroyers of the Enemy*

The Arhats were sixth-century BCE disciples of the historical Buddha. Arhat is the Sanskrit name for this category of spirit; they are also known as Lohan (Chinese), Nahan (Korean), and Rakan (Japanese). They are sometimes called Buddhist saints. These acolytes were able to achieve freedom from ignorance and suffering. They may be compared to apostles, in terms of their actual relationship with the historic Buddha. The enemies they destroy are greed, delusion, desire, and old karmic residue.

In the Buddhist spiritual hierarchy, Buddhas are at the pinnacle, followed by Bodhisattvas and then Arhats. Many find the Arhats to be the most approachable. Arhats are miracle workers, and many people seek their blessings.

There are Arhats and then there are *Arhats*. Although technically there may be thousands of Arhats, there is an inner sanctum of "Immortal Arhats," whose numbers are given as sixteen, seventeen, or eighteen, depending on tradition. (The first sixteen are fairly standard; debate continues over the remaining two.) Immortal Arhats use their magical knowledge and power to prolong their lives indefinitely in order to preserve the Buddha's teachings, especially in difficult, corrupt times. Each of the Immortal Arhats leads a retinue of 500 to 1,600 subordinate Arhats.

- There were originally sixteen Arhats: this is the number accepted in India.
- Two more were added by the Chinese so that there are eighteen Lohans/Arhats.

- Varying traditions exist in Tibet: there may be sixteen, seventeen, or eighteen.

The standard sixteen include Ajita, Angaja, Bhadra, Chudapanthaka, Jivaka, Kalika, Kanakavatsa, Kanaka Bhadra, Nagasena, Nakula/Vakula, Panthaka, Pindola Bharadvaja, Rahula, Subinda, Vajraputra, and Vanavasin.

Among the most prominent Arhats are:

- Arhat Angaja: depending on tradition, he may be the first Arhat. He dwells on Mount Kailash in the Himalayas. His blessing offers especially potent protection from illness and anguish. After receiving his blessings, the children of various deities gave Angaja all sorts of valuable, precious gifts: too many to cope with. Eventually they all merged into his two attributes: an incense burner and a fly whisk formed from a yak's tail. (See also: *Shiva*.)
- Arhat Pindola Bharadvaja is the most widely revered Arhat in Japan. He has the gift of healing. Rub the part of his statue that corresponds to the part of your body that is ailing or feels pain while petitioning his blessings and help. Children's bibs and bonnets are tied to his statue as part of the process of requesting his protection for them. (See also: *Binzuru*.)
- Arhat Rahula: only son of the historic Buddha (Siddhartha Gautama; Shakya muni). He walked in his father's presence and attained enlightenment. Arhat Rahula teaches in the Heaven of the Thirty-Three Deities (*Trayastrimsa*); he tutors the children of the heavenly inhabitants who repay him with gifts of beautiful, powerful, jeweled tiaras.

**Iconography:** Arhats may appear individually or in company with each other, typically in groups of four or more. Their standardized images are predominantly based on Buddhist records and the works of Chinese Tang Dynasty painters.

**Offerings:** Incense, prayers, good deeds on behalf of others, upholding Buddhist ideals, visits to their shrines

**See also:** *Bodhisattva; Buddha; Buddha Shakyamuni; Dharmatala*

## Ariadne

*The Holy One; The Pure One*

**Origin:** Crete

Ariadne is most famous as the Minotaur's sister. She fell in love with Theseus and betrayed her brother, family, and kingdom by helping Theseus enter the labyrinth, kill the Minotaur, and escape. Ariadne holds the end of the spool of thread that rescues Theseus from the labyrinth. He rewards her by abandoning her on the deserted isle of Naxos, where Dionysus finds and marries her and they live happily after.

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*The tale of Ariadne, Theseus, Dionysus, and the Minotaur is the subject of operas, comics, and philosophy books. An illustrated retelling is found in Doris Orgel's Ariadne, Awake! (Viking, 1994).*

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Beneath the classical myth lies a goddess. Ariadne is a pre-Greek goddess of Minoan Crete, possibly a snake and/or spider goddess. Perhaps after the fall of Minoan civilization, she decided to leave home and see the world. That's what she does with Dionysus: their marriage is described as fruitful and joyful. They travel together, teaching the art of making wine. In some versions, Ariadne is immortal and they're traveling still. The Ariadne of Minotaur fame may be this goddess, her avatar, or her high priestess.

In other myths, she eventually dies, either of old age or in childbirth. Dionysus commemorates her by placing her crown in the sky. Alternatively, when he retrieves his mother from Hades, Dionysus simultaneously resurrects Ariadne.

Ariadne is invoked for assistance with true love, marriage, and childbirth. She is considered an ameliorating influence on Dionysus and may be petitioned for relief of alcoholism.

**Iconography:** Ariadne, happily in company with Dionysus, was a

favorite subject of ancient Greek vase painters. Victorian painters preferred to pose her alone. She is often portrayed as a sleeping goddess. Artist John William Waterhouse (1849–1917) envisioned Ariadne dressed in deep saffron hues, sleeping in the company of leopards and poppies.

**Spirit allies:** Ariadne is venerated alongside her husband, mother-in-law, satyrs, and any of the spirits in Dionysus' entourage. In addition, she was also traditionally venerated together with Aphrodite in Cyprus.

**Plant:** Ivy, which twines like snakes; potentially a mild intoxicant; symbolic of eternity

**Animal:** Snake

**Bird:** Crane. (Ariadne was venerated with crane dances.)

**Emblem:** She is associated with both the lab-yr and the labyrinth.

**Constellation:** The Corona Borealis (Northern Crown) is her crown.

**Offerings:** Wine; flowers

**See also:** *Akalli; Aphrodite; Dionysus; Pasiphae; Semele*

## Arianrhod

### *The Silver Wheel*

**Origin:** Wales

A weird tale appears in the Welsh epic *Fourth Branch of the Mabinogi*: Math, Lord of Gwynedd, must rest with his feet in the lap of a virgin girl. When his last foot-holder loses her credentials, Arianrhod, daughter of Don and Beli and Gwydion's sister, becomes a candidate for the position.

As a test of her virginity, she must step over Math's magic wand. She does and *instantly* gives birth to twin boys. The first, Dylan, immediately joins the sea spirits. Arianrhod's brother, Gwydion, takes the other boy under his protection. Arianrhod imposes three taboos on this twin, including the proviso that he will not receive a name until she feels like

giving him one. Gwydion eventually tricks her into naming him Llew Llaw Gyffes. Gwydion manages to subvert the other taboos, too, consistently subverting Arianrhod's authority.

This is just part of a very complex saga written down by Christian commentators based on much older Celtic oral traditions. Arianrhod is presented as a strange, hostile girl, but older versions may have told of a moon goddess who birthed the sea and sun (or at least the spirits thereof).

Arianrhod's name means "Silver Wheel" which is a Celtic metaphor for the moon. One of her sons is a sea spirit; the other is associated with the sun. Her mother, Don, may be the ancestress of the entire Welsh pantheon; her father may or may not be Belenus.

Little information survives regarding Arianrhod, but she is beloved in the modern Pagan community. Vestiges of myth indicate that she is an extremely powerful goddess. She owns two fortresses: one in the sky; one on an island in the sea. Arianrhod's wheel may be perceived as a lunar year; she is sometimes given dominion over the Welsh zodiac and sacred astronomy.

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*Hidden within Arianrhod's myth may be a powerful lunar goddess and her attempts to maintain her authority against those who venerate the sun. A full retelling and exploration of themes is found in Sharynne MacLeod NicMhacha's 2005 book, Queen of the Night (Weiser Books).*

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**Planet:** Moon

**Metal:** Silver

**Constellation:** In Welsh, the Corona Borealis (Northern Crown) is known as *Caer Arianrhod*, Arianrhod's Fortress.

**Sacred site:** *Caer Arianrhod*, Arianrhod's Fortress, a reef off the coast of Gwynedd, Wales, is reputedly the remains of Arianrhod's island castle, only visible during low tide.

**See also:** *Blodeuwedd; Lleu Llaw Gyffes*

## **Arion**

**Origin:** Greek

Poseidon and Demeter coupled in the form of horses. (Whether this was consensual on Demeter's part depends on the version of the myth.) From this union, Demeter birthed twins, Despoena and Arion.

Arion is a beautiful, oracular, immortal talking stallion. Invoke him for information. Some speculate that vestiges of his veneration survive in the talking horse head of the Brothers Grimm fairy tale, *The Goose Girl*.

**See also:** *Demeter; Despoena; Poseidon*

## **Aristaeus**

*Ever Close Follower of the Flocks; The Honey Lord; The Bee King; The Best*

**Also known as:** Aristaios

**Origin:** Berber or Greek

Aristaeus, son of the Nymph Cyrene and Apollo, was born in Libya and raised in Thessaly. There are different versions of exactly who raised Aristaeus, but perhaps they collaborated or took turns:

- Gaia and the Horae
- Chiron and the Muses
- Nymphs

Chiron had prophesied that Cyrene and Apollo would bear a Divine Child, destined to be the best of deities: a new, improved, undefiled Zeus or Apollo. Chiron taught Aristaeus hunting and warfare, but Aristaeus preferred the pastoral life, especially beekeeping.

Aristaeus is described as inventing beehives and beekeeping; cheese making; and the oil press (and by extension, olive oil). This is not quite true. Aristaeus learned all these arts from Nymphs. However, Aristaeus

was the one who took these previously secret, sacred arts and taught them to people. He is responsible for our knowledge, for our ability to spread honey on toast. In addition to the other arts of which he is master, the Muses taught Aristaeus healing and divination.

Aristaeus married the Nymph Autinoë, daughter of Cadmus and Harmonia. They have several children, including two daughters, Makris and Nysa, who helped hide and rear baby Dionysus and a son, Actaeon, famous for his fatal encounter with Artemis.

Aristaeus' epithet, "Ever Close Follower of the Flocks," technically refers to his function as guardian of herds. It also describes his relationship with devotees: he keeps an ever-watchful eye for danger. He is a generous, benevolent deity. If you seek to learn any of the arts of which he is master (or if you labor in those fields), he is a spiritual sponsor. He protects women, children, and nature.

**Favored people:** Beekeepers; cheese makers; those who grow olives or produce oil; those raising sheep, goats, and cattle (especially on artisanal levels)

**Animals:** In addition to herds and flocks, Aristaeus is the Bee King.

**Sacred sites:** Aristaeus lives in a cave on a mountain on the island of Euboea. He was venerated throughout Sicily. His statue stood within a temple of Dionysus in Syracuse.

**Offerings:** The food he loves: honey, Greek cheese; fine olive oil. Cook Greek dishes for him. Serve wine, retsina, and spring water. Sponsor beekeepers.

**See also:** *Apollo; Chiron; Dionysus; Gaia; Horae; Kura; Muse; Nymph; Zeus*

## **Arnemetia**

*Lady of the Grove; She Who Dwells by the Sacred Grove*

**Origin:** Celtic

Arnemetia is the goddess of the healing springs of Buxton, Derbyshire,



England. The spa at Buxton is unique as there are actually two springs situated closely together, gushing out two kinds of water. The Romans and the Celtic people they conquered may have disagreed on many things, but they shared a love of thermal baths and the spirits who preside over them. The Romans established a settlement near Arnemetia's springs circa 78 CE, calling the sacred spa *Aquae Arenemetiae*: Waters of Arnemetia.

Beyond some limited archaeological evidence and Roman inscriptions, little else survives regarding Arnemetia. Her name contains the Celtic word *nemeton*, meaning "sacred grove." She had a temple by the spring presumably complete with grove. Drinking her waters is believed to alleviate illness, especially chronic wasting diseases. The site remained sacred post conversion to Christianity, but the waters were rededicated to female saints. Saint Ann's Well, as it was renamed, was a major pilgrimage site until the Reformation. It is still the site of an annual well-dressing festival.

**Element:** Water

**See also:** *Coventina; Sequana; Sulis*

## Arsinoë II

**Pronounced:** *Ar-sin-o-ee*

**Origin:** Macedonia

Arsinoë (316–271 BCE) was born in Macedonia. After Alexander the Great died, her father was awarded Egypt and Libya, which he ruled as Ptolemy I. At approximately age sixteen, Arsinoë was given in marriage to Lysimachus, forty-five-year-old ruler of Thrace. For fifteen years, she was happy, bearing three sons. In order to position her sons in line for the throne, she had Lysimachus' older son by a previous marriage poisoned.

When her husband died in battle in 281 BCE, she fled for sanctuary to her half brother, ruler of Macedonia. He married Arsinoë; then proceeded to kill her sons. (Two died; the third fled to Egypt.) Arsinoë

herself fled to Egypt, where her father had abdicated in favor of her brother.

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*Before she was a goddess, Arsinoë II was an initiate. Between 289–281 BCE Arsinoë sponsored the building of the Arsinoeion in Samothrace, the largest roofed rotunda of Greek antiquity. The rock-cut altar may indicate veneration of the goddess Axiéros. After her death, Arsinoë was venerated here, too.*

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Arsinoë arrived penniless and out of favor, but she was not one to admit defeat. She is believed to have stimulated the accusations of treason against her brother's queen, Arsinoë I, coincidentally the daughter of Arsinoë II's husband, Lysimachus, King of Thrace. Arsinoë I was exiled and Arsinoë II moved into the king's bedroom. In the fashion of gods and Egyptian pharaohs, they married, scandalizing Alexandria's Greek nobility as they were full brother and sister. Not one to hide, Arsinoë adopted the epithet Philadelphios, "brother lover."

She ruled alongside Ptolemy II, sharing public honors. Coins were minted with both their images. She was considered a living goddess, described as being as beautiful as Helen of Troy and depicted wearing the diadem of a goddess. When she died, she was identified as an avatar of Isis. A law was passed requiring private citizens to offer sacrifices to her. Temples were built in her honor.

**See also:** *Axiéros; Helen of Troy; Hephaestus; Isis; Jezebel*

## Artemis

*Mistress of Animals; She of the Wild; Most Beautiful; Lady of Many Shrines and Many Cities; Lady of the Wild Mountains; Opener of the Womb*

**Origin:** Greece

Artemis is among the most ancient indigenous spirits of Greece. Her

earliest incarnation seems to have been as a bear goddess. By the Classical Era, Artemis was absorbed into the Olympian pantheon as the spirit most associated with wild nature, witchcraft, and women's mysteries. Artemis was venerated by both men and women. She is an initiatory spirit who presides over rites of initiation for both males *and* females.

According to the most popular version of her myth, Artemis was born on the island of Delos, daughter of Leto and Zeus. Her very first act upon drawing breath was to assist Leto in the long, difficult delivery of her brother, Apollo. He is her complement and alter ego: spirit of the sun and masculinity in contrast to her as spirit of the moon and femininity. Artemis is a good friend and ally of Persephone.

Zeus offered Artemis her deepest wish: she requests never to be forced to marry. This may be understood as a demand to maintain autonomy and independence. Emphasis is often placed on Artemis' chastity but her temple rituals involved erotic dancing and masquerades by men and women, not necessarily separately. Artemis' sexuality is not under anyone's control but her own. Her emphasis on chastity may hark back to a primeval bear cult in which sexual abstinence precedes the hunt.

Artemis is Mistress of the Hunt: she protects the wilderness from excessive human encroachment and regulates sacred hunting rituals. Artemis influences, grants, and removes human, animal, and botanical fertility. She regulates menstrual cycles.

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*Artemis rules sexual energy and tension. She presides over mysteries involving sexual energy intended for magical rather than procreative use. Sexual energy is concentrated, rather than released, to serve as a source of esoteric power.*

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Artemis was both loved and feared. Her name may mean "bear" but may also derive from *Artamos*, "slaughterer" or "butcher." She preserves, bestows, and takes the lives of animals *and* people. She was among the last Greek deities to reject human sacrifices. She grants fertility to those

previously unable to conceive but also decides who survives childbirth (women and animals). She is the gatekeeper who determines who lives and who dies.

- Artemis can bestow or withhold health, wealth, life, and fertility.
- She can undo any mischief caused by Nymphs or Nereids.
- Artemis may be petitioned for a swift death.

Veneration of Artemis was never entirely suppressed, nor was she ever as closely associated with malefic witchcraft as her Italian counterpart, Diana. Instead her spiritual functions were officially redistributed to male saints, especially Saint Nicholas but also Saint Artemidos, who emerged to take her place. Artemis survives in modern Greek lore: she still wanders the wilderness, but rather than leading a band of Nymphs, she is now Lady Beautiful, Queen of the wild Neraida.

**Favored people:** Girls and women in general; lesbians; sailors and mariners; Amazons; women athletes, especially runners, swimmers, and archers

**Manifestations:** Artemis is a magician and shape-shifter who takes many forms. Her most common manifestation is as a youthful female athlete, usually accompanied by a stag and/or a pack of hunting hounds. She may wear a horned headdress or a headdress ornamented with a crescent moon. Artemis also manifests as a mermaid or in the form of any animal especially wolves, does, and bears.

**Iconography:** She was venerated in the form of a pillar or tree trunk; a statue in Arcadia depicted her as a mermaid. Some images depict her with a fish amulet over her genitalia.

**Attributes:** Silver bow and arrows; a shield bearing the image of a wolf

**Colors:** White, silver

**Metal:** Silver

**Planet:** The moon is Artemis' spinning wheel, upon which she spins the fate of human beings; spindle whorls, shuttles, and assorted weaving tools have been found in nearly all her shrines; alternatively the crescent moon is her silver bow.

**Realm:** Wild groves and forests (not orchards or farmed trees); she is also closely associated with freshwater, including lakes, marshes, springs, streams, and rivers.

**Sacred sites:** Allegedly her very favorite place is the Arcadia region of Greece. The island of Leros in the Dodecanese is sacred to her, as is Delos, site of her first midwifery.

**Trees:** Walnut, willow, cedar, myrtle, fir, oak, wild fig, bay laurel

**Plants:** The Artemisia family of plants, named in her honor, includes mugwort, wormwood, southernwood, and tarragon.

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*A Greek proverb asks, "Where has Artemis not danced?" Ecstatic, sometimes erotic dance was central to her rites. She is a shamanic spirit, so perhaps it is safe to venture that dance involved ritual possession, too. Drums have been found in many of her shrines. The kordax was danced in her temples. Described as a lewd rotation of abdomen and buttocks, the kordax, a masked dance, may derive from ancient snake dances and is possibly a precursor of modern belly dance.*

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**Bird:** Quail

**Sacred creatures:** She is the Lady of the Beasts: all wild animals are sacred to her but especially bees, bears, boars, deer, dogs, dolphins, goats, fish, wolves, and cats great and small. Her chariot is drawn by stags.

**Spirit allies:** Although Artemis is often described as a solitary spirit, she is often found in the company of others. In addition to her animal companions, she has a band of Nymphs who serve and accompany her. Her cousin, Hekate, is her favorite companion. She has a close alliance with Apollo and Leto.

**Number:** 6

**Sacred days:** Artemis is honored on the sixth of each month (lunar or solar).

**Altars:** Artemis' shrines were decorated with boars' heads or tusks.

**Offerings:** Make them on behalf of wild nature (keeping it wild) and the animals she loves, especially bears, deer, and wolves. In Athens, she was honored with round honey cakes. Offerings may be laid on household altars or left at a crossroads at midnight or noon.

**See also:** *Adonis; Aphrodite; Apollo; Aristaeus; Artemis of Ephesus; Diana; Fairy, Green; Hekate; Iphigenia; Lady of the Beasts; Leto; Ner aida; Nymph; Persephone; Polyboea; Ragana; Selene; Zeus*

## Artemis of Ephesus

**Also known as:** Many Breasted Artemis or Many Breasted Diana

During the Hellenistic period, when Greek was the *lingua franca* of much of the ancient world, the deity worshipped in Ephesus was commonly called "Artemis." As Rome became dominant, she was called "Diana" in order to impose a Roman identity on this most important goddess. The votive image venerated in Ephesus does not really resemble either Artemis of Greece or Diana of Italy. Instead she more closely resembles Near Eastern Mother goddesses. This may reveal something about the hidden history of Artemis or it may be that another deity lurks beneath the Greco-Roman names, possibly Kybele or Asherah, both of whom resemble this deity and were venerated nearby. Alternatively, a now forgotten Amazon goddess was originally venerated here who was identified with Artemis by early Greek settlers.

This isn't obscure history: the Temple of Artemis/Diana in Ephesus, now in modern Turkey, was among the ancient world's Seven Wonders. Although the temple was destroyed, as was the original votive statue, the shrine was a *major* tourist and pilgrimage site: vendors sold reproductions of the statue in the same manner that modern visitors to any monument favored by tourists will find countless vendors selling countless souvenir replicas. Reproductions of the statue of the Many-Breasted Goddess survive, so we know what she looked like: a beautiful,

regal, crowned woman, her torso completely covered by multiple breasts, indicating her capacity to nurture and provide for all, her long tight skirt covered by reliefs of animals and birds.

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*Date palms were among the most sacred trees throughout what is now the Middle East.*

*Inanna-Ishtar is sometimes depicted as a date palm, as is Asherah, famed as the wet nurse of her pantheon. She possessed the magical capacity—and presumably the breasts—to nurse them all simultaneously.*

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The shrine's single most sacred object was a meteor in her crown, believed to contain the very essence of the goddess. The shrine was destroyed and rebuilt several times. The goddess herself chose the site by falling there in the form of a meteorite, which landed upon a date palm. (An alternative legend says that Amazons found the black meteorite in a swamp.)

Records indicate that the earliest temple was built in the eighth-century BCE as a simple tree shrine, allegedly by Amazons, passionate devotees of this goddess. The original votive image was not in the form of a woman but in the form of that original date palm hit by the meteorite. That first simple tree shrine was destroyed by Cimmerians in 650 BCE. The Amazons lost control, but the shrine survived and was continually rebuilt:

- A temple-shrine was built in 580 BCE but sacked, rebuilt, then sacked again.
- A fourth temple of priceless white marble was sponsored by King Croesus of Lydia.
- In October 356 BCE, a man wishing to immortalize his name by committing a crime so tremendous it could never be forgotten set the temple's wooden precincts aflame. (A legend suggests that the fire occurred in July 356 on the night Alexander the Great was born.)

Artemis couldn't save her temple as she was attending the birth.)

An indignant population joined to rebuild the shrine. *This* temple is the one called the greatest of the Seven Wonders. The lintel was so huge that the architect Dinocrates despaired of ever adjusting it correctly. He was on the verge of suicide when Artemis appeared to him in a dream and assured him that the lintel was now perfectly in place, that she had taken care of it. When he awoke, he discovered this to be true.

Ephesus was a great city, its economy based on the Temple of Artemis/Diana. Small votive images of the Many-Breasted Diana of Ephesus were sold to *thousands* of annual pilgrims, as documented in the New Testament (Acts 19). Saint Paul's criticism led to rioting and his expulsion from Ephesus. As Christianity gained influence, his expulsion would be revenged:

- The statue was destroyed in 400 CE by a Christian zealot who boasted of having overthrown "*Demon Artemis.*"
- In 406 CE Saint John Chrysostom preached against the Temple of Artemis at Ephesus. It was looted and burned soon afterward.
- A fifth-century inscription mentions the replacement of a statue of Artemis with a cross.

Less than thirty years after the final destruction of Artemis' temple, Ephesus was given a new sacred matron: Mary, Mother of Jesus, allegedly spent her last years in Ephesus. She was proclaimed Mother of God here in 431 CE. The city was rededicated to her and remains a major pilgrimage site. The ruins of the temple remain grand and imposing. The beautiful temple pillars were eventually brought to Constantinople and incorporated into the Hagia Sophia Byzantine church amid great controversy. It was feared that the pillars were a corrupting influence and that the church would become a pilgrimage for secret Pagan devotions. Veneration of the Many-Breasted Goddess of Ephesus may survive in the form of some Black Madonnas.

**Iconography:** The most famous surviving image of the Many-Breasted Goddess of Ephesus is a second-century Roman alabaster and bronze statue with black face, hands, and feet. She has multiple breasts and wears a tower crown. Her dress is covered with images including bees, bulls, deer, and goats.



**Sacred sites:** In addition to Ephesus, the city of Marseilles, now in France, was a major cult center for this goddess.

**See also:** *Artemis; Asherah; Black Madonna; Demon; Diana; Hekate; Inanna; Kybele; Leto; Maries de la Mer*

## **Artio**

**Origin:** Celtic

Artio is a bear goddess and guardian of bears. Her very name means “Bear.” Although now most associated with Bern, Switzerland, the bear city, inscriptions dedicated to Artio have also been found near Trier.

**Iconography:** In 1832, an ancient bronze statue identified by an inscription as Artio was exhumed in Bern. It depicts a seated woman offering fruit to an extremely large bear.

**See also:** *Artemis; Callisto*

## **Aryong-Jong**

*Lady of the Dragon Palace*

**Also known as:** Alyeong

**Origin:** Korea

Aryong-Jong is a dragon goddess of water, rain, and fertility and the consort of the first King of Silla, an ancient Korean kingdom. The people of Silla decided they needed a king. They looked long and hard but were unable to find anyone suitable. Finally a magical white horse led them to the foot of a mountain where they discovered an unusual red or blue egg. The horse gave a cry and flew up to heaven, and a beautiful, radiant baby boy emerged from the egg. The people of Silla realized that they had found their king; soon they decided he also needed a suitable mate. Again they searched but couldn't find anyone suitable until a *kyeryong* (chicken-dragon) emerged from the sacred Aryong-Jong well near

Saryang-ni village.

Reports vary. Either the dragon gave birth to a baby girl or the dragon died and the living girl emerged from the dragon's body. She was the perfect bride for the prince except that her mouth was formed like a chicken's beak, but when bathed in a sacred stream, even this fell away. Aryong-Jong was named after the sacred well. When king and consort were thirteen, they were married and lived happily ever after, ruling wisely and justly and having children. The king died first after reigning for sixty-two years; his wife followed shortly. The people desired to bury them together in the same tomb, but a huge snake emerged, preventing this. Separate funerals were held. Their tombs became pilgrimage sites.

Aryong-Jong emerged from a well and she herself serves as a well, providing rainfall during drought. A traditional ritual for rain involves petitioning her assistance while pouring water through a sieve simulating rain. Her dragon well is a pilgrimage for women seeking to marry or conceive.

**See also:** *Dragon Queens; Kyeryong*

## Arziki

**Also known as:** Bagwariya

**Origin:** Hausa

**Classification:** Bori spirit

At her best, Arziki brings abundance to devotees. Her name means "Prosperity." Her alternative name, Bagwariya, means "the Gwari woman." (The Gwari are neighbors of the Hausa.) Arziki bestows and heals goiters and hunchbacks. She has a strong influence over her husband, Malam Alhaji, and on Dan Galadima. She may be requested to ask them to remove afflictions they have caused.

**Manifestation:** Arziki displays a goiter and a hunchback, the afflictions she causes.

**Color:** Black

**Offering:** Arziki has a voracious appetite. Give generous offerings. She likes cooked black beans but does not like food prepared with peppers. She will eat non-hallal meat, including carrion.

**See also:** *Bori; Dan Galadima; Malam Alhaji*

## **Asase Yaa**

### *Old Woman Earth*

**Also known as:** Aberewa (Primordial Woman)

**Origin:** Ashanti

In the West, Asase Yaa is best known as the mother of Anansi, famous Ashanti trickster spirit. However, she is the spirit of Earth, the Great Mother of Ghana, and a tremendously important spirit in her own right. Although she is very powerful, no shrines or temples are dedicated to her. Instead she is worshipped in the fields. Asase Yaa accompanied enslaved devotees to the Western Hemisphere. She is revered in Guyana and by the Maroons of Jamaica.

Asase Yaa must be placated, typically with libations, before Earth is disturbed for any reason, whether planting, digging a grave, or otherwise. It is traditional to lift a coffin up and down three times before laying it to rest on Earth in order to give Asase Yaa due notice and time to prepare.

**Favored people:** Anyone who has worked a field may consider him-or-herself Asase Yaa's child. She is the Mother of the Dead, their guardian, if they are buried within her.

**Attributes:** Mortar and pestle

**Consort:** Twe, a spirit of water

**Animal:** Goat

**Planet:** Jupiter

**Element:** Earth

**Number:** 8

**Day:** Thursday is her sacred day, and traditionally farmers allow her a day of rest. They refrain from using plows or any sharp tools on her body on that day. This has caused conflict between traditional Ashanti farmers and Christian missionaries who prefer to see Sunday honored. Devotees of Asase Yaa do not practice procreation or agriculture on Thursday; they refrain from planting.

**Place:** Asase Yaa dwells in plowed fields and barren wilderness. She may be approached in either place but *must* be petitioned outdoors, in physical contact with Earth.

**Offerings:** Libations are poured on Earth on Thursday.

**See also:** *Ala; Anansi*

## **Ascalaphus**

**Also known as:** Askalaphos

**Origin:** Greek

**Classification:** Chthonian spirit

Ascalaphus is the chief gardener of Hades, son of Acheron and an infernal Nymph, maybe Gorgyra or Orphne. The one bright spot in gloomy Hades is an orchard of pomegranate trees. Persephone, Spirit of Spring Flowers, took comfort there during her captivity. Ascalaphus handed her some pomegranate seeds and bade her eat them. When she had the opportunity to leave Hades provided she had consumed nothing, it was Ascalaphus who revealed that she had eaten the seeds.

Demeter took revenge: she transformed him into a lizard and buried him beneath a rock. Eventually Heracles moved the rock and he escaped, but Persephone then transformed Ascalaphus into a screech owl. In that shape he remains, seated on Hades' shoulder or serving as Hades' spy. Those seeking a traditional poison garden might request Ascalaphus' assistance and gardening tips.

**See also:** *Demeter; Hades; Heracles; Lampades; Persephone*

### **Ascended Masters**

The term *Ascended Master* refers to incredibly spiritually evolved individuals who serve as teachers of humanity, our spiritual guides. The concept arose amidst Theosophy and the writings of Helena Blavatsky, although she did not use that term. She described the evolved beings she encountered as Mahatmas or Hidden Masters of Wisdom.

The Ascended Masters are so highly evolved that they have achieved immortality and are able to defy and manipulate ordinary laws of matter. According to Madame Blavatsky, their headquarters is in the Himalayas although others claim that the Ascended Masters are chthonic spirits living within Earth, especially within California's Mount Shasta.

Different modern esoteric spiritual traditions understand (or experience) Ascended Masters differently. Some describe a set, defined number of Ascended Masters; others say that the ranks are always expanding. Some define Ascended Masters as humans who ascended to spiritual heights, but other traditions suggest that Ascended Masters are sacred souls who repeatedly assume human form. Souls pass from one incarnation to another. Thus Arthurian Rowena may have later incarnated as the Roman Catholic Saint Teresa of Avila. Alternatively, some Ascended Masters walk the Earth and never die or leave, such as the allegedly immortal Comte de Saint-Germaine.

Ascended Masters derive from any and all religious or spiritual traditions. The Ascended Masters are on Earth to save us from ourselves and to lead people toward enlightenment, love, and expanded esoteric knowledge and existence. Alchemists of the soul, they are petitioned for help with spiritual and occult knowledge as well as for actual physical protection and rescue. Among those considered Ascended Masters are Jesus Christ and Buddha.

**See also:** *Blavatsky, Madame Helena; Great White Brotherhood; Hidden Company; Morya; Serapis Bey*

## Asha

Asha is the Hindu goddess of hope venerated in Afghanistan since time immemorial. There has been a Hindu presence in Afghanistan since the Vedic age. The region was once ruled by a Hindu dynasty.

The center of Asha's veneration is the Asamai temple in the foothills of Koh-i-Asamai in Kabul. The hill is named for Asha: she lives on the mountain peak. The continuous fire in her temple has allegedly burned uninterrupted for over 4,000 years. Asamai temples are now also found in Amsterdam, Frankfurt, and New York City.

## Asherah, Lady of the Sea

*Lady Asherah, Treader on the Sea; Lady of the Pomegranate; Lion Lady; Lady Asherah, Walker on the Water; Lady of the Sinai; Lady of the Pillar*

**Also known as:** Athirat; Asertu (Hittite); Atharath (Arabic); and Elath (the goddess)

Asherah is a spirit of love, reproduction, trees, and all kinds of water: the sea, springs, and wells. Most renowned as the supreme femaled deity of Canaan, veneration of Lady Asherah is ancient and widespread.

References to "the Hebrew goddess" usually mean Lady Asherah. Controversial even in biblical days, her image was repeatedly placed into and removed from Solomon's Jewish Temple. Lady Asherah was introduced into the Jerusalem Temple by Solomon's son, King Rehoboam, circa 928 BCE. Solomon's Temple stood for 370 years; Asherah was within it for no less than 236 years or almost two-thirds of its existence.

Whether the Hebrews learned her worship from the Canaanites or whether Lady Asherah is an indigenous Hebrew spirit remains an unresolved issue and the focus of much scholarly and theological debate. She was also venerated by the Hittites and in Southern Arabia. She may or may not be the same spirit as Hathor. Her most famous priestess was Jezebel. The tribe of Asher is believed to be named in her honor; some consider the biblical matriarch Leah an avatar of Asherah. (See the

Glossary entry for Avatar.)

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*In Canaanite cosmology, Asherah is the wife of El, the chief deity. In ancient popular Jewish religion, Asherah may be the wife of YHWH: inscriptions on storage jars found in Northern Sinai read, “ ... may you be blessed by YHWH and by his Asherah.”*

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Asherah is the mother of the entire Canaanite pantheon, some seventy spirits. Christian references to Jesus walking on water or choosing fishermen as disciples may indicate veneration of Asherah, Judaism's suppressed, forbidden goddess. Asherah may survive as the Kabbalah's Tree of Life. Asherah is a kind spirit who promotes fertility and facilitates childbirth.

**Image:** *Asherah* names both a spirit and a specific type of graven image. The asherah has a very simple form: a pillar featuring a woman's head, breasts, and arms. In the simplest asherahs, only breasts and arms are distinct; the statue is faceless. Others possess a smiling visage and a curly hairdo. Below the waist, the bottom of the image is a cylindrical pillar with a flared base. Literally representing the Tree of Life, the image was intended to be implanted into Earth. Life-sized asherahs made of wood and planted in groves were once found all over Judea. (Technically, the correct Hebrew plural is *asherot*.)

Wood rots; none of these ancient asherahs have survived. Surviving information derives from the Jewish Bible. The word *Asherah* occurs over forty times in the Jewish Bible. Much of the information recounts the removal and destruction of these images. Numerous small clay images have been found throughout Israel. They were commercially manufactured from molds by Hebrew and Canaanite artisans, intended for household use.

**Spirit allies:** Anat; Astarte

**Creatures:** Dove, dog, lion

**Element:** Water

**Places:** Lady Asherah frequents the seashore and is easily petitioned there. She also favors high places full of leafy groves, fresh water, and fruit trees. Asherah offers protection to various city-states, particularly Tyre and Sidon (Jezebel's hometown), now modern Lebanon. The Israeli city Eilat may be named in her honor.

**Tree:** Fruit trees, especially pomegranate

**Petition:** Planting an asherah summons Lady Asherah. They are commercially available but have such a simple shape, even someone with no artistic ability whatsoever could easily craft one. Place it anywhere for purposes of contemplation.

To activate the image for spiritual communication, it must be implanted into Earth. If you lack access to land, Lady Asherah will preside over a flowerpot or container of sand from the sea.

**Altar:** Create a personal altar with shells and stones from the sea. Perform rituals outside if possible.

**Offerings:** Lady Asherah accepts offerings of sweet baked goods, such as cookies or small cakes. She likes fragrant incense, perfume, and liqueurs. Phoenicians and Jews once offered her luxurious feasts to mark the new moon.

**See also:** *Anat; Aphrodite; Artemis of Ephesus; Astarte; Ba'al; Hathor; Hokhma; Jezebel; Mari (2); Shekhina; Sophia; Stella Maris*

## **Ashmodai**

*Prince of the Avengers of Evil*

**Also known as:** Asmodeus

**Classification:** Djinn, demon, or angel

Ashmodai, the destroyer, lives in a palace on a mountain from which he visits Heaven daily to learn the destined fate of human beings,



participate in learned discussions, and receive his assigned orders. He may be the King of Demons, Shedim, or Djinn. He is a spirit of rage who rules anger, jealousy, lechery, and revenge. He's something of a manipulator, encouraging illicit and extramarital love affairs. When he's in a mean mood or if someone annoys him, he encourages the breakup of marriages and soul mates. He allegedly enjoys what biblical sources consider transgressive sex: he likes sex with menstruating women.

Ashmodai may be the son of Naamah. His father may be Adam or Shemhazai, a powerful but rebellious angel. Alternatively he is the son of Agrat and ancient Israel's King David, thus making him King Solomon's half brother. Ashmodai is Solomon's rival and shadow self. He may or may not be the same spirit as the malevolent Iranian Aeshma Deva even though the Latin name Asmodeus is applied to both of them.

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*Despite his rulership of wrath and rage, Ashmodai is generally a good-natured, gregarious spirit who likes to drink. According to legend, Ashmodai is in charge of the casinos and gambling parlors of the Afterlife. He may bestow gambling luck.*

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According to legend, Solomon enslaved Ashmodai, forcing him to help with building projects, including the Jerusalem Temple. Ashmodai paid him back by tricking Solomon into giving him his magic ring. Once Ashmodai had the ring, he sent Solomon into exile, assumed his form, and ruled in his place although Solomon eventually regained his throne. (Solomon got him back: magically recovering his ring from the belly of a fish, he stuck Ashmodai in a bottle like a genie.)

Ashmodai has many wives, including a harem of human women. He is apparently a good father; many folktales describe him finding husbands for his daughters or punishing men who mistreat them.

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*Ashmodai is the husband-killing demon in the Book of Tobit who is eventually*

*vanquished by the archangel Raphael. Raphael is the angel who controls and counteracts the powerful and dangerous Ashmodai.*

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**Manifestations:** He has the reputation of being loud and demonstrating a sensuous nature. He may manifest in the form of a man or a man with goat or rooster feet. He is also known to appear as a black dog.

**Petition:** He is a king and expects to be treated as such. Doff your hat and address him with honorifics. Never get too comfortable or informal with him.

**Offering:** Give him a drink, then give him another. Burn frankincense in his honor. Give him a deck of cards or some casino chips and request his help. But don't ask too often; if you annoy him, he'll wreck your luck instead of enhancing it. If he helps you, count yourself lucky, give him a gift, and leave him alone. Don't ever pester or nag.

**See also:** *Agrat; Demon; Djinn; Genie; Lilith; Mahalat; Naamah; Padilla, Maria de; Raphael; Shedim; Solomon; Solomon's Seventy-two Spirits*

## Ashura

**Also known as:** Asuras

**Origin:** India

The Ashuras are spirits from India who are the hostile rivals of the Hindu deities, the Devas. *Ashura* is now frequently translated as "demon" or "anti-god," but they are an earlier pantheon who came into conflict with the new Hindu pantheon. Many mythologists perceive that they correspond to the Titans or at least play a corresponding role. They are a vanquished but still troublesome pantheon hostile to newer Aryan spirits and so not incorporated into the Hindu pantheon but demonized instead.

Unlike the priest, merchant, and warrior castes of Hinduism, Ashuras are identified with iron smelters; a caste of metalworkers still bears their name. The hostility of the Ashuras derives from a betrayal. Once upon a time, the Devas required the Ashuras' cooperation to churn the cosmic

sea and obtain the Elixir of Immortality. Vishnu engaged their help with the understanding that they would share this precious elixir, although Vishnu actually never intended to do so. Various versions of exactly what happened exist; the end result of all is that the Devas drink the elixir and the Ashuras do not.

**See also:** *Aesir; Gajasura; Titan; Vishnu*

## Ashvins

**Origin:** India

The Ashvins are the Vedic divine twins. These two brothers, Dasra (“Accomplishing Wonderful Deeds”) and Nasatya (“Helpful”) are described as leaders of Heaven. The Rig Veda says they preside over Earth.

The Ashvins are solar horses, sons of the sun, born from the nostrils of their sacred mare mother, Ashvini. They rise at dawn to disperse gloom to the far corners of Earth. They are saviors from sin and are petitioned by the ailing and infirm for peace and healing. The Ashvins not only treat humans, but they are also the personal physicians of the Devas. Just to be in their presence provides healing power. They are also oracular spirits.

**Manifestation:** They are young, rambunctious, full of energy, and sweet-natured.

**Planet:** Sun

**Time:** Sunrise

**Constellation:** Ashvini, the very first of the *Nakshatras* (lunar mansion: divisions through which the moon passes every month in Vedic astrology) associated with the star Beta Arietis, one of the horns in the constellation Aries. (Although the Ashvins are horses, they demonstrate the cardinal energy associated with Aries.)

**Offering:** Honey; ghee (clarified butter: place a cotton wick in ghee and burn)

**See also:** *Saulé*

## **Asklepios**

**Also known as:** Asclepius; Aesculapius

**Origin:** Greece

Asklepios is a master healer so skilled he can raise the dead. He is a shamanic healer who cures via dreams and herbs. His temples are credited as the prototypes of modern hospitals. Veneration of Asklepios is believed to have originated in Thessaly but became extremely widespread, ranging as far afield as England.

There are different versions of his myth. He is usually described as a divine child, marked at birth because he is as radiant as lightning. The crow spirit Coronis may be his mother with no word of his father, or he may be the son of Coronis and Apollo. One myth says that Apollo killed Coronis during her pregnancy but saved baby Asklepios (and inherited her sacred bird, too). Somehow the divine child ended up in the cave of the wise centaur, Chiron. Apollo may have brought him or he may have been abandoned in the forest at birth, nursed by a goat and discovered by a shepherd who brought him to Chiron to rear. (It's unclear whether Apollo was always involved in Asklepios' myth or whether, as Asklepios evolved into a significant, widely venerated independent deity, these myths evolved in order to incorporate him into the official pantheon.)

Chiron taught the boy botany and the healing arts. He traveled and became renowned as a miracle healer, learning the secret of reviving the dead by observing snakes. Hades complained to Zeus, who decided that Asklepios was too powerful to live and zapped him with a lightning bolt. Asklepios now heals spirits and humans as a divine physician.

His shrines (*Asklepions*) were pilgrimage sites. People slept in the Asklepion hoping to receive a dream, which would be interpreted by Asklepios' priests and provide a cure. These sanctuaries usually included a small temple, a number of porches under which the ailing could rest, sleep, and dream, and a spring or tank of fresh water. Asklepios is a chthonic spirit: some of his rituals were conducted beneath ground level.

Nonvenomous snakes slithered freely through the shrine.

The Asklepios required sources of fresh water and so were often built beside springs or near caves, often on sites already sacred to Nymphs. Earlier deities associated with his shrines were not eradicated or removed; instead Asklepios was venerated *with* them.

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*Socrates' last words were to remind friends to sacrifice a rooster to Asklepios on his behalf.*

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Asklepios treats *all* illnesses. He provides miracle cures but not hospice care. He does not treat the pregnant, which he does not consider a medical condition, even if it is a difficult pregnancy. (His friends the Nymphs and Coronis, his mother, may be petitioned instead.)

**Favored people:** Healers of all kinds and those who need healing; those involved with sleep therapy, hydrotherapy, and dream healing and divination

**Manifestations:** A mature man or snake

**Iconography:** Asklepios is rarely without a dog or snake.

**Attribute:** His primary attribute is a staff entwined by one single snake (not the caduceus, which belongs to Hermes and Mercury); also opium pods with which to facilitate dreams and pain relief.

**Places:** His primary shrine was in Epidaurus. There was also a major shrine in Corinth and elsewhere throughout the Hellenistic world. Post-Christianity, some of his sanctuaries were rededicated to Saint Martin of Tours. The Church of Saint Anne in Jerusalem beside the Bethesda Pool may be built over an Asklepios.

**Day:** 1 January

**Animals:** Dogs and snakes

**Spirit allies:** Asklepios is venerated alongside Nymphs and Achelous. He was usually not venerated alone but in the company of his family, especially his daughter, Hygeia, and his mother, Coronis.

**Offerings:** Charms in the forms of body parts made of clay, gold, iron, silver, and stone, similar to modern *milagros*, have been found in his shrines. The poor offered him images formed of dough. Life-sized images have also been found, possibly in repayment for healing. Asklepios was also offered miniature surgical tools, pillows, bottles, slippers, fans, and mirrors.

**See also:** *Achelous; Apollo; Chthonic Spirits; Hades; Hygeia; Nymph; Panacea; Telesforos; Zeus;* and the Glossary entry for *Milagro*

## **Astara**

### *Radiant Dawn*

**Also known as:** Easter; Eostre; Ostara

**Origin:** Germanic

Call her Easter: it's her name. The various different spellings reflect regional pronunciations. Astara was venerated throughout Germanic lands. She is the spirit of resurrection, Lady of Spring, and the return of life and fertility after winter's darkness. Her name derives from the same root word as *estrus* and *estrogen*. It may mean *east*; the direction of the radiant dawn. Astara's annual return is celebrated with flowers, bell ringing, and singing. New fires are lit at dawn.

**Manifestation:** She manifests as a beautiful young woman, with flowers in her hair.

**Consort:** Her male consort takes the form of a rabbit. Sometimes he is the size of a full-grown human male; at other times he's a little bunny that she cradles in her arms. Astara and her frisky rabbit bring the eggs that signify Earth's resurgence of fertility.

**Offerings:** If it's advertised as being for Easter, then it's got her name on

it. Give Astarte Easter baskets and bunnies; painted eggs and chocolate eggs; build her an egg tree. Once upon a time, it was traditional to offer her painted eggs in the cemetery on the Vernal Equinox.

**Day:** The Vernal Equinox; Ostara is the name of the modern Wiccan sabbat celebrating the Spring Equinox.

**Animal:** Rabbit

**See also:** *Ix Chel; Waldmichen*

## Astarte

*Lady of Heaven; Mother of the Blessed*

**Also known as:** Ashtarte. (The final *e* in *Astarte* may or may not be pronounced.)

**Origin:** Levantine

Astarte was worshipped by Canaanites, Egyptians, Hebrews, Philistines, and Phoenicians, but exactly who is she? It can be very difficult to distinguish between West Semitic spirits because of their tradition of addressing spirits by both a personal name *and* an honorific. Thus *Ba'al*, meaning “master,” is the title for a spirit named *Hadd*. *Elath*, literally “Lady,” is a title for the spirit named *Asherah*. *Astarte* means “the womb,” “the conceiving womb,” or “full womb” and is a title for the goddess *Anat*, but it may also be a title for other goddesses associated with fertility or possibly a name for a completely independent spirit. All of the following may be true:

- *Astarte* is a title for *Anat*.
- *Astarte* is the title of the Cypriot goddess whose Greek name is *Aphrodite*.
- *Astarte* is the title for a completely independent spirit, perhaps *Anat*'s sister.

Documents from the thirteenth century BCE indicate the Egyptians considered *Anat* and *Astarte* to be two allied war goddesses. In a twelfth-

century BCE hieratic papyrus, the goddess Neith ordered that Set be given Anat and Astarte as wives. Rameses III called Anat and Astarte “his shields.” Among the triad of Semitic sex/love/war goddesses worshipped in Egypt, Astarte was the favorite (over Anat and Kadesh). She had her own priests and prophets.

Jews used the title *Astarte* to indicate Anat. *Astarte* is mentioned nine times in the Jewish Bible. It is now unknown exactly how the Phoenicians comprehended her identity, which is unfortunate as they are most closely associated with her—the ones, as traders and master navigators, who carried her veneration (and statues) to their colonies in Europe, Africa, and islands in between. By the fourth century BCE, kings of the Phoenician city-state Sidon served as priests of Astarte; their wives were her priestesses.

Astarte is a spirit of abundance, prosperity, love, sex, and war. When the Philistines defeated Israelite King Saul, they placed his captured armor in Astarte’s temple as tribute and thanks. Erotic temple rites and sacred prostitution were central to her veneration. She guards women’s reproductive health.

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*Astarte may be Anat, Aphrodite, and/or Tanit. Any information pertaining to them may pertain to her as well.*

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**Manifestations:** A beautiful, sexy woman sometimes depicted with a Hathor-style hairdo. Alternatively, she is horned.

**Iconography:** A nude woman holding lilies or sometimes wearing a Philistine helmet. A Phoenician statuette uncovered near Granada, Spain, dating to the seventh or sixth centuries BCE, depicts Astarte enthroned, flanked by sphinxes. She holds a bowl beneath her breasts, which are pierced so that milk placed in the statuette flowed from her breasts into the bowl.

**Day:** Friday



**Plants:** Lilies, coriander

**Planet:** Venus

**Bird:** Dove

**Sacred places:** Groves, hilltops, and caves; she had important temples in Beirut, Byblos, Sidon, Tyre, Malta, Cytherea, and Eryx (now Mount Erice, Sicily).

**Offerings:** Lilies, roses, sweet cakes, honey. Ornament your body with henna or honey. Her traditional Phoenician offerings included clothing stained with menstrual blood. Cake molds in the shape of horned Astarte dating from the seventeenth century BCE have been found near Nahariah, Israel. Raphael Patai, author of *The Hebrew Goddess*, suggests that these molds were used to form goddess-shaped cakes either to be burned on an altar or eaten by celebrants (perhaps an ancient precursor of the Catholic host).

**See also:** *Adonis; Aisha Qandisha; Anat; Aphrodite; Asherah; Ba'al; Hathor; Jezebel; Kadesh; Mylitta; Neith; Set; Sphinx; Tanit*

## **Asteria**

*Starry One*

**Also known as:** Astraea; Astraia

**Origin:** Greece

**Classification:** Titan

Zeus got Leto pregnant. Hera, his enraged wife, cursed Leto so that she couldn't give birth anywhere the sun had ever shone. Leto's pregnancy stretched on interminably. Zeus' wandering eye moved from Leto to her sister, Asteria, who attempted to evade Zeus by transforming into a quail and flying away. His interest piqued by what he considered a game of hide-and-seek, Zeus transformed into a predatory eagle, pursuing the little quail.

Asteria transformed into a stone and dropped into the sea, where she

quickly transformed again, this time into Delos, the small rocky island where Leto was finally able to give birth. (The sun hadn't yet shone on Delos.)

Asteria is the goddess of the magic powers of night. She has dominion over various magical arts, including astrology, divination, dreaming, and necromancy. She is an oracular spirit and may be requested to send prophetic dreams. Like mother, like daughter: Asteria may be Hekate's mother.

**Favored people:** Those practicing her arts or seeking to learn them

**Sacred site:** Delos

**Bird:** Quail

**Offerings:** Fragrant incense; divination tools; pilgrimage to her sacred island

**See also:** *Astraea; Hekate; Leto; Zeus*

## **Astghik**

*The Little Star; Bearer of Roses*

**Also known as:** Astgheek

**Origin:** Armenia

Astghik is the spirit of water, beauty, love, joy, and fertility. She is a rose goddess, distributing love through the world by sprinkling it with rose-infused waters. She presides over the ritual act of asperging: sprinkling water or other liquids for purposes of protection, purification, and to demarcate sacred space.

Once when her beloved consort, Vahagan, was injured, Astghik rushed barefoot to his side. In her hurry, she accidentally trod on some thorny white roses: her spilled blood turned the roses red.

Iranian goddess Anahita eventually became very popular in Armenia, absorbing many of Astghik's functions and titles. Astghik, once the

primary spirit, became part of a triad with Anahita and with Astghik's own consort. Theirs is reputedly a good relationship: they can be venerated together.

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*Hydrosols are the by-product of steam-distilled essential oils. When the oils are separated from the water, what was once pure spring water is now infused with the molecules of whatever plant was steam-distilled. Use rose hydrosol to call Astghik. Sprinkle it through the home, on her altar, or on yourself*

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**Favored people:** Astghik traditionally protects women. Those who cultivate roses are also under her dominion.

**Iconography:** Astghik is depicted as a beautiful naked woman in the act of swimming.

**Consort:** Vahagan

**Element:** Water

**Flower:** Roses

**Bird:** Dove

**Time:** Vardavar is Astghik's ancient festival, originally timed to coincide with the rose harvest. Although Armenia became Christian in 301 CE, Vardavar was too beloved (and too much fun) to be abandoned, and so the formerly Pagan holiday was incorporated into the Church calendar as the Feast of the Transfiguration. During the festival, people drench each other with buckets of water. It is now usually celebrated 98 days after Easter.

**Offerings:** Roses, roses, roses! In addition to bouquets, plant rosebushes or offer rose scented soap or perfume. People once honored Astghik by releasing doves.

**See also:** *Anahita*

## **Astraia**

*Starry One*

**Also known as:** Astraea; Asteria

Astraia is the Goddess of Righteous Justice. She lived on Earth during Greece's Golden Age (age of Kronos) but was so dismayed by the evil and lawlessness she witnessed during the Bronze Age that she departed to the heavens. You can find her in the sky as the constellation Virgo.

- Astraia's parents may be Themis and Zeus or Astraios and Eos.
- Astraia is closely associated with Dike and Nemesis, other ancient spirits of justice.
- Some consider her to be the same spirit as Dike.

**See also:** *Asteria; Astraios; Dike; Eos; Kronos; Nemesis; Themis; Zeus*

## **Astraios**

*The Starry One; Father of Stars*

**Also known as:** Astraeus

**Origin:** Greece

**Classification:** Titan

Astraios is the Lord of Stars and Planets. The night sky is his domain. He teaches the arts of astrology and astronomy. Those pursuing astral knowledge or seeking to discover or understand new celestial phenomenon may find him a useful patron.

**See also:** *Astraia; Boreas; Eos; Zephyr*

## **Aswang**

**Origin:** Visayan Islands of the Philippines

The Aswang is a Filipino vampire spirit; a beautiful woman by day, a bloodsucker at night. Her preferred victims are children, the younger the better, and so she is a threat to pregnant women, taking babies right from the womb. Her favorite beverages are blood and amniotic fluid. The Aswang is feared and blamed for miscarriage and blighted ovum.

The Aswang's secret weapon is her long proboscis, the equivalent of a drinking straw. The Aswang walks around innocuously during the daytime, scouting for potential victims, and then near midnight flies to their homes. She stations herself on the roof or outdoors and extends her bloodsucking tube from her nose to the woman's navel, through which she enters the womb and sucks out all fluids.

The Aswang can be combated:

- Visibly pregnant women are discouraged from leaving the safety of their homes after nightfall. (Those not yet visibly pregnant are discouraged from revealing their condition to strangers.) If she must go out, she should only do so in the company of others. (The Aswang prefers sneak attacks.)
- If an Aswang draws near, driving copper spikes into the ground prevents her from following while her intended victim reaches safety.
- The tell-tale sign indicating that an Aswang is near is her noise, which has been described as a *tik-tik* or *wak-wak* sound. (It is audible to anyone, not just the targeted victim.) Here's the tricky bit: if the noise is loud and sounds close, the Aswang is still far away. If the sound is faint and sounds distant, that means she's hovering very near.
- Talismans and amulets prevent the Aswang's attack. Place a handkerchief or cloth soaked in Holy Water over the pregnant belly. A rosary placed on the belly or attached to a belt so that it hangs over the belly wards off the Aswang, too.

The Aswang is inevitably female. The word is now a synonym for *witch*, but she is not a human witch but a spiritual entity. The Aswang causes miscarriage because she's hungry. She may cause death and disease just because she's mean and destructive or because her very presence is so toxic that she spreads infection. The Aswang does not need physical contact to cause harm: she can attack someone via their shadow.

The Aswang has become a popular character in horror entertainment. Beyond the traditional flying vampire-witch, *Aswang* is now a blanket term for fiends of all kinds and may refer to:

- A ghoul that eats human corpses
- A weredog that eats people alive
- A bloodsucking vampire
- A viscera sucker

**Manifestations:** During the day, the Aswang looks like an ordinary woman except that her eyes burn with strange fire. She is a shape-shifter and may take any form.

**See also:** *Acheri; Ghoul; Vampire*

## Atabey

**Also known as:** Atabeira

**Origin:** Taino

**Classification:** Zemi

Atabey is a spirit of fresh water and agricultural and human fertility venerated throughout the Caribbean, including Cuba, Puerto Rico, and Hispaniola (now Haiti and the Dominican Republic). She and her son, Yucahu, were the supreme Taino deities and creators. Atabey controls ocean tides and childbirth. She is petitioned for safe, easy, happy pregnancy and childbirth.

**Iconography:** Atabey may be depicted as a woman on top, a frog below.

**Sacred creature:** Frog

**Planet:** Moon

**See also:** *Anacaona; Xtabay; Yucahu; Zemi*

## Ataegina

**Also known as:** Atégina

**Origin:** Lusitania

The Lusitanians were an ancient European people who may or may not have been of Celtic stock. They inhabited what is now Portugal and Spain. Ataegina, among the primary deities of the Lusitanian pantheon, is a goddess of birth, fertility, healing, illness, renewal, and death. Ataegina's name is believed to be of Celtic derivation and may refer to rebirth.

Ataegina is petitioned to awaken and bless long dormant projects, plans, and relationships. She is petitioned for justice and retribution and invoked to curse others. The Romans identified her with Proserpina.

**Planet:** Moon

**Sacred animal:** Goat

**Tree:** Cypress

**Place:** She was venerated in cypress groves.

**Time:** Spring, the season of rebirth and reawakening

**See also:** *Proserpina*

## **Atargatis**

**Also known as:** Dea Syria, “the Syrian goddess” (Rome); Derceto, “whale of Der” (Philistine)

**Origin:** Sumeria

Fish swimming in the Euphrates discovered an unusual egg floating on the river. They nudged it to shore with their noses. Once on dry land, the egg hatched and Atargatis emerged, in mermaid form.

Atargatis is intensely proud of her mermaid form. Atargatis is no little mermaid longing for legs: when she bore a daughter in the shape of a human, Atargatis was so surprised and dismayed that she killed her lover, the baby's father. Transporting her newborn daughter, Semiramis,

to the wilderness, she left her in the care of doves who fed and attended the baby. Some versions of this legend state that Atargatis then threw herself into a lake, transforming herself into the Great Fish Mother and since that time prefers to communicate with humans through fish.

Atargatis was widely venerated. Her primary shrine was a magnificent temple in Hierapolis, Syria, northeast of Aleppo near the Euphrates. It was the largest, richest temple in Syria and eventually plundered by Romans. Under her Philistine name, Derceto, she had a temple in Ashkelon, now modern Israel. Atargatis counted ancient Israelites among her devotees. She had sacred fish ponds in Crete and Cyprus and a small temple on the sacred island of Delos. There is much conjecture that the temple in Petra, now modern Jordan, belonged to her.

Syrian auxiliaries in the Roman army carried veneration of Atargatis throughout Europe, especially Spain. Inscriptions dedicated to her have been found in Northumberland and Yorkshire. She was a great favorite of Roman Emperor Nero.

Atargatis is petitioned for abundance, health, protection, fertility, safety, and virtually anything else one desires. Devotees traditionally refrain from eating doves and any kind of fish, including shellfish.

**Manifestation:** Atargatis wears a dolphin crown.

**Attribute:** A scepter topped with a dove

**Creatures:** Doves, snakes, fish, whales, dolphins, and other sea creatures. Atargatis' sanctuaries featured sacred trees full of doves and ponds filled with sacred fish. Their gills and lips were pierced and they were decorated with gold ornaments. Fish function as Atargatis' oracle and were hand-fed by her priestesses and priests.

**Place:** Syria, where she was sometimes the most prominent and beloved deity

**Offerings:** Votive offerings of gold and silver fish. Maintain an ornamental pond filled with beautiful, healthy fish. Feed pigeons: they're doves, too. Contributing to the safety of sea creatures and their watery homes should gain her favor.



**See also:** *Al-Uzza; Aphrodite; Asteria; Mari (2); Mermaids; Semiramis*

## Até

**Origin:** Greece

*Até* literally means delusion and ruin, the usual result of encounters with *Até*, Spirit of Mischief and Trouble. *Até* is the daughter of Eris, Lady of Strife. There's little point petitioning her: what she likes most is stirring up trouble, making people (and other spirits!) do stupid, delusional things. If invoked to torment another, she may do it for nothing, only her own pleasure, but is also likely to stick around and play havoc with you and yours, too.

*Até* causes reckless judgment. According to myth, she first plagued the spirits on Mount Olympus, but when Zeus realized the tricks she played on those he loved, he flung her down to the mortal realm where she has plied her arts ever since.

**See also:** *Eris; Zeus*

## Atete

**Also known as:** Maram; Mariam

**Origin:** Oromo (Galla), Ethiopia

**Classification:** Ayana

Atete is an Oromo goddess with dominion over reproduction and women. She controls fertility and can bestow or remove it. Atete is venerated by Christian and Muslim Oromo as well as those who maintain their traditional religion.

For Christians, Atete is profoundly identified with Mary, perhaps inseparably so. She is addressed by the Ethiopian variant of Mary, not her traditional Oromo name. Although rituals stem from Pagan Oromo tradition, Christian devotees perceive that they venerate the Mother of Christ and only the Mother of Christ. In addition to her traditional

functions, within a Christian context, she serves as an intercessor with God. Regardless of a devotee's primary spiritual orientation, Atete is venerated mainly by women and is petitioned for conception, safe childbirth, and healthy children.

**Sacred time:** Atete has two major annual ceremonies, each lasting for three days: one in July corresponds to the season of volatile, dangerous weather when she is petitioned for protection. The second corresponds to the Ethiopian New Year, usually in September, and offers thanks for surviving the previous year.

**Day:** Friday

**Color:** Black

**Element:** Water

**See also:** *Black Madonna; Boldog Aszony*

## Athena

*Owl Faced; Ever Powerful; Hard Bargaining Spirit of the Marketplace; Lady of the Coal Pan*

**Also known as:** Athene; Pallas-Athene

**Origin:** Probably Libya

**Classification:** Olympian spirit

At her most primeval, Athena is a snake and owl goddess, creatures profoundly associated with reproduction. (Owls are ancient uterine symbols.) Athena may be the primordial Eye Goddess whose staring eyes appeared throughout the Neolithic world. Her associations with owls, snakes, and pomegranates unite realms of fertility and death.

Snakes and owls are also emblems of another strong-minded independent goddess, Lilith, who reacted to male domination by fleeing from civilization. Athena took the other tack: when she saw the writing on the wall, Athena allied herself with the male principle.

Athena's origins may lie in the Libyan tradition of the Great Mother who has dominion over life and death. In her earliest Greek incarnations, she retained her associations with women's mysteries: she was married to Hephaestus, the Smith Lord, gave birth to a serpentine child, and allied herself with serpentine families in Athens.

Eventually she recreated herself as Zeus' favorite child, born from his head, not a womb. (Another myth suggests that she was found on the shores of North Africa's Lake Tritonis by three snake priestesses.) She began covering her tracks, destroying all remnants of her past:

- She abandoned the bone flute she invented (a snake charmer's instrument, too sexually provocative).
- She encouraged Orestes to commit matricide, declaring that she was "always for the father."
- She eliminated Medusa, Pallas, Arachne, and the Aglaurides and denied her child Erichonios.

Athena and Poseidon vied to be presiding spirit of Athens. The vote split along gender lines: men voted for Poseidon; women for Athena. There were more women and Athena won. The result, allegedly to appease Poseidon's wrath, was a triple punishment imposed on Athenian women: they lost their right to vote; children were no longer called by their mother's name as they were previously, but by their father's; and women were no longer considered Athenian citizens: only men.

Emphasis on Athena's physical virginity became absolute. (This may be understood in the context of her role as a war goddess: virgins were perceived as fonts of concentrated, suppressed potential energy ready to explode with the energy of an atom bomb. Sexual relations would dissipate and redirect this esoteric energy.)

According to Olympian myth, Athena was born in full battle gear, armed and ready to fight. Her birth triggered earthquakes and tidal waves. Hesiod describes her as "a Goddess Queen who delights in war cries, onslaughts, and battles." Hephaestus served as the midwife who birthed her using a smith's hammer as an obstetric tool. Athena was sent to a foundry in North Africa to be raised by a Cyclops.

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*Athena is a goddess of crafts but not just any crafts. She presides over smithcraft, metalworking, and traditional “women’s work,” like spinning, weaving, and wool working, all traditionally also mystical arts.*

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Athena is petitioned for virtually anything. She becomes profoundly attached to people, especially heroic, clever men. If she loves you, she will protect you like a mother. Athena protects weddings, brides, and grooms and secures conception. She is the matron of shipbuilders. She is the only one, other than Zeus, who knows where he hides his lightning bolts and the only other spirit empowered to use them.

She is a reasonably gregarious spirit, historically venerated beside Zeus, Hera, and Hephaestus. (Her image was traditionally placed in the secondary position in Temples of Hephaestus.) Athena has a tenuous relationship with Aphrodite and can’t stand Ares. They should be kept apart.

**Manifestations:** She is a beautiful woman with grey eyes. She also manifests as an owl. Athena appeared on the battlefield as an owl during Greece’s war with Persia.

**Iconography:** An armed, helmeted woman wearing the Gorgon’s head on her breast

**Attributes:** Spear, lance, bridle, spindle, distaff; Gorgon’s head or a Gorgon mask; loom, metalworking, or other artisanal tools; grave digger’s tools; lightning bolt

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*Athena and Neith, another spinning goddess, are believed linked although the connections between them are subject for debate. Both derive from Libya, ancient stronghold of women’s Mystery traditions. Some believe Neith, an incredibly primeval deity, crossed the Mediterranean and transformed into Athena. Alternatively, Neith and Athena once formed a trinity with Medusa.*

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**Color:** Red

**Numbers:** 3, 7

**Day:** She celebrates her birthday on the third day of every month. Alternatively it is celebrated on the first day of the dark moon.

**Planet:** Moon

**Trees:** Olive, oak, willow, pear, pomegranate

**Bird:** Owl, carrion crow, vulture, sea eagle, swallow dove

**Animals:** Snake, spider, wolf, dog, horse, lion, goat, sheep, griffin, sphinx

**Altar:** Reproductions of her ancient votive images are readily available, as are new interpretations. The Queen of Spades playing card is also used to represent Athena.

**Rituals:** Her ancient statues were bathed in river water. Priestesses in some of her shrines were night owls: all responsibilities were carried out at night.

**Sacred site:** Athens is her city. Center of her veneration was the Parthenon built on the Acropolis circa 447 BCE. Her votive statue was thirty-nine feet (twelve meters) high and wore clothing woven by Athenian women. A Roman Emperor stole the statue in the fifth century CE; its whereabouts are unknown. It has never been found. Nashville has a full-scale replica of the Parthenon complete with Athena's statue.

**Offerings:** Incense; candles; the fruits of your labor and creativity; images of owls, spiders, and ships; young Athenian women once offered Athena sacrifices of their own hair curled around spindle whorls.

**See also:** *Aglaurides; Aglauros; Alastor; Aphrodite; Arachne; Ares; Artemis; Erichtonios; Erinyes; Gorgon; Hephaestus; Hera; Iodama; Medusa; Metis; Neith; Pallas; Poseidon; Prometheus; Sphinx; Zeus*

**Atlas**

**Origin:** Greece

**Classification:** Titan

Atlas is the Lord of Dangerous Wisdom. He plumbs the depths of the sea. He knows the mysteries of the universe. He once owned the pillars that held Earth and Sky asunder. (It was believed that Gaia and Uranus sought to reunite and had to be kept apart lest the entire world be crushed by their embrace.)

Atlas, a powerful and primordial spirit, led the Titans in their war against Zeus. When the Titans lost, most were cast into the pit of Tartarus, but Atlas was condemned to stand at the world's end and either carry the entire world or hold the sky up so that Uranus and Gaia, Sky and Earth, could not resume their embrace. (In some versions, Atlas is Uranus and Gaia's son so he is essentially keeping his parents apart.)

Atlas can no longer roam or wander; he must bear this weight for eternity (unless he can get someone to replace him; he had a momentary respite from Heracles). Atlas suffers at the western edge of the Greek world; his brother, Prometheus, suffers at the eastern edge.

Atlas' name may derive from the root verb *Tlao*, which means "to carry." His consort may be Phoebe, Titan of the Sun. Atlas may be the spirit of the moon. His sons include Hesperus and Hyas. His daughters include the Hesperides, Pleiades, and Hyades. Through his daughter Maia, he is Hermes' grandpa.

**Iconography:** A huge, powerful man bearing Earth on his shoulders

**Sacred sites:** A two-ton art deco statue of Atlas is in New York City's Rockefeller Center, not far from a statue of Prometheus.

**See also:** *Gaia; Heracles; Hermes; Hesperides; Maia; Prometheus; Titan; Zeus*

## Au Co

**Origin:** Vietnam

Au Co, a beautiful mountain Fairy, and Lac Long Quan, Dragon Prince of

the Sea, fell in love. Au Co bore an egg sac from which one hundred children hatched. Au Co and Lac Long Quan loved each other passionately but could not live together: she longed for the mountains, he for the sea. Eventually they split up, each taking half the kids. The fifty children who stayed with Au Co became the Vietnamese people. One son became the first Vietnamese emperor. Au Co protects Vietnam and its people.

**See also:** *Dragon Kings of the Sea; Skadi*

## Aumakua

**Origin:** Hawaii

Aumakua are the guardian ancestral spirits of Hawaii. The word derives from *Au*, meaning “far traveling,” and *Makua*, meaning “ancestors.” In Hawaiian cosmology, Akua are presiding spirits while Aumakua are specific ancestral spirits. A spirit may be an Akua, an Aumakua, or both. Thus Pelé is an Akua (spirit) but also an Aumakua for those who are her descendents.

- There is an actual family lineage involved with Aumakua.
- An Akua is a spirit for everybody, but an Aumakua is only an ancestral spirit for those who are their descendents.

Veneration passes from generation to generation. Aumakua and their descendents are bound with sacred ties. Aumakua are sometimes described as guardian angels. They guide and protect living family members and have, on occasion, been known to resurrect the dead. Aumakua will engage in ritual possession, speaking through a medium’s lips.

Traditional Hawaiian religion was abolished in 1819 but active veneration of Aumakua survived. Devotion to Aumakua was private, secret, and esoteric. Rituals and knowledge were restricted to family members and so were difficult to suppress.

Aumakua sometimes serve as Night Marchers, psychopomps who meet newly dead souls, offering protection and escort service to the beyond. Many claim to have heard the flutes and chanting voices that signal their

presence. It is dangerous to encounter Aumakua in their guise as escorts of the dead. If you can't avoid them, the traditional remedy is to remove all clothing, fling yourself on the ground, lie faceup with your eyes closed, and be very still. Whatever you do, don't make eye contact.

**Manifestations:** Aumakua are shape-shifters who appear as animals, insects, wind, mist, and rainbows, as well as humans.

**Iconography:** Aumakua are traditionally represented by stone or wood Tiki carvings.

**See also:** *Akua; Ancestors; Kamohoali'i; Kanekua'ana; Kihawahine; Kua; Kukauakahi; Pelé; Psychopomp;* and the Glossary entry for *Possession*

### **Aunt Nancy**

Anansi arrived in North America and played a trick: *he* transformed into *she*, becoming Aunt Nancy. Explicit memories of the African deity were forgotten, but the stories were recalled. *Anansi* sounds like *Aunt Nancy*, and Aunt Nancy must be a woman, right? Of course, the stories are still full of spiders. In the United States, Anansi stories may be called Aunt Nancy stories.

**See also:** *Anansi*

### **Aurora**

**Origin:** Italy

Aurora is the Spirit of Dawn. Roses fall from her hair to Earth. Every morning she signals the day by riding across the sky in her chariot. Her siblings are Sol the sun and Luna the moon. In the *Aeneid*, Virgil describes Aurora leaving her "saffron bed." The image of the saffron bed is very erotic. In addition to its use as an important medicinal, dye, perfume, and cosmetic, saffron was perceived as a potent aphrodisiac. Aurora's throne and robes are the color of saffron, as is perhaps the goddess herself.



**Flower:** Saffron crocus (*Crocus sativa*); meditate on a saffron crocus flower and you will understand its associations with dawn. The flower's center is the intense yellow of the Mediterranean sun, while its petals are the color of dawn's purple clouds.

**Offerings:** Roses; crocuses; foods cooked with rosewater or saffron, still Earth's most expensive spice

**See also:** *Ausriné; Eos; Ushas*

## **Ausriné**

*Princess of the Morning Star*

**Pronounced:** *Ow-shree-nay*

**Also known as:** Ausra

**Origin:** Lithuania

Ausriné is the goddess of the Morning Star and radiant dawn. She is a spirit of love, beauty, and happiness radiating health, youth, and beauty. Described as the daughter of deities Perkunas and Saulé, she rivals her mother's beauty and sometimes invokes her mother's hostility. For a while Saulé was married to Meness, the moon, but he flirted with all Saulé's daughters and eventually tried to marry Ausriné. (Perkunas refused to permit the marriage, splitting the moon asunder with his thunderbolt.) Ausriné tries to keep peace with her mother by rising before the sun and getting the sky ready for her.

**Animals:** Cow, mare

**Planet:** Venus

**Days:** Vernal Equinox; Summer Solstice

**See also:** *Amberella; Aurora; Eos; Meness; Perkunas; Saulé; Ushas*

## **Austeja**

## *Queen Bee*

### **Origin:** Baltic

Austeja, the Bee Goddess, is the ultimate queen bee. Austeja has dominion over bees, hives, honey, and the flowers needed to make honey. She also cares for people, promoting and protecting abundance, fertility, and growth. She offers special protection to brides, pregnant women, and beekeepers, too. Austeja serves as guardian of the family but is also the one true mother of the bees. Lithuanian hives were kept high within trees partially to keep bees close to their mother.

Austeja, a primordial deity, was actively venerated until the sixteenth century. (The Baltic was the last stronghold of European Paganism.) Austeja is simultaneously a bee and a woman. Before gathering honey, it's traditional to make offerings to Austeja combined with prayer and petition. Honey had tremendous spiritual value in the Baltic homeland: it was once forbidden to buy or sell it as it was a sacred gift. That said, Lithuania was once Europe's top exporter of honey and beeswax, thanks to Austeja.

**Iconography:** Wooden images are in Lithuania's Ancient Beekeeping Museum.

**Sacred day:** Her festival, Zoline, is celebrated in mid-August, when bees are especially active. They dance with Austeja and her celebrants.

**Sacred site:** Trees in which bees build hives are sacred to Austeja.

**Offerings:** Traditional beekeepers offered Austeja honey and beeswax. She accepts spring water and mead: instead of pouring libations on the ground, toss them into the air; also offer images of bees; become a beekeeper or plant a garden with the flowers bees love.

**See also:** *Aristaeus; Bubilas; Lazdona*

## **Avalokitesvara**

*The One Who Responds to the Cries of the World; Lord of the Six Syllables*

**Also known as:** Avalokiteshvara

**Classification:** Bodhisattva

Avalokitesvara, Bodhisattva of compassion, embodies the compassion of all Buddhas, past, present, and future. His name means “the lord who responds to the cries of the world.”

Avalokitesvara eliminated all his negative karma, broke the cycle of rebirth, and achieved nirvana. However, he refused to leave the Earthly plane until he could save everyone else, too. Avalokitesvara delayed his own final release in order to help suffering souls still trapped in suffering and negativity. He tirelessly travels to all corners of all realms helping all who seek his help. Call him by name or via his mantra (the six syllables):

*OM MANI PADME HUM!*  
*(Hail the jewel in the lotus!)*

Chanting this mantra on a regular basis allegedly prevents evil, subdues evildoers, eases pain, heals illness, banishes evil spirits, and leads one’s soul to paradise.

Avalokitesvara is first described in the Lotus Sutra, dating to approximately the first century CE. According to the Lotus Sutra, if called, Avalokitesvara will help those swept away by floods or menaced by other deadly perils. He also fulfills petitions for those desiring children but facing obstacles or unable to conceive. Veneration of Avalokitesvara was brought to Tibet by the Bengali monk Atisha in 1042.

According to an ancient Tibetan legend that long predates Darwin, back in primordial times, before the appearance of humans, Avalokitesvara was a monkey living in Tibet’s Yarling Valley. Tara was an abominable snow-woman (yeti) living in a nearby rock crevice. The two eventually became friendly, fell in love, and became the parents of six humans, ancestors of the Tibetan people. Within the context of Tibetan Buddhism, Avalokitesvara is intrinsically associated with Tara. Green and White Tara are his constant companions.

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*In Mongolian Buddhism, three Bodhisattvas— Avalokitesvara, Manjusri, and Vajrapani— are considered similar to archangel protectors and venerated together, as together they contain all the compassion (Avalokitesvara), wisdom (Manjusri), and power (Vajrapani) of all Buddhas past, present, and future.*

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**Favored people:** Avalokitesvara will protect anyone and everyone on Earth if asked. He is the definition of compassion and mercy. Avalokitesvara is venerated throughout the Buddhist world but especially in Tibet. Avalokitesvara is patron of Tibet, where he has appeared in many incarnations throughout history:

- He is the ancestor of the Tibetans.
- As King Songtsen Gampo, in the mid-seventh century, he first brought the Dharma to Tibet.
- He was the first Dalai Lama; all Dalai Lamas, including the present one, are considered incarnations of Avalokitesvara.

**Manifestations:** Avalokitesvara can take *any* form in order to reach a soul in need.

**Iconography:** In India, Avalokitesvara is traditionally portrayed as a young prince with the Buddha nestled in his hair or as an ascetic who resembles Shiva. He may have two arms, eight, or one thousand. (According to legend, Buddha gave Avalokitesvara one thousand arms the better to reach those in need.) In China, Avalokitesvara transformed into Kwan Yin and so is depicted in female form.

**Attribute:** Lotus flower

**See also:** *Bodhisattva; Buddha; Hayagriva; Jambhala; Kwan Yin; Manjusri; Shiva; Tara (2)*

**Aveta**

**Origin:** Celtic

Aveta is a mysterious Celtic goddess about whom little information survives. Archaeological evidence indicates that her shrine in Trier on the Moselle River by a healing spring was a pilgrimage site. Inscriptions dedicated to her have been found in Switzerland and throughout France: she may once have been a very prominent goddess.

**Iconography:** She is depicted as a woman holding a swaddled baby, lapdog, or baskets of fruit.

**Attributes:** Her attributes are the clue to her powers:

- Fruit baskets indicate abundance and prosperity, agricultural and otherwise.
- The swaddled infant indicates fertility and safe, successful childbirth.
- Lapdogs are Celtic emblems of healing.

**Offerings:** Clay votive images of Aveta have been found, indicating she may have been given images of herself.

**See also:** *Arnemeta; Nantosuelta; Nehal ennia; Sequana; Sulis*

## Awashima

**Origin:** Japan

**Classification:** Kami

**Festival:** 3 March

Harisaijo, Amaterasu's daughter, was married to Sumiyoshi, kami of the sea, fishermen, and poetry. She developed what is usually euphemistically referred to as a "woman's ailment": she was not experiencing normal menstrual cycles but bled continuously, which was perceived as polluting.

Harisaijo was exiled to the island of Awashima, shrine of Sukunahikona-no-Mikoto, a kami who specializes in fertility and reproductive disorders. Harisaijo vowed to heal women's suffering. She,

too, was enshrined, transforming into Awashima Myojin. Awashima bestows fertility, protects pregnant women, oversees childbirth, and heals ailments of the female reproductive system, including sexually transmitted diseases.

Devotees spread her veneration by traveling through Japan with portable shrines. Empress Jingu, caught in a storm on her way back from invading Korea, prayed for rescue. Throwing a rush mat onto the waves, she had the boat follow its path, landing safely on Awashima Island. The Empress expressed gratitude for this miraculous rescue by expanding the small shrine on the island. (Another legend says she was pregnant when beached but gave birth safely and for this reason wished to honor and thank Awashima.) Empress Jingu is now enshrined together with Awashima.

Awashima shrines are famous as doll repositories. As dolls may have souls, it is not safe to discard them, as they may take revenge for ill treatment. Awashima shrines are spiritually equipped to accept dolls that no longer have homes. An annual ceremony coincides with Hina Matsuri (Japanese Girl's Day; a holiday associated with beautiful dolls) in which dolls are floated out to sea.

**Spirit allies:** Awashima is venerated with Sukunahikona and Empress Jingu.

**Sacred sites:** There are several Awashima shrines throughout Japan.

**Offerings:** Dolls (especially *Hina Ningyo*); sewing needles; hair combs and ornaments; pilgrimage to Awashima Shrine; women traditionally offer their underwear when requesting healing of sexually transmitted disease; this practice has expanded: women seeking blessings of fertility or pregnant women petitioning for the birth of a healthy child attach underwear to ema boards (wooden votive plaques), which are offered at Awashima shrines.

**See also:** *Amaterasu; Jingu, Empress; Kami; Sukun ahikona; Tsukogami*

**Axiéros**

## **Origin:** Samothrace

Axiéros is the great goddess who was venerated at the Samothrace Temple Complex. Samothrace (literally Thracian Samos) is a large island off the coast of Thrace. Greek colonists began arriving in 700 BCE, but until the first century CE Thracian was the popular language of the island.

Samothrace was the center of shamanic Mysteries associated with the Cabeiri. Little information survives (it was, after all, a mystery). In its day the shrine at Samothrace was as famous as Eleusis. (See also: *Demeter*.) Alexander the Great's father allegedly met his mother, Olympius, here. The historian Herodotus was an initiate. Veneration at the temple complex officially continued until the fourth century CE, although there is report of Pagan activity until approximately 600 CE.

Greeks identified Axiéros with Demeter, which may imply that she presided over the Mysteries of Samothrace just as Demeter presided over Eleusis. (The only surviving information derives from Greek sources; what Thracians thought is now unknown.) Others theorize that *Axiéros* is another name for *Kybele*, but this is all speculation.

Axiéros was closely identified with stones and minerals. Sacrifices and offerings were made to her atop sacred rocks. She was identified with lodestones, magnetic iron ore, understood as sharing her essence. Initiates to her Mysteries wore rings carved from lodestones. Such rings have been found in graves in the nearby necropolis.

Axiéros was venerated as part of a triad with Axiokersa, whom the Greeks identified with Persephone, and Axiokersos, identified with Hades. However, Axiokersos is sometimes described as Axiéros' husband with Axiokersa as their daughter, which would put a different spin on the myth. They may have been a family of spirits with dominion over birth, death, and rebirth. The Greeks compared a fourth member of the Samothracian pantheon, Kadmilos, to Hermes. All four were apparently venerated together.

**Altar:** Her altars within the Samothrace sanctuary were formed of porphyry, purplish-red stones long considered sacred and associated with royalty.

**Minerals:** Porphyry

**Offerings:** Offerings similar to what would be given Demeter or Kybele may be appropriate.

**See also:** *Arsinoë II; Cabeiri; Demeter; Hades; Her mes; Kybele; Persephone;* and the Glossary entry for *Mystery*

## Ayana

**Origin:** Oromo (Galla)

The Ayana are spirits of the Oromo (also known as Galla) people of Ethiopia and Kenya. Ayana can be benevolent or malicious. A relationship with a spirit may be passed down from mother to daughter in similar manner to Zar. Some theorize that the Ayana are a branch of the Zar family. Like Zar, the Ayana are possessing spirits. Ceremonies in which the Ayana come down and possess devotees occur throughout the year for purposes of healing or just to celebrate the Ayana.

**See also:** *Atete; Zar;* and the Glossary entry for *Possession*

## Ayao

**Origin:** Yoruba

**Classification:** Orisha

Ayao is the orisha of the whirlwind, Oya's younger sister. Like her sister, Ayao is a powerful, fierce, *smart* spirit. They are venerated together. Beyond wind phenomenon, whirlwinds are emblems of witchcraft and magic power. Ayao's ally is Osanyin, orisha of plants. She is a font of botanical and magical knowledge, learned directly from Osain, which she may be petitioned to share with devotees.

**Attribute:** Crossbow

**Realms:** She lives in the forest and travels in the form of a whirlwind or cyclone.



**Colors:** Brown, green (the colors of bark and leaves)

**Animal:** Snake

**Number:** 9 (shared with Oya)

**See also:** *Orisha; Osain; Oya*

## **Ayida-Wedo**

### *The Rainbow Serpent*

**Also known as:** Aida-Wedo

**Origin:** Vodou; Haiti

If you've seen a rainbow, then you've seen Ayida-Wedo, rainbow serpent, water snake spirit, and ancient root lwa. She is very rarely invoked without her beloved Damballah, her soul mate and other half. Damballah is envisioned as a great snake arching across the sky. Ayida-Wedo is his complement, the rainbow. Their sexual union is symbolized by a snake coiled around a cosmic egg containing all of life's energies, possibilities, and potential.

On the cosmic level, Ayida-Wedo protects Creation. On a personal level, her union with Damballah epitomizes the happy marriage. She is invoked by those who desire successful, committed, faithful marriages. Request her blessings of hope and happiness, peace and prosperity.

**Manifestations:** The rainbow; a snake with rainbow-colored scales

**Iconography:** Ayida-Wedo is syncretized to Our Lady of Immaculate Conception, whose image is used to represent her. If you prefer a serpentine image, a stuffed fabric snake is easily constructed. Cover it with rainbow-colored sequins, repeating your invocation, petition, or request as you sew on each individual sequin.

**Emblem:** Rainbow

**Element:** Water

**Color:** Blue (especially azure); white

**Sacred tree:** Ceiba (also known as the kapok, silk cotton, or mapou tree)

**Offerings:** Ayida-Wedo craves white foods: eggs, milk, rice, whipped or clotted cream, and sweet white deserts like rice pudding. In addition to milk, she'll drink sweetened café au lait (lots of milk!). Give her gifts in the form of snakes, rainbows, or ornamented with a rainbow motif.

**See also:** *Agasou; Aïdo-Hwedo; Dambal lah; Gran Bois; Lwa; Mami Waters; Xtabay*

## Ayizan

**Also known as:** Aizan

**Classification:** Lwa

Ayizan is Queen of the Marketplace and a spirit of initiation. She is the lwa of primordial ancestors and the repository of mystic spiritual secrets. Ayizan is the spirit of the very first Vodou priestess (*Mambo* or *Manbo*). She is among the most primordial of spirits and must be treated with extreme respect. Address her politely as Mambo Ayizan. Should one be making offerings to a number of spirits, Ayizan must be among the first honored, if not the very first.

Ayizan's name may mean "sacred earth." In the Fon language of Dahomey, from whence she derives, *Aïzan* refers to earthen mounds heaped up in the marketplace intended to honor primal ancestors. *Azan*, a related word, refers to fringes of palm fronds used to demarcate sacred space.

Ayizan is *old*, truly among the elder spirits; she can't be bothered with small, trivial problems. She oversees the initiation process of *hounsi* (Vodou priestesses). She is also the matron of women who work in the marketplace and assures their success.

Ayizan protects against the Evil Eye, malice, envy, and jealousy. She despises and punishes exploiters: rich against poor; powerful against the weak; adults against children; men against women; husbands against

wives. If you perceive yourself as oppressed and exploited, she may assist you. (Don't bother her if you're on the wrong end of this equation.) Request that Ayizan protect you and supervise your spiritual growth.

She has an incredible knowledge and command of the spirit world. Ayizan may be petitioned to reveal information or serve as an intercessor (if she chooses). Ayizan banishes malevolent entities and exorcises them. She can cleanse and purify an area and create sacred space. She protects entrances, doors, gateways, barriers, markets, and public spaces. In her book, *Vodou Visions*, author and manbo Sallie Ann Glassman compares Ayizan to the Gnostic Sophia exiled in the material world: the initiatrix in the marketplace.

**Manifestations:** She appears in natural phenomenon: palms and earth mounds but also as an elderly woman.

**Iconography:** Ayizan is represented by a palm branch or earthen mounds, anointed with oil and surrounded by palm fronds. Images of Saint Anne, to whom she is syncretized, or Christ being baptized by John the Baptist (his initiation) also represent her.

**Consorts:** As Queen of the Marketplace, Ayizan is Mrs. Legba. As Grand Initiatrix, her mate is Papa Loko.

**Petition:** Women who seek Ayizan's protection for home or store should obtain blessed palms (whether on Palm Sunday or via other rituals). Fix them into the shape of an X or cross and hang over your door while invoking Ayizan's blessings.

**Tree:** Palm

**Colors:** White, silver

**Metal:** Silver (traditionally the incorruptible metal)

**Offerings:** White flowers, bananas, plantains, yams, hearts of palms; dirt from an outdoor market crossroads; spring water and sweet liqueurs

**See also:** *Ancestors; Azaka; Eshu Elegbara; Legba; Loko; Lwa; Ma Zu; Sophia;* and the Glossary entry for *Syncretism*

## Aynia

**Origin:** Irish

Aynia, powerful, ancient Irish goddess, Fairy Queen of Tyrone, may or may not be the same spirit as Aine. Aine is a solar spirit and Aynia a lunar one, but it is possible that once upon a time these were two paths or sides of the same goddess.

Aynia is a spirit of the moon, death, stones, the tides, and the sea. Moonlight allegedly bestows fertility and psychic ability but may also confer madness, hence the term *lunatic*. Aynia is profoundly tied to each of these gifts. Among her sacred sites was a large stone near Dunany called Aynia's Chair or the Chair of the Lunatics, believed to exert a magical magnetic force that drew rabid dogs and mentally unstable people who stayed until forced to leave or until another mysterious compelling force lured them into the sea, Aynia's domain. It was considered dangerous for those who were mentally fit to sit in Aynia's chair as they, too, might lose their wits.

Aynia teaches master classes in herbalism and healing to Fairy doctors. She sponsors healers. It was considered dangerous to let blood or operate surgically on Aynia's sacred day; death of the patient was considered likely. Aynia serves as a psychopomp, leading those she loves and admires to the next realm.

Aynia is associated with death by drowning. On her holy days near Lughnasa, people were advised to stay out of the water and fishermen avoided plying their trade lest they drown, possibly a vestigial memory of ancient human sacrifices. Post-Christianity, Aynia was reclassified as a dangerous Fairy or Witch Queen.

**Favored people:** Healers; Fairy doctors; poets, authors, and playwrights; she may perceive those who ply their trade on the sea (fishing, research, diving, and so forth) as obligated to pay her tribute.

**Planet:** Moon

**Element:** Water

**Sacred place:** County Tyrone in general; a stone formation at

Knocknanny called Aynia's Cove is believed to be her special haunt. Although generally considered a reasonably benign spirit (as long as you stayed out of her chair!), she is protective of her territory and allegedly punishes those who remove as much as a pebble. (See also: *Pelé*.)

**Sacred days:** Midsummer's Eve; the Friday, Saturday, and Sunday following Lughnasa (1 August) are dedicated to her; this is the tail end of what was once a much longer festival than the modern Wiccan sabbat.

**Animal:** Dogs; rabid dogs—once perceived as moonstruck—are believed to act under her control. If confronted with a rabid dog, she's the one to quickly petition for help.

**Offerings:** Anything to do with the sea or moon. Give her moonstones, silver charms, moon-infused water, or botanicals associated with the moon like moonwort (*Botrychium lunaria*), native to Northern Ireland.

**See also:** *Aine; Endymion; Fairy; Fairy Queens; Lugh; Mania; Mari (1); Pelé; Psychopomp*

## Azaka

**Also known as:** Papa Azaka; Papa Zaka; Azacca; Kouzen Zaka (Kreyol for Cousin Zaka); Mazaka

**Classification:** Lwa

Papa Azaka presides over the ancient, profound bonds between Earth and agricultural people. He is the divine country cousin and something of a trickster. He is generous, hardworking, good-natured, and protective, but if he's not well fed or considers himself disrespected, he can be mean and vicious. Like a stereotypical peasant, Papa Zaka is convinced that everyone is always out to rob him.

Unlike most lwa who come from Africa, Azaka may have been born in Haiti: He is the spirit who presides over alliances between African and indigenous Haitians (Taino), possibly an indigenous spirit incorporated into the Vodou pantheon. His name may derive from the Taino *maza*, indicating maize. (See also: *Anacaona*.)

He is the sacred peasant. His manners are rough but don't let his appearance fool you. He is not a powerless peasant but a potent lwa. His ragged clothes and modest demeanor are a bluff to see how you behave. Everyone is respectful toward the rich and beautiful, but how will you treat a poor, ragged country bumpkin?

Papa Zaka hates the rude and stingy and punishes those who exploit and oppress poor workers. If consistently treated with respect, he appreciates it greatly and can be very loyal and protective. However, he is a suspicious spirit who is forever testing people. (If you offend him, he will reject your request and possibly make it backfire. He demonstrates displeasure via illness that mimics symptoms of food poisoning.)

Papa Zaka knows the secrets of the soil. He is a master herbalist who appears in dreams with advice and instructions. Papa Zaka is syncretized to Saint Isidore the Laborer, whose iconography also includes a sack slung over one shoulder.

**Favored people:** Papa Zaka is patron of those who earn their bread by the sweat of their brow: farmers, laborers, especially day laborers, workers of all kinds. He likes women and can be very flirtatious. He may be inclined to help out hardworking, good-hearted women who treat him respectfully and kindly.

**Manifestation:** Papa Zaka is very recognizable, consistently wearing traditional Haitian peasant's garb: blue denim, red scarf, straw hat, and a bag slung over his shoulder. He may limp. He may not be charming but aggressively beg and pester for rum, food, or the money to buy them with.

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*The dreaded Tonton Macoute, the private militia of Haitian dictator François "Papa Doc" Duvalier (1907–1971), based their attire on the image of Papa Zaka with the addition of dark sunglasses and guns. Papa Doc may have modeled his own attire after that of the Barons.*

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**Attributes:** Machete; a *macoute*, the traditional Haitian peasants' straw or burlap bag; pipe; hoe; walking stick

**Consorts:** He may be married to the lwa Clairmesine Clairmeille, or to his female counterpart, Couzenne, who runs the market stand where they sell the produce they grow.

**Colors:** Blue, red

**Tree:** Avocado

**Day:** Thursday

**Number:** 3

**Animal:** Field mouse

**Altar:** A traditional altar may be created or offerings placed in a Haitian macoute sack (a burlap bag substitutes). Fill it with nonperishable things he likes: a sealed bottle of rum, pipe tobacco, and a loaf of brown sugar. Tie the bag up with a red bandanna; hang it near his altar or consider the bag his altar. Don't ever open it except to add more offerings. (Talk to him; tell him what you're doing as you're doing it to assuage his fears.)

**Offerings:** Whatever you give him, give him a lot. Papa Zaka is always hungry: he eats like a man who's labored all day. Give him the equivalent of lumberjack meals. Keep food simple, abundant, frequent, and reliable. His favorite food is corn. He likes bread, melons, beans, and staples like brown sugar (or sugar cane), salt, and pipe tobacco. He prefers overproof white rum or other clear alcoholic beverages but is not likely to spurn most alcoholic beverages. He really likes absinthe.

He hates having anyone taste his food. In essence, he's the anti-Oshun. Oshun fears that untasted offerings of honey are poisoned; Azaka worries that tasting is stealing. This is usually not a problem with something like pipe tobacco or bottled liquor, but those offering cooked meals sometimes taste what they're preparing without even thinking, just from habit. If he begs for something that wasn't originally intended for him, that's fine. He's getting something extra. But if a dish is created intentionally for him, make sure he gets every last bite.

Like a subsistence farmer, Papa Zaka worries about going broke and thus really likes cash offerings. Place them in an envelope or money bag and lay on his altar or beneath his votive statue so he can keep a firm grip on it. Consider this cash gone: you will never be able to use it. However, in emergencies, he may be willing to front you a loan or serve as your bank. Don't just take the money: it's not yours anymore, it's his. Request his permission. Money *must* be paid back promptly. He may charge interest, too, sometimes at exorbitant rates. Be prepared to bargain with him. He likes to bargain and is a shrewd negotiator. Ask him for advice when you need to bargain with others.

**See also:** *Barons; Clairmesine Clairmeille; Ezili Freda Dahomey; Fairy, Green; Lwa; Oshun*

## Azazel

Azazel is a desert spirit worshipped by ancient Semites. He rules over a band of goat-spirits, the Se'irim. Azazel played a part in Jewish Day of Atonement (*Yom Kippur*) rituals. As per instructions in Leviticus 16:21–28, two goats were brought into the Jerusalem Temple. One was sacrificed to the Creator; the other, dedicated to Azazel, is the original *scapegoat*. The sins of the people were ritually transferred to this goat, which was brought to the desert and set free. Although this was a Jewish custom, its roots are believed to be pre-Judaic. Azazel may belong to an ancient, now-forgotten pantheon.

He is among the leaders of the rebel angels. Azazel taught women the arts of metalworking and cosmetics. The Creator punished his disobedience by hanging him upside down in a canyon of jagged, pointy stones beyond the Mountains of Darkness until the Apocalypse when the Creator may again require his services.

In Jewish tradition, Azazel may be classified among the avenging angels. In Christian demonology, Azazel is a fallen angel, counted among Satan's host. His name is sometimes used as a synonym for Satan. Apocalyptic literature from the early centuries of the Common Era describes sinners punished in the flames of Azazel. *Lech le-Azazel* (literally "Go to Azazel") is the equivalent of "Go to Hell" in modern



Hebrew.

Azazel is a master of herbalism and *all* the occult arts. He rewards those who visit him with knowledge and information.

**Manifestations:** He is a shape-shifter and may appear in *any* form, including a winged angel. In *The Apocalypse of Abraham*, an apocalyptic text, Azazel appears as a twelve-winged dragon with human hands and feet.

**Realm:** Azazel, Chief of the Se'irim, lives in the Negev and Sinai deserts. The Jordan River valley, once wilderness, was a favored haunt. Azazel the Rebel Angel was banished to the desert of Dudael past the Mountains of Darkness, home of demons and "fiery serpents." Despite being chained, Azazel remains so powerful that many spirits placed themselves under his command. (He is the spiritual equivalent of an imprisoned mafia don or mob boss still calling the shots from behind bars.)

**Opponent:** Should you find yourself in trouble with Azazel or afraid of him, the archangel Raphael is his traditional opponent and may be invoked for protection.

**Offering:** Frankincense

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*In Mikhail Bulgakov's novel, The Master and Margarita, Azazelo, as he's called, raises havoc in Communist Moscow.*

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**See also:** *Demon; Mahalat; Peacock Angel; Prometheus; Raphael; Se'irim; Shedim*

## B

### Ba Chua Kho

*Lady of the Storehouse;  
Lady of the Granary; Goddess of the Market*

**Origin:** Vietnam

Ba Chua Kho, among modern Vietnam's most popular goddesses, presides over the marketplace. She bestows success and prosperity. The historic Ba Chua Kho lived in the eleventh century, wife of a king of Vietnam's Ly dynasty. She was an active, benevolent, compassionate woman who established a village and worked to boost its economy. The village was located on a traditional smuggler's route. In 1076, during wartime, Ba Chua Kho herself ensured supply of food and weapons to the village and beyond. She cared and protected people during her lifetime, anticipating their needs. After her death, she continued to do so.

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*The Vietnamese title Ba Chua, interpreted as Lady, Queen, or Princess, is used to address powerful goddesses like Ba Chua Xu, Ba Den, and Ba Chua Kho. Ba is also sometimes interpreted as Goddess.*

*Thus, other female spirits like Thien Y A Na may be described as a ba.*

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At the lunar New Year, crowds visit her shrine to obtain symbolic loans. "Lucky spirit money" blessed at her shrine is the equivalent of seed money: it's expected to grow, flourish, and spread. At year's end, devotees return to the shrine to repay the loan, often with added interest

via offerings of gifts and real cash.

**Time:** Ba Chua Kho responds whenever she is needed, but her annual pilgrimage coincides with the Vietnamese lunar New Year.

**Petition:** Burn spirit money to honor her. Burn the amount that you need. Burn miniature paper models of your needs: house, automobile, legal documents.

**Bird:** Rooster

**Sacred site:** The Ba Chua Kho Temple, her primary shrine, is in Co Me, approximately nineteen miles north of Hanoi. She has shrines in the marketplace as well as in devotees' homes, but Co Me is her home. (Because of her nature, she is usually enshrined in the market or in one's place of business; those who work at home enshrine her there.)

**See also:** *Ba Chua Xu; Dinh Cô; Thien Y A Na;* and the Glossary entry for *Spirit Money*

## Ba Chua Xu

### *The Lady of the Realm*

Ba Chua Xu is among Vietnam's most beloved modern goddesses and the subject of a huge, annual pilgrimage. Ba Chua Xu is matron of Vietnamese at home and abroad, but she potentially fulfills requests for anyone, and her own ancestry is disputed.

There are as many legends of Ba Chua Xu and opposing stories, claims, and theories as there are for Black Madonnas. One legend explains that two or three centuries ago, a girl was possessed by a spirit identifying herself as the "Lady of the Realm." She revealed the location of her statue on Mount Sam and demanded that it be brought down to the village and venerated. People followed the spirit's directions; the statue was found, but forty men were unable to lift it.

The goddess again spoke through a medium, stating that only nine virgin girls would be permitted to carry her image. The girls easily lifted it, carrying it until they reached the place where the shrine now stands.

The statue once again became too heavy, signaling the goddess' desire to stay in that place. (Alternative legends suggest that the goddess first made contact in dreams or that the statue emerged from the sea or was found growing from mountain rocks.)

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*Ba Chua Xu is the matron of Vietnamese refugees. Those desperate to flee invoked her help, as for instance the boat-people exodus of the late seventies and early eighties. Afterward, they returned (if only for pilgrimage purposes) with gifts for her shrine.*

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The statue was old and badly damaged, and so its face was repainted to enhance its beauty. It was dressed in lavish garments. (Some scholars believe this statue is really an ancient Khmer image of Shiva, although this theory is rejected by devotees.) The statue venerated on Sam Mountain is believed to be over eight thousand years old.

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*The Vietnamese government has periodically discouraged or even actively suppressed divination and spirit mediums at Ba Chua Xu's shrine at Sam Mountain. She is traditionally served by transvestite spirit mediums, but this, too, has periodically been discouraged by secular authorities.*

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The age of the original shrine built for Ba Chua Xu is unknown. (It may be older than the several hundred years suggested by the myth.) It was renovated in the late nineteenth century and then rebuilt to present size in 1972. Since the early nineties, this shrine has become *the* most visited religious site in southern Vietnam, receiving over one million visitors annually.

Located in Vinh Te village at the base of Mount Sam in the western regions of the Mekong Delta near the Vietnam-Cambodia border, the

shrine is in a frontier region, an ethnic crossroads where borders have historically been contested. Ironically or not, although Ba Chua Xu is now intensely associated with Vietnamese nationalism, there are claims that she was originally a goddess of ethnic groups conquered by the Vietnamese. Ba Chua Xu is variously described as originally being:

- A Vietnamese woman (a member of royalty or a mountain woman who helped a general)
- A Cham princess
- A Khmer or Thai woman
- An avatar of Ma Zu

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*According to legend, anyone who offers incense to Ba Chua Xu at her shrine during her festival will attain their desires and have their petition granted.*

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Ba Chua Xu's tremendous popularity is based on her track record for responding to petitions and protecting her devotees. There is virtually nothing that Ba Chua Xu does not do. She provides academic and business success, health, fertility, romantic and domestic happiness. She is an oracular spirit, answering questions and offering information via mediums. She oversees commerce and travel.

Ba Chua Xu will grant *any* request provided it is offered with respect. However, promises to Ba Chua Xu *must* be kept. She is a benevolent, responsive, generous spirit but is also authoritative and volatile, easily angered by perceived insults, disrespect, and especially theft of her offerings. (She has a lavish temple filled with valuable offerings in a region where many are impoverished.) She seriously enforces all deals made with her. If she comes through, you must, too, or she will exact punishment. "Minor" punishment includes bad dreams or severe headaches, but she also demonstrates anger via loss of home, business, or money. She may take back whatever she has given and then some. Ba Chua Xu will inflict bodily harm and has a reputation for wringing necks.

**Sacred place:** The lavish Ba Chua Xu temple in Vinh Te, Vietnam, is flanked by two halls displaying offerings made to the goddess.

**Time:** Her primary festival is from the 23<sup>rd</sup> to 27<sup>th</sup> day of Vietnam's fourth lunar month, with the 25<sup>th</sup> being the main festival day. On the first night of her festival, her image is bathed in perfumed water and dressed in new clothes. Her old clothes are ripped to pieces that are distributed as amulets, which allegedly possess the power to banish evil spirits and preserve good health.

**Altar:** Small shrines resembling little houses placed in the corners of homes, gardens, or orchards

**Offerings:** Incense; clothing for her image; roast pork; fresh water; fruit; flowers; candles; paper clothing; salt; gold leaf; her favor is earned by sponsoring entertainment at her shrine: dancers, singers, actors, and acrobats are present, waiting to serve.

**See also:** *Ba Chua Kho; Black Madonna; Dinh Cô; Ma Zu; Thien Y A Na;* and the Glossary entry for *Possession*

## **Ba Den**

*The Black Lady; Holy Mother of the Sacred Mountain*

**Also known as:** Linh Son Thanh Mau

**Origin:** Cambodian (Khmer) or Vietna mese depending on version of her myth

Ba Den, literally the "Black Lady," is a small, dark-faced porcelain image venerated by Vietnamese and Cambodians. Both ethnic groups claim her. Since the nineteenth century, her shrine at Ba Den Mountain has been among the most popular pilgrimages in the region.

There are different legends of how Ba Den became a goddess. All end sadly. She may have committed suicide to avoid an arranged marriage or died resisting rape. She may have fallen to her death from a cliff or been attacked by a tiger on the mountain. Regardless of cause, after she died, people saw her walking on the mountain, chanting Buddhist mantras

and prayers.

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*Black Lady Mountain was a guerilla base during the second Indo-Chinese war. There was so much fighting in the region during the American-Vietnam war that pilgrimage routes were blocked. Many devotees visited Ba Chua Xu's shrine in the Mekong Delta instead. Ba Chua Xu is now enshrined with Ba Den on the main altar at Black Lady Mountain.*

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Renowned for healing illness, protecting from danger, and bestowing good fortune and success, she has a similar generous but volatile nature as her sister goddess, Ba Chua Xu. Make sure to fulfill all vows made to Ba Den. Ba Den is sometimes identified with Hindu goddess Mariamman.

**Sacred sites:** Ba Den has two primary shrines:

- A mountain shrine in Tay Ninh province near the Vietnamese-Cambodian border northwest of Ho Chi Minh City (Ba Den Mountain)
- A Khmer monastery called the Bat Pagoda in Soc Trang Province (named for its huge colonies of bats); this manifestation of Ba Den (who may or may not be the same spirit as the one enshrined on the mountain) is famed for providing traffic safety and preventing accidents. The monks bless vehicles with Holy Water from Ba Den's altar.

**Time:** Pilgrimages are traditionally made on the 15<sup>th</sup> day (full moon) of the 1<sup>st</sup>, 9<sup>th</sup>, and 10<sup>th</sup> lunar months.

**Offerings:** Wealthy devotees have been known to offer bars of silver or gold at her shrine; the less wealthy offer the fruits of their labor, often literally.

**See also:** *Arang; Ba Chua Kho; Ba Chua Xu; Black Madonna; Ma Zu; Mariamman*

**Ba Neb Tetet**

*The Soul of Mendes; Lord of Mendes; The Ram of Mendes*

**Also known as:** Banebdedet; Banebdjedet

**Origin:** Egypt

At the root of the wrangling and power struggle between rival Egyptian deities Horus and Set is a philosophical disagreement about succession rights. King Osiris is dead: who should succeed him?

- If descent is patrilineal, then it should be his legitimate son, Horus.
- If descent is matrilineal, then it should be Osiris' mother's other son, Set.

They might still be wrangling about this today if it wasn't for Ba Neb Tetet, the calm, cool-headed ram deity who suggested that the primordial goddess, Neith, be consulted for the final decision. Ba Neb Tetet cautioned that a peaceful solution *must* be found lest Ma'at (sacred universal order) be destroyed and all Egypt with it (and possibly the world).

Ba Neb Tetet is the original goat of Mendes. (The ancient Egyptians lumped goats and sheep together.) In the medieval era, the image of this horned deity was identified with Satan; however Ba Neb Tetet is not even a trickster: he is a calm, peaceful, orderly, honest spirit who may be petitioned for assistance with negotiations and arbitration.

**Manifestation:** A man with a horned ram's head

**Sacred site:** Djedet, the Egyptian city better known by its Greek name, Mendes, was also known as Per-Banebdjedet or House of the Ram of the Mendes.

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*The ancient, Semitic storm spirit is Ba'al (1). His descendent, the demonologists' Ba'al, is Ba'al (2).*

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**Ba'al (1)**



## *He Who Mounts the Clouds; The Prince*

### **Origin:** Semitic

Ba'al is not actually a name but a title that literally means "Master" and generally refers to a spirit whose name is Hadd, Haddad, Addad, or some variation of that name. Ba'al's primary modern fame is from the Bible, where he is the spirit railed against by the Hebrew prophets.

Ba'al is the epitome of male sexual prowess and fertility. He is responsible for life-giving rain and is petitioned for fertility, abundance, and protection. Ba'al belongs to a family of spirits:

- El and Lady Asherah of the Sea are his parents.
- Anat is his sister, lover, partner, and bodyguard.

In Ugaritic (Canaanite) mythology, Ba'al and El have a contentious relationship. If one understands El as corresponding to the God of Israel, then this contentiousness serves to explain much of the biblical antipathy to Ba'al. Ba'al is frequently venerated beside his mother, Lady Asherah of the Sea.

Ba'al travels with an entourage. His closest compatriot is Anat, but he also has a harem including spirits called Dew, Rain, and Plump Damsel. When Anat approaches he dismisses his other women, but it's unclear whether this is because he really loves her most or because he, too, fears her rage. Ba'al travels with eight boar-hunters, which may refer to myths of Adonis. He has two servant spirits who act as his envoys:

- Gahpen or Gahfen (Vine)
- Ugar (Field)

Ecstatic dance was integral to his rites. It is theorized that vestiges of choreography may survive among dervish traditions.

**Manifestations:** A large, handsome, virile, youthful man or sometimes as such a man with a bull's head

**Attributes:** Other than his horned helmet and his lightning bolt, Ba'al's attributes are weapons. His arsenal includes a spear, mace, battle axe, double axe (labrys), and two bludgeons named Ayamur (Driver) and Yagrush (Chaser). Ba'al is *always* armed and ready for action; he has a

dagger at his belt.

**Realm:** Ba'al lives in a palace of gold, silver, and lapis lazuli with but one window through which he sends rain, thunder, and lightning to Earth.

**Animal:** Bull

**Tree:** Cypress

**Sacred places:** Mount Saphon (Syria); Mount Carmel (Israel)

**Offerings:** Fruit

Various Ba'alim (plural) are associated with different locations. It is unclear whether these Ba'alim are paths or local manifestations of the same spirit or whether they are closely related but distinct spirits. (See the Glossary entry for Path for further information.) The Ba'alim include:

- **Ba'al Addir:** A Phoenician/Punic path of Ba'al venerated in Byblos and North Africa; possibly the spirit the Romans called Jupiter Valens, who was worshipped by Rome's African legions.
- **Ba'al Berith:** A Canaanite path of Ba'al. Judges 8:33 describes Hebrew veneration of Ba'al Berith following Gideon's death. *Ba'al Berith* literally means "Master of the Covenant," but it could be interpreted to mean "Master of Circumcision." Because of this, some scholars believe he was venerated in the form of a phallus. (See also: *Baalberith*.)
- **Ba'al Haddad:** Ba'al in his Ugaritic path as Spirit of Thunder. This is the best known and documented Ba'al.
- **Ba'al Hammon:** "Lord of the Smoking Altars" was the primary spirit of Carthage, where he was worshipped as a fertility-bestowing spirit since at least the ninth century BCE. It is unclear whether he was imported to North Africa by the Phoenicians or whether the Phoenicians used the name *Ba'al* to identify a local Berber spirit. The Romans identified him with Saturn. "Smoking altars" is believed to refer to the Phoenician incense trade. (See also: *Hammu Qaiyu*.)
- **Ba'al Karnaim:** This name literally means "Two Horned Ba'al" or the "Two Horned Master"; scholars theorize that he or Ba'al Haddad is the Ba'al of the Bible. He may have shared a shrine with Astarte in

Karnaim, now modern Jordan. They may also have been venerated together on the sacred mountain, Jebel Bu Karnin, near Carthage, south of modern Tunis. (The mountain features two peaks, separated by a gorge, and resembles a pair of horns.)

- **Ba'al Lebanon:** This is generally considered the same spirit as Ba'al Haddad.
- **Ba'al Marqod:** This form, literally "Master of the Dance," was venerated near modern Beirut. He is a spirit of healing; the Romans identified him with Jupiter.
- **Ba'al Merodach:** This form was venerated as the head of the celestial pantheon in Babylon and Assyria. He has four attack dogs: Akkulu (Eater), Ikssuda (Grasper), Iltebu (Holder), and Ukkumu (Seizer).
- **Ba'al Peor:** This, the Ba'al of Moab, is the Master of Mount Phegor. Also known as Ba'al Phegor, he was the subject of a Mystery tradition and may have been venerated in the form of a phallus. (See also: *Belphegor*.)
- **Ba'al Shamin:** This name literally means "Master of the Heavens" or "Master of the Sky." He is the path of Ba'al venerated in Palmyra, Syria.
- **Ba'al Zebub:** This name literally means "Master of Flies." Flies are associated with mysteries of birth and death. In the ancient Middle East, flies were understood as souls of the dead searching for new incarnations. Ba'al Zebub is Lord of the Flies, Shepherd of Souls. His name inspired William Golding's novel, *Lord of the Flies*. His center of veneration was the Philistine city of Ekron, just west of Jerusalem. Second Kings 1:2–3 records that Ahaziah, King of Israel fell ill and sent emissaries to Ba'al Zebub's shrine at Ekron to divine whether or not he would recover. (See also: *Beelzebub*.)
- **Ba'al Zephon:** This form, literally "Master of the North," was venerated near the Red Sea. Legend suggests that he tricked the Egyptians into pursuing the Israelites into the Red Sea. (See also: *Adonis; Anat; Asherah of the Sea; Astarte; Ba'al (2); Elagabal; Jezebel; Jupiter; Melkart; Tanit*.)

## Ba'al (2)

**Also known as:** Bael; Bel; Baël

**Origin:** Medieval Europe

**Classification:** Demon

The demonologists' Ba'al is no longer a spirit of fertility and rain. He is a King of Hell, attended by seventy legions of demons (alternatively he only has sixty-six). He has the power to bestow wisdom and invisibility.

**Manifestations:** As a creature with three heads: cat, man, and toad. His portrait in Collin De Plancy's *Dictionnaire Infernale* depicts him with what may be spider's legs.

**See also:** *Ba'al (1)*; *Baalberith*; *Beelzebub*; *Belphegor*; *Demon*

## Baalberith

*Master of the Covenant; Master of the Promise*

**Also known as:** Berith; Elberith

**Classification:** Demon

Medieval demonologists reinterpreted Ba'al Berith as a fallen angel, a former Prince of Cherubim but now "Pontiff of Hell." He serves as chief archivist and the devil's own private secretary. The covenant or promise that concerned medieval Christians was the one that left a human soul in thrall to Satan. If one believes in signed contracts between mortals and the devil, then Baalberith is the spirit who serves as notary.

**See also:** *Ba'al (1)*; *Ba'al Berith*

## Baba Yaga

*Iron Nosed Woman; Iron Nosed Witch; Grandmother in the Forest*

**Origin:** Russia (maybe originally Scythian)

Baba Yaga, goddess of birth and death, devolved into the bogeywoman of Russian fairy tales, a cannibal forest-witch, her name used to threaten children into obedience: “Be good or Baba Yaga will get you.” Baba Yaga doesn’t just eat children; sometimes she defends them by dispensing justice to evil step-mothers.

Baba may be petitioned for fertility by those who lack it. She allegedly knows every botanical healing secret in existence; whether or not she can be persuaded to reveal these secrets is another story. Baba Yaga is the Mistress of All Witches, Lady of the Beasts, the Primal Mother who rescues, nurtures, *and* destroys.

**Favored people:** Witches, herbalists, heroes, and hardworking advocates for wild nature, but be cautioned: Baba Yaga has no patience with slackers, whiners, and ingrates of any persuasion.

**Manifestations:** Baba Yaga flies through the air in a mortar, steers with a pestle, sweeping away her traces with a broom. She has iron teeth that protrude like boar’s tusks. Her hands are tipped with bear claws. She wears a necklace of human skulls and likes to smoke a pipe. One of her legs may be distinctive: it may be formed of clay, gold, iron, or steel. Sometimes her leg is an iron pestle. (In other versions, she is a woman from the waist up, a snake from the waist down.)

**Attributes:** Knife, oven, mortar and pestle

**Realm:** Baba Yaga lives in the heart of a deep, birch forest in a little hut named Izbushka (literally “little hut”) that usually stands on stilt-like chicken’s feet but occasionally on goat’s legs or even on spindle heels. Baba Yaga’s hut obeys orders. Say “*Izbushka, Izbushka!* Stand with your back to the forest and your front to me” and it does as directed. The house is formed from bones, personally collected by Baba herself. The doorposts are leg bones; the lock is a sharp-toothed mouth; the bolt is a hand. The fence consists of bones crowned with skulls whose empty eye sockets glow in the dark. The house is dominated by an oven akin to a cauldron of regeneration, and Baba Yaga stories may be understood as tales of initiation, sometimes but not always successful.

**Planet:** Sun

**Elements:** Fire, earth

**Animals:** *All* animals, but especially horses, hedgehogs, snakes, and dragons

**Birds:** Crows, ravens, and owls

**Plants:** Poppies, black sunflowers, medicinal herbs, rye

**Spirit allies:** The Rusalka

**Offerings:** Baba Yaga has a voracious appetite and gourmet taste. Offer her lavish homemade feasts of traditional Russian delicacies (blinis, coulbiac, pelmeny, and so forth). The more difficult and time-consuming the feast is to prepare, the more she will like it. Set the table beautifully for her. She also enjoys tobacco products. Baba Yaga drinks strong black Russian Caravan tea and vodka.

**See also:** *Anat; Jezibaba; Kali; Lady of the Beasts; Ragana; Rusalka; Tabiti*

## **Babalu Ayé**

*Father of the Earth*

**Also known as:** Obaluaiyé; Sagbata; Sakpata; Omolu; Soponnon; Asohin; Asojano

**Origin:** West Africa

**Classification:** Orisha; orixa

**Feast:** 17 December

The simplest explanation of Babalu Ayé is that he is the spirit of smallpox, but that does not do him justice. Babalu Ayé transcends being a disease spirit: he is a powerful deity who is as adored as he is feared. He is a dread spirit who is simultaneously beloved.

Babalu Ayé protects against the disease he embodies and carries. He is smallpox, and he is its vaccine. Smallpox has become something of a

disease of the past, but Babalu Ayé remains relevant. He has dominion over all skin ailments, major and minor, as well as infectious and viral diseases. He controls all illnesses that manifest on the skin, like measles or chicken pox. Babalu Ayé has emerged as the spirit of AIDS and the patron who protects those suffering from this illness. He owns all secrets of death, disease, and cemeteries.

Babalu Ayé is a title meaning “Father of the Earth”—not his real name. It is considered dangerous to call him by his true name, no need to attract his attention needlessly, no need to get too familiar, lest he become familiar with you, too. Euphemisms are used to address him. Babalu Ayé is the most famous and well-known, but there are others:

- Babaligbo: Father of the Forest
- Ile-Gbonon: Earth Heats Up
- Olode: Lord of the Outside
- Oluwa: The Lord
- Omo-Olu: Child of the Lord (from whence derives his Brazilian manifestation, Omolu)

He is venerated throughout Western Africa and, unlike many orishas, is shared by several spiritual traditions, so it is unclear exactly from where he derives. In one myth, he was a handsome, amorous prince punished with smallpox by the Creator for breaking a spiritual injunction. Because people cried so much for him after his death (or because Oshun, his lover, mourned so deeply), the Creator resurrected him, giving him dominion over the disease that felled him. Another legend describes him as a lame beggar. Unsympathetic people mocked and abused him past his point of endurance. He took a broom and, sweeping some sesame seeds into the air, magically created fever, pestilence, and especially smallpox. No one mocks him anymore.

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*In 1917, British colonial authorities in Africa banned devotion to Babalu Ayé when his priests were accused of deliberately spreading smallpox. The religion went underground with Baba worshipped as Oluwa, “the lord.”*

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Babalu Ayé strikes down the immoral, arrogant, and wicked. He fells the insolent. Always be kind and polite to even the most decrepit, pathetic beggar: it could be Babalu Ayé testing your character. Babalu Ayé strolls with an entourage all dressed in red in the heat of the noonday sun. Sometimes he cloaks himself in raffia to hide the ravages of his disease. People are cautioned against walking alone at noon, especially wearing red, lest Babalu add you to his entourage. Babalu Ayé delivers the wrath of God—but he also has the power to save you from it.

He is syncretized to Saint Lazarus—not the Lazarus who was raised from the dead, but the poor leper whose dogs lick his sores, mentioned in the Gospel of Luke. When African devotees saw the chromolithograph of Saint Lazarus, they recognized Babalu Ayé in his suppurating sores and the faithful, loving dogs.

**Favored people:** Those who suffer from any of the illnesses under Babalu’s dominion may consider themselves under his dominion. He is the patron of the humble, outcasts, and those who truly suffer.

**Attributes:** A broom with which he removes illness or sweeps it into the air; a club to fell his victims; a lance or spear with which he pricks victims to cause pustules, spots, or pox; arrows that cause rash

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*Babalu was the signature song of Cuban singer, actor, and television producer Desi Arnaz (2 March 1917–2 December 1986). According to legend, Desi requested three things from Babalu: professional and financial success and a beautiful wife. In return he promised to spread Babalu’s name around the globe, or so the legend says.*

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**Colors:** Depending on tradition, he’s associated with brown, red, purple, yellow, black, and/or white.

**Number:** 17



**Days:** Sunday or Monday

**Animals:** Scorpions; dogs. Shango stole the dogs, who are his constant companions, from Ogun to give to Babalu Ayé so that he would not be so lonely.

**Element:** Earth

**Plant:** Cactus

**Tree:** Odan (a kind of banyan native to West Africa)

**Spirit allies:** In Africa, he's venerated alongside Nana Buruku and Oshumare, who may be his parents; in the African-Diaspora, he is closely allied with Shango.

**Altars:** In general, only Babalu's true devotees maintain permanent altars for him. Others erect them as needed (for a petition, spell, or gratitude), but then promptly remove them. No need for him to feel too much at home. Place offerings atop a raffia cloth; decorate with pottery shards, dry leaves, and perforated objects (believed to resemble smallpox pustules or measles spots). Soak some bread in milk and put it on the altar to feed Babalu Ayé's dogs, his ever-present companions.

**Sacred site:** The shrine of Saint Lazarus in El Rincon, Cuba

**Offerings:** Popcorn, roasted corn, sesame seeds, candy, cookies, cigars, cowrie shells. If you wish to cook for him, he likes chicken; Babalu drinks good white wine: don't offer water; it irritates his sores. Offer him small *milagros* when you request healing. Present larger, even full-sized ones if he answers your petition.

A SIMPLE RITUAL REQUESTING THAT BABALU AYÉ REMOVE ILLNESS

- Create a simple shrine by laying down a raffia cloth.
- Place a glass of white wine on the cloth, together with a bowl of milk in which you have placed a slice of bread.
- Pour palm oil over a bowl of dry popcorn and place this on the raffia, too. The wine, milk, and bread may be removed after twenty-four hours, but the popcorn *must* remain for seventeen days.

- Use this shrine as a focal point for prayer and petition. Invoke Babalu; negotiate with him; plead with him; always speak very gently and politely to him. (Some spirits tolerate bullying and threats, but not Babalu.)
- When the seventeen days are over, completely dismantle the shrine. Take the popcorn to the park or beach and feed it to birds.

**See also:** *Daruma; Jari-Mari; Logunedé; Nana Buruku; Ogun; Omolu; Orisha; Oshumare; Oshun; Shango; Sitala; T'ou Chen Niang Niang;* and the Glossary entry for *Milagro*

## Bacchus

**See:** *Dionysus*

## The Bodbh

**Also known as:** Bodbh Catha (literally, the battle crow)

**Origin:** Irish

Crows on the battlefield are harbingers of doom. They await the battle's end to feast on the fallen. Crows are also traditional psychopomps: crow spirits travel back and forth between the realms of the living and the dead. The Irish warrior goddess called the Bodbh is a crow goddess.

*Bodbh* literally means “crow,” “scald crow,” or “raven,” but it also has the added connotation of “witch.” She is a mysterious spirit. Bodbh may be a title, not a name. It is used as an epithet for other Irish warrior goddesses, like Macha, the Morrigan, and Nemain. The Bodbh is very closely associated with the Morrigan; some perceive Morrigan and Bodbh as two names for the same spirit. The Bodbh may also be the same spirit as the Gaulish deity, Cathobodua, in which case her veneration was widespread in the ancient Celtic world.

Her power on the battlefield is psychological: the Bodbh doesn't actually fight on behalf of devotees. Instead, she terrifies, intimidates, and confuses their enemies with her presence. The Bodbh appears in the

epic Ulster Cycle. She is closely associated with the hero, Cu Chulainn, assisting and encouraging him on several occasions. In addition to her responsibilities on the battlefield, the Bodb is associated with death and the Otherworld:

- Her appearance in the form of a crow may be a harbinger of death.
- The Bodb is among those spirits who manifest as Washers at the Ford.
- She may sometimes be located at the House of Da Derga, hostel of the dead.

**Manifestations:** She may manifest as a woman or crow and has been sighted as a huge crow riding a battle horse. If she manifests as a woman, she may be powerful and beautiful or haglike and terrifying. In one myth, the Bodb appears at Da Derga's Hostel as a fierce crowlike hag in triple form (triplicate; three of her): black as a corpse or a crow and bleeding with her mouth on one side of her head and a rope around her neck. Birdlike she perches on one leg at the hostel's threshold. She is simultaneously Death and a sacrificial victim; hag and carrion crow merged in one form.

**Color:** Black

**Birds:** Crow, raven, scald crow

**Husband:** Neit, a battle deity about whom little more is known than his name

**Sisters:** Aine, Banbha, Eriu, Fotla, and Macha

**See also:** *Aine; Macha; Morrigan, the; Washer at the Ford*

## **Bagalamukhi**

*The Crane Headed One*

**Also known as:** Bagala

**Origin:** India

Bagalamukhi is Queen of Witchcraft, poison, and deceit. She presides

over language and the sacred power of words. Bagalamukhi controls the tongue. She blesses those she loves with eloquence and protects them from the devious, hurtful words of others. Bagalamukhi silences her enemies, human or demon, by ripping out their tongues or otherwise rendering them mute. (Another favored method is hammering pegs through the tongue.) Bagalamukhi also has the power to cause or alleviate illness.

She is sometimes described as an irritable, foul-tempered spirit who may incite people to torture one another, physically or emotionally, for her own enjoyment. In all fairness, it is not uncommon for powerful female deities associated with magical rites to be defamed by authorities. What has survived the centuries best are written texts by male scholars, not the oral Mystery traditions of ancient devotees. It would be ironic if a spirit associated with deceit, gossip, and slander was also its own victim.

She is the seizer of speech and the paralyzer of the tongue: she carries a big hammer with which she knocks enemies and the wicked out cold. She also protects those she loves, bestows courage, health, and prosperity, and watches over you so that you don't say something really stupid. Invoke Bagalamukhi, if you dare, to stop gossip and slander.

**Favored people:** Witches and sorcerers specializing in the magic power of words

**Manifestation:** Bagalamukhi has three eyes. She wears saffron-dyed robes and a garland of champaka flowers.

**Attributes:** Hammer, chisel, wooden pegs, and a noose

**Bird:** Crane

**Mount:** Lion

**Number:** 9

**Flower:** Champaka (*Michelia champaka*)

**Color:** The yellow-gold spectrum; the shades of saffron (includes a deep red)

**Consort:** Rudra

**Planet:** Moon

**Sacred site:** The Temple of Jwalamukhi, approximately seventy kilometers from Dharamsala, is built on the site where the dismembered goddess Sati's tongue fell to Earth.

**Offerings:** Incense, candles, yellow flowers; *milagros* in the form of mouths or tongues; miniature hammers; wooden pegs

**See also:** *Rudra; Sati*

## **Baghlet el Qebour**

### *Mule of the Graves*

**Origin:** Morocco

According to the tenets of Islam, there is a proscribed waiting time before a widow can take a new husband. Officially this is described as a period of mourning, but it also serves to clarify and establish paternity, especially back in the day before instant pregnancy tests.

According to the legend of the Baghlet el Qebour, a Marrakech widow flouted this proscription. (Alternatively, she prostituted herself before the official mourning time was complete.) When she died, she was not allowed to rest in peace but was punished. Every night (except Wednesdays, her night off) she transforms into a mule. From just before midnight until the wee hours of morning, Baghlet el Qebour roams Marrakech's deserted quarters looking for men out gallivanting. She buries them alive.

Presumably the Baghlet el Qebour was not the only woman to flout this rule: why she was singled out for punishment is unclear. Furthermore, although she's described as being punished, Baghlet el Qebour is something of an avenging angel, the morality police in the shape of a mule. She doesn't bother anyone who's at home after dark. She also doesn't bother streetwalkers; it's their customers she has within her sights.

Baghlet el Qebour's modern legend may be a cautionary tale reminding widows to behave properly. She's not punished for being the only woman to misbehave; she's punished for being a potential role model. The Baghlet el Qebour is sometimes classified with Djinn (who are a different species from people; Djinn, unlike some other spirits, do not have prior human incarnations). Lurking beneath this urban legend may be a pre-Islamic spirit who upholds matrilineal traditions, flouting the desire to establish paternity. She may be a spirit of contraception, also potentially flouting paternal control. Mules, notoriously, are sterile; it doesn't matter when they have sex, they won't conceive.

**Manifestation:** A solitary mule, all saddled up. Those who attempt to mount her, mistakenly thinking they can catch a ride home, are in for an unpleasant surprise.

**See also:** *Aisha Qandisha; Djinn; Xtabey*

## **Bahlindjo**

**Also known as:** Balandjo; Balendjo

**Origin:** Yoruba

**Classification:** Orisha

Bahlindjo is the resident spirit of the Ogun River in what is now Nigeria. He once shared this river with Yemaya, who is now associated with the sea, but the two remain closely associated. Bahlindjo is a spirit of fertility and healing.

Bahlindjo may or may not be an aspect of Ogun, but he has largely been absorbed by that dynamic orisha in his path as Ogun Balendjo. Bahlindjo may or may not be an independent spirit.

**See also:** *Ogun; Yemaya; and the Glossary entry for Path*

## **Bahuchara**

**Also known as:** Bahucharaji; Bahuchara Mata

## Origin: India

Hijras are India's third gender, straddling the threshold between men and women. They are described as transvestites or cross-dressers, but that's a limited, superficial description. Hijras are disreputable and of very low social status *but* are also popularly considered shamanic, holy beings possessing great spiritual power. Bahuchara is their goddess, and they are vehicles of her power.

Bahuchara's veneration is not limited to hijras. She is venerated by women whom she protects from marrying husbands who will not provide sexual fulfillment and children. She is petitioned for children, especially sons, by childless women (in a culture where a woman's safety, status, and, in extreme cases, life depend on male family members). Hijras, however, are her special children.

Various legends recount how Bahuchara attained her role. Their common theme is that in life she was denied the pleasures and benefits of a wife. In the most famous myth, a young prince adamantly does not wish to wed, but his parents insist, marrying him to the future goddess. She's young and beautiful, but the prince abandons her on their wedding night, riding away into the forest. After months of loneliness, she searches for him, finally discovering him in the forest with a community of hijras. Puzzled and not really comprehending, she asks whether he desires a wife. The prince answers honestly and frankly, explaining that if he wanted a wife and children, he'd be home with her. He describes himself as neither man nor woman but something else.

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*In another version of Bahuchara's origins, she is a young girl traveling through the forests of Gujarat. When her party is set upon by thieves, Bahuchara, fearing rape, sliced off her own breast and offered it to the robbers in place of her virginity. She died and was deified. The robbers, cursed with impotence, became Bahuchara's first devotees.*

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She reacts with rage. In the context of her culture, there is no divorce,

no second opportunity for her. He's dancing in the forest, but she's stuck. She is doomed to an unhappy, frustrated, childless life lacking the status and benefits she had anticipated as a prince's bride. She orders the ritual of emasculation. She slices off his genitals and transforms into the goddess Bahuchara, who presides over this operation and the community of hijras.

Hijras possess the power to transmit Bahuchara's blessings of fertility and prosperity but only after undergoing emasculation. Their blessings are eagerly sought; their curses terribly feared. They are Bahuchara's vehicles and priestesses.

Bahuchara is also the matron goddess of gay men, cross-dressers, and the transgendered. She does not expect most to undergo any modification, protecting and loving them as they are. However, Bahuchara selects certain individuals, the few rather than the many, to be her vehicles. Those she has earmarked to be her priestesses may receive dream visits from Bahuchara. Impotence is also sometimes considered to signal her calling. There is a folk belief that impotent men who resist Bahuchara's call are doomed to seven future incarnations of impotence.

The standard Western sex-change operation may or may not be sufficient to transform a man into Bahuchara's sacred vehicle. Traditionally the ritual was part of a complex initiation conducted at her temple. In 1888, this rite was outlawed by the ruling Raja despite protests from hijras and is now a criminal act under India's penal code. (Which doesn't mean it doesn't exist and isn't done.)

**Manifestation:** A beautiful, gracious, bejeweled woman with four arms, her palms and soles ornamented with henna

**Attributes:** A sword, a trident, and a text filled with blessings

**Color:** Green

**Mount:** Rooster

**Day:** Tuesday

**Sacred site:** Her main temple is near Ahmadabad, Gujarat, India;



smaller shrines are kept in hijra households, but ideally each individual is expected to visit her primary shrine.

**Offerings:** Fruit, especially watermelon; cardamom pods; cashews; brown sugar; stick a wick in ghee (clarified butter) and burn as a butter lamp; hijras traditionally practice mortification and celibacy to gain Bahuchara's favors; Bahuchara is a gentle spirit who condemns the killing of animals: devotees frequently become vegetarians.

## **Baka**

**Origin:** Congolese

The term *Baka*, most commonly associated with dangerous spirits of Haitian Vodou, is variously used but is almost always negative or pejorative:

- *Baka* may be a synonym for minor demons.
- *Baka* may indicate malevolent, tricky souls of the dead.
- *Baka* most commonly refers to powerful spirits willing to contract with sorcerers.

Baka and magician are both independent contractors. The Baka is not a member of a pantheon but a free spirit; the sorcerer works for him-or herself. Each represents only their own desires. The Baka will do whatever the magician/shaman/sorcerer seeks as long as the price is right. Thus the Baka could theoretically be commanded to perform good works, although this is generally not believed to be the case.

Haitian Baka derive from Congolese spirits described as dead souls wandering the forest or as small malevolent spirits who wreak havoc. *Baka* also names an ethnic group: Baka Pygmies, nomadic hunter-gatherers who still live in the diminishing rain forests of Cameroon, Congo, and Gabon. They have historically been persecuted by settled Bantu neighbors who traditionally perceive Baka Pygmies as possessing profound magical knowledge. Using the name *Baka* to refer to malevolent forest spirits reflects Bantu fear of these forest dwellers.

In the context of Haitian Vodou, individual Baka make deals with

individual magical practitioners. They are typically asked to provide or guard wealth, reveal hidden treasure, or do revenge work. They are not patient spirits but clever tricksters who will turn on you in an instant if you fail to live up to your end of the bargain or their interpretation of your end of the bargain. They are dangerous and should be avoided.

**Manifestation:** Baka may have horns.

**See also:** *Bossu*

## **Baku**

### *The Dream Eater*

**Origin:** China, Japan

Have bad dreams? Suffer from nightmares? Have no fear, Baku will eat them. Baku is a fierce, protective spirit who can permanently eliminate nightmares. No dream is too tough for Baku, whose other dietary mainstay is metal. (Baku is also commonly referred to as “the Baku”.)

Dreams pass through Baku’s digestive system to be eliminated in the form of good luck. He removes your torment, leaving blessings in its place. Baku may spontaneously consume dreams, but he generally must be requested to do so. Allegedly, if you cry out, “Eat it, Baku!” or words to that effect three times, Baku will immediately devour all traces of a nightmare. Tell children about him for reassurance: no need to suffer bad dreams when Baku can be called.

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*Of course, from a metaphysical perspective, nightmares are more than just unpleasant moments: some are harbingers of disaster. By eating nightmares, Baku can change and improve fate.*

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Images of Baku or stuffed Baku toys (he’s cute!) are placed in

children's bedrooms or in those of anyone suffering chronic nightmares. His name painted on headboards or placed in the bedroom may be sufficient to promote peaceful, secure, uninterrupted sleep.

**Manifestations:** Baku is among those composite creatures classified as lion-dogs. His appearance is hazy; he may manifest differently for different people. He is a hybrid creature featuring elephant, rooster, horse, bear, ox, lion, dog, and possibly other animal components.

**See also:** *Faunus*

## Balder

**Also known as:** Baldr; Baldur; Lord Balder

**Origin:** Norse

**Classification:** Aesir

Balder, Odin and Frigg's son, is the fairest of all Aesir spirits, merciful, kind, and wise. Lord of joy, light, purity, friendship, reconciliation, and innocence, he is beloved by all. Well, almost all.

Balder had ominous dreams, which the Aesir recognized as portents of doom. His mother, determined to save him, traveled around the world extracting oaths from everything on Earth, making them promise never to harm Balder. She extracted vows from all living creatures and everything formed of metal, stone, and wood. The sole exception was mistletoe, which she considered too insignificant to pose a threat.

Frigg returned to Asgard, reassured of Balder's safety. The other Aesir amused themselves by throwing things at Balder (darts, hard objects), knowing that he could not be harmed. Observing these antics, a strange woman, maybe Loki in disguise, maybe his twin Angerboda, asked Frigg to explain. The woman asked whether *everyone* had sworn the oath. Frigg, still underestimating mistletoe, revealed the exception.

Later Loki handed a bit of mistletoe to Hodder, Balder's blind brother, and, guiding his hand, persuaded him to throw it. The mistletoe pierced Balder's heart, killing him instantly.

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*Balder plays a prominent role in the Xbox 360 action role-playing game “Too Human.”*

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**Manifestation:** He’s not called “Balder the Beautiful” for nothing. He is radiant.

**Consort:** Nanna

**Son:** Forseti, spirit of justice and peace

**Colors:** The yellow-gold spectrum, shining white

**Sacred plants:** Various plants are popularly called Balder’s Eyebrows, including valerian (*Valeriana officinalis*) and Mayweed (*Matricaria perforata* and *M. maritima*).

**Realm:** Balder’s hall is called *Breidablik* (“Broad Splendor”).

**Rune:** Sowulu

**See also:** *Aesir; Angerboda; Frigg; Hel; Loki; Odin*

## **Baleine, La**

*Mother of the Sea*

**Also known as:** La Balèn; Ezili Baleine

**Classification:** Lwa

La Baleine the whale is a mysterious, powerful spirit of the sea, invoked for protection, prosperity, and fertility, both creative and procreative. La Baleine travels the length, breadth, and depth of the seven seas; she carries secrets and messages from the depths to the surface. She is usually venerated alongside the mermaid, La Sirène; they are celebrated in the same songs. Their relationship is subject to debate: La Baleine may be La Sirène’s sister, mother, or lover. They may be aspects of each other with La Baleine the more distant, mysterious, elusive aspect. They may

also be aspects of Ezili: La Baleine is sometimes called Ezili Baleine.

Unlike most Vodou lwa, who were either born in Haiti or Africa, La Baleine may have arrived via European route. Late medieval European sailors and travelers described a female sea-monster named Balena.

La Sirène and La Baleine may be venerated on an altar together. Lord Agwé, La Sirène's husband, may be venerated along side.

**Manifestation:** She is a whale.

**Offerings:** Seawater; gifts with marine motifs; offer what a whale would eat, symbolically if not literally: a bowl of goldfish crackers or Chinese dried fish crackers.

#### VISUALIZATION

- Obtain or create an image of a whale's huge, open, gaping jaw.
- Visualize yourself entering the jaw as if it is sacred space.
- Although this is reminiscent of Jonah and the Whale, be assured that you can come out whenever you choose onto dry land
- La Baleine is a font of secret, hidden mystic and erotic information; explore and see what you experience.
- When your journey is concluded, thank La Baleine and ask her for a gift.

**See also:** *Ezili; Lwa; Sirène, La*

## Ban Naomha

**Also known as:** Ban-na-Naomha

**Origin:** Ireland

Ban Naomha means "Woman of the Well" or "Lady of the Well." She is an oracular spirit associated with the sacred well, Tober Kil-na-Greina, in County Cork. The well, whose name literally means "well of the fountain of the sun," is located near the ruins of an old Pagan fort. It was hidden for centuries beneath overgrown marshes but rediscovered when a local farmer cleared the land. Based on carvings and artifacts found, the area

was a holy Druid site. The well water allegedly has profound healing and blessing properties, and the well became a popular local pilgrimage until, possibly too popular, it was denounced by the local priest and public veneration ceased.

Ban Naomha is an elusive spirit who prefers to remain invisible. Only those gifted with second sight (psychic vision) can see her. She usually manifests in the form of a trout. Allegedly she will reveal herself and answer any question in response to this ritual at her well. If not conveniently located, try it in visualization and see what happens:

- Drink three cups of well water, then crawl around the well on your knees in a sun-wise direction three times.
- After the third round, place an egg-shaped stone on the altar by the well. (These stones, popularly called “stones of the sun” and found near the shrine, are white, shine when wet, and may resemble eggs.)
- Repeat twice more for a total of nine drinks and nine circumambulations. Three stones will be laid on the altar, and then Ban Naomha should appear.

## **Banshee**

**Also known as:** Bean Sidhe

**Origin:** Ireland

**Classification:** Sidhe

Fairy mounds are another name for the ancient, sometimes treasure-filled burial mounds that stud Europe and Asia, also known as *barrows*, *kurgans*, or, in Irish, *sidhe*. The spirits called sidhe are simultaneously Fairies and spirits of death and the Otherworld. No Fairy is more associated with death than the Banshee.

*Banshee* is the anglicized version of the Irish Gaelic *bean sidhe*, literally “Fairy Woman” or “Woman of the Fairy Mound.” Banshees have become horror entertainment staples. The phrase “scream like a Banshee” has entered the modern lexicon. In Hollywood’s version of the Banshee, hearing her voice causes death. This is unfair: the Banshee doesn’t kill or

injure anyone, nor will she scream for just anyone. Individual Banshees are attached to very specific families, typically old, elegant Irish families.

The Banshee is the family's personal escort to the realm of the dead. She does not kill but awaits death and mourns. Should a member of her family be about to die (for *any* reason; it could be a natural death of someone aged 102), she manifests and audibly *keens*, the traditional Celtic mourning wail. Obviously, she is a dreaded guest: her presence, typically visible *and* audible, indicates imminent death.

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*Although most closely associated with Ireland, Banshees are not exclusive to the Emerald Isle. They're also native to the Scottish Highlands, Brittany, and Wales.*

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**Manifestations:** The Banshee's many forms include:

- An old woman dressed in green with glowing red eyes and long, wild, white hair
- A deathly pale woman dressed in white with long, wild red hair
- A beautiful woman, veiled in white
- A shimmery, silvery woman with long, beautifully abundant silver-grey hair
- A headless woman, naked from the waist up

**Attribute:** A basin of blood

**See also:** *Baobhan Sith; Caointeach; Cyhyraeth; Nemhain; Psychopomps; Sidhe; White Lady*

## **Bao Gu**

*Lady Bau; Lady Doctor*

**Also known as:** Bao Ku

**Origin:** China

Bao Gu's father, a high-ranking Taoist magistrate, raised his daughter in a monastery where she learned magic, alchemy, and medical techniques including acupuncture. Maturing into a beautiful woman, she married her father's disciple, a master acupuncturist, in approximately 327 CE. They traveled to the mountains to work as healers while studying medicine and mysticism. Bao Gu's husband died circa 364 on the very same mountain associated with the Fairy Ho Hsien-Ko.

Bao Gu returned to the monastery, where she continued her healing practice, now working alongside her father. She combined his techniques with the acupuncture she had learned from her husband and her own innovations, becoming an incredibly skilled healer. Bao Gu herself was fascinated with the healing properties of water. Although it no longer exists, her well was renamed the Bao Gu Well in her honor. Her mastery of alchemy was so complete that she never died but transformed into an Immortal or Fairy.

- Bao Gu is petitioned for healing, fertility, and happy marriages.
- She is the goddess of acupuncture.

**Favored people:** Acupuncturists, practitioners of Traditional Chinese Medicine, and their patients

**Sacred site:** Her father's monastery is now the Triple Origin Temple in Guangzhou City. Originally called the Bau Gu shrine, in 1643, the imperial officer in charge of astronomy advised that the location and feng shui of the shrine was so perfect that it should be converted to venerate the Great Emperors of the Triple Origin, an imperial cult. Bao Gu's shrine remains but was moved to the side hall. The temple including the Hall of Bao Gu was enlarged after 1700.

**Offerings:** Incense, acupuncture needles, different types of mineral waters

**See also:** *Eight Immortals; Ho Hsien-Ko; Miao Shan*

**Baobhan Sith**



**Pronounced:** *Buhvan shee*

**Origin:** Scotland

Baobhan Sith are spirits of the Scottish Highlands. Their name literally means “Fairy Women” or “Women of the Sidhe” and so is cognate with Banshee, but they are very different spirits. Unlike Banshees, Baobhan Sith are killers, sometimes called Scottish vampires.

Baobhan Sith love to dance all night. According to some legends, they seduce men, dance with them, and then kill them, draining them of their blood. It’s difficult to determine whether this is their true nature or whether these legends were invented post-Christianity to discourage potential devotees from joining the Fairy’s dance. The Baobhan Sith’s favorite victims are hunters out on the moors. They may be deer goddesses punishing those who’ve hunted without performing correct rituals. Alternatively, they’re just dancing vampires.

**Manifestations:** They manifest as beautiful women usually, but not always, dressed in green. The true clue to their identity is in their feet. Rather than human feet, these ladies sport deer hooves. They are shape-shifters: be prepared to be surprised.

**Sacred birds:** Hooded crows or ravens

**Color:** Green

**See also:** *Aisha Qandisha; Banshee; Sidhe; Vila*

## **Barade**

**Origin:** Hausa

**Classification:** Bori

*Barade* means “mounted warrior” and is the title for the Bori spirit whose personal name may be Safiyanu, Sumb, or Sufi. He’s Sarkin Rafi’s brother. He adores battle but sulks when things don’t go his way. The afflictions he causes are characterized by bleeding, including internal bleeding. His victims usually experience burning heartburn and/or spit

up blood.

**Color:** White

**See also:** *Bori; Sarkin Rafi*

### **Mr. Barbaro**

Thor moved to Venezuela and transformed into Mr. Barbaro. Spirits of the Venezuelan spiritual tradition Maria Lionza are divided into courts: Mr. Barbaro leads the Viking Court. He is a protective, generally benevolent spirit. Because of his bravery and valor, he's been adopted into the African Court, too.

**See also:** *Maria Lionza; Thor*

### **Barhaza**

**Origin:** Hausa

**Classification:** Bori

Barhaza is Inna's younger sister and Wanzami's mother. Her husband is unclear. She may be married to:

- Kure the Hyena
- Mai Gizo, Owner of Matted Hair
- Mai Dawa, Owner of the Bush

Her primary affliction is paralysis. It is her signature affliction, but she is also blamed for headaches, stomachaches, numbness on one side of the body, impotence, sleepwalking, and compulsive wandering (not just restlessness; a compulsion bordering on mental illness—or maybe over the border).

**Manifestation:** She appears as a woman dressed in a traditional white wrapper dress with a white headwrap ornamented with cowrie shells. Thin silver bangles jingle on her wrists.

**Color:** White

**See also:** *Bori; Inna; Kure; Mai Dawa; Mai Gizo*

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*In addition to causing illness, Bori spirits are invoked for cures. Each is associated with different vehicles of healing. Medicinal agents associated with Barhaza include milk from white cows, sheep, and goats.*

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## **The Barons**

**Also known as:** Bawon (Kreyol)

**Origin:** Haiti

**Classification:** Lwa

Modern Haitian Vodou has two types of spirits of the dead: Gédés and Barons. Boundaries between them are sometimes nebulous, but in general the Barons are the spirits in charge, elite spirits of death. The Barons exert dominion over the dead.

There are many Barons. Baron Samedi is their leader. Others who have achieved individual acclaim include Baron LaCroix, Baron Cimitière, and Maitre Carrefour (a.k.a. Baron Carrefour).

The Barons are instantly recognizable. They wear a combination of undertaker's and high-ranking Freemasons' garb. They tend to travel in packs. They're not solemn and funereal but boisterous, raucous, and lewd: disruptive spirits who interrupt other lwa's rituals and possessions. They are obscene, offensive, and vulgar but also elegant, not to mention powerful. Many are occult masters. They know the secrets of the grave *and* the secrets of the living.

The Barons protect and heal children. They embody primal life, *but* they're simultaneously dead. Rules, law, order, authority: none of it applies to them. They are subversive spirits who flout convention. The Barons will help you subvert convention, too. They are the embodiment of gallows humor; they teach devotees to laugh in the face of death, despair, and grief, to find the bitter but funny aspects of tragedy.

They embody both truisms: *death is guaranteed* and *life springs eternal*. They may be petitioned for anything involving death, dying, and the cemetery but also for fertility, safe childbirth, and sex. They are sometimes deliberately offensive but always ruthlessly honest. If you can get past the jokes and innuendo to ask them a question, they will give you the brutal truth.

The Barons en masse are syncretized to Saint Gerard, who is pictured with a skull.

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*The largest cross in a traditional Haitian graveyard is called the Barons' cross and is usually located at the cemetery crossroads. It is traditional to first salute, feed, and propitiate the Barons at this cross before performing any rituals in the graveyard. The Barons own the cemetery; ask their permission before conducting ceremonies and especially before removing dirt, stones, or anything conceivably belonging to them.*

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**Manifestations:** Black suits, black hats; they wear dark glasses: as they live in the grave, when they come to the land of the living, the light hurts their eyes even at night.

**Colors:** Black, violet (Masonic colors)

**Day:** 2 November, the Day of the Dead: visit them at the cemetery.

**Offerings:** Rum, rum cake, rum candy, more rum, cigars, coins; Day of the Dead toys; sugar skulls

This is a sampling of some of the more renowned Barons, but there are many others:

### **Baron Cimitière**

**Also known as:** Bawon Simityé; Baron Cemetery

**Classification:** Lwa; Baron

Baron Cimitière is a grand magician, master magus, and healer extraordinaire. He holds court in the cemetery at midnight. He is part of a triad of magicians with his compadres, Gran Bois and Maitre Carrefour. Traditional lore suggests that in order to receive Baron Cimitière's blessings of healing, magic, and knowledge, one must first propitiate Maitre Carrefour. (It is not as simple as it sounds: Maitre Carrefour, a.k.a. Master Crossroads, is a dangerous and wily spirit.)

**See also:** *Carrefour, Maitre; Gran Bois*

### **Baron Del Cementario**

Although technically Baron Del Cementario's name is the Spanish version of the French Baron Cimitière, they are not the same spirit. In the Vodou traditions of the Dominican Republic, the first man buried in a cemetery becomes that cemetery's Baron Del Cementario. To identify or contact him, locate his grave.

In Dominican tradition, Baron Del Cementario is the Baron with the closest relations with the living, perhaps because he, unlike most Barons, has had a relatively recent human incarnation. Baron Del Cementario is contacted or invoked in the cemetery at midnight. Enter by one gate; make your offerings and petition, then leave by another gate, not the one by which you entered. Throw nine coins over your left shoulder (have them ready in your pocket) and then go home via a circuitous route without looking back.

It is especially crucial to be exceptionally clear when speaking with Baron Del Cementario and to be incredibly specific and articulate in terms of negotiations and offerings. (Dominican Vodo is very influenced by Roman Catholicism; in that context, Baron Del Cementario may be perceived as craving souls.)

- Baron Del Cementario is syncretized to Saint Elias and shares his feast day of 20 July.

**Manifestations:** Baron Del Cementario resembles the traditional Baron (black wardrobe; sunglasses) but also appears in dreams as a large black bull.

**Consort:** La Barona

**Day:** Monday

**Number:** 9

**Offerings:** Black coffee; anything you'd give the other Barons

**See also:** *Barons; Baron Cimitière; Baron Samedi; Barona, La*

## **Baron Kriminel**

**Also known as:** Baron Criminel; Captain Zombi

**Classification:** Baron; Bizango; Centinela; Lwa

Justice awaits beyond the grave. Sometimes justice emerges *from* the grave. Baron Kriminel is a fierce spirit of justice. He is custodian of the graveyard, captain of the *zombi* squad. He leads an army of *zombis*.

Baron Kriminel is a headhunter. He wears a belt of severed heads and carries a sack filled with souls he has collected. Does he make you nervous? Then remember, he's a force of justice: if you have no guilt, you need have no fear. Behave yourself; behave ethically and kindly and you will never meet him—unless you go looking for him, but that's another story: he is also patron of criminals who invoke him for safety and success. Baron Kriminel is the Master Criminal but also the vigilante who enforces justice.

He's accused of being a cannibal, which is not untrue but ignores the complexities of this mysterious, powerful spirit. Behave like a pig and be consumed like a pig. Baron Kriminel inflicts justice by transforming someone into a pig, which he then eats with no knife but only a fork and spoon, i.e., slowly and excruciatingly painfully. The fork and spoon are also symbolic of his aloof, unsympathetic nature: he eats like a colonial master from slavery days.

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*Dominican Vodou classifies Baron Kriminel as a centinela (sentinel or*

*guardian). Place his image by your doors looking outward to protect against enemies and invasion.*

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Kriminal is classified among the Barons and the Petro or Bizango lwa. His close companions include Ezili Dantor, Marinette, Ti Jean Petro, and Simbi Andezo. He is a coldhearted, merciless spirit; if you find yourself in trouble with him, appeal to Ezili Dantor, who is most likely to save you, although Simbi Andezo may be helpful, too.

- Baron Kriminal is syncretized to Saint Pancras or Saint Sebastian.

**Attributes:** Cross; fork (sometimes fork *and* spoon; the better to eat you with, my dear)

**Colors:** Black, red

**Animal:** Pig

**See also:** *Barons, the; Bizango; Circe; Ezili Dantor; Marinette; Petro; Petro, Ti-Jean; Simbi*

### **Baron LaCroix**

**Also known as:** Azagon LaCroix; Bawon Lakwa; Baron the Cross

Baron LaCroix, Baron Samedi's brother, is the cemetery groundskeeper: he maintains the graves. He is generally not invoked but avoided as he allegedly kills on contact and may zombify his victims. Should you find yourself in trouble with him, contact his brother *quickly* for assistance.

**Attributes:** Skull and crossbones, candle

**See also:** *Barons; Baron Samedi*

### **Baron Samedi**

*Master of the Cemetery*

**Also known as:** Bawon Samdi (Kreyol); Baron Sandi (Spanish); Baron Saturday

**Classification:** Lwa

Baron Samedi is the leader of the Barons and possibly the Gedés. He presides over a sprawling, confusing, complex clan of spirits. When people speak of *the* Baron, they tend to mean Baron Samedi. *Baron Samedi* literally means *Baron Saturday*, which may sound innocuous compared to Baron Cemetery or Kriminel, but Saturday was the one day when Christ was really, truly dead, the day between the crucifixion on Friday and resurrection on Sunday. On Saturday, even Jesus must answer to the Baron, Lord of the Dead. (An alternative explanation suggests that *Samedi* is related to *Simbi* or *zombi* and only resembles the French word.)

Baron Samedi is Grand Master of the Celestial Masonic Lodge of Vodou Spirits, a thirty-second-degree-initiated Mason. He is invoked to contact and communicate with the dead (he determines whether they can come visit or not). He may be petitioned to remove bothersome ghosts and invoked to ward off death.

He a powerful healer and is especially sympathetic to terminally ill children. Baron Samedi rules the cemetery: *no one* can die until he gives permission for their grave to be dug. Baron Samedi is lewd, obscene, and vulgar, but he can be just and kind. He prefers that children live full lives before joining him in the cemetery.

Baron Samedi is the crossroads where sex and death meet. Spirit of the undying life-force, he may be petitioned for fertility. He is the guardian of ancestral knowledge and the link to your ancestral spirits. If one lens keeps popping out of your dark glasses, the Baron may be seeking your attention or offering his patronage.

Baron Samedi is syncretized to Jesus Christ as they share the symbol of the cross. (Baron Samedi's associations with the cross may pre-date Christianity. In Congolese cosmology, the cross is the symbol of the life cycle: birth-death-rebirth.) He may also be syncretized to Saint Expedite.

**Favored people:** Children; women seeking to conceive; funeral workers; grave diggers; those whose work brings them into contact with death



**Manifestation:** Baron Samedi's manifests as an older, dark-skinned man in formal attire, dressed *completely* in black. He wears a black top hat, black suit, and may be smoking one of his beloved cigars. He wears impenetrable black sunglasses:

- The glasses may be missing a lens because he possesses two kinds of vision: he simultaneously sees the realms of the living and the dead.
- Alternatively his glasses have but one lens because a penis has but one eye and the phallus is his attribute (and because he loves sexual humor and innuendo).

**Iconography:** Baron Samedi's throne is a chair chained to a cross. Images of Darth Vader are used to represent him (or just to decorate his altar; he likes toys).

**Attributes:** Coffin; phallus; skull and crossbones; shovel; grave; black sunglasses; cross

**Offerings:** Black coffee, plain bread, dry toast, roasted peanuts. He drinks rum in which twenty-one *very* hot peppers have been steeped. Cigars, cigarettes, dark sunglasses, Day of the Dead toys, the sexier and more macabre the better; raise a skull and crossbones pirate flag for him; beautiful wrought-iron crosses are crafted in his honor.

**Colors:** Black, also red and purple

**Day:** What else? Saturday

**Feasts:** 2 November, Day of the Dead; 24 April

**Numbers:** 3, 7, 21

**Time:** Twilight tends to be a good time to invoke him or make requests.

**Consort:** Madame Brigitte; they may be petitioned together for fertility, protection, or to save ailing children.

**See also:** *Barons; Brigitte, Madame; Gédé, Papa; Gédés*

**Barona, La**

There are lady barons, too. In Dominican Vodou, La Barona is Queen of the Cemetery. To some extent her role corresponds to that of Madame Brigitte or Oya. She may be invoked in the cemetery at midnight, with or without her husband.

**Consort:** Baron Del Cementario

**Attribute:** La Barona carries a bag filled with magical herbs and poisonous plants.

**Daughter:** Gedelia

**Color:** Purple

**Gem:** Jet

**Offerings:** Red wine, black coffee, traditional mourners' jewelry

**See also:** *Baron Del Cementario; Brigitte, Madame; Gedé; Oya*

## **Basa-Andre**

**Origin:** Basque

Basa-Andre is a beautiful but dreaded spirit of the Pyrenees Mountains, called the "land mermaid" or "mountain mermaid," sharing many mermaid characteristics but lacking the fish tail. Basa-Andre sits at the threshold of remote mountain caves (and perhaps there's pools of water in those caves) or atop large stones, combing her long hair with a gold comb. She is not particularly sociable and does not want to be bothered.

Basa-Andre has a reputation of luring people to their doom, but she is not an aggressive spirit. She doesn't pursue victims. Tragedy tends to befall men who presume that she is a lone, defenseless, and beautiful woman and who pursue her perhaps with not such innocent intent. She leads them to dangerous precipices and unstable ground where only a spirit walks safely. Basa-Andre is a great sorceress privy to the secrets of the mountains. If addressed very politely and cautiously, she may be persuaded to reveal information.

**Consort:** Basa-Jaun

**Offerings:** Ornaments for her hair, cosmetics, perfume, beautiful shiny smooth stones

## **Basa-Jaun**

**Also known as:** Basajaun; *Homme de Bouc* (French: literally “Goat Man”)

**Origin:** Basque

Basa-Jaun lives high in the caves and forests of the Pyrenees between France and Spain. He enjoys the company of shepherds. At night, at least in the old days, he would join them at their fire, drink, eat, and talk with them. In exchange for politeness and generosity, he protects goats and sheep. Basa-Jaun is a trickster who enjoys pranks and practical jokes but is also credited as a primordial teacher, the one who first taught local people agricultural and iron-working skills. He is in Mari’s entourage.

**Manifestations:** He may be a shape-shifter; descriptions vary. He is compared to a faun or satyr, a horned goat-man spirit. Others describe him as resembling a Dwarf or brownie.

**Consort:** Basa-Andre

**Animals:** Goat, sheep

**Offerings:** He likes simple shepherd’s food, especially dairy products: cheese, clotted milk. Offer him a strong drink: he probably won’t refuse.

**See also:** *Akerbeltz; Dwarf; Fawn; Mari (1)*

## **Bastet**

*Mistress of the Oracle;  
Great Conjuress of the Casket*

**Origin:** Egypt

Bastet, great cat goddess, has dominion over sex, fertility, marriage, magic, music, childbirth, prosperity, joy, dance, and healing—in short,

the pleasures of life. She protects humans against infertility, dangers of childbirth, evil spirits, illness, and bodily injuries, especially those caused by venomous creatures. A tomb inscription says Bastet bestows “life, prosperity and health every day and long life and beautiful old age.”

Bastet offers special protection to women and children and serves as matron of magicians and healers. Her cult began in the Nile Delta swamps. The earliest known portrait of Bastet dates to circa 3,000 BCE. By about 950 BCE, she was worshipped throughout Egypt. For a while, she was the most popular goddess in the kingdom. Her veneration reached its zenith during the reign of Osorkon II (874–853 BCE), when a major temple was erected at her cult city, Bubastis. Devotion to Bastet officially survived until 30 BCE and the Roman conquest, the Romans having little sympathy for animal-shaped gods.

Her annual festival in Bubastis was Egypt’s most popular. A precursor of modern Mardi Gras, it was renowned for parties, revelry, and drunkenness. Herodotus, the Greek traveler and historian writing in the fifth century BCE, claimed that more wine was consumed in Egypt during this festival than during the entire rest of the year. Although many details are lost, Bastet’s festival celebrated female sexuality and generative power. Boats sailed up the Nile toward Bubastis. As each barge approached towns and settlements, it would halt and the mainly female celebrants on board would loudly hail local women congregating on the riverbanks. They would shout sexual obscenities to each other, dance wildly, and perform *anasuromai*, the ritual act of lifting up the skirts to expose the vulva, associated with laughter, healing, and defiance of grief.

Bastet may be the wife and/or daughter of Ra, the sun. Among the spirits described as her sons are Maahes, Khonsu, and Nefertem.

**Iconography:** She is depicted as a cat, often bejeweled, or as a woman with a cat’s head, sometimes surrounded by kittens and fashionably dressed in a green or blue dress.

**Attributes:** Basket and ankh (symbol of life)

**Planets:** Sun and moon

**Color:** Green

**Animal:** Domestic cats are her servants and sacred animals.

**Offerings:** Her name may be related to a word meaning “perfume.” Ancient Egyptian perfume was typically in the form of a salve. Offer her precious cream perfumes or offerings that benefit her sacred animal, cats.

**See also:** *Baubo; Khonsu; Nefertem; Sekhmet*

## Bau

**Origin:** Sumer (Mesopotamia)

Bau, Goddess of Healing and Life, was once among the most significant deities of the Sumerian pantheon. She is intensely associated with dogs and may appear as a dog-headed woman. It is very tempting to associate her name with “bow-wow.” Dog and puppy burials have been found amidst her temple ruins.

Bau, Lady of Life, is invoked for any sort of healing as well as prosperity, abundance, and emotional and psychic relief. Her popularity faded as that of Inanna rose. (Inanna is also associated with canine imagery; whether or not this is borrowed from Bau is subject to debate.)

Bau has seven daughters known as the Lukur Girls:

- Zazaru
- Nipae
- Urnuntaea
- Hegirnuna
- Heshaga
- Zargu
- Zurgu

The Lukur Girls served as Bau’s priestesses. (The eldest three, Nipae, Urnuntaea, and especially Zazaru were also venerated alone and possessed their own chapels.) With the ascendance of Inanna, the Lukur Priestesses were eventually transferred to her.

**Star:** Bau is the daughter of Sirius, the Dog Star.

**Animal:** Dog

**Offerings:** Build her an altar featuring dog imagery; appropriate gifts would include contributions to dog shelters and hospitals or acts on behalf of dogs in need.

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*In her later Babylonian incarnation, Gula Bau, spirit of healing, walks Earth accompanied by her pack of hounds.*

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**See also:** *Inanna-Ishtar*

## Baubo

**Origin:** Greece

Baubo personifies female fecundity. She is the goddess of the belly laugh, matron of women's humor. Baubo is a trickster, sacred clown, and a goddess of healing. Baubo's name may be interpreted as "belly," "hole," or "womb." In her major appearance in classical Greek myth, Baubo is an old nursemaid who exposes her vulva to Demeter. She is the only one able to draw a laugh from the grieving goddess. Baubo sets Demeter on the road to recovery and empowerment.

Baubo's gesture to Demeter, lifting her skirts to expose her vulva, was not random but had spiritual significance and a name: *anasuromai*, literally "to lift one's skirts." This gesture turns up again in the rites of Bastet and also in a legend concerning Hathor, where it similarly evokes laughter, reconciliation, and healing. *Anasuromai* is a defiant, protective charm against death, sterility, and despair. Significantly, when Baubo flashes her vagina, she is well beyond childbearing age.

Baubo belongs to that group of spirits called the Bona Dea who interact exclusively with women. Men were excluded from their rites and not privy to their mysteries. Unfortunately, whatever information

survives about these spirits derives from male sources. Baubo is a guardian spirit of children and babies. Little else is known of her. Her part in the Demeter/Persephone saga is often excised from mythology books, now often considered the province of children.

With the coming of Christianity, Baubo, Goddess of Good Humor, was especially defamed, damned by her votive imagery, now considered obscene rather than sacred or funny. Medieval demonologists classified her as a demon.

Images of Baubo protect against the Evil Eye. She is petitioned for fertility and to protect women, children, and babies. She heals through humor. She is a powerful ally for those who are ambivalent about the form and functioning of the female body.

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*Artist and author Winifred Milius Lubell explores Baubo's image and myth in her book, The Metamorphosis of Baubo: Myths of Woman's Sexual Energy.*

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**Manifestation:** In myth, she is described as an ordinary elderly woman.

**Iconography:** Baubo is depicted as a walking vagina. Her vulva is her mouth, her nipples her eyes. These images were not intended as pornography but to inspire sacred laughter, demonstrating the formidable powers of female sexuality and fertility. Reproductions of ancient images are readily available, but Baubo's traditional votive imagery is easily recreated even by someone with minimal artistic skill and talent.

**See also:** *Bastet; Bona Dea; Demeter; Demon; Hathor; Persephone; Uzume*

## **Bean Nighe**

*The Little Washer Woman*

**Origin:** Scottish Highlands, Ireland

**Classification:** Washer at the Ford

The Bean Nighe is witnessed in lonely places beside streams or pools of water washing the linens of those fated to die soon. The Bean Nighe is a category of spirits, not a single individual. According to one tradition, the Bean Nighe are women who died in childbirth, thus dying before their originally allotted time. They are fated to keep laundering clothes until the time originally allotted for their true lifespan arrives and they are released. Needless to say, they are grouchy spirits. Would you wish to spend what seems like eternity doing laundry?

Seeing the Bean Nighe is a harbinger of death, possibly but not necessarily for the person who sees them. The doomed may be the eyewitness or someone who is known to them, possibly family or friends but also someone famous who is familiar although not personally known.

People fear seeing the Bean Nighe because of her associations with death, but the true danger lies in whether or not she sees you. Allegedly if she sees you before you see her, she may inflict serious bodily harm. On the other hand, some welcome a sight of the Bean Nighe, even prowling the highlands looking for her as she is a wish-giving spirit providing proper rituals are performed. Various versions exist:

- Catch hold of her with your left hand before she sees you, and she will grant your wish.
- Catch hold of her but don't stop there: nursing at her breast transforms you into her foster child. Not only will she grant your wish but she will be your guardian spirit.
- Catching hold of her from the back garners you one wish, but if you can get between her and the water *and* catch hold of her with your left hand, she will grant you three.

There's yet another variant: She'll grant three wishes but in exchange you must truthfully answer three questions. If you lie or are somehow less than fully honest, she will know and those wishes are forfeit. Plus you're stuck beside this very grouchy spirit.



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*The Bean Nighe of the Isle of Skye does not grant wishes, but if you catch and hold on to her, she will reveal your own fate and destiny.*

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**Manifestation:** Not every Bean Nighe is identical. In general, they are described as petite women usually dressed in green. She may have red webbed feet; long, pendulous breasts; or swollen breasts leaking milk like a woman who has just given birth. She may be very pretty but there is a grotesque quality to many Bean Nighe: she may have one nostril or one incredibly large, protruding front tooth.

**See also:** *Washers at the Ford*

## Becuma

**Origin:** Ireland

Becuma was the wife of Conn, King of Ireland, who first saw her mysteriously emerging from a magical boat dressed in silk and satin. She remains as mysterious today. Her identity is unclear. She may be a member of the Tuatha Dé Danaan, or she may belong to an older, even more primordial pantheon.

Her first husband (at least as far as is known) belonged to the Tuatha Dé, but she cheated on him with a son of sea spirit, Manannan mac Lir. They were caught and Becuma was punished.

Manannan decreed that she either be burnt or banished, and so she was placed in a coracle (small boat) and set out to sea. Alternatively, fairy tales describe her as banished from her own magical realm, denied access to other spirit realms, and thus forced to live amongst people. (This may be a post-Christian slant; ancient Ireland's goddesses were sexually autonomous. They slept with who they chose. It's unclear why Becuma is punished so harshly.)

The heartbroken, recently widowed King Conn was enchanted by her. He married her and brought her to his court. He's happily under her spell, but their marriage signals hardship and tragedy for Ireland. Crops

fail; all manner of abundance and fertility shrivels. Ireland's kings ruled by virtue of their relationships with goddesses of sovereignty. Whatever Becuma is, she seems not to be that. Although everyone but her husband blames her for the calamity that has befallen Ireland, Becuma refuses to accept culpability.

When Becuma first met Conn, she told him her name was Delvcaem. When Conn's son and her rival, Art, loses a game of chess to her (with a little magical help from her foster sister, Aine), Becuma sends Art to retrieve another spirit named Delvcaem. After much hardship and adventure, Art does so, in the meantime falling in love with Delv caem. Delvcaem is a more powerful spirit and sorceress. When she arrives at court, Becuma is forced to leave. In some versions, she gets back in her coracle and drifts off to parts unknown. In others, she goes to England and is held responsible for fomenting hatred against Ireland.

**Manifestation:** Becuma has yellow waving hair and grey eyes and wears a red satin smock, a green silk cloak with long golden fringes, and bronze sandals.

**Attributes:** Coracle; magical boat; chess set

**See also:** *Aine; Delvcaem; Maeve; Manannan; Tuatha Dé Danaan*

## **Beelzebub**

*Lord of the Flies; Lord of Chaos*

**Also known as:** Belzebuth; Beelzebul

**Classification:** Demon

The Philistines were traditional enemies of the Israelites. They do not appear in flattering terms in the Old Testament. The word *philistine* remains a synonym for *uncouth barbarian*. So perhaps it is no surprise that their primary male deity, Ba'al Zebub, appears in even less flattering light in the New Testament.

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*In the context of Philistine Ba'al Zebub, flies are emblematic of the eternal human soul. In the context of demon Beelzebub, flies are emblematic of putrefaction, death, and decay.*

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The original Ba'al Zebub was a spirit of fertility and rebirth. In the Gospels, Beelzebub, as his name evolved, is chief of demons and prince of devils. In Christ's time, Beelzebub seems to have been incorporated into controversial shamanic techniques, disapproved of by the general Jewish public. According to the Gospel of Luke, when people witnessed Jesus successfully expel demons from the bodies of the ailing, they accused him of doing so with assistance from Beelzebub. Luke records that Jesus was insulted by the suggestion.

Beelzebub and Satan were once considered to be distinct beings. According to the apocryphal Gospel of Nicodemus, Jesus gave Beelzebub dominion over Hell in gratitude for helping remove Adam and other pre-Christian, unbaptized "saints in prison" and bringing them to Heaven, over Satan's objections. In those early days, Satan outranked Beelzebub. By the sixteenth century, however, demonologist Johann Wierus was listing Beelzebub as supreme chieftain of Hell, with Satan below him.

The distinction between the two was eventually erased. Dante equated them in his *Divine Comedy*. Beelzebub appears in John Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress* and John Milton's *Paradise Lost*. His name was frequently evoked during witch trials and demon-possession hysteria, including at Salem Village. Many now believe that Beelzebub is the devil's name.

Medieval demonologists perceived Beelzebub as a powerful demon to conjure, command, and control. They classified him as a fallen angel (order: Cherubim) and Founder of Hell's Order of the Fly.

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*Beelzebub's Tales to his Grandson is the first volume of All and Everything, the trilogy of influential allegorical novels written by mystic G. I. Gurdjieff (circa 1866–29 October 1949).*

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**Manifestation:** Beelzebub allegedly manifests in the form of a giant fly.

**Offerings:** Beelzebub tends to be conjured by those more inclined to command than cajole. If one wished to offer a bribe, however, bottles of Belzebuth French Ale or other items evoking his royal malevolence might do the trick.

**See also:** *Ba'al (1): Ba'al Zebub; Ba'al (2)*

## **Befana**

### *The Christmas Witch*

**Also known as:** Befana la Strega (“Befana the Witch”); Befana la Vecchia (“Befana the Crone”); Befania

Befana is a benevolent Italian witch who brings gifts to children on Epiphany Eve. She fills children’s stockings with gifts just like Santa Claus does elsewhere. Befana may pre-date Christianity and may originally be a goddess of ancestral spirits, forests, and the passage of time. Some identify this wandering nocturnal crone with Hekate. Other legends describe her as an elderly woman in either ancient Judea or Italy who was too busy cleaning to heed the Magi when they invited her to join them in paying homage to the newborn Christ Child. Befana soon regretted her decision and has spent the past two thousand years trying to catch up with the Magi, leaving gifts for good children along the way.

Befana is invoked in many Italian spells, especially those for good fortune. She brings sweets for children but may be persuaded to bring the sweetness of life to adults:

1. On Epiphany Eve, write her a note expressing your desires.
2. Place it beneath a red witch-shaped candle and burn.
3. Accompany with offerings.

**Manifestation:** Befana manifests as an old lady who flies through the air on a broom or goat. She carries a heavy sack on her back filled with gifts or is a hunchback.

**Attributes:** Distaff, spindle, sack of gifts

**Home:** Befana lives within chimneys.

**Time:** Befana is most active on the night of 5 January, the eve of the Feast of the Epiphany and the Day of the Magi. However, she may be contacted for assistance at other times as well.

**Offerings:** Befana travels the world leaving gifts on Epiphany Eve (the night of 5 January). An old lady can get tired from all that flying around; leave her some gifts to replenish her spirits: espresso, Strega liqueur, cookies, Italian pastry.

**See also:** *Berchta; Hekate*

## **Béfind**

### *The White Lady*

**Classification:** Birth Fairy

**Origin:** Breton

Béfind is the prototype of fairy tale Fairy godmothers. She is the queen of the Breton Fairies called “Our Good Mothers.” Béfind may appear with an entourage of other spirits or by herself. Although those who have a close, personal relationship with her may see her more frequently, in general, she makes but three appearances in a person’s life: birth, death, and marriage. She comes to bestow blessings and one’s fate. Whether she foretells fate or actually determines it is subject to debate, but it’s considered wise to propitiate her before these important events just to keep on her good side.

**Offerings:** A beautiful table is created for her, in the home if possible, just after a birth or preceding a wedding. If there is a death vigil, it is considered beneficial to lay a table for her; however, if death is a surprise, it may be laid afterward. Béfind has refined taste: in addition to the fruits, nuts, and berries generally offered to Fairies, she enjoys champagne, fine whisky, and liqueurs and elegant pastry.

**See also:** *Fairy, Birth; Our Good Mothers*

## **Begtse**

### *Hidden Shirt of Mail*

**Also known as:** Begtsejen; Begtse Chen; Jamsing

**Origin:** Mongolia

Begtse once rode with Genghis Khan as Lord of War; now this fierce Mongolian deity protects the Dharma. Begtse, a pre-Buddhist Mongolian guardian spirit associated with Tantric traditions, tried to stop the third Dalai Lama from entering Mongolia in 1575. The Dalai Lama defeated Begtse, converted him to Buddhism, and transformed him into a Dharmapala, a defender of Buddhism. He is Mongolia's guardian but venerated in Tibet, too. The fifth Dalai Lama appointed Begtse, protector of the Tibetan government. He also serves as personal protector of the Dalai Lamas.

**Manifestation:** He has three eyes, four fangs, and a perpetually wrathful countenance. He wears a crown of five skulls and a garland of freshly severed heads.

**Iconography:** Begtse is traditionally depicted standing atop a mountain in the middle of a lake formed from the blood of men and horses. (Mongolia is famed for its traditional horse culture.) Alternatively he tramples the corpses of men and horses, symbolic of victory. He may be portrayed holding an enemy's heart, which he has personally yanked out.

**Attributes:** Scorpion-handled flaming sword; bow and arrow; banner featuring an impaled human head

**Home:** Begtse resides in a palace constructed entirely of bleached human bones atop a red, four-cornered copper mountain rising from a sea of blood.

**Color:** Red

**Metal:** Copper

**Spirit allies:** Begtse travels with an entourage of spirits. Another name for him is Jamsing, literally “brother-sister” because he is usually accompanied by his sister, Rigpay Lhamo, who may also be his consort. She rides at Begtse’s right side, while his other constant ally, Leken Marpo, rides at his left.

**Offerings:** Begtse is traditionally offered barley flour mixed with water, intended to represent human sacrifice; his libations are served in skull cups.

**See also:** *Avalokitesvara; Eight Dharma Protectors; Leken Marpo; Rigpay Lhamo*

## **Belenus**

### *The Brilliant One*

**Origin:** Celtic

**Feast:** 1 May

Belenus is the Latinized name of the Celtic deity called Bel or Belen. That *Bel* in his name derives from a Celtic word interpreted as meaning “brilliant,” “bright,” “shining,” “luminous,” or “effulgent.” Very little is known about Belenus for sure. The Celts did not entrust sacred knowledge to paper. The Romans identified him with Apollo.

Based on surviving inscriptions and archaeological remains, Belenus was among the most widely venerated and beloved deities of the Celtic world. The center of his veneration seems to have been in France, where the most artifacts have been uncovered, but inscriptions dedicated to him have been found from the British Isles to Slovenia.

Belenus’ shrines often incorporated therapeutic springs. He may have dominion over the healing power of the sun. An erotic spirit, he may be a spirit of reproductive fertility for people and livestock. He is sometimes called the Lord of Flocks.

Belenus may be the same spirit as Beli, Arianrhod’s father. Others

theorize that Belenus is Ba'al who, carried to France by Phoenician traders, adapted to Celtic life and spirituality. Yet another theory suggests that Belenus arose in what is now Slovenia and traveled west through Europe. Many places in France still evoke his name:

- Beaune in Burgundy
- Tombelen, now better known as Mont Saint-Michel; the name may mean "tomb of Belenus."
- Bollène in southern France
- Ballon near Lemans and neighboring Saint-Mars-sous-Ballon and Soulligné-sous-Ballon

Belenus was assimilated to Saint Bonnet. Places named in honor of that saint may once have been sacred to Belenus.

**Planet:** Sun

**Elements:** Fire, water

**Animal:** Horse

**Sacred day:** Belenus is feted at Beltane or May Eve; beginning the night of 30 April with festivities continuing on 1 May; also 15 January, the feast of Saint Bonnet

**Offerings:** Votive offerings found at his shrine at Sainte-Sabine include terracotta horses and stone carvings of swaddled infants.

**See also:** *Apollo; Arianrhod; Ba'al (1); Michael*

## **Belié Belcan**

**Also known as:** Bellier Belcan or Bercan

**Classification:** Lwa

**Feast:** 29 September (feast of Michael Archangel)

Belié Belcan is among the most popular of the lwa from the Dominican Republic. He wanders the night, armed with a blade and heavy iron chain, looking for malefactors so that he can put them right. Belié is an



ancient guardian spirit invoked for protection. He presides over the making of protective amulets and talismans (*resguard dos*; similar talismans are associated with Shango).

Haitian Vodou identifies Belié Belcan with Ogun (specifically Ogou Shango). In Dominican Vodo tradition, Belié Belcan is syncretized to Michael Archangel. Rituals and spells associated with Michael (or that incorporate Michael's name) may be addressed to Belié or performed with Belié in mind.

**Manifestation:** A small elderly man with a limp; don't be fooled by his deceptively frail appearance. He is a spiritually and physically powerful spirit.

**Iconography:** Images of Michael Archangel are used to represent Belié.

**Attribute:** Machete; dagger; sharp knife; large, heavy chain with which to clobber enemies before he chains them up

**Consort:** Anaisa Pyé (traditionally venerated together, they will share an altar)

**Spirit ally:** Candelo

**Colors:** Red, green

**Elements:** Air, fire

**Offerings:** Rum, cigars, cigarettes

**See also:** *Anaisa Pyé; Candelo; Michael; Ogun; Shango; Twenty-one Divisions*; and the Glossary entry for *Syncretism*

## **Bellona**

**Also known as:** Bella Donna; Duellona (as in "duel to the death")

**Origin:** Rome; possibly Etruscan

**Feast:** 3 June

Bellona, Goddess of War and Conquest, was once extremely popular with

Roman soldiers. Roman senate meetings pertaining to foreign wars were conducted in Bellona's temple on the Capitoline Hill. Bellona's name derives from the same root as *bellicose* and *belligerent*. Some consider it safer to call her *Bella Donna*. *Bella Donna*, literally "Beautiful Lady," contains the name *Bellona* within it. It may be a euphemistic pun so that one could refer to Bellona without actually calling upon this beautiful but fierce lady.

Classical Roman mythology classifies Bellona, Lady of War, as belonging to the family of Mars. She is described as his sister, wife, or daughter.

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*Macbeth's success in battle is celebrated and his bloodthirsty nature is insinuated when William Shakespeare has the Thane of Ross describe him as "Bellona's Bridegroom."*

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**Favored people:** Soldiers, those who battle

**Manifestation:** A beautiful woman with long windswept hair, girded for battle

**Attributes:** Scourge; whip (to whip troops into frenzy); torch (to light her opponents' funeral pyres)

**Sacred plant:** Belladonna (*Atropa belladonna*), a beautiful but lethal killer, shares her essence.

**Sacred sites:** In addition to her Roman temple, Bellona had a temple outside York, England, and a shrine in Arfeuilles, France, now home of the Black Madonna of the Hollies. She was venerated wherever Roman soldiers traveled.

**See also:** *Mars*

**Belphegor**

## *Master of the Opening*

Once upon a time, Belphegor was Ba'al Peor, also known as Ba'al Phegor, patron of Moab, an ancient kingdom located along the Dead Sea's eastern shore, now in modern Jordan. According to demonologists, Belphegor is the demon of discoveries. He tempts people and leads them to ruin by inspiring them to create ingenious products and innovations that are destined to fail. Belphegor is also the demon of sloth, who encourages people to fantasize and procrastinate rather than produce.

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*In 1955, Australian artist Rosaleen Norton (1917–1979) was charged with obscenity for an exhibition of several paintings including one entitled Belphegor.*

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Belphegor is guardian of France, especially Paris, where he allegedly lives. He preserves and protects erotic, risqué aspects of French culture (French postcards; Paris cabarets). He can bestow wealth and inspiration and can allegedly guide you toward the creation of new inventions (if you can trust him not to destroy you in the process). Legends suggest that he enjoys sowing discord, causing dissension, and luring people to ruin via their own greed.

**Manifestations:** Belphegor is a shape-shifter who takes pleasure in manifesting in surprising ways. He may appear as a beautiful naked woman or a fierce horned spirit with jagged claws. He is sometimes described as having a perpetually open mouth, but this derives from a misunderstanding of his name. The openings of which he is master include caves, crevices, wombs, and vaginas. Once upon a time Ba'al Phegor presided over mystic, erotic rites on Mount Phegor, condemned by Hebrew prophets as “abominations.”

**Iconography:** The original Ba'al Phegor was venerated in the form of a phallus; the demon Belphegor is sometimes depicted seated on a toilet; medieval sorcerers engaged in commanding demons often felt compelled

to insult spirits to prove to authorities that they weren't secretly worshipping them.

**Offerings:** Absinthe; erotically shaped pastry

**See also:** *Ba'al (1); Ba'al Peor; Ba'al (2); Demon*

## **Bendis**

**Also known as:** Bendida

**Origin:** Thrace; Dacia; Scythia

Bendis is so primordial her origins are lost in the mists of time. Thracian immigrants brought her to Greece, where she became very popular. By approximately 428 BCE, Bendis had an official state cult near Athens. The Thracians themselves may have received her from their neighbors, the Dacians, whose kingdom was mainly in what is now Romania and Moldova but also incorporated parts of modern Bulgaria, Hungary, and Ukraine. Bendis may originally be of Scythian origin.

What is now known of Bendis tends to be filtered through Greek vision. Although honored, she was also considered disreputable, a goddess of foreigners. She never shed her Thracian identity (unlike Dionysus, who was incorporated into the Olympian pantheon). The Greeks identified Bendis with Artemis and Hekate, although she is even more intensely lunar than either.

Bendis' name is interpreted as "moon" or "to bind." "Binding" may indicate marriage or shamanism: Bendis binds different realms together. She is the mother of the now nameless spirit called the Thracian Rider, Horseman, or Hero. Her procreative powers are so great that she brought forth her son from herself without male assistance. Mother and son may be venerated together. Post-Christianity, veneration of Bendis was transferred to Mary and local female saints.

Bendis is at home in the wild and in the city. She is a spirit of divine ecstasy and passion. Bendis epitomizes lunar, female power. She is petitioned for fertility, successful childbirth, protection, good health, and good fortune.

**Manifestation:** Back in the day, Bendis was described as wearing a peaked Thracian hat, cloak, short tunic, and fox-skin boots; she may or may not have updated her wardrobe.

**Iconography:** In the fourth century BCE, Bendis was depicted with a group of male devotees, winners of nocturnal races in her honor; the men are depicted as significantly smaller than she is and display erect phalli. In the second century BCE, Bendis' peaked Thracian hat is sometimes designed to resemble a phallus.

**Attributes:** Torch, spear, dagger, bow and arrows in quiver, cup, staff, phallus

**Spirit allies:** Bendis is accompanied by an entourage of Nymphs, maenads, and satyrs. She is closely allied with Artemis.

**Planet:** Moon; Bendis is especially powerful during waning and dark moon phases. She is also the goddess of the winter sun.

**Animals:** Fox, deer, leopard, snake

**Plant:** Mistletoe

**Mounts:** A doe or a leopard; Bendis rides a chariot drawn by three winged horses.

**Sacred days:** She had various festivals throughout the year: two were celebrated at the full moons just preceding or coinciding with the solstices; her festival, the Bendidaea, featured ecstatic dancing, sexual rites, and nightly footraces with torches. Eventually the Athenian government banned all her rituals except for the races. Other rituals were forced underground and practiced in secret.

**Shrine:** In approximately 430 BCE, a group of Thracians requested permission from the Athens government to erect a shrine for Bendis in Piraeus. Eventually there would be two shrines: one for Thracians, another for Athenians.

**Offerings:** Lunar images and images of her sacred animals.

**See also:** *Achilles; Artemis; Dionysus; Hekate; Nang Kwak; Nymph;*

*Orpheus; Samovili; Tabiti*

## **Benten**

**Also known as:** Benzaiten; Benzai Tennyo

**Origin:** Japan

Benten, beautiful dragon goddess of sex, fertility, music, dance, love, and wealth, has dominion over all Earth's treasures, material and emotional. She brings happiness, wealth, and joy. Benten is the only female member of the Shichi Fujikin, the Seven Spirits of Good Fortune. Benten is revered in Shinto and Buddhist traditions.

Daughter of a dragon king, Benten agreed to marry a child-devouring dragon if he would promise to change his diet, which he did. She lives happily with her dragon husband under Lake Biwa, near Kyoto.

- If you are tormented by dragons in any way, Benten knows how to pacify and control them. Invoke her protection.
- Benten traditionally helps lovers remove obstacles from their path to happiness. Leave a letter or message for her at one of her many shrines or a home altar.

**Favored people:** Geishas, dancers, musicians, creative people in general, lovers, children

**Iconography:** She is frequently depicted naked; crowned with a white snake or surrounded by them. She often appears in the company of a dragon.

**Attribute:** Biwa (musical instrument)

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*An unexpected glimpse of a white snake is a harbinger of good fortune and/or a message from Benten.*

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**Element:** Water

**Sacred day:** The first serpent day in February (Japanese calendar)

**Sacred animals:** Dragon; snakes serve as her messengers, especially white snakes.

**Mounts:** Dragon or large white snake

**Sacred sites:** Lake Biwa; legend says that the holy island of Enoshima, near Tokyo, arose in response to Benten's footsteps.

**Shrines:** Benten's shrines are almost inevitably situated near water (sea, rivers, springs); among the most famous are the Zeniarai Benten shrines in Kamakura and in Tokyo's Inokashira Park.

**Rituals:** Benten is associated with the magical art of money laundering. Literally. The tradition of washing coins at her shrines began in the thirteenth century and derives from ritual rice washing associated with Ugajin, the water snake spirit with whom Benten shares shrines. Paper money is now washed, too. Money is cleansed at a sacred water source within her shrine, then carefully and completely dried. If washed properly and then spent within a week, it will allegedly return to you three-fold, at least!

**Offerings:** Images of dragons, snakes; ema boards (wooden votive boards) featuring images of snakes

**See also:** *Dragon King of the Sea; Dragon Queens; Lady White Snake; Shichi Fukujin; Ugajin*

## **Berchta**

**Also known as:** Bertha; Perchta; Frau Berta; Eisen Berta; Berchtli

**Origin:** Germanic

Bavaria is the ancient stronghold of Berchta, goddess of abundance. Allegedly whatever you give her will be returned many times over. Berchta rules a sort of transit area for souls, caring for and guarding

those who died as babies. Depending on the version, they either stay in her garden forever or she tends them until they reincarnate and receive new life. She protects living children, too: German folk tales describe a beautiful lady dressed in white who mysteriously appears in the middle of the night to nurse babies.

She was an *immensely* popular goddess, and so post-Christianity she was aggressively demonized by the Church as a Queen of Witches. She evolved into a bogeywoman still invoked as a threat to make children behave before Yule. She allegedly punishes “bad children” but gives gifts to good ones. People were told to baptize their babies because otherwise they’d end up in Berchta’s realm, not in Heaven. She is among the leaders of the Wild Hunt, usually leading a parade of unbaptized babies.

Berchta protects:

- Unbaptized babies
- Stillbirths; miscarriages; abortions
- Those driven to suicide by broken hearts or despair
- Dead souls who lack people to remember them
- Dead souls who have not received proper, respectful burial

The types of dead souls Berchta protects have a tendency to trouble the living by manifesting as destructive ghosts. Should you be afflicted by such a ghost, petition Berchta to soothe and remove it, escorting it to her realm, where it will be much happier.

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*Vestiges of devotion to Berchta survive: in some Alpine villages it’s traditional to place offerings of food for her on roof ops so she finds them while riding by.*

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**Manifestations:** As a beautiful woman with pearls braided into her gold hair. A white veil obscures her face, and she wears a long, white silk dress. She has another look, too: an old decrepit hag with long, wild grey hair and disheveled clothes.



**Attributes:** When she's young and beautiful, she carries the keys to happiness in one hand and a spray of mayflowers in the other; as a hag, she carries a distaff.

**Realm:** A subterranean palace with a fabulous garden where she welcomes souls of children who died in infancy. She maintains other homes within hollow mountains.

**Spirit allies:** Perchta travels with a retinue of spirits called the *Perchten*. Christian legend says the devil rides in their midst, but this may indicate the presence of a male deity who accompanies her.

**Sacred plants:** Holly; mayflower

**Sacred creatures:** Crickets, swans, geese; Berchta may be the original Mother Goose; she sometimes manifests with one webbed goose foot.

**Sacred time:** Berchta is celebrated throughout the entire Yule season. Post-Christianity, Yule became synonymous with Christmas, but in its original Pagan context it was a lengthier season. In German tradition, the Feast of the Epiphany (6 January) is *Berchtentag*—Berchta's Day. The preceding eve is *Berchennacht*. The festival is celebrated with processions characterized by grotesque masks.

**Sacred places:** *Berchtesgaden* in the Austrian Alps means "Berchta's Garden." Many springs near Salzburg are named in her honor.

**Offerings:** Leave offerings out for her on Epiphany Eve, the way offerings are left for Santa. No milk and cookies, though. Berchta likes a hearty meal: herring and dumplings is her favorite. Give her schnapps or other alcoholic beverages.

**See also:** *Befana; Ghost; Hulda; White Lady; Wild Hunt*

## Beregina

**Also known as:** Berehinia, Perehinia are Russian variants; Polish variant is Bóginki

**Origin:** Slavic

Bereginia is a primordial goddess venerated throughout Slavic lands. Her name may derive from *Berech*, “to protect.” Alternatively, *Bereginia* is translated as “earth” and “shore” and so perhaps indicates the threshold where land and water meet. The first recorded historical reference to Bereginia is from a sixth-century Greek lexicon naming deities Christians were forbidden to venerate. Among them is “the Berehinia.” In recent years, she has achieved the status of sacred matron of the nation of Ukraine, where she is described as the “hearth mother.” In 2001, a monumental statue of Bereginia (Berehinia in Ukrainian) was unveiled in the Ukrainian capital Kyiv’s main thoroughfare, replacing an equally giant statue of Vladimir Ilyich Lenin.

**Sacred color:** Red

**Sacred plant:** Snowball berry bush (*kalinka*)

**See also:** *Bereginy*; *Rusalka*

## **Bereginy**

**Origin:** Slavic

Bereginy refers to a host of Slavic water spirits who serve as Bereginia’s entourage. Slavic women paid public homage to the Bereginy as late as the Middle Ages with secret devotions continuing long after. Christian chroniclers complained that the Bereginy were dangerous spirits precisely because of the persistence with which women continued to serve them secretly. Rituals once held openly on the banks of rivers were eventually held in secret, private places like the bathhouse. The Bereginy are not considered entirely benevolent: in Poland, they stand accused of stealing babies and leaving changelings in their place.

**Manifestations:** Beautiful women or mermaids

**Iconography:** Bereginy are portrayed as double-tailed mermaids.

**Realms:** River, forest, and lake

**See also:** *Bereginia*; *Mermaid*; *Rusalka*

## **Berggeist**

**Origin:** Germanic

*Berggeist* literally means “Mountain Spirit.” He is the spirit of iron mines. Each mine may have its own Berggeist who presides over the mine. Once upon a time, he anticipated gifts, offerings, and requests for permission to dig. Post-Christianity, offerings and rituals dried up. The Berggeist was blamed for disasters in the mine and accused of being in league with the devil. Every once in a while, however, he is described as favoring someone and directing them to untapped veins in the mine.

The Berggeist is now most famous as the inspiration for the character Gandalf. While vacationing in the Swiss Alps, author J. R. R. Tolkien bought a postcard version of a painting called *Der Berggeist* by German artist Josef Madlener (1881–1967). He preserved it, later describing it as the origin of Gandalf.

**Manifestation:** As depicted in Madlener’s painting, the Berggeist is an elderly white-bearded man dressed in a red cloak and wide-brimmed hat. He is accompanied by a young deer.

**See also:** *Dwarves; Knockers; Kobold; Supay*

## **Bes**

### *Dancing*

**Origin:** Egypt or Nubia

Bes, spirit of domestic happiness, lord of love, music, and dancing, was among the most beloved popular deities of ancient Egypt. Spirit of pleasure and a woman’s best friend, Bes protects the family, especially children and pregnant women. He guards against evil spirits and trouble. Bes keeps malicious spirits away from women especially at crucial moments of conception and childbirth. Bes guards the childbirth process, guarantees fertility, may ward off venereal disease, and shields against the Evil Eye.

Bes’ distinctive image was ubiquitous in Egypt, carved onto bedposts

and unguent pots, painted upon walls and tattooed onto the left thigh of female entertainers. Bes has long been perceived as a popular deity, beloved of the masses, rather than as a member of the official cult, but recent archaeological evidence indicates that Bes was a favorite with royalty and the upper classes, too. Some scholars believe that Bes originated in Nubia and traveled north. He was venerated as far afield as Mesopotamia.

**Manifestation:** Bes is a small man with a lion's mane. He usually wears a lion or leopard skin and sometimes a crown of tall plumes. He dances with a small drum or a tambourine, slashing about with knives. His dance is intended to provoke laughter, which helps chase away malicious spirits. His association with drums is unusual and significant in a culture where drumming was associated with women. He is the only Egyptian deity who is consistently depicted full face.

**Attributes:** Bes holds a knife for defense and the *sa*, an instrument of protection. He also holds various musical instruments whose sounds are meant to terrify evil spirits. He plays the harp, lyre, drums, and tambourine.

**Consort:** Taweret; they have a wonderful marriage and are happiest if venerated together.

**Animal:** Lion

**Place:** Bes is rumored to dwell in the southern gate of the Karnak Temple, where he reputedly enjoys startling unwary tourists.

**See also:** *Beset; Taweret*

## Beset

**Origin:** Egypt

Beset, often described as a lioness-demon, is the female counterpart of Bes, but their relationship is unclear. Is she his sister, his consort, his daughter, or his feminine path? Beset is often found in the company of Taweret, Bes' official consort. They all seem to get along and may all be

petitioned and venerated together.

Beset's image appears on amulets. Artifacts associated with her have been found among papyri containing magic spells. She is associated with spell-work and rituals involving snakes, possibly snake charming. Well-worn masks of Beset have been uncovered, believed used in shamanic ritual.

**Iconography:** She resembles a feminine version of Bes. Usually appearing naked, her gender is quite clear. A wooden figurine with movable arms found in a tomb beneath the Ramesseum in Thebes depicts Beset holding metal snakes (or wands in the form of snakes).

**See also:** *Bes; Taweret*

## The Bethen

**Also known as:** The Beden

**Origin:** Germanic

The Bethen are a triad of female spirits associated with fertility, birth, and good fortune. They remedy childlessness, if desired. After a baby is born, the Bethen arrive to rock the cradle. They are associated with women's mysteries, spinning, and weaving. They may be petitioned to reveal hidden treasure (material and intangible).

*Bethen* derives from a verb meaning "to pray." They are associated with healing wells, sacred trees, and stones. Their name survives in German terms like *Bethenbrunnen* (Bethen wells) and *Bethensteine* (Bethen stones). Women sat on Bethen stones seeking their gift of fertility.

The Bethen were never forgotten, but by the late Middle Ages, their veneration was absorbed by local Christian practices. Some of their wells were renamed in honor of Saint Peter. Others became associated with witches. Their veneration was transferred to the Madonna as well as to a triad of Christian saints, coincidentally also called the Bethen.

**Colors:** Red, black, white

**Offerings:** An eleventh-century document describes women laying an

offering table for the Bethen, complete with food, drink, and a knife for each spirit sister.

**See also:** *Brigid; Fairy, Birth*

## **Bhut**

**Also known as:** Bhuta; feminine: Bhutini

**Origin:** India

Bhuts were originally ancestral spirits who, if propitiated and venerated, protect and provide for their descendents. However, if dead souls are *not* propitiated; if they lack descendents or living people to honor them; if they were not given proper funeral rites, then they can transform into malevolent, resentful spirits. These hostile spirits are also known as Bhuts. Since they're not being treated as honored ancestors, these Bhuts may kill off other people's descendents.

The most famous Bhut is a type of restless ghost—souls of those who died unexpectedly, especially by violence and/or lacked correct funeral rituals. Thus a lone traveler, set upon by thieves and killed in a lonely spot, whose body is never recovered is a likely candidate to transform into this kind of Bhut. A Bhut may have been a very good person in life; in death, they are frustrated and resentful. (As Bhuts tend to linger near the scene of their deaths, they may also be lingering near their killers or those who failed to help them.)

At their most malignant, Bhuts are vampires who drain the life-force from the living. Bhuts cause fatal illness, even epidemics. Targets tend to be children and women, especially brides and the visibly pregnant. Bhuts unable to feed off the living will lurk near cemeteries, feeding on intestines and excrement of new corpses. A Bhut can also enter a corpse and reanimate it.

While less publicized, other Bhuts are venerated ancestral spirits who are invited to possess mediums in order to deliver oracles during all-night rituals featuring dance and drumming. This type of Bhut derives from India's ancient tribal spiritual traditions and was not integrated into Hinduism. Thus they are considered subversive and may be lumped

together with malignant Bhuts. Ancestral Bhuts may not be anonymous: many possess names and personal identities and are familiar to their devotees.

If propitiated on a regular basis, even an initially malignant Bhut may become a protective guardian spirit. Because they are powerful and do not love anyone other than the family or individual they serve, Bhuts are coveted as dangerous protective patrons and spirit bodyguards. Alternatively those perceiving themselves as vulnerable to malevolent Bhuts, especially households with pregnant women or nursing babies, may make regular offerings just to divert the Bhut from its primary target.

- The scent of burning turmeric repels Bhuts. Throw a pinch into a fire or burn fresh turmeric in copper bowls.

**Manifestations:** Bhuts are shape-shifters; they can take *any* form. They are generally experienced as shadowy figures lurking in cemeteries, ruins, or lonely, remote places. They are most active at night when they draw nearer to human habitations.

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*Some Bhuts travel in the entourage of Shiva, who may enforce their good behavior.*

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**Altars:** Special shrines called Bhandara or Bhutastans, created so that the Bhut can rest, be sheltered, and eat, are built outside on stilts. Offerings are placed on the shrine. Brass or terracotta images of the Bhut may also be included on the altar.

**Ritual:** The Kola is the festival held to honor Bhuts.

**Offerings:** Bhuts crave milk; they attack babies in order to suck out the mother's milk the baby has consumed; Bhuts are propitiated and redirected with offerings like coconut milk or rice balls cooked in milk. Offer flowers, fragrant incense, coconuts. (Break the coconut and place it on the altar for the Bhut.) Treat the Bhut as you would treat a beloved,

respected family member.

**See also:** *Ancestor; Ghost; Shiva; Vampire;* and the Glossary entry for *Possession*

## **Bia**

### *Force*

**Origin:** Greece

Bia and her siblings, Kratos (Strength), Zelos (Zeal), and Nike (Victory), children of Styx and Pallas, serve as Zeus' enforcers. (This is not the same Pallas as Athena's friend.) They are his constant companions, never leaving his side (except when he wants his privacy). Styx allied herself with Zeus during his war with the Titans. As a reward, he honored her by having the Olympian deities swear oaths on her name and by employing her children. (Their father is a Titan, and so technically they are Titans, too. Zeus kept them safe and distinct from the other Titans by housing them in his own home.)

Bia, goddess of force, power, physical strength, and compulsion, was the spirit sent to bind Prometheus. She is invoked for protection and courage. She is also in constant communication with Zeus and may be requested to deliver messages to him.

**See also:** *Nike; Pallas; Prometheus; Styx; Zeus*

## **Binzuru**

**Classification:** Arhat

Binzuru is the Japanese name and manifestation of Pindola, first of the sixteen Arhats. Legend says he broke a vow of chastity and so Buddha forbade him from attaining Nirvana. Alternatively, magic got him into trouble: Binzuru is an occult master. Once, rushing to meet Buddha, he thoughtlessly flew through the air, causing pregnant women to miscarry. Buddha punished him by ordering him to stay on Earth until Maitreya,



Buddha of the Future, arrives. Yet another version says that Binzuru attained Nirvana but chose to stay and rescue people. He lives on Mount Marishi and is ever ready to respond to a call for assistance. He is a compassionate, proactive spirit of healing and pain relief. Because he himself lives in pain, he has vowed to alleviate that of others. Although most associated with physical pain, he heals psychic pain and heartache, too.

Rub your hand against the part of Binzuru's statue that corresponds with the part of your body that needs healing or relief. Simultaneously invoke his assistance.

**Manifestation:** Binzuru manifests as an elderly man with long, unkempt eyebrows and a bushy white beard. He wanders the world performing rescues and good deeds.

**Iconography:** Carved wood statues emphasize his ascetism to the point of being virtually skeletal.

**Color:** Red

**Sacred days:** Binzuru's Japanese festival is held on the first Saturday of August.

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*Binzuru is a pivotal character in Neil Gaiman and Yoshitaka Amano's graphic novella, The Dream Hunters.*

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**See also:** *Arhat; Maitreya; Marichi*

## **Birth Grandmother**

**Also known as:** Samshin Halmoni

Samshin Halmoni, the Birth Grandmother, is among Korea's most powerful goddesses. *Halmoni* literally means "Grandmother," but it's also a term of reverence and respect. She is really the mother, not the

grandmother, of three spirits. Her actual name *Tang Kum Agassi* means “Tang Dynasty Silk-Like Baby.” The Tang Dynasty ruled China from 618–907 CE; it’s theorized that the story dates from that time.

She was a shaman whose parents are described as “heavenly beings.” At age fifteen, while her parents and nine brothers were away, she was seduced by a monk who was, at least according to legend, an avatar of the historic Buddha. When her family returned home, they discovered that she was pregnant. Her brothers tried to kill her, but her mother stopped them. She was locked in a stone box and left to die of hunger and thirst, but her mother freed her. She gave birth to triplets, whom she raised in secret. Because she delivered three sons at once, despite terrible obstacles, the young girl was honored as the Birth Grandmother. (In a society that values sons, this was perceived as an incredibly sacred feat.)

- Samshin Halmoni the Birth Grandmother is responsible for all births on Earth.
- She protects infants for the first hundred days after birth.
- Although she supervises all births, the Birth Grandmother takes special care of home births.

**Attribute:** Gourd dipper (ladle)

**Offerings:** She may be venerated anytime, but offerings are expected for the three consecutive days following birth: offer incense, candles, spring water, alcoholic beverages, and cooked meals, including seaweed soup and rice.

**See also:** *Buddha*; and the Glossary entry for *Avatar*

## **Bishamon**

**Also known as:** Bishamonten; Tamonten

**Origin:** Japan

Bishamon, spirit of benevolent authority, enforces justice, punishing criminals and malefactors. He protects people and their possessions. Bishamon is a Japanese manifestation of the Buddhist Dharma Protector,

Vaishravana, who in turn may be an avatar of the Hindu Kubera, Lord of Wealth. Although theoretically, the three spirits may be identified as one, each manifests and behaves differently and has different concerns.

Bishamon is included among the Shiki Fujukin, the Seven Spirits of Good Luck.

**Favored people:** Soldiers, warriors, physicians (warriors against illness)

**Iconography:** Bishamon usually appears in the guise of a samurai.

**Attribute:** Bishamon carries a small pagoda symbolizing the divine treasure house he guards (and whose treasure he distributes as he sees fit).

**Consort:** Kishijoten, who may or may not also be his sister

**See also:** *Eight Dharma Protectors; Kishijoten; Shiki Fujukin*

## **Bitoso**

### *The Faster*

**Origin:** Romani (Transylvanian Gypsy)

Bitoso is a little multiheaded worm who causes headaches, stomachaches, and eliminates appetite. His children cause colic, cramps, toothache, and tinnitus, as well as unexplained ringing in the ears.

When the disease demon Schilalyi began molesting her siblings as well as humans, her brother Melalo told their father, the king of the demonic Loçolico spirits, that Schilalyi needed a spouse. Melalo advised the king to urinate on garlic, eat it, and then have sex with his wife Ana. She conceived and gave birth to Bitoso, who married Schilalyi.

**See also:** *Ana; Keshalyi; Loçolico; Melalo; Schilalyi*

## **Bizango Spirits**

**Origin:** Haiti

Bizango has two meanings:

- Secret mystical societies with a sometimes sinister reputation for social enforcement (including creation of *zombis*)
- The spirits served by these secret societies

The Bizango spirits are a subset of lwa. They may be understood as maximum, extreme Petro spirits. They are fierce, powerful, fast, and effective but also potentially dangerous. Attributes and symbols characterizing Bizango spirits include skulls, coffins, crosses, and crucifixes.

**See also:** *Baron Kriminel; Ezili Zandor; Lwa; Marinette; Petro; Rada*

## **Black Annis**

**Also known as:** Black Agnes; Black Anna; Cat Anna; Gentle Annie

**Origin:** England

Black Annis, Hag of the Dane Hills near Leicester, England, allegedly eats children who stray into her territory after dark, or at least so their mothers traditionally warn them. First she skins them; then she eats them, scattering the bones around the hills and hanging their skins from trees. Black Annis snatches lambs from pastures and climbs through windows to seize babies, although perhaps over the years she's just been blamed for missing children and livestock. Sometimes Black Annis is called Gentle Annie, although this is generally considered a supplicating attempt at appeasement.

**Manifestations:** She may manifest as a blue-faced crone with long claws and yellow fangs, as a huge black forest cat, or as some sort of woman/cat merger: a cat demon.

**Animal:** Cats

**Place:** Black Annis lives in a cave called Black Annis' Bower that she personally clawed out from the rocks. Some scholars think her cave marks an Iron Age shrine and that Black Annis, now a dread bogeywoman, was once a venerated goddess. Once upon a time, Black

Annis liked to sit and observe her territory from within a giant oak near her cave, vestige of the vast forest that once covered this region. The oak was felled and so she's now apparently moved permanently to the cave.

**See also:** *Aine; Aynia; Ketta*

## **Black Dog**

The Black Dog is among Britain's most famous spectral hounds. It may be dangerous and malevolent or helpful and benevolent. It usually serves as a guardian of treasure or a sacred place. If left alone, it usually leaves you alone, too, but if aggression is shown toward it, the Black Dog isn't afraid to demonstrate supernatural powers, potentially causing terrible wounds, paralysis, or death before vanishing into thin air.

**Manifestation:** A shaggy black dog the size of a calf with glowing, red eyes

**See also:** *Annwn, Hounds of; Drake, Sir Francis*

## **Black Hawk**

*The Watchman*

**Origin:** North America

Mother Leafy Anderson (circa 1887–1927), medium and miracle healer, is often considered founder of the Spiritual Churches of New Orleans. Black Hawk was among her own primary spirit guides. He first appeared to her in a vision in Chicago, where she lived before moving to New Orleans. She described him as “the saint for the south,” while his now less-renowned compatriot, White Hawk, served the north.

Black Hawk's identity is subject to debate. Several historic Native American leaders are named Black Hawk. He is usually associated with the most famous (circa 1767–3 October 1838), war leader of the Sauk and Fox who sided with the British during the War of 1812 and led an 1832 uprising called the Black Hawk War.

Initially successful, the Sauk and Fox were trapped on 2 August 1832 at the Bad Axe River in Wisconsin. Now called the Bad Axe Massacre, United States government troops killed dozens, including the elderly, children, and women. Black Hawk escaped but was betrayed, captured, and jailed. An autobiography allegedly dictated by Black Hawk was first published in 1833, then revised and enlarged in 1882 to great public interest. After his death, his skeleton was placed on display in the office of the governor of the Iowa Territory.

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*Scholar Judith Bettelheim suggests that Black Hawk may really be the Oglala Lakota chief of that name who performed with Buffalo Bill's Wild West Show and spent the winter of 1884–1885 in New Orleans.*

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Black Hawk the Watchman is a warrior for justice. He intercedes in all legal matters but especially to gain release from prison. Mother Anderson testified that she invoked his aid to overcome her legal difficulties while setting up the Spiritual Churches.

- Keep Black Hawk's image positioned near your front door looking out or place in any vulnerable area to serve as your sentry and watchman. (Images are readily available through vendors of New Orleans-oriented spiritual supplies.)

**Iconography:** Mother Anderson wore a mantle bearing Black Hawk's image.

**Attributes:** Tomahawk (to cut through obstacles and clear paths), spear, or lance (if thrown, it can reach distant goals)

**Color:** Red

**Time:** Rituals for Black Hawk are usually conducted at night and are illuminated by red candles, not electricity.

**See also:** *Indio, El; Spirit Guide*

## Black Madonna

Not all Black Madonnas are black. Some are silver, grey, brown, or other colors. Some used to be black until they were painted white. Although some Black Madonnas clearly depict women of sub-Saharan African descent; many do not. The word *Black* when describing these Madonnas is not used in the modern sense of describing race, ethnicity, or skin color. In many cases, it is a literal description: many Black Madonnas are carved from black or very dark wood, but it is a metaphorical, metaphysical description, too.

Not every Black Madonna may be a Madonna, or at least not in the conventional sense. Madonna literally means “My Lady,” but the lady in question is universally understood to be Mary, Mother of Christ. When it comes to Black Madonna statues, however, nothing can be assumed.

At heart, the Black Madonna phenomenon is a cult of miraculous images: images understood to be animated by divine spirit. Most Black Madonnas are small statues, although some are paintings. There are approximately two hundred fifty surviving Black Madonna images worldwide, with the greatest number in France, Italy, Switzerland, and Spain. Others may be hidden in church vaults or private collections.

Black Madonnas are extremely controversial: many passionately refute their very existence, claiming that they are just unusual images of the Virgin Mary, their dark color ascribed to centuries of candle smoke. (Why comparable images of saints, often housed in the very same sanctuaries, are not similarly darkened is generally not addressed.)

Within the context of traditional Christian iconography, Black Madonnas are odd. Beyond their color, they do not subscribe to standard depictions of Mary. There are subversive qualities and undertones to many of these images and their shrines. Some are ornamented with motifs more commonly associated with other spiritual traditions.

Many have mysterious provenance: they appeared miraculously in wells, ghost ships, trees, or caves. Others were brought to Europe from the Middle East and North Africa by returning Crusaders. These statues demonstrate supernatural power, making themselves light or heavy or refusing to stay where they are placed. They identify where they are hidden via apparitions and dreams. They choose the sites of their own

shrines.

Who is the Black Madonna? And is there only one Black Madonna? This is a controversial topic: arguments are made on all sides. Here are some possibilities:

- Black Madonnas are depictions of the Virgin Mary. Some just show a little more creative license than the standard Madonna image.
- Black Madonnas are images of the Virgin Mary, but, in the manner of a goddess with many paths, she manifests differently in different places, thus the variety demonstrated by Black Madonnas.
- The Sacred Blood Line Theory: Black Madonnas are deliberately unusual because they are encoded with mystical secrets. They do not depict Mary, Mother of Christ, but Mary Magdalen, his bride; sometimes in company with their child.
- Some, if not all, Black Madonnas mask veneration of forbidden Pagan goddesses including Isis, Kybele, Demeter, Persephone, Rosmerta, Astarte, Aphrodite, and Athena.
- Some or all of the above may be true.

Here's a scenario: Paganism or idolatry is forbidden by law. Not only are shrines closed, but people must dismantle personal home altars. What will you do with your beloved altar image? Direct defiance leads to severe punishment or death. Will you be obedient or sneaky? Rather than destroy images as ordered, some will hide them, hoping that the political climate will shift and that a precious statue can someday be recovered. The statue may be buried, hidden in a cave, down a well, or in a hollow tree. But the political climate does not improve, and the statue stays hidden. Centuries later, the person who rediscovers it may genuinely know nothing about old, abandoned religious practices. When they see a statue of a mother and child, they do not assume that it is Isis and Horus or Aphrodite and Eros: they recognize it as Mary and Jesus.

Most Black Madonnas are not life-sized or super-sized statues. They tend to be small, comparable to those now produced for home altars, except that, back in the day, there was no such thing as mass production. Each was carved by hand and is unique.

Their modest size belies the miracles associated with Black Madonnas.



Whoever they are, they are among the greatest miracle workers in the world. Although most are enshrined in specific locations, reproductions of their images also radiate power and they may be invoked for assistance *anywhere*. They produce miracles of healing, fertility, and protection. If they produce a miracle for you, the standard offering is a pilgrimage to their home shrine. Black Madonnas are usually identified by the location of their shrine. Here is a sampling of some of the most famous:

- **The Black Madonna of Avioth**, also known as the Black Madonna of the Thornbush and the Black Madonna of Life, was once literally black but has since been whitened. Her statue is considered especially ancient, comparable to those at Chartres. It was discovered in a hawthorn bush in 1140. In the fourteenth century, a basilica was built for her on the original site. (The statue refused to budge.) Avioth is in France on the Belgian border, once prime Merovingian territory. The Black Lady of Avioth is among those statues associated with Mary Magdalen, but suggestions are also made that she is Rosmerta.

In the seventeenth century, a Huguenot captain tried to manger his horse at her altar but immediately dropped dead. Her specialty was once resuscitating dead babies long enough for them to be baptized and thus admitted to Heaven. (It may still be her specialty but now there's not as much demand.) Dead babies were once left near the underground spring by the gate of the former cemetery near her church. The last recorded was on 23 February 1786. The sanctuary is associated with healing springs, which allegedly grant fertility. (See also: *Mary Magdalen; Rosmerta.*)

- **The Black Madonna of Candelaria** was found near the beach at Tenerife in the Canary Islands in 1390 by Guanche shepherds. The Guanche are the indigenous people of the Canary Islands; the men understood the statue of a dark woman holding a child to be a goddess. They placed her in a grotto. Miracles began to be associated with the image. Fifty years later, a Guanche convert to Christianity reidentified it as Mary with Jesus.

Her reputation spread: in 1464, the statue was stolen by people from a different island who hoped to receive her blessings. Instead, no matter how often she was turned around, the statue was continually found

facing the wall. She produced nothing but trouble and illness until returned to her home. She came from the sea and she returned to the sea: the original statue was swept away during a storm in 1826 and eventually replaced with a copy. Her dark complexion and association with storms led the Black Madonna of Candelaria to be syncretized with the orisha Oya. (See also: *Candelina*; *Oya*.)

- **The Black Madonnas of Chartres:** there are actually two Black Madonnas enshrined in France's Chartres Cathedral. Both are beautiful, evocative black statues:

**Our Lady of the Pillar** is the "official" Black Madonna. The current statue derives from the sixteenth century, replacing one that was enshrined in the thirteenth. She holds a child and is perched atop a pillar. That pillar may be an indication of pre-Christian traditions. Chartres is believed to have been the sacred capital of the Druid world. (*Chartres* derives its name from the *Carnutes*, an important Celtic tribe.) Wooden and stone pillars are characteristic of sacred sites from all over the Celtic world.

**Our Lady Underground** lives in the crypt. The Druids did not believe in enclosing sacred sites: their shrines were open to nature, often amidst groves and grottoes. The very first image enshrined at Chartres is believed to have been venerated by Druids and depicted a woman giving birth. She was kept in a grotto by a healing well. The well near Our Lady Underground is the most ancient surviving feature of Chartres. The present statue dates from 1856, replacing one destroyed during the French Revolution.

- **The Black Madonna of Czestochowa** is the most famous Black Madonna. Enshrined in the Basilica of the Jasna Gora monastery near Czestochowa, Poland, she was the emblem of the Solidarity movement and is known as the Queen of Poland.

This Black Madonna is an icon allegedly painted by Saint Luke on a tabletop built by Jesus. Saint Helena found it in Jerusalem in 326 CE. She gave it to her son, Emperor Constantine, who enshrined it in Constantinople. During the iconoclastic era of the eighth century when so many icons were destroyed, the Black Madonna was hidden in the Belsk Forest. It eventually came into Charlemagne's possession. The

painting passed between many owners until one, King Louis I of Hungary (5 March 1326–10 September 1382), in response to a dream, brought it to Poland where in 1382, during a Tatar attack, an arrow lodged in the Black Madonna's throat. The prince fled, installing the painting in a small church near Czestochowa. A Pauline monastery and church were later built to house it and ensure its security.

In 1439, Hussites (Protestants) attacked the monastery and attempted to remove the icon. One man struck the Madonna with his saber. He instantly fell to the floor writhing in pain and died. The icon *was* stolen, but arriving at the city limits, the thieves' horses refused to budge. The thieves found they could not leave town until they abandoned the Black Madonna, now covered in blood and dirt. The horses immediately moved and a miraculous healing spring emerged at the spot.

Saber scars on her cheek and the arrow wound in her throat remain visible. Polish soldiers brought copies of her image to Haiti. The wounds on her cheek resemble African tribal marks, and the Black Madonna of Czestochowa is now intensely identified with the Vodou lwa Ezili Dantor.

Spontaneous healings have been reported by those who have made the pilgrimage to the image. There is virtually no miracle for which she is not credited. Shrines are also dedicated to her in Doylestown, Pennsylvania; Eureka, Missouri; and Czestochowa, Texas. (Images in the United States generally have lighter skin and appear softer and more youthful than the original in Poland.) (See also: *Anais*; *Ezili Dantor*; *Lwa*; *Macarena, La.*)

- **The Black Madonna of Einsiedeln** in Switzerland is a four-foot wooden statue of a standing Black Madonna. She holds a scepter in her right hand and supports a naked child on her left who carries a bird. According to legend, Abbess-Princess Hildegard of Zurich gave this statue to Saint Meinrad in the ninth century. He brought it with him to the forested slopes of Mount Etzel where he lived in solitude in the wilderness until he was murdered in 861. In 934, an abbey was founded on the site.

The Bishop of Constance arrived in 948 to perform the consecration, but just as he began, a disembodied voice spoke to him in Latin, saying,

“Cease, cease, Brother. The chapel has been divinely consecrated.” Our Lady of the Dark Forest, as she is known, was evacuated to Austria in 1798 to escape Napoleon’s troops. When she was returned in 1803, devotees were dismayed to see that she had been artificially lightened. The decision was made to restore her to her former color before allowing her to be exhibited. For many, the Black Madonna of Einsiedeln is *the* Black Madonna. Her miracles are innumerable. Carl Jung identified the statue as Isis.

- **The Black Madonna of Guadalupe** is *not* the same as Mexico’s Virgin of Guadalupe. Also known as La Extremeña, she is a Black Madonna statue from Extremadura, Spain, home of her devotee Hernan Cortes and many other conquistadores. Mexican Guadalupe was named in her honor, but the two images do not resemble each other. *Guadalupe* means “Hidden River” or “Wolf River.”

The Black Madonna of Guadalupe is a black, fifty-nine-centimeter-tall statue with mysterious origins. According to legend, in 711, when Christian Visigoths were defeated by Muslim Moors, knights placed the statue in an iron box, burying her in Guadalupe lest she be destroyed as an idol.

In 1321, Christianity now reestablished, an apparition directed a cowherd to the hidden statue, perfectly preserved after six centuries. King Alfonso XI built her a sanctuary in 1340. At the time of the conquest of the Western Hemisphere, it was Spain’s most popular sanctuary. La Extremeña has been eclipsed by her Mexican namesake, who is now very popular throughout Europe, but she remains a font of miracles. (See also: *Guadalupe*.)

- **The Black Madonna of Hal** is enshrined near Brussels, Belgium. This wooden statue once belonged to Saint Elizabeth of Hungary, a gift from her husband who died en route to the Crusades after sending home four Black Madonna statues. (An alternative legend says the Madonna was locally crafted from a sacred tree.)

Eventually the statue was inherited by Elizabeth’s granddaughter, Matilda, Countess of Holland, who enshrined it in Hal in 1267. The Black Madonna of Hal performs miracles of healing and has allegedly resurrected those who are dead and buried. Her most famous miracle

occurred in 1580 when she intercepted cannonballs with her robes and lap, saving the town from attack. These cannonballs are still on display in her shrine, and her iconography depicts her with cannonballs.

The Black Madonna of Hal has several other shrines dedicated to her, many containing replicas of her image, for instance the Church of Our Lady of Hal in Camden Town, London. French knight Jean de Cordes invoked her while held captive: his chains fell off. On returning home, he built her a chapel in Ghissignies.

- **The Black Madonna of Orcival** in Puy-de-Dôme, France, is a carved wood statue covered in silver except for her face and her disproportionately large hands, intended to demonstrate her generosity and power, unless one subscribes to the theory that she is originally an ancient bear goddess in which case her big hands resemble bear paws. *Orcival* means “Valley of the Bears.” According to tradition, the shrine was founded by Saint Ursin in the third century. *Ursin* is etymologically related to *Ursus*, Latin for “bear.” *Ursine* means bearlike. Once upon a time, bearskins were affixed to the church door.

The statue was found when a hammer was thrown to determine the site of a church. Efforts were made to move the statue; she returned three times. The Black Madonna of Orcival heals the blind, provides fertility, frees captives, and casts out demons. She protects sailors and travelers on the sea, grants victory and success, and wards off epidemics. She is among the Madonnas deeply venerated by the Romani (Gypsies) and is considered their protectress. (See also: *Callisto*; *Macarena*, *La Sara-la-Kali*.)

- **The Black Madonna of Regla** is a small black statue holding a white divine child. The two figures were originally made from one piece of wood, but the original baby was replaced by the present white one in the sixteenth century. It resembles Phoenician statues. There are two theories as to her origin:

1. The statue of Mary was commissioned in the fourth century, possibly by Saint Augustine, Bishop of Hippo, near Carthage, now modern Tunisia, but once an old Phoenician stronghold.
2. It is a statue of the Phoenician goddess Tanit.

The statue was hidden from the Moors in 713 but reappeared in 1330. Her shrine is in Chipiona, Spain. In Cuba, the Black Madonna of Regla is syncretized to Yemaya. (See also: *Tanit; Yemaya.*)

## **Blathnat**

**Also known as:** Blathnait; Blathnet

**Origin:** Ireland

**Classification:** Tuatha Dé Danaan

Blathnat, the Flower Maiden, is Angus Og's foster sister. She is a Fairy woman, a goddess, although this is rarely made explicit in the legends told of her. Versions vary: she may have eloped with the hero Cu Chulain, or she may have been kidnapped by him and/or his rival, Cu Roi. She may or may not have helped loot her father's treasure/burial mound, and if she did, she may or may not have done so willingly.

The single consistent feature of the legends about her is that she betrays Cu Roi to Cu Chulain. Cu Roi is *almost* immortal: he can only be killed by his own sword. Delilah-like, Blathnat inveigles this secret from him and then slips the sword to Cu Chulain. She signals Cu Chulain to let him know when Cu Roi is vulnerable. (In some versions, he's sleeping; in others, he's in the bath.)

In some versions, she rides off happily with Cu Chulain following Cu Roi's death. Alternatively she dies at the end of the story, killed by Cu Roi's bard. Lugaid, son of Blathnat and Cu Roi, eventually avenged his father, slaying Cu Chulain.

**See also:** *Angus Og; Blodeuwedd; Tuatha Dé Danaan*

## **Blavatsky, Madame Helena**

**Origin:** Russia

Author, visionary, occultist Helena Petrovna Blavatsky (12 August 1831–8 May 1891) is often called the “Mother of the New Age.” Together with

Henry Steel Olcott (2 August 1832–17 February 1907), she founded the Theosophical Society, responsible for introducing Eastern ideas of reincarnation and karma to Western occultism. Many theories of the lost lands of Atlantis and Lemuria are based on her writings.

Madame Blavatsky, or HPB, as she was called, was born at midnight on the threshold between 30 and 31 July according to the Western calendar; her birthday of 12 August reflects the Russian calendar. A member of the Russian nobility, she left home to travel around the world, working as a concert pianist in Serbia, a bareback rider in a Turkish circus, a lady's companion, and a spirit medium. She labored in sweatshops in the United States, so poor that she once faced eviction from her apartment. In 1856, she may have been among the first Europeans to travel to Tibet, where she may have lived for seven years. She may have studied with Vodouistes in New Orleans and Kabbalists in Egypt.

HPB demonstrated strong magic powers, allegedly able to make things move without touching them, as well as make things dematerialize or materialize at will. Her own personal spirituality seems to have been a merger of Buddhism, occultism, and Russian Orthodoxy.

Always a controversial, strong-minded woman, people either adored or loathed her. In death, she has evolved into an Ascended Master and may be invoked by mediums, shamans, and students and practitioners of esoteric and magic arts. Madame Blavatsky was very poor for much of her life; she may be petitioned for financial as well as magical assistance. She was an extremely successful author; ask her for publishing advice. She may be invoked on behalf of those wrongly accused.

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*Blavatsky's two opuses, Isis Unveiled (1877) and The Secret Doctrine (1888), remain in print. Many biographies of her exist: some treat her as a goddess; others as a charlatan. Sylvia Cranston's H.P.B.: The Extraordinary Life and Influence of Helena Blavatsky (Tarcher, 1993) is an unbiased, neutral look at Blavatsky's life and accomplishments.*

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**Offerings:** Vodka and cigarettes on a regular basis, plus traditional Russian food; candles

**See also:** *Ascended Master; Morya; Serapis Bey*

## Blodeuwedd

**Origin:** Wales

Arianrhod, the mother of Lleu Llaw Gyffes, placed him under various taboos including one preventing his marriage. His uncle, Gwydion, got around that injunction by creating Blodeuwedd, a magical woman formed from broom, oak, and meadowsweet flowers. Just how magical she is (or how gifted a magician is Gwydion) is indicated by this selection of flowers: each blooms at a different time of year in a different location.

Blodeuwedd is extremely beautiful. Although created specifically to be Lleu's wife, the magician is unable to program her behavior or feelings. She took a lover, with whom she plotted Lleu's death. Delilah-like, she inveigled Lleu into revealing how he can be killed. (He's *almost* immortal.) The plot fails; Gwydion kills Blodeuwedd's lover, but Blodeuwedd cannot be killed as she is not really "alive" in the same sense as a mortal. (Or because a Welsh goddess lurks beneath this tale.) Blodeuwedd was always an Otherworld being, and so she was transformed into an owl for eternity.

This myth was committed to paper by Christian commentators based on earlier oral traditions. Blodeuwedd is very much cast as Delilah. It has been interpreted that because she is not truly human, she lacks moral sense as well as a soul, hence her faithlessness. The myth never expresses *why* she seeks to kill her husband, whether she has any motivation beyond being cold and immoral. Blodeuwedd may be understood as following in Arianrhod's footsteps. Lleu is a new solar, patriarchal-oriented deity. Arianrhod and Blodeuwedd may represent earlier spiritual traditions threatened by Lleu and seeking to halt his progress in their territory. Adding to the argument that Blodeuwedd is not merely a magician's invention is her resemblance to the Irish spirit



Blathnat.

By transforming Blodeuwedd into an owl, a nocturnal bird, she has been banished from the presence of the solar spirit, Lleu, but can keep company with his mother, the Moon Lady, Arianrhod. Blodeuwedd is a spirit of love and beauty. Invoke her to enable you to choose your own lovers, not to be forced into marriage or other relationships.

Petition and perform rituals for Blodeuwedd exclusively at night; she may be inaccessible during the day.

**Flowers:** Oak, meadowsweet, broom: the flowers from which she was created

**Bird:** Owl

**See also:** *Arianrhod; Blathnat; Lleu Llaw Gyffes*

## Bloody Mary

**Also known as:** Mary Whales; Mary Worth

“Bloody Mary, Bloody Mary, Bloody Mary.” Repeat the name three times in a darkened bathroom while looking in the mirror and ... something weird, bad, and creepy happens! That’s the gist of an urban myth associated with slumber parties. Although many scoff, others claim there really is a Bloody Mary and that these experiences are true. The myth has not died but continues to evolve. Is it a game, a hoax, or a ritual?

There are variations from the basic version:

- Some say it must be done at midnight.
- One must twirl around while calling.
- Some recommend sprinkling water on the mirror or coating it with ocean water.
- Sometimes a red candle or candles must be lit.

Descriptions of what happens after vary, too:

- You see Mary’s face in the mirror where your own should be.
- Mary appears in the mirror, weeping tears of blood from gouged-out

eyes.

- You see your own reflection in the mirror, covered in blood.
- Mary comes out of the mirror and kills you.
- She doesn't come out of the mirror all the way. She just reaches out and scratches you.
- Mary reaches out and pulls you into the mirror.
- Mary blinds you, drives you insane, and/or leaves you comatose.

Books have been written theorizing about Mary's true identity and the lengthy history of her ritual. Among the possibilities:

- Many romantic magic spells involve attempts to conjure the image of one's future spouse or true love in a mirror.
- Mediums mirror-gaze in order to communicate with spirits, sometimes calling them by name, timing rituals for midnight, and accompanying them with candles.

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*Bloody Mary is a popular theme of horror entertainment. Theatrical reenactments may be seen on television shows including The Ghost Whisperer and Supernatural.*

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Horrific details may have been added to scare and discourage people from attempting such shamanic rituals. A clue that this might be so emerges in a variant: after you call her name three times, Mary will actually appear in the room with you. (Not through the mirror; she just manifests.) Do not look at her directly but only at her reflection in the mirror and she will not harm you but will instead truthfully answer all your questions regarding your future.

Another possibility: consistent features of the ritual include references to blood, the mirror, and the location in a bathroom. The Bloody Mary game is most frequently a teenage girls' party ritual. Blood, girls, bathroom: it's hard not to think of menstruation. Many traditional cultures forbid menstruating women from viewing their own reflections.

The Bloody Mary game may involve a menstrual spirit and ritual gone wrong.

A famous theory recalls the historic Bloody Mary: Mary Tudor, Queen of England (18 February 1516–17 November 1558). In her brief reign (1553–1558), she burned over three hundred people at the stake, thus earning her sobriquet.

Mary suffered a number of miscarriages. A rumor suggests those miscarriages were induced, not by Mary, but by enemies in her household who sought to guarantee that she would leave no lineage (as she did not). Some scholars suggest that the Bloody Mary mirror ritual emerged shortly after her death and that the reflection in the mirror is the bloodthirsty queen driven mad by the loss of her babies. Clues that this might be the spirit's identity emerge from ritual variations that include summoning her by taunting, "*Bloody Mary, where is your baby?*" or, "*Bloody Mary, I killed your baby.*"

Bloody Mary may have emerged from her mirror for good. Residents of homeless shelters in Florida, Chicago, Oakland, and New Orleans describe a spirit in the guise of a woman who roams at night possessing young homeless girls, forcing them to become prostitutes, drug addicts, and gang members. She feeds on fear and misery, weeps flaming black tears, and is called Bloody Mary *and* La Llorona.

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*The modern merger of Bloody Mary and La Llorona is not without precedent. An old pseudonym for Blood Mary is written Mary Whales, but sounds like Mary Wails, as in the Wailing Woman. (Alternatively, it sounds like Mary Wales, as in Mary Tudor's Welsh heritage.)*

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**See also:** *Llorona, La*

**Boann**

**Also known as:** Boand

**Classification:** Tuatha Dé Danaan

Boann is the spirit of Ireland's Boyne River, responsible for its creation. Her myth is documented in the twelfth-century *History of Places*. Boann, whose name is interpreted as "White Cow," is married to Nechtan, owner and guardian of a Well of Wisdom, which he forbids her to visit. She defies him and walks around it counterclockwise (widdershins). The water in the well reacts explosively, churning and surging upward, turning into a raging river and racing to the sea. Engulfed by the waters, Boann loses an arm, an eye, and a leg and finally, her life. She is transformed into the spirit of the river. It's a mysterious myth:

- Is the well's reaction her punishment for breaking a taboo?
- Was she forbidden to visit the well because Nechtan knew what would happen if she did?
- Is the story a later rationale for why Boann is the spirit of the river that bears her name: the story of a defiant, disobedient wife who is drowned is preferable to acknowledging a primordial Pagan river goddess?

**Animal:** Cow

**Sacred site:** The Boyne River; her son Angus, Lord of Love, has his palace on her banks.

**See also:** *Angus Mac Og; Caer Ibormeith; Dagda, the; Nechtan; Sinnann*

## Bodhidharma

**Origin:** India

Bodhidharma, a Buddhist missionary from India who traveled to China, is an Arhat and an avatar of the Bodhisattva Avalokiteshvara. Founder of Chan/Zen Buddhism, he was eventually revered as the virtual equal of the Buddha.

Legend identifies Bodhidharma as an Indian king's son who achieved enlightenment and went to China, arriving in Canton in the early sixth century. He eventually had words with the emperor, and so Bodhidharma decided to leave town, crossing the Yangtze River on a

reed on his way to Northern China, where he settled on the sacred mountain, Song Shan, home of the Shaolin Monastery where Bodhidharma spent some time.

Bodhidharma spent nine years facing a wall in deep meditation. He was poisoned by two rivals. Two previous attempts at killing him had failed, but the third time Bodhidharma transmitted his wisdom to his disciple, then consciously took the poison and left the world. Or did he? After his death, a Chinese man returning from India claimed to have seen Bodhidharma on the Pamir Plateau. His tomb was opened and found empty! People resolved these mysteries by comparing the Buddhist sage to a Taoist Immortal. Bodhidharma is venerated by Buddhists but also by Taoists and Shintoists. According to Japanese legend, Bodhidharma did not return to India after he was poisoned but traveled to Japan, where he became Daruma.

- Bodhidharma is sometimes credited with developing some of the martial arts associated with the Shaolin Monastery.
- Bodhidharma is credited with creating tea. He once fell asleep while meditating. When he awoke, he was so annoyed with himself that to make sure it never happened again, he sliced off his eyelids. He tossed his lids to the ground and the very first tea plant (*Camellia sinensis*) emerged at that spot.

**See also:** *Arhat; Avalokiteshvara; Bodhisattva; Buddha; Daruma*

## **Bodhisattva**

A Bodhisattva is a lover of enlightenment, literally an enlightenment hero or heroine. Bodhisattvas come in many forms: female, male, animal, human, and divine. Although they have reached a level of spiritual enlightenment permitting them to break cycles of incarnation, the Bodhisattva resolves to transform the entire universe into a realm of abundance, peace, and happiness for all. Because of purity of soul, goodness, and love, the Bodhisattva postpones his or her own personal salvation for the benefit of all.

Bodhisattvas vow to save all living beings from suffering and to persist in this quest for as long as it takes: through many lifetimes, if necessary.

Bodhisattvas differ from Arhats in that they seek not only their own personal enlightenment, salvation, and freedom, but that of the entire world.

**See also:** *Avalokitesvara; Ksitigarbha; Kwan Yin; Manjusri*

## **Boldog Asszony**

**Also known as:** Boldogaszony

**Origin:** Hungary

*Boldog Asszony* literally means “Happy Woman.” *Asszony*, translated as “woman,” possesses an extra nuance: *Asszony* indicates a relationship so close and intimate that, though not a physical blood relative, it is impossible to conceive of having a wedding or funeral without her. That’s the gist of Boldog Asszony, presiding spirit of life cycles, especially births and weddings.

Boldog Asszony grants fertility, oversees pregnancy, and supervises birth. It is traditional to honor her immediately after birth. An offering table is laid for her, and she must be formally thanked. She is, as her title indicates, a generally benevolent, patient goddess not given to the temper tantrums displayed by some Birth Fairies. If a family fails to honor her, it may take years for her displeasure to manifest: fail to thank Boldog Asszony at the birth of a baby, and that baby may never have a happy marriage. (The opportunity exists in the years in between to apologize and make amends.)

Boldog Asszony is a title, not a name, and it is now generally applied to the Virgin Mary, but the original Boldog Asszony was a goddess with dominion over joy, fertility, and abundance, among the primary deities of the Hungarian pantheon. Saint Gellert, who converted the Hungarians to Christianity in the eleventh century, wrote that the Church was associating Boldog Asszony with Mary and calling her the Queen of Hungary.

Boldog Asszony has seven daughters who bring good fortune. To differentiate her from her daughters, she is called *Nagy Boldogaszony* (“Big or Great Boldog Asszony”) while her daughters are *Kis*

*Boldogaszony* (“Little Boldog Asszony”). She is intensely identified with Mary. Alternatively, she is identified with Saint Anne, while Little Boldog Asszony, reduced to one daughter, is identified with Anne’s daughter, Mary.

**Day:** Tuesday. (Do not do laundry or anything that pollutes or dirties water on her day.)

**Sacred day:** She is now associated with Christmas and with various harvest festivals throughout the year.

**Offerings:** Water, wine, pastries, dried and fresh fruit, Palinka (Hungarian fruit brandy)

**See also:** *Atete; Black Madonna; Fairy, Birth; Szépasszony*

## **Bon Spirits**

**Origin:** Tibet

*Bon* is the name given the spiritual tradition practiced in Tibet prior to the arrival of Buddhism. Bon recognizes thousands of spirits although only a small number are consistently, dependably friendly toward people. Many Bon spirits are volatile, unpredictable, and temperamental, but rituals exist to propitiate, appease, or exorcise them.

Most of those thousands of spirits are localized: tied to a specific region, land, or natural formation: a rock or tree, for instance. Many are identified by the names of the locations in which they reside. Every building has its own presiding spirit.

Spirits are classified as peaceful or wrathful and further divided by type:

- Klu (water spirits)
- Nan (spirits of trees and stones)
- Sadag (earth spirits)
- Tsan (sky spirits usually found atop mountains)

Each human being possesses a cadre of at least five spirits (benevolent

and malevolent) who are born with you and who reside within you. Every life may be understood as involving the struggle between various spirits encountered.

Bon possesses an extremely complex cosmology. Historically there has been a contentious relationship between Buddhist and Bon practitioners (for political as well as spiritual reasons), including a century of religious warfare in the ninth and tenth centuries, but Tenzin Gyatso, the present Dalai Lama, has expressed support for Bon as it is so close to the heart of Tibetan culture.

**See also:** *Ekajata; Khadiravani; Klu; Padmasambhava; Palden Lhamo*

## **Bona Dea**

**Origin:** Rome

*Bona Dea* literally means the “good goddess” and refers to female spirits exclusively venerated by women. Because these were Mystery traditions from which men were excluded, little documented information about the Bona Dea survives. Several different goddesses were classified among the Bona Dea. References to *the* Bona Dea are generally believed to refer to Fauna.

**See also:** *Baubo; Fauna; Maia;* and the Glossary entry for *Mystery*

## **Boreas**

*The Devouring One*

**Origin:** Greece

Boreas, the North Wind, is the spirit of winter. Son of Eos and Astraios, he is an aggressive spirit with a violent temper and a history of sexual violence. Because Boreas comes from the north, the Greeks identified him as Thracian. According to legend, he was smitten with a beautiful Athenian princess. She resisted his advances, so he swept her up and brought her to Thrace. They had two sons, known as the Boreads, and



two daughters. Based on this abduction, the Athenians perceived Boreas as a kind of “in-law” and thus obliged to be their ally. When Athens was threatened by the Persian fleet, appeals were made to Boreas for protection. Four hundred Persian ships were allegedly sunk by the North Wind.

Invoke Boreas when you need a North Wind. He is associated with the welfare of horses. His wives include mares; Boreas protects horses’ reproductive health. Roman author Pliny describes a belief that mares would conceive if their hindquarters were turned to face the north wind.

**Manifestations:** He *is* the wind, but he also manifests as an elderly, bearded winged man with wild, shaggy hair. His cloak billows. He may have snakes for feet. He also appears as a stallion.

**Iconography:** He is sometimes depicted with two faces, like Janus, facing front and back, indicating his ability to see the future and past.

**Attribute:** Conch shell

**Sacred animal:** Horses

**See also:** *Anemoi; Astraios; Bendis; Eos; Hyacinth; Janus*

## **Bori**

**Also known as:** Aljan; Ishoki

**Origin:** Hausa

Maguzawa is the indigenous pre-Islamic religion of the Hausa people of Nigeria and Niger. Maguzawa spirits are called the Bori. Even in urban regions where little formal Maguzawa survives, the Bori remain venerated. The name *Bori* now also indicates modern urban spiritual traditions incorporating Bori spirits (if only because the term *Maguzawa* is considered disreputable).

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*Traditional Maguzawa shamanic healers are known as boka, reminiscent of*

*independent Haitian magical practitioners known as bòkò.*

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Bori is officially condemned by devout Muslims. Periodic attempts are made to outlaw it, but the spiritual tradition persists if only because people tend to resist abandoning spirits who demonstrate healing powers. Women hold prominent positions in Bori spiritual traditions. Other names for Bori spirits include *Iska* (plural: *Ishoki*), which literally means “wind,” and *Aljan*, derived from the Arabic word, *Djinn*. The Bori are frequently identified as Djinn, spirits who are acknowledged in the Koran and thus more palatable from an Islamic perspective. However, Bori spirits preceded Djinn in the region. Bori more closely resemble Zar spirits but are described as less capricious.

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*Individual Bori spirits can develop extremely close, positive relationships with people although they can be demanding, expecting constant attention and offerings. Like lwa, orishas, and Zar spirits, each Bori prefers specific colors, numbers, offerings, fragrances, rhythms, songs, and dances. Bori engage in ritual possession. Each Bori possesses a specific song that celebrates and summons them. Bori ritual leaders are also herbal specialists. Each Bori is associated with specific botanicals.*

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Bori tend to demonstrate anger and displeasure by gradually sucking away someone’s life-force. The key word is *gradually*. Opportunity is left (usually!) to make offerings, conduct ceremonies, or otherwise appease, placate, and propitiate the spirit.

Bori spirits are devotees, too: some are Muslim; others maintain a Pagan path. There are an infinite number of Bori but only approximately one hundred to three hundred are actively involved with people. Bori spirits live like people.

They get married, have children, and belong to families. They have their own city, Jangare, where they live in twelve houses divided by

family, ethnicity, and occupation.

Bori are traditionally invoked to bless beginnings: new homes, business ventures, marriages, or births. They are also invoked for healing, but the relationship between Bori spirits and illness is complex.

Bori spirits cause human illness and misfortune and then provide the remedy. They may cause illness and bad luck because they are angry or annoyed, but they also cause it as a way of indicating their interest in a person. Each Bori is associated with specific ailments or misfortunes, which they have the power to cure even when they are not the cause. Each ailment is essentially a calling card for a specific Bori spirit. Bori are also associated with more nebulous disorders: general incompetence, clumsiness, and the inability to do anything right are all considered signs of Bori affliction.

Ceremonies are held to heal these afflictions. The healing ritual is simultaneously an initiation. The newly healed individual is expected to become a trance medium, a vehicle for the particular Bori and an active participant in future rituals.

**Antidote:** Iron repels the Bori. Even the word *iron*, whether spoken or written, may be sufficient to send them packing.

**Realm:** The Bori spirits live in an invisible city named Jangare where they live in twelve houses or *Zauren*:

- First House: House of the Chief of Spirits inhabited by the Chief's family, bodyguards, metalworkers, and blind spirits
- Second House: House of the Chief's Brother
- Third House: House of Koranic Scholars
- Fourth House: House of Lepers and Snakes
- Fifth House: House of the Fulani Spirits
- Sixth House: House of the Younger Brother of the Fulani Chief, incorporating the House of Butchers and the House of Musicians
- Seventh House: House of Water Spirits
- Eighth House: House of the Hunters, including spirits identified by the Hausa as Tuareg

- Ninth House: House of the Chief of Pagans
- Tenth House: House of the Chief of Gwari (also Pagan spirits)
- Eleventh House: House of the North Africans
- Twelfth House: House of Magicians and Sorcerers

**See also:** *Barade; Barhaza; Duna; Inna; Kure; Lwa; Mami Waters; Orisha; Sarkin Aljan; Sarkin Rafi; Zar*

## **Boromu**

**Classification:** Orisha

Boromu is lord of dryness and desiccation. Although this is his essence and he is responsible for those conditions, he is also petitioned for relief and alleviation. Boromu spends time at the court of Olokun, Spirit of the Sea and so is well acquainted with the powers of water.

Boromu is little known in the Western Hemisphere. He is the orisha of the desert, which may be why he does not seem to have survived the Middle Passage from Africa, home of the Sahara and Sahel, to the Caribbean or Brazil, Western Hemisphere strongholds of Yoruba spiritual traditions.

Boromu is not exactly a spirit of death, but he is a spirit of *not-life*. Boromu has dominion over dry bones and skeletons. Desiccated corpses or mummies presumably come under his dominion, too. He transmits the withering effects associated with the Evil Eye. Boromu rules contraceptives, abortifacients, and botanicals that eliminate or minimize chances of pregnancy. He may be the orisha who administered an herbal potion to Yewá causing her to abort her illegitimate child. He has a very complex relationship with her and is sometimes described as her spouse or messenger.

Boromu is traditionally venerated in conjunction with Yewá and/or Olokun. If you love the desert, you may be under his patronage, as are those who work with bones. In the face of floods or excess moisture, he may be helpful. Boromu is the master of herbal contraceptives and may be petitioned for information and assistance. He may also be beneficial

in cases of severely dry eczema, psoriasis, or other skin disorders.

**Manifestation:** Boromu's sand-colored robes mimic the rippling motion of sand dunes.

**See also:** *Olokun; Orisha; Yewá*

## **Bosatsu**

*Enlightened One; Enlightened Being*

**Also known as:** Butsu

Theoretically Bosatsu is merely the Japanese variant of the Sanskrit Bodhisattva. Prominent Bosatsu include Amida, Jizo, and Kannon. From the orthodox religious or academic perspective, that is the only true definition of the term Bosatsu. *However*, in the context of popular folk religion, the definition may be a little more nebulous. Distinctions between Bosatsu and Kami sometimes blur. Jizo and Kannon, technically Bosatsu, are often venerated and treated like Kami, while conversely the Kami Hachiman is sometimes envisioned in the garb of a Buddhist monk and treated like a Bosatsu.

**See also:** *Amida Buddha; Bodhisattva; Hachiman; Jizo; Kami; Kannon*

## **Bossu**

**Also known as:** Bosou; Bosou Twa Cornes

**Classification:** Lwa

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*Bossu may descend from an ancient bull spirit who guards the King of Dahomey. Alternatively he may be of European descent, deriving from the triple-horned bull spirits once very popular in Pagan Gaul (France) where bulls were identified with power, virility, fertility, victory, invincibility, and good luck. Images of the Gaulish three-horned bull are found in healing*

*shrines and graves.*

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Bossu, spirit of primal male vigor, usually manifests in the form of a three-horned bull. He is the spirit of the masculine life-force, similar to that other sacred bull, the biblical Ba'al. Like Ba'al, Bossu is volatile, manifesting the potential dangers of excess testosterone.

He is the lwa of aggressive action. Bossu is considered among the more volatile lwa and among those identified as patrons of less ethical sorcerers. He is invoked to control Baka. Although aggressive and capable of violence, he can be a spirit of incredible generosity.

- Bossu is a powerful guardian able to remove tough obstacles from devotees' paths.
- He is petitioned by men and women for enhanced personal fertility.
- He is petitioned by men for increased potency and to remedy erectile dysfunction.
- Bossu can bestow psychic ability.
- He guards his devotees at night, especially when they are traveling.

**Iconography:** Haitian depictions of Bossu in bull form are readily available. Images of Saint Vincent de Paul to whom he is syncretized or the Minotaur may also be used to represent him.

**Altars:** Decorate with horns.

**Day:** Tuesday

**Colors:** Red, black

**Offerings:** Rum, especially overproof rum; cocktails made with Red Bull energy drink; whisky; burn red penis candles in his honor and to petition him for fertility and/or virility; feed him fried beef or steak; add Tabasco sauce to his food (other hot sauces may be substituted but Tabasco's bottle is Bossu red).

**See also:** *Ba'al (1); Lwa; Pasiphae*

## Boyuto

**Classification:** Orisha

Boyuto is the Orisha of Illusion. He has dominion over perception, mirages, hallucinations, vision, second sight, and ESP. Illusions and mirages are his weapons as are blurred vision, double vision, and faulty vision. Boyuto controls optical illusions. When he wishes, he creates mental confusion and disorientation.

On the other hand, Boyuto can bestow the gifts of enhanced night vision, psychic vision, and clairvoyance. As a healing spirit, he has dominion over illnesses associated with sight including cataracts, glaucoma, blindness, or any sort of impaired visions. Healers and physicians who are eye specialists may invoke his assistance, as may magicians and conjurers who depend on the power of illusion and misdirecting the eye.

**Manifestation:** Boyuto manifests as a fisherman.

**Attribute:** Fishing pole

**Spirit ally:** Boyuto is the companion and guardian of Erinle. They may be venerated together.

**See also:** *Erinle; Marichi; Morgan Le Fay; Orisha*

## Brag-Srin-Mo

**Origin:** Tibet

Brag-srin-mo is Tibet's mother goddess and ancestress. She lived in the mountains where she became romantically involved with a monkey god. Their children became the Tibetan people. Post-Buddhism, Brag-srin-mo was identified as an avatar of Tara.

**See also:** *Avalokiteshvara; Tara (2)*

## Bragi

**Classification:** Aesir

Bragi is the Norse Lord of Poetry, renowned for his wisdom and eloquence. Bragi always knows the right words and the right way to express them. He may be invoked for advice and assistance. Bragi is apparently Odin's son. His mother is unknown. She may be Gunlod, guardian of the mead of poetry who was seduced by Odin. Bragi and Loki are enemies.

**Consort:** Idunn

**Offerings:** Mead; poetry; stories and beautiful writing

**See also:** *Aesir; Idunn; Loki; Odin*

## **Bran**

**Also known as:** Bendigeidfran (Bran the Blessed; Blessed Crow)

**Origin:** Welsh

Bran is so big no house can contain him. He owns a cauldron that can resurrect the dead (although they will not regain powers of speech). He walks across the Irish Sea to rescue his sister. Bran is a king, a hero, and a potent oracular, guardian spirit.

The myth of Bran the Blessed, son of Llyr, brother of Branwen and Manawyden, appears in the Welsh epic, the Second Branch of the Mabinogi. When Branwen is humiliated by her husband, the King of Ireland, Bran leads an army of Britons to avenge and rescue her. (Bran walks beside his war ships, carrying other warriors.)

Bran, fatally wounded during the altercation by a poison spear, commands his seven surviving heroes, including his brother, Manawyden, to cut off his head, carry it to London's White Mount and bury it there to guard against foreign invasion. The men do as he asks but the journey takes a while. They spend seven years in Harlech, Wales, and more time elsewhere. In the meantime, Bran's head continues speaking with his men. Finally they recollect their mission and bury Bran's presumably still-conscious head facing the European mainland.



Bran's myth was set to paper by later Christian commentators who transformed a beloved deity into a hero. Bran is invoked for oracular advice and for protection.

**Sacred bird:** *Bran* literally means "raven" or "crow."

**Sacred site:** The Tower of London is allegedly built over Bran's head. Legend has it that if the Tower's resident ravens ever leave, the kingdom will fall. This tradition is sometimes associated with Bran.

**Offerings:** You cannot possibly feed him enough; his capacity is endless; build him an altar, perhaps in conjunction with his siblings; protect and feed crows and other members of the corvid bird family in his honor.

**See also:** *Branwen; Llyr; Manawyden*

## **Branwen**

### *White Crow*

**Also known as:** Bronwen ("White Hill" or "White Breast")

**Origin:** Wales

Branwen, daughter of Llyr and sister of Bran and Manawyden, heroine of the Welsh epic, the Second Branch of the Mabinogi, is described as the world's most beautiful woman. Matholwch, King of Ireland, came to her father's court in Harlech, North Wales, seeking her hand in marriage. Her father and Bran agreed. A wedding feast was arranged.

Branwen's half brother Efnisien (same mother; different father) arrived in the midst of festivities, wondering what was going on. Offended and enraged that he wasn't consulted about his sister's nuptials, Efnisien retaliated by mutilating Matholwch's stabled horses. The act was intended as a grave insult and was taken as such. Matholwch finally appeared to be appeased by the gift of Bran's magical cauldron.

Branwen returned to Ireland with her new husband, but in fact Matholwch was *not* mollified or perhaps never had good intentions. Branwen is forced to labor as a cook. The butcher boxes her ears daily.

She is humiliated, degraded, and abused. As is common with abusers, Matholwch tried to keep Branwen's situation secret. He was very careful that her family in Wales be kept unaware of her fate.

Resourceful Branwen caught a young starling and trained it to carry messages for her although this took years. She tied a letter to its leg and sent it to Bran who soon arrived with an army. In the ensuing battles, Branwen and Matholwch's son is killed; Bran is decapitated, and both nations are devastated. (On the Welsh side everyone dies but seven warriors; Ireland is completely depopulated except for some pregnant women.)

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*A phase of the early British Bronze Age, approximately 1650–1400 BCE, is named the Bedd Branwen Period. There is some speculation that if there was a historic Branwen, then that is the era in which she lived.*

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Branwen survives and returns home, but upon landing at Aber Alaw on Anglesey, she dropped dead from heartbreak and shame that she could have been the root cause of so much death and destruction. Branwen is described as one of Britain's three powerful matriarchs. She has emerged in recent years as a significant Neo-Pagan goddess invoked for love, marital happiness, success, and protection against abuse and humiliation.

**Birds:** Raven, starling

**Sacred site:** Bedd Branwen, allegedly her grave, is a now-ruined cairn on the banks of the Alaw River in Anglesey.

**See also:** *Bran; Manawyden; Rhiannon*

## **Brigantia**

Brigantia was the presiding spirit of the Brigantes, the most populous Celtic tribe of Britain. They ruled a broad swathe of Northern England

and the Midlands with their capital at York. Brigantia's name is usually interpreted as *Queen*. The Romans identified her with Minerva and Victoria. She is generally considered to be the same spirit as Brigid and the Gaulish Brigindo.

**See also:** *Brigid; Minerva; Victoria*

## **Brigid**

*Fiery Arrow; The Bright One;  
Lady of the Shores; The Ashless Flame;  
Moon Crowned Queen of the Undying Flame*

**Also known as:** Bride

**Origin:** Ireland and Gaelic Scotland

**Feast:** 1 February

Brigid is a great goddess of healing, music, poetry, prophecy, and smithcraft. She is the matron of artisans, artists, and livestock. Brigid presides over the production of ale. She protects women in childbirth and may be petitioned for fertility. Brigid has dominion over wisdom, education, and learning. She is associated with sacred fires and holy wells.

Brigid is the daughter of the Dagda and thus a member of the Tuatha Dé Danaan, but she transcends classification. She is a symbol of Ireland, emblematic of the modern Celtic revival, among the most beloved spirits of the twenty-first century.

Brigid is a master shape-shifter. Not only is she able to change the physical form in which she manifests, she is able to transform herself to meet the needs of devotees. Thus Brigid was never forgotten or suppressed, nor was she demoted to the status of Fairy Queen or tragic heroine as were so many of her fellow goddesses. Instead, Brigid made the transition to Christianity, evolving into Saint Brigid. When Scots and Irish indentured servants were transported to the Caribbean, she further evolved into Madame Brigitte, Vodou lwa.

Brigid is the mother of invention. Among her other creations, she allegedly made the very first whistle intended as a nocturnal alarm to keep women safe from sexual assault, an early precursor of the “Take Back the Night” movement. Whistles may be blown during rituals to invoke Brigid’s aid.

**Favored people:** Brigid loves poets, writers, midwives, artisans, snake charmers, and especially smiths.

**Manifestations:** Brigid may appear in any phase of womanhood: maiden, matron, or crone. She manifests as a column of fire or as a woman with a pillar of fire emerging from her head. Brigid may also manifest in the form of a snake.

**Iconography:** She is sometimes depicted with a serpent wreathed around her head.

**Attributes:** Cauldron, spinning wheel, metalworking tools

**Elements:** Fire, water

**Animals:** Pure white bulls; a white cow with red ears; horses; wolves; pigs; and snakes

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*Brigid’s traveling companion is a milk white cow. Her other familiars include a pair of sacred oxen and the King of Swine. These animals allegedly cry out in pain and protest whenever injustice is committed in Ireland.*

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**Birds:** Swan, vulture

**Tree:** Oak

**Number:** 9 (3X3)

**Time:** Imbolc, celebrated on 1 February, is the festival of new beginnings and Brigid’s birthday. Brigid is also venerated in other parts of the Celtic world on 13 February.

**Places:**

- Brigid possessed an ancient temple with an eternal flame and a miraculous healing well at Kildare. Some scholars speculate that it was originally a snake shrine. It was later transformed into a convent where nuns maintained her perpetual flame.
- A Temple of Fire was once located on the sacred island, Inishmurray, off the coast of Sligo.
- Among the rivers believed named in her honor are the Brighid (Ireland), the Braint (Wales), and the Brent (England).
- Many healing wells are dedicated to Brigid.

**Offerings:** Blackberries; works of creative inspiration; eggs; ale; coins; light candles in her honor. In some parts of Ireland and Scotland, it was traditional to leave offerings of food or grass on the doorstep for Brigid's cow. A cake may be placed outside the window as an offering to Brigid on Imbolc Eve. A basket made from rushes known as *Brigid's Bed* is placed near the hearth, often with a phallic-shaped wand placed inside.

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*In the pre-Christian era, the entire area around Kildare, Ireland, was known as the City of Brigid.*

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**See also:** *Ailinn; Brigantia; Brigitte, Ma dame; Dagda, the; Fairy Queen; Lwa; Tuatha Dé Danaan*

**Brigitte, Madame**

**Also known as:** Maman Brigitte; La Grande Brigitte; Brijit (Kreyol); Mother Bridget (New Orleans)

**Origin:** Haiti

**Classification:** Lwa

Madame Brigitte is Queen of the Cemetery and Spirit World. She is married to Baron Samedi and is venerated and petitioned alongside him, especially for fertility and healing. The Baron and Brigitte are invoked on behalf of terminally ill children. If Baron Samedi frightens you, Madame Brigitte may be petitioned to intercede on your behalf.

Brigitte has tremendous powers of her own: she is not dependent on her husband. Madame Brigitte is an avatar of Brigid, who was brought to Haiti by Scots and Irish indentured servants. She evolved in Haiti, transformed into a lwa, and wed the Baron; however songs sung in her honor still recall that she originally came from Scotland. La Grande Brigitte travels well: Haitian refugees carried her to New Orleans, where she is also actively venerated.

- Madame Brigitte is invoked to protect one's children serving in the military.
- She is invoked for healing or for financial prosperity (especially when a quick fix of cash is desperately needed).
- Madame Brigitte serves as a judge in the Court of Spirits: invoke her for justice if it is not forthcoming elsewhere.
- Invoke her help in regular courts, too: petition her for success with court cases and legal issues.

Madame Brigitte is syncretized to Mary Magdalen, whose image may be used to represent her.

**Manifestation:** Madame Brigitte is traditionally envisioned as a white woman.

**Attribute:** Cross

**Days:** Monday, Wednesday, or Saturday, depending on tradition

**Colors:** Purple, black, violet

**Number:** 9

**Trees:** Elms and weeping willows; Madame Brigitte lives in trees within the graveyard.

**Altar:** In the cemetery, rocks are arranged as cairns or pyramids to serve

as an altar for Brigitte; arrange cemetery rocks on home altars.

**Offerings:** Violets and purple irises; black coffee; rum in which many small extremely hot peppers have been steeped (she really likes those hot peppers; add them to her offerings as appropriate); overproof rum; red wine; nine purple eggplants; black beans and rice; corn meal; corn bread; roast corn.

**See also:** *Baron Samedi; Brigid; Lwa; Mary Magdalen; Oya*

## **Britomartis**

*Sweet Maiden; Blessing Maiden*

**Origin:** Crete

Britomartis is an ancient Cretan goddess. According to her most famous surviving myth, Britomartis was a mountain Nymph who, fleeing from the sexual advances of King Minos, flung herself into the sea. She did not drown; fishermen rescued her with their nets. Emerging from the water, she assumed new names:

- Aphaia: “the invisible”
- Diktyнна: “Lady of the Nets” or “from the Nets”

Alternative versions suggest she did drown but that Artemis took pity on her and transformed her into a goddess, or that she was Artemis’ lover and had vowed to have no sexual relations with any other, hence her flight from Minos.

Cretan artifacts, including many coins bearing her image, indicate that she was no minor spirit but a great goddess, the presiding spirit of Mount Dikte. Her name, translated as “Sweet Maiden,” may be a euphemism, a plea for Britomartis to behave nicely in the same way that Fairies are called “The Good People.” If you tell fierce, volatile spirits that they’re nice and kind, maybe they’ll behave that way.

Britomartis is invoked for protection, fertility, and abundance. She is a spirit of female mysteries and protectress of wild animals.

**Iconography:** Britomartis is depicted with a fierce face sometimes

reminiscent of a Gorgon. She holds snakes and may suckle griffins.

**Attribute:** Double axe (labrys)

**Animals:** All wild animals, but especially snakes; griffins; her temples were guarded by dogs reputed to be fiercer than bears.

**See also:** *Artemis; Gorgon; Nymph; Pasiphae*

## **Bruxa Evora**

**Origin:** Brazil

Bruxa Evora is a Brazilian witch spirit, a deified Moorish sorceress. Bruxa Evora speaks fluent Portuguese, Arabic, and Latin, but she is full of surprises and may know other languages, too. She is a font of mystic, esoteric, and botanical secrets.

*Bruxa Evora* means the “Witch Evora,” but it should really be the Witch of Evora. Evora is not her name, which is a secret. Instead Evora names a Portuguese city variously ruled by Romans, Moors, Christians, and Visigoths. In the Roman era, Evora was the home of a large Temple of Diana, and perhaps Bruxa Evora is a survivor of those days. Portugal suffered comparatively mild witch hunts, but a woman was burned as a witch in Evora in 1626. Bruxa Evora is the matron of those who practice magical arts. She is petitioned to oversee the spell process and for magical instruction and information.

**Manifestations:** Bruxa Evora can manifest in any form she chooses.

**Iconography:** Despite her esoteric résumé, Bruxa Evora is usually portrayed as a stereotypical crone with broomstick, perhaps because those who sell her images want to be sure everyone recognizes her as a witch.

**Color:** Red

**Sacred animals:** Goats, cats; she has a big, black cat named Luzbel as her familiar.

**Offerings:** Burn red witch candles in her honor; rum; cigarettes; magical



tools

**See also:** *Aradia; Diana; Padilha, Maria*

## **Bubilas**

**Also known as:** Babilas

**Origin:** Lithuania

Bubilas is the patron of bees, honey, and beekeepers. In general, bee spirits are female, like the Queen Bee or worker bees, who are the bees most visible to people. Bubilas is an exception: He is the spirit of the drone. Bubilas serves the bees and Austeja, queen of the bees. He will serve human beekeepers, too, as well as those who labor on behalf of bees.

**Manifestation:** Bubilas looks like a fat hairy man.

**Offerings:** He has a sweet tooth as befits a honey spirit. Honey in jugs was offered to him by smashing the jug (like breaking a hive).

**See also:** *Austeja*

## **Buddha**

*Buddha* is a Sanskrit word that literally means “awake.” It is not a name, but a title acquired by one who has achieved enlightenment. The Buddha defined *enlightenment* as:

- Complete freedom from all suffering
- Full experiential knowledge of the exact nature of reality
- Complete awareness of all dimensions of reality

Buddhism was founded in the sixth century BCE by Siddhartha of the Gautama Clan, crown prince of the Shakya Kingdom. (See *Shakyamuni Buddha* below.) Theoretically, from a Buddhist perspective, all of us will one day achieve enlightenment and hence Buddha status. A Buddha is a being who has achieved the highest possible spiritual perfection;

someone who has achieved the ideal; a being of complete, perfect wisdom and compassion.

Buddha is technically not a deity. In its earliest form and purest manifestations, Buddhism had no deities. Siddhartha Gautama (Buddha Shakyamuni) was a man who achieved enlightenment without spiritual assistance. Enlightenment is something that humans can achieve. However, as Buddhism developed, it became common, in some places, to view Buddha and the Bodhisattvas as deities and spirits (even if this was never the intention of the historic Buddha). As Buddhism spread, especially in regions with strong traditions of animism and spirit working, the concept of the Buddha was reinterpreted.

Theoretically, Buddha, having achieved Nirvana (enlightenment), is in a state of nonexistence and so cannot be approached for help; however, in reality, individuals do direct offerings and rituals to Buddha as spiritual petition (and as the banking of goodwill). In places where Buddhism coexists and may mingle with pre-Buddhist spiritual systems, Buddha may preside over a vast pantheon of Buddhist and non-Buddhist spirits.

Similar to miracle-producing Black Ma donna statues, a powerful tradition of statue veneration became identified with Buddha. In some traditions, the spirit within sacred Buddha statues is interpreted as being someone other than Buddha. It's recognized that Buddha has achieved nirvana and thus is not concerned with worldly issues. The spirit within the statue may instead be a local Earth-bound spirit, one more sympathetic to the petitions of devotees, who will not tell them to overcome desire but instead help fulfill it.

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*Buddhism originally did not incorporate veneration of images. Before statues were permitted, Buddha was represented by the bodhi tree, also known as the bo tree. By association, modern Thai folk tradition considers that bo leaves that fall to the ground facing upward, especially within temple precincts, are lucky charms. Greek sculptors from the era of Alexander the Great were the first to craft lifelike images of Buddhas and Bodhisattvas.*

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Buddhas may be male or female. Female Buddhas play a prominent role in Tibetan Buddhism, where images of the sacred feminine are ubiquitous in contrast to other Buddhist cultures.

**Offerings:** Rice; fruit juices; white and yellow flowers

There is not one Buddha but many. In many cases, as with Black Madonnas, these are cults of statues. The following are but a sampling:

#### **AMITABHA BUDDHA**

Also known as Buddha Amitayus, he is invoked for the gift of longevity. *Amitabha* means “limitless or immeasurable light.” He allegedly has the power to lengthen the life span, and so it is traditional to call his name in moments of grave danger or illness. Amitabha made forty-eight vows to establish the Western Realm of Unlimited Bliss, also known as the Pure Land. If only someone recites his name, Amitabha will bring and welcome them to his realm, the Pure Land of Unlimited Bliss.

**Attribute:** A vessel of Amrita, the elixir of life

**Color:** Red

**Mount:** Peacock; eight peacocks support his throne.

**See also:** *Amida*

#### **AMOGHASIDDHI BUDDHA**

The Sanskrit name *Amoghasiddhi* is variously interpreted as “Almighty Conqueror,” “Unfailing Power,” or “He Who Unerringly Achieves His Goal.” If your goal is to conquer feelings of envy and jealousy, then he can help you achieve it. Amoghasiddhi assists in the release of these negative emotions. Meditating on his image and/or chanting his mantra is also believed to *antidote* these feelings. In addition, posting his image as an amulet repels and eliminates jealousy, resentment, and envy directed toward you.

**Attribute:** Vishvavajra (double vajra)

**Direction:** North

**Color:** Green

**Element:** Air

**Spirit ally:** Green Tara

**Mantra:** OMAMOGAHSIDDHI AH

#### EMERALD BUDDHA

This seventy-five-centimeter green jade or jasper statue, the most revered image in Thailand, is considered protector of that nation. Enshrined in the Temple of the Emerald Buddha in the Grand Palace compound, historic home of the Thai royal family, the statue is believed to endow the king with the right and power to rule.

Its origins are mysterious; believed carved in India, it was discovered in 1434. Lightning struck a stupa in northern Thailand, which cracked open, and the image was revealed. Although the Emerald Buddha refers to a specific statue, reproductions are also believed to radiate power and are placed on home altars. If worn as an amulet, the image reputedly bestows happiness and prosperity. (This is a somewhat controversial and ironic but *extremely* popular amulet: Buddha teaches how to transcend desires but the Emerald Buddha fulfills them.)

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*The Emerald Buddha manifests strong personality and preferences. He is extremely benevolent and loving and has a reputation for fulfilling petitions.*

*However, one must never take vows made to the Emerald Buddha lightly. According to legend, if you betray your oath to him, he'll break your neck. In 1990, 350 arrested poachers were pressured to swear oaths to the Emerald Buddha saying that they would cease their illegal activities.*

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**Offerings:** The Emerald Buddha likes hard-boiled eggs and fermented fish. Candles, incense, and lotus flowers are also offered.

#### LAUGHING BUDDHA

refers to a specific image whose subject may be Hotei or Maitreya. (See their entries for details.)

## **LONELY BUDDHA**

Two statues in Vietnam are known as Lonely Buddhas: one in Ho Chi Minh City; the other in Tay Ninh province. It is the statues themselves that are lonely, because for a while they were abandoned and all alone. (The statue in Tay Ninh appeared to a man in his dream advising where in the jungle it could be found.) In the 1990s, however, miracles began to be attributed to these statues. They are considered exceptionally responsive to requests and petitions and are visited so frequently that they can hardly be lonely any longer. Offerings are subject to fulfillment of petitions.

## **MEDICINE BUDDHA**

is the folk name for the Buddha whose full Sanskrit name is *Bhaisajyaguru Vaidrya prabha Tathagatha*, meaning “The Healing Master of the Lapis Lazuli Realm” or the “Lapis Healing Master” for short. Some perceive him as the healing aspect of Shakyamuni Buddha; others consider him a distinct, independent Buddha. The Medicine Buddha is invoked to avert and eliminate disaster and for every possible cure. He may be invoked by physicians, patients, friends, or family to reveal correct methods of healing and the path to recovery.

**Iconography:** Dressed in monk’s robes, his left hand is in the meditation mudra while his right extends blessings.

**Attribute:** A begging bowl filled with nectar and fruit

**Colors:** Blue, gold

**Tree:** Myrobalan (*Terminalia chebula*), an evergreen, which reputedly emerged from drops of the divine elixir amrita, is believed to encourage longevity and is prized in Ayurvedic medicine.

**Mineral:** Lapis lazuli

**Realm:** The Medicine Buddha lives in the Pure Lapis Lazuli Realm.

## **NAGAYOUN BUDDHA**

This statue of a Buddha, whose head is hooded by a cobra, enshrined in Myanmar, allegedly heals snakebite and protects against snakes.

Requests are accompanied by prayers and recitations of sacred texts. Traditional offerings include flowers, incense, and cooked rice. (See also: *Nagas*.)

### **SHAKYAMUNI BUDDHA**

When people speak of *The Buddha*, Buddha Shakyamuni (563–481 BCE) is who they mean. Shakyamuni Buddha was a historic person, Siddhartha Gautama, founder of Buddhism. *Shakyamuni* means “Sage of the Shakya Clan.” His father was King of the Shakya, a prominent family in the Bihar region of modern India. His mother, Maya, dreamed of a white elephant entering her side and woke to discover that she had conceived.

At age twenty-nine, Siddhartha was rich, happily married, the father of a beautiful son, and heir to the throne. Age twenty-nine, as astrologers know, marks the Saturn return, an astrological transit associated with profound change: Siddhartha abandoned his wife and family and his role as prince. He renounced his high caste, privileges, property, wealth, his physical desires, even his personal identity, to devote himself completely to a spiritual path.

He went to the forest to meditate until he could discover the true meaning of life or die in the attempt. He sought the way to escape life’s sorrow, pain, and suffering and achieve a sublime state. He achieved enlightenment after years of sitting beneath a bodhi tree. He taught for approximately forty-five years after his enlightenment, traveling widely and speaking to a tremendously diverse audience drawn from all facets of society, from kings to farmers. The Buddha made no claim of divine revelation; no deity gave him his teachings. They simply emerged as part of a process.

**Animals:** Animals associated with Buddha Shakyamuni include lions and snails (because he sat in meditation for so long, snails took up residence on him).

**Sacred site:** Lumbini, Buddha’s birthplace, is located in Nepal, six miles from its border with India, in the Himalayan foothills. The exact location was lost during the period of Muslim rule beginning in the twelfth century but rediscovered by nineteenth-century British archaeologists. It

has now been rebuilt with contributions from many Buddhist nations and is a major pilgrimage center.

#### **WEALTH GIVING BUDDHA**

provides your financial needs so that you can focus on your spiritual journey. The title “Wealth Giving” may be applied to various Buddhas but especially *Jambhala* and *Yellow Jambhala*.

**See also:** *Amida; Black Madonna; Jam bhala; Jambhala, Yellow; Ksitigarbha; Maitreya; Simham ukha; Tara; Vajrayogini*

### **Bukwas**

#### *The Wild Man of the Woods*

**Also known as:** Bakwas; Bukwis

**Origin:** Kwakiutl

The Kwakiutl are the indigenous people of Vancouver Island and the adjacent Canadian mainland. Bukwas lives in the deep forests of the Pacific Northwest. He is a spirit of the dead identified with an afterlife realm inhabited by various ghosts, especially the souls of those who have drowned. Bukwas may serve as the psychopomp between realms. (Depending on the myth, Bukwas may also contribute more directly to their deaths.)

Bukwas lingers at the forest threshold or by forest paths, offering assistance and food to people who are lost. He seems helpful, but the end result is that people are lured to his Otherworld and may not return, at least not alive.

Bukwas emerges from the forest very early in the morning before too many people are about. He goes to the seashore to collect his favorite food, cockles, and other shellfish. If it's crowded, he will retreat to the woods, but he may approach a lone person and offer to share his food. Don't accept. Those who eat Bukwas' food end up in Bukwas' realm of the dead.

In traditional Kwakiutl cosmology, Bukwas is clearly a spirit. He is the

subject of carved shamanic masks and appears during rituals, especially the traditional winter dance. However, he is now sometimes also identified with Bigfoot or Sasquatch and thus assumed to be a cryptid, an as yet unidentified living being.

**Manifestation:** He resembles a gaunt, haggard wild man, dressed in ragged garments and with long, disheveled hair. (When identified as Bigfoot, he is described as being ape-like.)

**Iconography:** Bukwas is depicted in the form of carved, wooden masks and statues.

**Favorite foods:** Cockles; shellfish

**See also:** *Ghost; Psychopomp*

## Buraq

**Also known as:** Al Buraq (literally *the* Buraq)

Al Buraq is a winged white horse (bigger than a donkey; smaller than a mule) with the crowned head of a beautiful woman and the wings and tail of glorious male peacock feathers. Al Buraq is the mount on which the Prophet rode on his flight from Mecca to Jerusalem to the Seventh Heaven. Her origins are unclear. Some scholars speculate that she is related to ancient spirits of Mesopotamia depicted with human heads on large animal bodies. She may be some sort of angel.

Historically, images of al Buraq are mass-produced as popular chromolithographs, comparable to chromolithographs of Roman Catholic saints. This is highly unusual in a culture that usually discourages any sort of visual depiction. Her image serves as an amulet for personal safety and to fly over obstacles. In Pakistan, buses are ornamented with images of al Buraq in hopes that she will provide safety. In Muslim West Africa, merchants post images of al Buraq in hopes that she will serve as a vehicle for miraculous business and entrepreneurial success and progress. Her image is thus used in similar manner to that of Mami Waters and La Sirène elsewhere.

Airlines in Indonesia and Libya are named after al Buraq, as is an



Islamic credit card. In *Sheba*, Walter Crane IV's comic book series, al Buraq meets and mingles with ancient deities of Egypt.

**See also:** *Mami Waters*; *Sirène, La*

## **Buto**

**See:** *Wadjet*

## C

### **Cabeiri**

**Also known as:** Cabiri; Cabyri; Kabeiroi

The Cabeiri were subjects of an ancient Mystery tradition. They remain enigmatic and mysterious today. The three Cabeiri brothers, spirits of fertility, smithcraft, magic, and the sea, are venerated alongside Heph aestus, who may be their father or grandfather, and their mother, Cabeiro.

Because little of their mythology survives, the Cabeiri may seem to be minor deities, but they were not. Their Mysteries at Samothrace were second only to those at Eleusis. (See the Glossary entry on Mystery for further information.) Endangered sailors invoking their protection called them “great gods.” Allegedly the Cabeiri protect against shipwreck and drowning.

The Cabeiri were venerated on the Greek mainland, at Thrace and in Phrygia in what is now modern Turkey, but the epicenter of their veneration was the Northern Aegean islands of Lemnos and Samothrace, which were not originally ethnically Greek but were conquered and colonized by Athens starting in the sixth century BCE. Devotion to the Cabeiri predated the arrival of the Greeks and was adopted enthusiastically.

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*Various groups of divine smiths, many possessing very similar myths, were venerated throughout Greece and Anatolia, including the Cabeiri, Curetes, Corybantes, Daktyls, and Telchines. Their names are sometimes used interchangeably, adding to confusion. All are associated with Mystery traditions, fertility, Mother Goddesses, and, in many cases, protection of an endangered Divine Child. Information was always reserved for initiates, and*

*so it's now very difficult to determine whether they are similar but distinct spirits or different regional names for the same spirits. These names may also refer to clans, secret craft guilds, or ethnic groups.*

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Their origin is unknown. Cabeiri is not a Greek name but is generally believed to be Lemnian, a now extinct language possibly related to Etruscan. Another theory suggests that they are named after and maybe come from Mount Cabeiros in what is now modern Turkey, once a center of devotion to Kybele. Yet another theory suggests that Cabeiri is a Sumerian or Semitic name.

**Manifestation:** The Cabeiri are described as “dwarfs.”

**Rituals:** Because the Cabeiri were the subject of Mysteries, much information is lost. What survives are descriptions of raucous rituals, involving drinking *lots* of wine out of special ceremonial cups decorated with images resembling the Egyptian deity Bes with a big, erect phallus. Cups were eventually smashed as part of the ritual.

**Emblem:** Phallic symbols

**Animal:** Crab (their pincers resemble smith's tongs)

**Offerings:** The Cabeiri are allegedly heavy consumers of wine; also first fruits of the season; metal smith's tools; phallic images

**See also:** *Bes; Cabeiro; Dactyls; Kedalion; Telchines; Hephaestus*

## **Cabeiro**

**Also known as:** Kabeiro; Kabira

Cabeiro, mother of the Cabeiri, was venerated in Northern Aegean Mystery traditions. Surviving myth suggests that she was a local Nymph, daughter of the sea, who married Hephaestus. Cabeiro may or may not be the same spirit as the Nymph Kapheira, also a daughter of the sea. According to one myth, Kronos did not swallow baby Poseidon. Instead

Rhea rescued him, hiding him in a cave on the island of Rhodes, where Kapheira served as his guardian and wet nurse. When the Hellenic Greeks arrived in the Northern Aegean, they identified Cabeiro with

Aphrodite, Demeter, Hekate, and Rhea. These goddesses are very different from each other, indicating that Cabeiro was multifaceted and not easy to pigeonhole.

**See also:** *Aphrodite; Cabeiri; Demeter; Hephaestus; Kronos; Nymph; Poseidon; Rhea; Telchines*

## **Caboclo**

In Spiritist traditions of Brazil, Caboclos are the souls of indigenous Brazilians, especially inhabitants of the Amazonian forests. They are deified ancestors of individuals and the Brazilian nation. Caboclos are hunters, warriors, healers, and shamans. There are male and female Caboclos. (Females are *Caboclas*.) Caboclo children are called *Caboclinhos*. There are an infinite number of Caboclo spirits, and although some are famous, most are known only to the mortals with whom they communicate. Thus every person may work with a different Caboclo.

Caboclos communicate via spirit mediums as well as directly to individuals. They appear in dreams or visions. Caboclos are extremely active, vigorous, and articulate spirits. They are excellent communicators, adept at offering guidance and advice.

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*In non-mystic circles of Brazil, the term Caboclo is sometimes used to refer to people of mixed African and indigenous ancestry and may be considered derogatory. However, in the context of spiritual traditions like Umbanda and Macumba, Caboclo refers exclusively to spirits of Brazilian Indians and is spoken with respect.*

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Caboclos possess their own realm called Jurema, a mythic paradise in the *mato*, the Brazilian jungle, presided over by the Cabocla goddess Jurema. An alternative scenario suggests that they dwell in the realm of Aruanda with another family of Brazilian spirits, the Pretos Velhos. (*Aruanda's* name derives from *Luanda*, once a major slaving port in Angola and the point of embarkation for many Pretos Velhos.)

In Yoruba-oriented traditions, Oxossi is chief of Caboclos.

**Altars:** If at all possible, offerings are given outdoors, ideally near trees or even hung from trees. If this is not possible, create an indoor forest for them via houseplants. Place food offerings on mats set on the floor so that they can sit and eat.

**Sacred animals:** Amazonian animals in general, but especially snakes

**Offerings:** Roast corn; plantains; pineapples; melons; tobacco, especially cigars

**See also:** *Caboclo of the Seven Crossroads; Jurema; Ochossi; Pretos Velhos*

### **Caboclo of the Seven Crossroads**

**Also known as:** *Caboclo das Sete Encruzilhadas* (Portuguese)

In the early twentieth century, conventional medical treatment failed to heal the paralysis suffered by a young man from Rio de Janeiro named Zélio de Moraes. His father, seeking spiritual solutions, brought Zélio to the Brazilian Spiritist Federation. It was a time of conflict among Brazilian spiritualists. Brazilian Spiritualism is based on the teachings of Allan Kardec and is known as Spiritism. Kardec was from France; the system originated in Europe. Some wished to keep the tradition exclusively European and white; others wished to incorporate African practices.

As a result of colonialism and slavery, tremendous numbers of Africans and Indians had suffered death and inadequate funeral rites on Brazilian soil, yet their souls were not honored or propitiated. Although many practitioners of Kardecian Spiritism were of African or mixed descent, attempts to honor or incorporate souls of deceased Africans or

Indians into Spiritist traditions were officially rebuffed. Rather than being given respect, they were insulted and described as “low spirits.”

At the Federation, Zélio received a visitation from a spirit identifying himself as a Jesuit priest, who revealed that Zélio’s illness indicated his spiritual mission to found a brand-new Brazilian tradition, which would incorporate devotion and propitiation of Caboclos, souls of Brazilian Indians, and Pretos Velhos, souls of Africans enslaved in Brazil. The Jesuit told Zélio to await further instruction.

Zélio went home and miraculously recovered. Shortly afterward, he received a visitation from a spirit identifying himself as the Caboclo of the Seven Crossroads, several centuries old. He told Zélio to found a new religion called Umbanda incorporating indigenous Brazilian, European, and African spirits and promised to reveal doctrines and rituals. Soon after, Zélio de Moraes officially inaugurated Umbanda. Many consider Seven Crossroads to be the patron and spirit founder of Umbanda. He continues to communicate with spirit mediums.

**See also:** *Caboclo; Pretos Velhos*

## **Caer Iborneith**

*Yew Berry*

**Origin:** Ireland

Angus Mac Og, Lord of Love, fell asleep, dreamed of a mysterious, beautiful woman, and fell in love. He reached out to embrace her in his dreams, but the vision evaporated. She returned the next night and the next, and Angus began to pine away for love. Irony of ironies: how could the Lord of Love die of heartbreak? A major search for Angus’ dream woman was organized, coordinated by his parents, Boann and the Dagda. Finally she was discovered standing by a lake as beautiful as in his dream, surrounded by three times fifty maidens all linked together by a silver chain.

Her name was Caer Iborneith (Yew Berry), and she was clearly no ordinary woman. Angus did the polite thing and asked her father for

Caer's hand in marriage. Her father explained that it was impossible. Caer is a shape-shifter, changing back and forth from female to swan along with her maidens.

No love is impossible for Angus. He conferred with the Dagda and then went to wait by the shores of the lake where the swan horde was anticipated. They arrived on Samhain (31 October). Caer promised to be Angus' bride if he, too, would become a swan. He agreed; she transformed him, and the two flew happily off together. They flew three times around the lake; then flew off to Angus' palace where they resumed human form. They still live happily ever after in any form they choose.

The love story of Angus and Caer was written down in the eighth century after Ireland's conversion to Christianity. Old myths were loved and recorded so as not to be forgotten, but divine aspects of characters were downplayed. Caer is an ancient swan goddess, a fitting mate for the Lord of Love. (Legend has it that swans mate for life, and so their coupling is an example to all.)

She is a mysterious primordial spirit: when Angus describes his dreams to the other deities, they don't recognize her. Although in modern mythology books, Caer is a footnote, mentioned only as Angus' consort; it is Caer who approaches Angus in his dreams; Caer who sets the terms for their marriage; and Caer who transforms Angus into a swan.

Caer has powerful associations with death:

- Yew berries are highly poisonous and are favored weapons in old British murder mysteries.
- Swans are among creatures serving as psychopomps: spirits who guide dead souls to their next destination. Caer's dual identity indicates her power over life and death. She is a beautiful, fertile, magical woman while simultaneously a death goddess.

**Color:** White

**Bird:** Swan

**Tree:** Yew, a funerary tree

**Place:** Caer presides over Newgrange (Brugh na Boinne).

**Day:** 31 October, the festival of Samhain, precursor to Halloween. The ancient Celtic calendar was divided into two halves: the light half and the dark. Samhain inaugurates the dark half of the year.

**Offerings:** Images of swans; mead; jewelry and perfume with which to adorn herself for her lover. Don't offer or handle yew berries: they're deadly poisonous.

**See also:** *Angus Mac Og; Boann; Dagda, the; Psychopomp; Swan Goddesses*

## Callisto

### *The Great Bear*

**Also known as:** Kallisto; Themisto

**Origin:** Greece

Callisto is a Nymph and a close companion of Artemis. She may be her lover, best friend, or alter ego.

Zeus in the form of a wolf had sex with Callisto. Later myths suggest she was raped, but in the earliest versions, sex was consensual and may even have been sacred: union occurred in the temple where he was worshipped in the guise of a wolf. Artemis did not take this well. She either kills Callisto or transforms her into a bear.

That's the Classical Greek myth. Scholars suggest that Callisto is a particularly ancient goddess from the Arcadia region of Greece who predates her Greek myth. No transformation may have been needed: Callisto is a primordial bear goddess. She already was a bear. Callisto may be an early incarnation of Artemis or her ally from pre-Hellenic days before the arrival of Zeus.

The Hellenic Greeks did not particularly like deities in the form of animals. The concept of a sacred bear didn't necessarily appeal to them. Callisto came with territory they conquered; they may have preferred the explanation that her bear form was a punishment. Before she died, *if* she died, Callisto gave birth to Zeus' son, Arcas. Another version of the myth has her roaming Arcadia in the form of a voiceless bear (a plain



bear; not a spirit bear) until Zeus transfers her to the sky as the constellation Ursa Major, the Great Bear.

Callisto was venerated as an ancestral spirit. The Arcades from Arcadia (the “bear folk”) traced their descent from Arcas. She is invoked as a fierce guardian spirit on behalf of people and bears. She is also a spirit of transformation.

**Iconography:** She wears a bearskin in paintings from Delphi. Fifth-century BCE coins minted in Greece depict Callisto in the form of a bear. Coins from fourth-century BCE Orchomenos show Artemis shooting a girl, identified as Callisto.

**Constellation:** Zeus transported Callisto and Arcas to the sky, allegedly to prevent Arcas the hunter from unknowingly killing his own mother. Callisto is the Great Bear, and Arcas is Arcturus, brightest star in the constellation Bootes, the bear watcher.

**Sacred site:** Callisto’s Tomb near Trikolonoi, Arcadia, was eventually topped by a sanctuary of Artemis.

**Offerings:** Honey, berries, sweet foods, spring water, images of bears

**See also:** *Artemis; Black Madonna of Orcival; Dione; Maia; Nymph; Zeus; Zeus Lykaios*

## Calunga

*Mother of the Waters*

**Also known as:** Kalunga

**Origin:** Congolese; Bantu

Calunga is a Congolese spirit of death and the sea. The word *Calunga* literally means “sea” but has implications in Congolese cosmology beyond salty watery depths. Calunga also refers to the realm of the ancestors. The realm of death in many African traditions is located beneath the sea. The ocean is associated with fertility, abundance, and death. Goddess Calunga presides over this realm.

What is called the Calunga Line is the watery frontier between the visible and invisible worlds, the threshold between realms of life and death. Calunga the goddess rules that line and controls that frontier. She is among the most respected and feared deities because she transcends divisions that stymie others, human and spirit alike. There are no barriers to Calunga's power. At one time, she was considered a supreme deity. She remains the epitome of the protective mother, so powerful that she cannot help but be threatening even if she doesn't seek to be. She is the great mother of the sea, guardian of life and death.

Calunga made a sea change while crossing the waters from Central Africa to Brazil with the slave trade, emerging as a male spirit. In Brazil, *Calunga Grande* ("Big Calunga") refers to the ocean; *Calunga Pequena* ("Little Calunga") refers to the graveyard.

**Element:** Water

**See also:** *Agwé; Pomba Gira*

## Calypso

### *She Who Conceals*

**Also known as:** Kalypso

Calypso, daughter of Atlas, lives on an extremely remote island, Ogygia, far from mortals or deities. (According to Homer, anyway: the not quite so remote Maltese island of Gozo claims to be her residence.) Calypso is most famous for her part in Homer's *Odyssey*. Shipwrecked Odysseus lives on Calypso's paradise island for seven years as her lover. In the *Odyssey*, Calypso is described as a Nymph and a goddess. Odysseus calls her the "dread goddess with human speech."

Calypso offered Odysseus immortality if he stayed with her, but he chose to return to his home and wife. Although Calypso attempted to keep him anyway, Zeus sent Hermes to tell Calypso to release Odysseus. She helped him build a boat and sent him on his way.

Calypso is an ancient, pre-Olympian goddess. Her offer of immortality to Odysseus was sincere. This goddess of love, beauty, and seduction has

powers over life and death. Calypso may have had a liaison with Hermes. She is matron of those who are selective with lovers, who seek only true love or particularly exciting liaisons, who'd rather be alone than with the wrong person.

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*Calypso, her garden, and her long affair with Odysseus are favorite subjects of artists, including Max Beckmann and Arnold Böcklin. Vanessa Williams is Calypso in Andrei Konchalovsky's 1997 television miniseries, The Odyssey.*

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**Manifestation:** She is described as eternally beautiful.

**Tree:** Poplar

**Realm:** Calypso lives in a cave, which opens into a garden with wildflowers; fruiting vines, poplar, and cypress trees; and four fountains.

**Sacred site:** Calypso Cave on the Mediterranean island of Gozo

**See also:** *Atlas; Circe; Hermes; Zeus*

## Camazotz

*Snatch Bat; Death Bat*

**Also known as:** Zotz

**Origin:** Maya

Long before Dracula, there was Camazotz, spirit of death in the form of a bat. Camazotz is the servant of the Lord of Death. He leads the nightly arrival of twilight, the time when bats emerge from their caves.

Camazotz first appears on the stage of history among the Zapotec of Oaxaca, Mexico, but was incorporated into the pantheon of the Quiché Maya of Guatemala. In the Mayan sacred text, the *Popul Vuh*, Camazotz decapitates the hero, Hunahpu.

His name literally translates as “snatch bat,” and archaeologists

suggest that Camazotz is a sacred vampire. He is identified with various species, including the common vampire (*Desmodus rotundus*) or the false vampire (*Vampyrum spectrum*), the largest Western Hemisphere bat. Some now connect Camazotz with recent fossils of a giant vampire bat (*Desmodus draculae*) or the chupacabra.

**Favored people:** Bat and vampire lovers

**Manifestations:** Camazotz may have a bat's head on a human male body, or he may manifest as a *really* big bat. Because his nose is described as being like a flint knife, there is some speculation that he is a leaf-nosed bat, as for example, the false vampire (*Vampyrum spectrum*).

## Camunda

**Origin:** India

Camunda, dread goddess, is venerated and propitiated in Hindu and Buddhist traditions. Her name derives from Canda and Munda, the two Ashuras she slew. Camunda, demon killer, has the power to destroy the world with one glance. She dances the Dance of Destruction while playing a musical instrument whose neck is holy Mount Meru and whose gourd is the crescent moon. Her instrument is strung with the cosmic serpent. On a more mundane level, Camunda inflicts and heals disease. Those who venerate her receive her blessings of courage. Camunda sponsors practitioners of witchcraft and sorcery. She bestows victory over one's enemies and success in war.

Camunda is identified with Parvati and Dur ga, but she is also venerated as an independent goddess in southern India.

**Manifestation:** Flames shoot from Camunda's three eyes. She has four arms. She wears a garland of skulls and is covered with snakes. She travels with an entourage of demons.

**Iconography:** Camunda stands atop a corpse, lion, or owl.

**Attributes:** Chalice and knife

**Element:** Fire

**Color:** Red

**See also:** *Ashura; Durga; Kali; Parvati; Shiva*

## **Candelina**

**Also known as:** Candelina Sedifé; Candela

**Classification:** Lwa; Metresa

Candelina may be Candelo's sister, wife, or female alter ego. The nature of her relationship with Candelo evokes strong feelings from devotees who argue passionately about whether she is wife or sister. If they are married, then they may have two children, Candelito and Candelita, son and daughter respectively. They may all be venerated together. Candelina is a benevolent and generous lwa who protects and guides her devotees. Although she has a temper, she is not as spectacularly fiery as Candelo. Candelina is syncretized to the Black Madonna of Candelaria.

**Color:** Red

**Sacred day:** Candelina is honored at the Feast of Candelaria/Candlemas on 2 February.

**Offerings:** Scarlet lipstick; red clothing, fabric, and jewelry; perfume in red bottles like Christian Dior's Hypnotic Poison or Cacharel's Amor Amor; red wine; red soda; hibiscus tea; add a little Florida Water and dark rum to a glass of dark beer and then offer it to her. (Don't drink it yourself; Florida Water is an eau de cologne and not for human consumption.)

**See also:** *Black Madonna of Candelaria; Candelo; Lwa; Metresa; Twenty-one Divisions*

## **Candelo**

**Also known as:** Candelo Sedifé; Papa Candelo

**Classification:** Lwa

**Feast:** 4 November

Candelo is an extremely popular Dominican lwa. Originating on the island of Hispaniola, comprising Haiti and the Dominican Republic, he is now well known throughout the Spanish Caribbean and the United States.

Once upon a time, Candelo may have been an enslaved African forced to labor on a sugar plantation. He was a font of knowledge regarding African religious, spiritual, and mystic traditions; others came to consult him and benefit from his expertise. Candelo also made and sold potent firewater, another reason people flocked to him.

Candelo, now a powerful spirit, no longer enslaved, roams Dominican streets at night, playing dice and cards, and attending cockfights. (Another version suggests that he was never truly enslaved or completely human: his spirit took human form to comfort enslaved Africans and provide spiritual guidance.)

Candelo is an old, wise miracle worker who may theoretically be petitioned for *anything*, but his specialties involve improved luck, business, and finances. He is invoked to ward off or alleviate poverty. Candelo is a classicist who strongly prefers that rituals be performed carefully and correctly. He has a temper. He is not a spirit for the dabbler or the inexperienced.

Although frequently described as a severe spirit, Candelo has a lively side, too. He loves dancing. He likes the ladies. He enjoys pyrotechnics, too. Because Candelo essentially *is* fire, it is crucial to be extra cautious with fire safety when honoring or invoking him, as he has a tendency to announce his presence with conflagrations. His friend and compatriot Belié Belcan is syncretized to Michael Archangel. Michael offers protection from fire, and so Belié exerts a balancing effect on Candelo. They are frequently venerated together. (Don't be careless with candles or flaming alcohol offerings anyway.)

**Favored people:** Candelo protects women and children; he is the patron of cockfighters and those born under fire signs.

**Attribute:** Machete

**Element:** Fire

**Bird:** Rooster

**Color:** Red

**Plants:** Basil, rue

**Offerings:** Candelo is intensely fiery: offerings of alcohol, like rum or Florida Water, are traditionally set alight. He likes tobacco products such as cigars or cigarettes. Light them for him when presenting.

**See also:** *Belié Belcan; Candelina; Michael Archangel;* and the Glossary entry for *Syncretism*

## **Cao Guo-Jiu**

**Also known as:** Royal Uncle Cao; Cao Guojiu

**Origin:** China

Cao Guo-Jiu is the most recent addition to the party of spirits known as the Eight Immortals. There are strikingly different versions of how he came to attain this role.

Before Cao Guo-Jiu was an Immortal, he was a powerful and very well connected courtier.

His father was a prominent military commander. His sister married one emperor and was the mother of another. Cao Guo-Jiu was the uncle of a Song Dynasty emperor.

In one version, Cao Guo-Jiu just wasn't suited for court life or, as an honest man, he disapproved of the corruption he witnessed. He abandoned court for a quiet, ascetic, meditative existence devoted to learning. Another version suggests he left court because his younger brother was a libertine and murderer. In shame and sadness, Cao Guo-Jiu, an extremely ethical man, the opposite of his brother, resigned his imperial post and embarked on a life as a holy man.

In yet another version, although Cao Guo-Jiu disapproved of his brother, his priority was protection of their family honor. When he

learned that his brother had murdered a man in order to possess his wife, Cao Guo-Jiu ordered the woman arrested and executed so as to eliminate any witness who could sully their family name. Miraculously rescued by a celestial being, the woman petitioned the imperial court for justice and damages. Again, Cao Guo-Jiu had her arrested and sentenced to death. Again, she was miraculously rescued. This time, she was allowed to plead her case with the court. The brother was executed and Cao Guo-Jiu placed in the stocks for months. When finally released, he abandoned all his worldly goods, left court, and headed for the mountains to repent. He lived in a cave and devoted himself to the Tao. His repentance was so sincere that eventually Lu Tong-pin and Zhong Li-Quan invited him to join the Immortals.

**Favored people:** He is the patron of those in theatrical professions as well as those who, ashamed of their past, seek salvation and expiation and desire to make amends.

**Iconography:** Cao Guo-Jiu is depicted as an elderly, bearded man wearing traditional Chinese imperial court dress. He carries a tablet that gains him admission to the imperial court.

**Attributes:** Jade tablet; castanets

**Animal:** The Qilin or Chilin, also known as the “Chinese unicorn,” which is emblematic of perfect righteousness

**See also:** *Chang Kuo Lao; Eight Immortals*

## **Caointeach**

*The Keener*

**Also known as:** Caoineag

The Caointeach of the Western Highlands is a Scottish equivalent of Ireland’s Banshee. She is attached to a clan who comes to mourn prior to a death, hence serving as a harbinger. She is usually heard crying, weeping, and wailing several days before a death in the family. She *keens*, a word related to her name, the ancient Celtic mode of mourning.



Like the Banshee, the Caointeach is a psychopomp, a spirit who provides escort service to the world beyond.

Clans and families associated with the Caointeach include the Curries, Duffies, MacDonalds, Macmillans, Mackays, Macfarlanes, Mathisons, and Shaws. The Caointeach of Clan MacDonald was heard to wail for several nights prior to the Massacre at Glencoe in 1692.

**Manifestation:** In general, the Caointeach is heard, not seen; she is described as child-sized and wearing a green shawl or dress.

**See also:** *Banshee; Cyhyraeth; Psychopomp*

## Car

**Also known as:** Kar; Khar; Ker; Kher; Q'ar

Car is a great goddess of life, death, and the sun. She is a primordial cave mother, akin to Kybele or Echidna, who emerges from her cave daily to drive the chariot of the sun across the sky, returning to the depths of Earth at night. The word *chariot* and its derivative *car* may derive from her name. Her vehicle would survive but with new drivers like Helios or Apollo.

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*Pay attention: if you start to look and listen for Car's sacred syllable, you will find it everywhere. Car's ubiquity is among the mysteries of Katherine Neville's 1989 novel, The Eight.*

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Her origins date back at least as far as the Neolithic. She seems to have first emerged in North Africa and was widely venerated throughout Algeria, Libya, Tunisia, and the Sahara. She may have been their preeminent deity: Arab commentators called her "Libya," indicating that she was the mother of that region, their presiding goddess. Devotees carried her devotion far and wide.

The syllable *Car* is ubiquitous among place-names and the names of

goddesses. Speculation and debate exists as to whether all derive from the same primordial spirit. Although impossible to prove definitively, the following are among the many places possibly associated with Car:

- Carthage (allegedly founded by her priestess Elissa; also known as Dido)
- Carchemish
- Carcassonne
- Khartoum
- Carmel
- Khardaia (Algeria)
- Carnac (Brittany)
- Karnak (Egypt)
- Carnutes (Gaulish tribe)
- Chartres
- Carnuntum (on the Danube)
- Caraalis (now Cagliari, capital of Sardinia)
- Carpathians
- Corsica
- Caria (now modern Turkey)

Car may or may not be identical to (or the progenitor of) spirits like Kore, Ceres, Carna, Cardea, Carmenta, and Karina. (See their individual entries.) Other words with which she is associated include *cardiac*, *carmine*, *carnal*, and *karma*. She may be the spirit of sacred songs or carols.

Car remains a primordial force lurking in caves. She was beloved and venerated for millennia. Spirits who do not provide blessings or at least some positive, benevolent gifts are rarely venerated for long.

Car is also a death goddess. She may be the earliest manifestation of Kore as an underworld goddess, older than Hades or even Demeter. In Homer's *Iliad*, fierce Car drags the dead from the battlefield.

According to Greek myth, Car's son, Phoenix, was the ancestor of the Phoenicians, who are named after him. Their father is Poseidon. (This is

a Greek myth, not a Phoenician one. *Phoenician* was the Greek name for the Canaanites. The myth explains how the Greeks viewed their seafaring neighbors, worshippers of a primeval goddess, not necessarily how the Phoenicians envisioned themselves.)

**Manifestation:** According to the *Iliad*, Car is black, fanged, and dressed in red.

**Color:** Carmine

**Planet:** The sun and possibly also the moon: scholarly debate rages.

**Sacred bird:** Phoenix, the solar bird

**See also:** *Apollo; Echidna; Helios; Keres; Kybele; Poseidon*

## Cardea

**Origin:** Italy

In Latin, *cardo* is a door hinge or pivot. Cardea is the goddess of hinges. She controls the opening and closing of doors, literal and metaphorical. Ovid says her power is to open what is closed and close what is open. Cardea chooses whom to admit. Because of this power, she is invoked to protect children from malevolent powers. She can block their path so they can't reach their victims. Conversely, Cardea is petitioned to open doors to good fortune, opportunity, and success.

Hinges are physically attached to doors. Janus, Lord of Doors, was so enamored with Cardea (who may or may not originally have been Carna) that he made her the goddess of hinges so that she would always cling to him. They may be venerated together.

**Tree:** Hawthorn (place a branch over or beside a child's bed or cradle to beseech Cardea's blessings and protection)

**See also:** *Car; Carna; Janus*

## Carmenta

**Also known as:** Carmentia; Carmentis

**Origin:** Greece

Carmenta, the original Charmed One, was born in Arcadia, Greece, where she was known as Nicostrata. She moved to Italy and changed her name, emerging as the goddess of prophecy. Carmenta sings the future and the past. The word *charm*, meaning a spoken or sung magic spell, derives from her name. She is the goddess of charms.

Carmenta traveled to Italy with her son, Evander, whose father was Hermes. Evander is credited as the founding father of Greek colonies in Italy, the first to bring Greek culture and myth to Italy. Carmenta is credited with inventing the Latin alphabet. Her Roman shrine was beside the Porta Carmentalis, the Gate of Carmenta.

In Italy, Carmenta also emerged as a sacred midwife who protects women in childbirth. Carmenta is a goddess of higher learning and may be invoked for help with academic issues, including exams and admissions. Although the majority of Carmenta's celebrants were women, she is not exclusively a women's goddess.

**Consort:** Hermes

**Rituals:** Present petitions in the form of rhymes or incantations, i.e., charms.

**Sacred dates:** Her festival, the Carmentalia, was celebrated from 11 January through 15 January (rituals are held on the first and last days).

**Offerings:** In the twenty-first century, the word *charm* has the additional and now more common meaning of a small amulet, as in the charms attached to a bracelet. Offer charms in the form of what you desire or for what you'd like to express thanks. Carmenta drinks Carménère wine.

**See also:** *Car; Hermes*

## Carna

**Origin:** Italy

**Feast:** 1 June

Carna is the flesh goddess, the carnal queen. She is the goddess who controls the functioning of the body, including the ability to obtain nourishment from food and the pleasures of the flesh. Although Carna has dominion over the entire corporeal form, she is particularly associated with inner organs, especially the heart, liver, and lungs. Invoke her assistance with any health issues. She is also petitioned to strengthen health and body in general, especially in terms of the digestive system.

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*Carna may be invoked to help those suffering from eating disorders obtain nourishment and establish a healthy relationship with food.*

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According to one myth, Janus was so taken with the carnal goddess that he transformed her into Cardea, goddess of hinges, the better to keep her always near.

**Rituals:** Romans traditionally ate hot bacon and beans cooked with farro (emmer wheat) on Carna's feast day.

**Sacred site:** Carna had a grove beside the Tiber River.

**Offerings:** She was traditionally offered flour ground from fava beans.

**See also:** *Cardea; Janus*

## **Carrefour, Maitre**

*Master of the Crossroads*

**Also known as:** Kalfu; Mèt Kalfou

**Origin:** Haiti

**Classification:** Lwa

Maitre Carrefour, master and guardian of the crossroads, may be the alter ego of Eshu Elegbara, his mirror image, shadow side, or nocturnal counterpart. Eshu Elegbara (Leg ba; Elegba) is a solar spirit. Maitre Carrefour emerges with the moon. Papa Legba is a trickster: Maitre Carrefour is a trickster taken to exponential extremes. Crossroads are places of decisions; the road chosen (or not) can impact one's entire life. Be careful: crossroads spirits are invoked to point you to the right road or direction. If Maitre Carrefour is feeling tricky, he may point you in the wrong direction or make you lose your way. Crossroads are favorite haunts of witches, spirits, and ghosts: those magical crossroads are under Maitre Carrefour's jurisdiction. Maitre Carrefour walks the crossroads at night, in the company of malevolent spirits. He is their master and gatekeeper.

Maitre Carrefour controls comings and goings of ghosts and malevolent spirits. Carrefour unleashes the secret spirits of the night: he may be petitioned to keep them far from you. He is, however, usually a spirit of last resort. Don't invoke him until other avenues and attempts have failed. He is a great, powerful, and potentially dangerous spirit: never summon him for trifles. Don't get too comfortable or familiar with him. He is *the* master. It is not necessarily to your benefit to attract his attention without very good reason. If you feel you need him, it may be advisable to request the services of a reputable Vodou priest or priestess (*houngan; mambo*) to intercede for you.

Maitre Carrefour is an aggressive, effective spirit. He works quickly, and so devotees love him. There are no demons that he cannot command. *However*, he also punishes quickly: he's not a good-natured, patient spirit. Never promise him what you're not absolutely certain you can deliver immediately.

Maitre Carrefour is not a spirit for beginners. He doesn't care whether you're just learning. Pleas for mercy may have little effect. He has a cold nature; hence he can behave cruelly although he does possess a sense of justice. He is not an evil spirit per se but a hardened, tough one. He didn't get to be master of evil spirits by being nice. He is a brilliant, quick-thinking, tricky spirit: don't even think of outwitting him.

Maitre Carrefour is petitioned to keep malignant spirits, ghosts, and people far from you. He can break hexes, curses, and spells. If sorcerers

have set ghosts or spirits after you, Maitre Carrefour can redirect them and prevent them from drawing near. Maitre Carrefour owns the night: there's little he can't do.

- Maitre Carrefour is the Bizango counterpart to Legba, the first invoked in rituals and ceremonies.
- He is syncretized to Saint Andrew, the vampire saint.
- Carrefour is sometimes classified among the Barons, in which context he is Baron Carrefour (French) or Bawon Kalfou (Kreyol).

**Animal:** Black pig

**Color:** Black

**Numbers:** 3, 7

**Time:** Night

**Planet:** Carrefour is the sun at midnight and the moon to Legba's noonday sun.

**Altars:** Maitre Carrefour typically has his own altars, not shared with other spirits.

**Offerings:** Rum set ablaze (be careful!); cigars; lace his food generously with hot sauce, cayenne, or habanero powder.

**See also:** *Barons; Bizango Spirits; Eshu Elegbara*

## Castalia

**Origin:** Greece

Castalia is a spirit of water, prophecy, knowledge, purification, and divine inspiration. She is the presiding goddess of the Castalian Springs, which emerge from a ravine on Mount Parnassus near the Oracle of Delphi. The Castalian

Springs were an integral part of Delphic rituals. Pilgrims, all who wished to consult the oracle, and contestants in the Pythian Games were required to wash their hair at the Castalian Springs before continuing to

the shrine. The water was used to cleanse the shrine and served as drinking and bathing water for the Delphic priestesses.

When Apollo arrived in Delphi, Castalia already presided over the spring, although classical Greek myth suggests otherwise. According to myth, Castalia, a daughter of Achelous, preferred to commit suicide by leaping into the spring rather than submit to Apollo's embrace. Apollo named the springs in her honor. The Castalian Springs were placed under the dominion of Apollo and the Muses. Drinking the waters of Castalia allegedly bestows the gift of poetry and creative inspiration.

**Sacred sites:** Her springs are still accessible and may be sipped from. Two fountain houses fed by the springs survive. The older, from the early sixth century BCE, displays benches where people sat around the marble-lined basin. A later fountain features niches carved into the rock wall where votive offerings to Castalia were placed.

**See also:** *Achelous; Apollo; Daphne; Muse*

## Castor and Pollux

**See:** *Dioscuri*

## Centella Ndoki

**Also known as:** Centella Endoki; Mari wanga; Mama Wanga; Mama Huanga

**Origin:** Congolese

Centella Ndoki is a spirit of the Afro-Caribbean spiritual tradition, Palo. She is the owner of the cemetery, gatekeeper of the portal between life and death. She is the Queen of the World, among the most powerful forces in the universe, if not the most powerful. Because Palo rituals may involve working with dead souls, Centella Ndoki is an exceptionally significant spirit in this tradition. She may or may not be the same spirit as Oya. Like Oya, Centella Ndoki has associations with the marketplace and storms as well as the graveyard.



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*In traditional Congolese culture, ndoki refers to someone possessing great reserves of magic power. The power is neutral; it may be used for good or ill depending on the desires and intent of the individual.*

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**Home:** Present petitions and offerings in the graveyard; that's where you'll find her.

**See also:** *Oya*

## Ceres

**Origin:** Italy

Ceres is the original Corn Mother, Goddess of Grain. Scholars now believe grains were first cultivated for the purpose of brewing beer, not baking bread, and so Ceres is also a goddess of intoxication. She presides over the fertility and abundance of plants, people, and animals.

Ceres may or may not be the same spirit as the mysterious, primordial goddess Car. Her name is believed to derive from a root word meaning "growth." Related words include *kernel*, *cereal*, and *cerveza* (beer).

Ceres, the Italian Corn Mother, eventually became profoundly identified with Demeter and has become somewhat subsumed by that Greek goddess. Often the name *Ceres* is used when Demeter is intended. The two were originally distinct spirits. Because she was identified with Demeter, her associations with Proserpina were eventually emphasized, but Ceres was originally venerated alongside Liber and Libera, with whom she shared a temple in the Circus Maximus. Her constant companion is Tellus Mater, Mother Earth.

Ceres is literally an earthy goddess, beloved by the masses. She was a highly significant and respected spirit: the Sibylline Prophecies recommended an annual fast honoring Ceres to ensure an abundant harvest and avoid famine. She is also a spirit of healing and dream divination.

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*Farmers traditionally offered Ceres the first harvested stalk of grain.*

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**Iconography:** Ceres usually holds a stalk of wheat in her left hand and a basket or bowl of fruit in her right.

**Animals:** Sow (pigs were kept in underground enclosures in her shrines; sleeping among them allegedly produced healing dreams)

**Feast:** Her primary festival, the Cerealia, was celebrated around the full moon in April; it was a seven-day festival featuring games and processions; another festival, the Ambarvalia, was celebrated around 29 May.

**Sacred sites:** Many shrines were rededicated to the Virgin Mary. The Roman Church of Santa Maria in Cosmedin is built over Ceres' temple. Her temple in Apulia, Italy, was rededicated to the Madonna of the Wheat Stalk.

**Offerings:** Grains; baked goods; beer (in Spanish: *cerveza*); wine; honey; salt; incense; images of pigs, traditionally silver and gold pigs; wear a charm bracelet featuring pig charms to signal your devotion; images of pregnant animals

**See also:** *Car; Demeter; Keres; Liber; Libera; Proserpina; Sybil; Tellus Mater*

## **Cernunnos**

*The Horned One*

**Also known as:** Kernunnos

Cernunnos is the Latin name given this mysterious Celtic deity. *Cernunnos* is usually translated as “the horned one” and derives from an Indo-European root word *ker* meaning “growth” or “to become large and hard.” It may be a name, or it may be a title: the word appears on an altar found at Notre Dame together with his image.

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*On the Gundestrup Cauldron, a highly ornamented silver vessel, discovered in a Danish peat bog in 1891 and dated to the first or second century BCE, Cernunnos sits cross-legged surrounded by forest animals, holding a ram-horned serpent in one hand and a torc in the other. In a relief from Reims, France, Cernunnos sits cross-legged with a stag and bull at his feet. He has a large sack from which he distributes what may be coins or grain.*

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Cernunnos' image appears throughout Celtic Europe, from Ireland to Romania. The oldest surviving image is from the fourth-century BCE Italian Alps, which were then Celtic. He remains beloved in the Neo-Pagan community, where he may be associated with the Green Man. Cernunnos has dominion over nature, animals, and abundance. He dispenses and distributes wealth. He is the Lord of Souls, Celtic Lord of the Underworld, the dead, healing, and wealth.

**Manifestation:** Cernunnos has a man's body and sports stag's horns, although this may be shamanic ritual garb. Sometimes his legs are snakes.

**Iconography:** Over thirty surviving depictions exist. He is sometimes triple-headed or triple-faced and may be accompanied by a female consort.

**Attributes:** Sack filled with treasure; a torc, Celtic emblem of power and nobility

**Animals:** Ram-horned snakes and regular snakes; bull; boar; stag

**See also:** *Green Man; Pashupati*

## **Cerridwen**

*The White Sow; The Old One*

**Origin:** Welsh

Cerridwen is a shape-shifting lunar deity, witch, herbalist, and keeper of the Cauldron of Knowledge, Inspiration, and Transformation. Cerridwen's most famous myth is preserved in the *Book of Taliesin*, a thirteenth-century manuscript named for the sixth-century Welsh poet. *He* is the focus of the myth: Cerridwen's main significance in the context of that myth is as the vehicle of his transformation. However, it is the document from which most modern knowledge of Cerridwen derives. In this myth, Cerridwen is married to a giant, Tegidfoel, by whom she has two children:

- A daughter, Crearwy, whose name means "Beautiful" or "Light."
- A son, Afagddu, whose name means "Ugly" or "Dark."

It is theorized that these children are the Celtic equivalent of oppositional, yin-yang forces.

Cerridwen, who gave birth to them, contains and has access to all these powers. Cerridwen is a good mother: she wishes the best for her children. She doesn't worry about her daughter but fears that her son lacks sufficient gifts for success and decides to brew a potion for him to compensate. Once tasted, this potion bestows *all* knowledge, as well as all magical, oracular, and shamanic powers. Only Cerridwen knows the formula: it takes a tremendous variety of botanicals, which must be ritually gathered and then added at just the right moment. In addition, someone must continually stir the brew, which must be kept steadily boiling for a year and a day. Cerridwen finds a poor, ignorant child to watch the pot, which is where Gwion, the future Taliesin, enters the story. He awakens her rage: she pursues him with murderous intent. He finally finds safety by becoming her child: Cerridwen is ultimately unable to harm her own children.

Cerridwen's name is interpreted as "white sow." She is a master of transformation. There is no magical skill or botanical secret she does not know; however, secrets may be reserved for those she considers her children or initiates.

**Manifestations:** Cerridwen can take *any* form. The big question is not what form she will take but whether or not you will be able to recognize her. She is an occult master: every encounter with her may be considered a test of your knowledge and psychic ability.

**Color:** White

**Animal:** Pig

**See also:** *Henwen*

## **Chalchihuitlicue**

*She of the Jade Skirt*

**Origin:** Aztec

Chalchihuitlicue is queen of rivers, lakes, and standing, still waters. The meaning of her name refers to a jade skirt, a metaphor for shining expanses of still water. Without Chalchihuitlicue, there is no irrigation. She presides over agriculture and was especially associated with cotton, a plant with huge moisture requirements for healthy growth.

Chalchihuitlicue provides for people but is also a goddess of destruction. In Nahuatl (Aztec) myth, Chalchihuitlicue was the regent of the previous world, known as 4 Water, destroyed by flooding.

Chalchihuitlicue also presides over amniotic fluids. She is a goddess of human as well as agricultural fertility. Pre-Christian Aztecs possessed birth rituals involving baptism in which Chalchihuitlicue played a prominent, presiding role.

**Manifestation:** Chalchihuitlicue appears as a woman whose face is decorated with a pair of short black lines running vertically down her lower cheeks. She wears a headband studded with balls of cotton. Her skirt is adorned with jade, and she often wears a tasseled shawl.

**Attributes:** Ear of maize corn or corn cobs

**Consort:** Tlaloc

**Plants:** Corn, cotton, prickly pears

**Colors:** The various shades of jade and turquoise

**Minerals:** Jade, turquoise

**See also:** *Tlaloc*

## **Chan, Lady**

### *Lady of Birth*

**Also known as:** Ji Sung Niang Niang

**Origin:** China

Lady Chan, divine midwife, rules the birth process. She protects pregnant women and babies and oversees labor. In her most famous legend, a Sung Dynasty official's daughter-in-law suffered a puzzling, never-ending pregnancy. The young woman had been pregnant for seventeen months when a woman mysteriously appeared at the door, announcing that she was the midwife. She had not been summoned; she just appeared out of the blue. Identifying herself as Mrs. Chan from Foochow, she immediately took charge, demanding a special birthing room for this special pregnancy. As per her directions, a large hole was dug in the room and filled with sharp stakes. The pregnant woman was placed above it and with the midwife's help delivered a white snake, which was trapped inside the hole.

The family, impressed and relieved, sought to pay the midwife lavishly but she refused all money and gifts, asking for and accepting only one white handkerchief. She blessed the young woman and departed. Although things returned to normal for the family, they always remembered this strange experience and thought of the midwife fondly. When the official visited Foochow, he decided to look up Mrs. Chan and offer further thanks. Although he searched high and low, she could not be found, nor had anyone heard of her. Finally someone recommended that he try the local birth goddess' shrine, as that was where all the local midwives went to pay obeisance. When the official approached the shrine's votive statue, he saw, attached to it, the handkerchief given Mrs. Chan. He took a good look at the statue and recognized her as his midwife.

**Favored people:** Lady Chan is venerated almost exclusively by women.

She is the matron saint of midwives and pregnant women.

**Sacred site:** Lady Chan's shrine and miraculous statue may be visited in Foochow, now more popularly spelled Fuzhou, Fujian Province, in China.

**Offerings:** Candles, incense, handkerchiefs

## Chandi

### *Queen of Dust*

**Origin:** India

Chandi, goddess of birth and death, is a tribal and village goddess partially incorporated into the Hindu pantheon. She is venerated alongside Kali and the Dakinis. Chandi bestows both good fortune *and* disaster. She is an oracular, prophetic spirit, petitioned for safety, romance, and fertility. She banishes malevolent spirits. Chandi is invoked in love spells, particularly those involving footprints. Dust taken from a person's footprint is believed able to magically influence them, hence Chandi's title, the Queen of Dust.

Chandi displays different aspects of herself in different locales, thus she is sometimes described as "Chandi of the River" or "Chandi of the Grove." Among her other powers, she is a disease spirit: healing and causing eye ailments and cholera. She's held responsible for illnesses of cattle and propitiated for their health.

**Iconography:** In tribal context, Chandi is venerated in the form of round black stones. The stones may be seated on a throne and/or have a woman's face painted on them. In Hindu context, she appears in the form of a four-or more armed woman wearing a red sari and adorned with a garland of skulls.

**Attribute:** A water pitcher for purposes of scrying and divination

**Mount:** Lion

**See also:** *Dakini; Kali; Kybele*

## Chandra

**Origin:** India

Chandra, Lord of the Moon, married twenty-seven sisters, daughters of Daksha, known as the Star Maidens, but he really loved only one, Rohini. He spent all his time with her, ignoring the other sister-wives. The other sisters complained to their father, who ordered Chandra to fulfill his marital obligations. Chandra ignored him and so Daksha cursed him with a wasting ailment. Chandra waned away, almost to nothingness. Shiva came to his rescue, permitting Chandra to rest his head at the end of every lunar cycle, in order to preserve his vitality and rejuvenate. Shiva also brokered a truce: Chandra visits each wife once a month. He waxes joyful as he approaches Rohini (identified with the star Aldebaran), then wanes when he is forced to leave her.

The twenty-seven sisters are identified with the mansions of the moon in Vedic astrology. Chandra is the ruler: he may be invoked for assistance by astrologers and those seeking to learn the art. He rules the astrological sign Cancer. He is a spirit of fertility: his moonbeams possess the magical power to stimulate pregnancy.

**Manifestation:** Chandra is described as a youthful, fair, very handsome man.

**Attributes:** Club, lotus

**Consorts:** His primary consorts are Rohini and Tara, but he also wed all the Star Sisters.

**Animals:** Antelope, rabbit

**Mounts:** Chandra rides an antelope or drives a chariot pulled by ten white horses.

**See also:** *Khonsu; Shiva*

## Chang Kuo Lao

**Also known as:** Chokaro (Japanese); Zhang Guolao



**Origin:** China

Chang Kuo Lao, one of the Eight Immortals, was a seventh-or eighth-century CE Taoist hermit. He developed a brilliant reputation as an alchemist, and so the emperor sought to have him in his service. He ordered Chang Kuo Lao to appear at the royal court. Chang Kuo did not wish to give up his wanderings. (Alternatively he objected to serving a corrupt government.) He ignored the first summons but after the second, he vanished, reemerging as one of the Eight Immortals.

He is a brilliant occultist with vast magical knowledge. He may be consulted for healing, advice, and instruction.

**Favored people:** Chang Kuo Lao is traditionally the patron of blind fortune-tellers.

**Iconography:** Chang Kuo is portrayed riding backward on his white mule.

**Attribute:** The yuku, or fish drum, a musical instrument formed from a bamboo tube, one end of which is covered by snake skin

**Animal:** A magical white mule, which carries Chang Kuo Lao amazing distances but when not needed can be folded up like paper and carried in his wallet; whenever Chang Kuo Lao next needs his mule, he squirts water on the wallet and the mule reappears.

**See also:** *Eight Immortals*

## **Chang'O, Lady**

### *The Moon Lady*

**Also known as:** Heng-O; Chang'E

**Origin:** China

Although other places describe a man in the moon, in Chinese cosmology, the moon is inhabited by Lady Chang'O, a beautiful, lonely woman. There are different versions of how she ended up there, but in all of them, she secretly swallows the Elixir of Immortality, which may

have been intended for her husband, Yi the Archer, only, or possibly for both of them. She either swallows his portion, or if there are two, then she swallows both. She receives more than she anticipated: Chang'O expected to be made an immortal, which indeed occurred. However, she unexpectedly floated up into the sky and onto the moon. Lady Chang'O lives alone on the moon in a palace made of cinnamon wood; her sole companions are a three-legged toad and the rabbit in the moon who pounds out the elixir of immortality with his mortar and pestle.

Lady Chang'O was never just an ordinary mortal. Prior to her marriage to Yi the Archer, Lady Chang'O was among the attendants of Hsi Wang Mu, Queen Mother of the West. Even in exile on the moon, Lady Chang'O is a powerful presence on Earth. China's lunar exploration program is named in her honor. She stars in *The Moon Lady*, the best-selling children's book by Amy Tan and Gretchen Schields.

Lady Chang'O is celebrated during the annual Moon Festival, also known as the Autumn Harvest Festival. It's the time to invoke her blessings and also the time when she grants secret wishes. (Not just any wishes: they must be your secret desires.) Her moon festival celebrates the power of Yin: the universe's divine feminine force. Although the Moon Festival is her big night, those who adore her may venerate Lady Chang'O year round. Votive statues are available.

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*Lady Chang'O provides oracles during the Moon Festival. Light a stick of incense for her altar, then whisper your wish or question. Be silent and listen. The first words heard from passersby represent Lady Chang'O's answer.*

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**Manifestation:** Lady Chang'O is invariably described as very beautiful.

**Ritual:** Gaze up at the full moon celebrated at the Moon Festival and articulate your secret wish, addressing Lady Chang'O. This may be done silently; make sure no one else hears. It's crucial that the wish be secret. Theoretically, Lady Chang'O expects no payment for favors done on this night: it's an example of *noblesse oblige*, but it wouldn't hurt to light

some incense for her and pour her a libation of wine.

**Sacred day:** The Moon Festival occurs on the 15<sup>th</sup> day of the 8<sup>th</sup> Chinese lunar month.

**Altar:** During the Moon Festivals, altars dedicated to Chang'O are placed outside in the moonlight. Votive statues of the lady may be incorporated, but the focal point of the altar is usually an image of the Moon Hare surrounded by thirteen moon cakes, one for each month of the lunar calendar. Add five more plates, each filled with a different fruit representing different blessings: apples, grapes, melons, peaches, and pomegranates.

**Offerings:** Candles; incense sticks; moon cakes: special round, filled pastries commercially available during the Moon Festival. Fillings often represent desires: for instance, a filling of watermelon seeds may indicate the wish for sons. The tops of the small cakes may be ornamented with pictures of the moon rabbit, Lady Chang'O, or auspicious wishes for longevity or good health. (They may be imprinted with the name of the bakery, too.)

**See also:** *Chieh Lin; Hsi Wang Mu; Jade Maidens*

## **Chango**

**See:** *Shango*

## **Chantico**

**Also known as:** Xantico

**Origin:** Aztec

Chantico is the Aztec goddess of fire and hearth. As a hearth goddess, she was venerated in the home as well as in temples. She is a guardian spirit who protects whatever is valuable and precious. In 1519, after the arrival of the Conquistadores and accompanying missionaries, Chantico's primary votive image was secretly buried to keep it safe. Chantico is

associated with health, fertility, wealth, and abundance.

**Manifestations:** As a woman and as fire

**Attribute:** Cactus spines

**Animal:** Red snake

**Plant:** *Theobroma cacao*, better known as chocolate

**Offerings:** Ideally light a hearth fire; if not possible, light candles or maintain a fire in an iron cauldron; cacao beans; molé sauce; Chantico drinks Mexican-style hot chocolate. Starbucks named a deluxe chocolate drink after this goddess: serve her something comparable.

**See also:** *Huitzilopochtli*

## Chariklo

**Also known as:** Chariclo

**Origin:** Greece

Chiron the centaur raised and tutored many of ancient Greece's heroes, but he didn't do so by himself. He had help from his wife, Chariklo. She knows all the heroes, having shared her cave with them. Chariklo may be a centaur, too, or she may be a Nymph. Her other claim to fame is that she is Athena's best friend. Alternatively, she is Athena's lover. Chariklo's son, Tiresias, accidentally caught sight of Athena naked; the goddess struck him blind. Although unable to undo her curse, when Chariklo bitterly complained, Athena compensated Tiresias by blessing him with the gift of prophecy.

Chariklo, discovered in 1997, is the largest of the icy planetoids known as centaurs. She has an orbit of 62.4 years.

**Iconography:** Chariklo appears frequently on sixth-century BCE vase paintings depicting the wedding of Thetis. She forms a triad of goddesses with Hestia and Demeter.

**See also:** *Achilles; Athena; Chiron; Demeter; Heracles; Hestia; Thetis*

## Charites

**Also known as:** The Graces

**Origin:** Greece

The Charites are attendants of Aphrodite and Hermes but are also venerated independently as spirits of creative inspiration, botanical abundance, moisture, and human fertility. The Charites are:

- Aglaia: “The Wonderful”
- Euphrosyne: “Joy”
- Thalia: “Plenty”

Their parentage is subject to dispute. The Charites may be the daughters of the primeval Pelasgian goddess Eurynome by either Zeus or Kronos. (An obscure myth suggests that Aphrodite was the daughter of Eurynome and Kronos, which would make them her sisters.) Alternatively the Charites are daughters of Nyx and Erebus or Lethe or Hekate and Hermes. Their name derives from a word meaning “to rejoice.” They are joyful, happy, sensuous spirits; their festivals had a reputation for being raucous. The Romans called them Graces, indicating favor and thankfulness (as in saying grace before meals).

**Favored people:** Dancers, young women; those who need joy and beauty

**Manifestations:** The Charites, who manifest as beautiful, graceful, dancing young women, usually appear as a pair or triad.

**Iconography:** Their most familiar image depicts the three Charites standing close together. Two face the viewer while the Charite standing in the center turns her shapely back. The Charites may be naked or clothed. At their shrine in Orchomenos in Boeotia, the Charites were venerated in the form of three uncut stones described as falling from Heaven, presumably meteorites.

**Sacred sites:** Important cult centers included Athens, Arcadia, and the Aegean island of Paros.

**See also:** *Aphrodite; Eurynome; Hekate; Hermes; Kronos; Lethe; Nyx;*

*Persephone*

## **Charlotte, Mademoiselle**

**Also known as:** Mamzelle Charlotte; Maitresse Charlotte

**Origin:** Haiti

**Classification:** Lwa

Mademoiselle Charlotte is a lwa of European origin. She speaks only French, not Kreyol. Those whom she ritually possesses may discover themselves suddenly fluent in the most stylish French even if normally they can't speak a word. (Please see the Glossary entry on Possession for further information.)

To some extent, Mademoiselle Charlotte epitomizes a stereotypical rich, upscale white woman—and not her best traits, either. She's fussy; impatient; a stickler for etiquette and what she considers appropriate behavior. She adores fine manners and Paris style and visibly turns up her nose at what she considers uncouth.

Mademoiselle Charlotte rarely manifests during ceremonies, perhaps because she's a snob; perhaps because she's aware she's not loved nor entirely welcome. She's a capricious lwa; somewhat lazy; not overly hardworking even on behalf of those she favors. Mademoiselle Charlotte's assistance must be coaxed out of her. If and when she gives it, she can be very effective and helpful, but Mademoiselle Charlotte will only help those who appeal to her and only for as long as they appeal to her. Did we mention that her attention span is limited?

She is served in similar fashion to Ezili Freda Dahomey. If you are very chic or stylish, she may desire you as a pet, the equivalent of a human poodle. If you are persuasive and persistent, she may even do some large favors for you.

**Colors:** Pink, cream

**Offerings:** French cosmetics; French perfume; elegant and expensive French scarves; delicate, refined, expensive foods, preferably French;

sweet soft drinks; pink champagne; aperitifs; rum liqueurs; cream-colored beverages; cream-filled pastries; French or luxury cigarettes; serve all beverages, whatever they are, in a champagne flute; offer food on fine china.

**See also:** *Ezili Freda Dahomey; Lwa; Mami Waters*

## Charon

**Origin:** Greece

According to classical Greek myth, in order to reach the afterlife in Hades, one must cross a river, the threshold between realms of life and death. Charon is the ferryman, the one who controls the passage. He's a grim, cranky, merciless spirit. Those lacking a coin to pay for passage are left behind to find their own, painfully long, dangerous route to Hades. (Or to wander in the dark for one hundred years, whichever comes first.) Thus it was traditional to place an *óbolos* in the mouth of ancient Greek corpses, a coin of extremely little worth but sufficient to pay for Charon's services. He also only accepts passengers who have received proper funeral rituals.

Charon has reasons for being cranky. Before the arrival of Lord Hades, Charon may have ruled the realm of death. He was demoted to ferryman with the ascendance of the Olympian spirits. Charon is believed to be an old Pelasgian deity, a wolf-spirit of death.

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*Charon the Ferryman appears in Edna St. Vincent Millay's poem "Sappho Crosses the Dark River into Hades."*

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Charon is the prototype for the ferryman to the Afterlife, now a popular entertainment and literary motif. Many consider Charon to be the prototype for the Grim Reaper, too. He sometimes appears in the form of a cloaked skeleton or cadaver. Many prefer to know absolutely

nothing of Charon until his services are required. However, shamans seeking round-trip travel on his ferry may need to cultivate a relationship with the gruff old spirit.

**Manifestations:** Charon takes various forms. He may appear as a simple, decrepit, sullen, elderly man or as a dark-winged angel. He may have wolf ears.

**Iconography:** Charon's carved image appears frequently on Athenian tombs.

**Attributes:** Oar, double-hammer

**Sacred bird:** The tawny owl, known as "Charon's bird"

**Planet:** Charon, discovered in 1978, may be Pluto's largest moon or part of a double planet, together with Pluto (or double dwarf planet, however Pluto is characterized); Pluto's alter ego. The diameter of Charon is just slightly over half that of Pluto.

**See also:** *Charos; Charun; Hades; Olympic Spirits*

## Charos

Charon abandoned his boat and resumed what may have been his original function: Angel of Death. In modern Greek folklore, Charon is no longer the ferryman or even just a psychopomp, an escort to the Realm of Death. Instead, Charon became Charos, Lord of Death and Ruler of the Realm of Death. Charos *is* death itself.

The name of the realm that Charos rules is Hades. Charon/Charos turned the tables, banishing Lord Hades in the same manner that he himself was once dethroned. Or perhaps, in the wake of Christianity, Charos found a vacancy and decided to re-occupy it.

Charos occupies Hades with his entire family: his mother, wife, and children all assist in the family business, which is death. Charos no longer lingers by the rivers of Hades: he personally visits the land of the living to kill, collect, and transport the dead. He cuts his victim's throats, releasing their souls, which he then transports to his realm. If the person



puts up a struggle, he brutally overpowers them. He turns a deaf ear to pleas for mercy. Don't bother making offerings: he cannot and will not be bribed. *However*, Charos does cooperate with other spirits: he allows angels and archangels to accompany children and others to his realm; thus for the kindest, gentlest transport to the Afterlife, it's best to request an additional escort, someone to encourage Charos to maintain good behavior.

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*Charos is a coldhearted, merciless spirit. He does, however, have a kind, softhearted mother. She is the one to appeal to. She sometimes spontaneously urges her son not to part newlyweds or true lovers and to spare mothers of young children. Sometimes he listens to her. If you fear Charon's imminent approach, present pleas and arguments to her and ask her to intercede on your behalf.*

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**Manifestations:** Charos takes different forms, variously appearing as:

- A sharp-featured, white-haired old man with a severe expression
- A vigorous warrior dressed in black and riding a black stallion. His hair is either raven black or shining gold.

**Attributes:** Sword; double-edged knife; keys: souls in his custody are kept under constant lock and key. Charos keeps one set of keys; his son has the backup set.

**Consort:** Charontissa, also known as Charissa, is Charos' wife and female counterpart. She's perfectly capable of filling in for him if he needs a day off. Charontissa is not the merciful one in the family; that's Charos' mother. Charos and Charontissa have a son who assists his father, as well as various adopted human children, kidnapped and brought from our realm to theirs.

**Sacred animal:** Charos has a three-headed watchdog, the family pet.

**See also:** *Charon; Charun; Exotika; Gabriel; Hades; Olympic Spirits;*

*Psychopomp; Thanatos*

## **Charun**

**Origin:** Etruscan

Charun is the Etruscan spirit of death. He is not the ferryman of classical Greek mythology but a psychopomp, a spirit who comes to collect souls and escort them to the afterlife. Some psychopomps wait until the person has died. They are purely escorts. Others actual deliver the coup de grace. Charun's attributes are potentially instruments of violence, and so we can surmise that he takes an active role in the death process. He resembles modern Charos very much.

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*Charon, Charun, and Charos are all presumably the very same spirit.*

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**Manifestations:** He may appear as an old man with a beard, but he sometimes appears youthful. Charun has a hooked nose, snake-like hair, and the ears of a wolf. His skin is greenish or greyish in hue. Sometimes he has wings.

**Iconography:** Charun appears frequently on vases, urns, and sarcophagi. He is usually depicted with the door to the netherworld behind him.

**Attributes:** Axe, mallet, sword

**See also:** *Charon; Charos*

## **Chelone**

**Origin:** Greece

Chelone, a mountain Nymph, objected to the nuptials of Hera and Zeus. Perhaps as a warning to others not to voice objections, Zeus shut her up

by transforming Chelone into a turtle. Another version has him so aggravated with her that he caused her house to collapse on top of her. Now she carries it wherever she goes. (Later versions have Hermes, as Zeus' messenger and proxy, casting the actual spell.)

Chelone, the Turtle Goddess, is the spirit of silence. She may be invoked by those who need silence as well as by those who have been silenced. Chelone is the matron of political prisoners, those persecuted for voicing objections as well as those afraid to speak their minds. Chelone is also the matron of the homeless and those able to carry all their possessions on their backs.

**Altar:** Decorate altar space with turtle imagery or with a terrarium for turtles.

**Animal:** Turtle

**Flower:** Chelone species, known as turtlehead flowers

**See also:** *Hera; Hermes; Nymph; Zeus*

## **Chemharouch**

**Also known as:** Shamharush; Chamharouch; Shemharush

**Classification:** Djinn

Address him as *Sidi* or Lord: Chemharouch is King of Morocco's Djinn. If other Djinn are giving you trouble, complaints may be addressed to Sidi Chemharouch. Although he is a Djinn, Sidi Chemharouch is also venerated as a saint in Marrakesh and elsewhere in Morocco. Sidi Chemharouch may be buried at the foot of Mount Toubkal, North Africa's highest peak. His grave, at the end of a deep gorge, beside a waterfall in the village of Sidi Chemharouch is believed to be a survival of a pre-Islamic shrine but, as of the time of this writing, non-Muslims are forbidden to cross the bridge leading to his shrine. Pilgrims visit all year round. There is little that Sidi Chemharouch cannot accomplish.

**Days:** Thursday, Friday

**See also:** *Aisha Qandisha Paths: Aisha Sudaniyya; Djinn*

## **Chi U**

**Origin:** China

Huang Ti, the Yellow Emperor, unified China and taught the arts of civilization. Not everyone wanted to learn. Chi U is the chief of the Chinese shamanic pantheon replaced by Huang Ti. Armies of spirits fought a terrible apocalyptic battle. Huang Ti was ultimately victorious. The battle ended when Chi U was decapitated and his head hung from a gate. Images of the head of Chi U serve as talismans to ward off and banish malicious and evil spirits.

**Manifestations:** Chi U may have the face of a man or a demon. He wears a horned helmet and is clad in armor and/or a tiger skin (emblematic of East Asian shamanism).

**Sacred day:** Chi U presides over the fifth day of the fifth Chinese lunar month, the day most associated with harmful spirits and venomous creatures. It's considered the most auspicious time for acquiring and posting Chi U's image. (It's also the time you're most likely to find the best selection.)

## **Chieh Lin**

*The Old Man of the Moon*

**Origin:** China

Chinese folklore has a woman in the moon, but there is an old man, too. Chieh Lin is a spirit of romance or at least marriage. He determines marital unions; he decides who will marry whom. He records these decisions in his very large book, then connects the feet of the predestined couple to each other's with an invisible red silk thread. Ideally, that thread will lead the couple toward each other and happy matrimony. Appeal to Chieh Lin if that thread seems to be all tangled up

or nonexistent.

**Ritual:** During the marriage ceremony, bride and bridegroom pledge their troth from two goblets of honeyed wine tied together with red ribbons or cord.

**See also:** *Chang'O, Lady*

## Chimata

**Also known as:** Chimata-no-kami

**Origin:** Japan

**Classification:** Kami

Chimata is lord of the crossroads, highways, byways, and footpaths. He is an ancient phallic spirit. Phallic images representing him or meant to propitiate him are traditionally placed at crossroads. In addition to representing male fertility power, these phallic symbols also serve to ward off and police the malicious spirits who sometimes congregate at crossroads. Chimata is also invoked to heal erectile dysfunction and enhance fertility. He may or may not be the same spirit as Dosojin.

**Iconography:** Chimata is represented by stone road markers and phallic symbols. His image is also sometimes found at *onsen* (traditional Japanese hot springs). Allegedly stroking these images will remedy sexual dysfunction and/or infertility for both men and women.

**Ritual:** Request Chimata's blessings and keep him happy by placing a smooth pebble at a crossroads' very point of intersection and saying a prayer to him.

**See also:** *Dosojin; Kami*

## Chinnamasta

*The One Who Fulfills All Wishes; The Decapitated*

**Also known as:** Chinnamastika

**Origin:** India

Chinnamasta, Tantric wisdom goddess, is the subject of an unforgettable votive image: beautiful Chinnamasta stands headless atop a copulating man and woman who may be Kama and Rati. She holds her own severed head in one hand and a sword in her other. Three streams of blood spurt from her neck: one into her own mouth and the others into the mouths of two attending dakinis. In traditional iconography, they look exactly like her: they are her duplicates although usually smaller, visually emphasizing that she is the goddess and they are the attendants. They resemble identical triplets.

No known sacred myth or narrative is associated with the image, but it is considered to have tremendous spiritual significance; some say a lifetime may be spent meditating upon it. The image of decapitated, blood-drinking Chinnamasta expresses the eternal cosmic process of creation, preservation, and destruction: the interdependence of sex, love, life, and death. Her blood leaves her but simultaneously nourishes her. She is dead but alive, or vice versa. Her image is emblematic of self-sacrifice. Chinnamasta represents the paradox of the loving mother as killer.

Chinnamasta is a great yogini. She serves as a vehicle of transformation. Chinnamasta fulfills the desires of her devotees. She is also associated with a powerful yantra, a geometric figure for magical and spiritual use.

**Consort:** Headless Shiva

**Attributes:** Sword, bowl of blood

**Color:** Red

**Animal:** Cobra

**Flower:** Red jaba flower (red hibiscus)

**See also:** *Dakini; Kali; Kama; Rati; Shiva*

## Chiron

### *The Wounded Healer*

**Also known as:** Cheiron

**Origin:** Greece

Although centaurs are usually dismissed as raucous barbarians, Chiron is the exception to the rule: a brilliant, civilized culture hero. Chiron has always been considered different from the other centaurs. In ancient times, debate raged as to whether centaurs were spirits or transformed/possessed humans like werewolves. Chiron is always considered an immortal. His origins are divine: Kronos in the form of a stallion had sex with Philyra, an Oceanid. Chiron is the result of their union and thus half brother of Zeus and the other Olympians. Chiron is renowned as the tutor and foster-father of heroes including Achilles, Jason, and Heracles.

Chiron lives in a cave on Mount Pelion in Thessaly. Mount Pelion is called "Philyra's Bridal Chamber" and may be the site of his conception, too. He's not a solitary spirit; his whole family lives together and may be venerated together, too. Permanent residents of Chiron's cave include Philyra, his mother, and Chariklo, his wife. His many daughters come and go, as do the heroes he tutors. Jason was raised in the cave; Achilles was nursed here. Chiron's daughter, Endaïs, may be the mother of Peleus, Achilles' father, which makes Chiron his grandfather as well as his tutor. Chiron gave Heracles music lessons, suffering a head injury when Heracles hit him with a lyre; nothing compared to what he would do to him later.

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*During his fourth labor, Heracles stopped to party with the centaurs. Very drunk, he accidentally wounded Chiron, his old friend, with a poisoned arrow. As an immortal, Chiron didn't and couldn't die but suffered excruciating agony. To relieve him, Zeus placed him in the heavens as the constellation Sagittarius. Chiron is the archetypal wounded healer who heals everyone but is unable to help himself.*

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Chiron is a musician, healer, herbalist, prophet, and sorcerer. He restores eyesight to the blind and reputedly never lifts his hand in anger. There is little he doesn't know. He is generous with his knowledge and an excellent teacher.

**Manifestation:** An old man with a white beard and the hindquarters of a pony

**Planet:** Chiron, officially discovered in 1977, is a mysterious space object, a dual asteroid/ comet, sometimes also classified as a planetoid.

**See also:** *Achilles; Asklepios; Chariklo; Heracles; Kallikantzari; Kronos; Oceanid; Olympian Spirits; Silenus; Zeus*

### Chthonic Spirits

*Chthon* means "Earth" in Greek and is used to indicate subterranean beings, those spirits who dwell inside Earth as opposed to in the Heavens, within trees, or elsewhere *on* Earth. *Any* spirit who lives inside Earth is technically a chthonic spirit. Ancient metaphysical wisdom suggests that those spirits who dwell below or within Earth share common interests: they tend to be involved with basic life issues. Chthonic spirits are concerned with birth, fertility, death, destiny, minerals, and treasure.

**Altars:** Offerings are traditionally brought to the spirits: the Greeks actually dug altars into the Earth and offerings were placed inside. (A description is found in Homer's *Odyssey*.)

**Offerings:** Libations for the spirits may be poured directly on Earth; traditional offerings include wine, water, honey, and botanical gifts.

**See also:** *Adonis; Charon; Dwarves; Ereshkigal; Hades; Hekate; Lethe; Persephone; Styx; Thanatos*



## Chung-Li Chuan

**Also known as:** Zhong Li-Quan

**Origin:** China

Chung-li Ch'uan, Chief of the Eight Immortals, allegedly lived during the Chou Dynasty (1122–249 BCE). A great alchemist, he obtained the secrets of the Elixir of Life and the Powder of Transformation, better known in the West as the Philosopher's Stone.

Once upon a time, he was a Taoist master who encountered a young woman dressed in widow's weeds sitting beside a grave and fanning the ground over it. When asked to explain her actions, she said she had promised her late husband not to re-marry until the dirt over his grave was dry. She had found a man she wished to marry and was trying to hurry the process.

Chung-li Ch'uan offered to help. He invoked spirits, then, borrowing her fan, he struck the ground with it. It dried completely. The widow was so ecstatic that she ran off, thanking him, leaving the fan in his hands. He went home and described his experience to his own beautiful, much younger wife, who expressed strong disapproval of the widow's desires, protesting (perhaps too much) that she herself would *never* behave in such fashion. Chung-li Ch'uan was inspired to prove a point.

Using spells, he made his body seem dead while his soul assumed the form of an extremely handsome young man in which guise he aggressively courted his own wife. She held out for a few days but then agreed to marry him. Chung-li Ch'uan in disguise advised her that her late husband's brains were required as an ingredient for a potion. Intending to fulfill her new lover's request, she opened the coffin, only to witness the corpse come alive and the new lover vanish. Devastated and humiliated, she hung herself. Chung-li Ch'uan set his house on fire including all his possessions, keeping only the fan and a copy of the I-Ching. Chung-li Ch'uan is invoked when his magical or alchemical knowledge is needed; however, it is his powers of resurrection and his ability to bestow longevity that are generally most sought.

**Iconography:** Chung-li Ch'uan is usually depicted as a fat man with a

big naked belly. He *always* grasps his primary attribute, the magical fan with which he resurrects the dead.

**Attributes:** Fan, peach of immortality

**Offerings:** Incense

**See also:** *Eight Immortals*

## Cihuacoatl

### *Snake Woman*

**Origin:** Mexico

Cihuacoatl, divine snake woman, is a native of the Valley of Mexico long before it was known by that name. The Mexica, also known as the Aztecs, discovered her there when they arrived in the region. They loved her and claimed her as their own.

Cihuacoatl is a midwife spirit with a martial nature. Women in childbirth were considered the equivalent of soldiers in battle; hence Cihuacoatl carries a warrior's weapons. Women were encouraged to call out her name during childbirth for courage, fortification, and blessings. Cihuacoatl guards the souls of women who died during childbirth, as well as souls of those not born or prematurely dead: abortions, miscarriages, and stillbirths. Premature babies who live briefly, then die are also under her protection.

Cihuacoatl's myths feature abandoned children. She left her son, Mixcoatl, at the crossroads. When she returned, she found a ritual knife in his place and began to wail.

Cihuacoatl appears as a harbinger of disaster. The Florentine Codex describes her roaming at night, "weeping and wailing," a dread phantom who foretells war. She may be the spirit at the root of Llorona, the wailing woman of modern urban myth. Initially, there was no doubt regarding the identity of the wailing woman: in 1502, not long before the Spanish invasion, Cihuacoatl in the form of a beautiful woman dressed in white wandered the streets of the Aztec capital, Tenochtitlan,

as well as other Aztec cities compulsively wailing, “Oh my children, your destruction has arrived! Where can I take you?” She would then plunge into the river or transform into mist.

Cihuacoatl would appear in the marketplace dressed as a noblewoman in white with her hair twisted up to form two horns. She would ask a shopkeeper to watch her heavily swaddled baby while she shopped. When she never returned, eventually someone would examine the baby, only to find an obsidian knife wrapped within the swaddling clothes. (This apparition is interpreted as a warning to mend one’s ways or else.)

**Favored people:** Twins

**Manifestation:** She appears as a beautiful young woman or a fierce old one with a skeletal head. Her face may be painted half-black and half-red. She wears golden earplugs and has an extensive wardrobe, including a headdress of eagle feathers. She may wear a cradleboard with a baby (or without one) on her back.

**Attributes:** Warrior’s shield and weapons; turquoise weaving stick (shuttle); obsidian knife

**Color:** White

**Plant:** Tobacco

**Sacred sites:** Talpa, now home to Our Lady of the Rosary of Talpa

**See also:** *Berchta; Cihuateteo; Itzpaplotl; Jizo; Llorona; Mixcoatl; Rachel*

## **Cihuateteo**

### *Divine Women*

**Pronounced:** *See-wha-tet-ay-o*

**Origin:** Mexico

The Cihuateteo are Aztec female warrior spirits, souls of women who died in childbirth, considered the equivalent of dying valiantly in battle. The Aztec afterlife was fairly dismal for most dead souls, but the

Cihuateteo were given the glorious role of escorting the sun on its downward passage through the sky. When not busy with celestial chores, the Cihuateteo haunt crossroads, where they are accused of stealing children, seducing and harming gullible men, and causing seizures and madness.

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*The bodies of women who died in childbirth were considered very valuable. Soldiers and warriors fought over their remains, considered talismans ensuring courage and victory in battle.*

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**Iconography:** Aztec stone sculptures portray them as kneeling women with skeletal faces and taloned hands.

**Sacred sites:** Shrines for the Cihuateteo are placed at crossroads.

**See also:** *Cihuacoatl; Itzpapalotl; Mictlante-cuhtli*

## Circe

**Origin:** Greece

Circe's very name is synonymous with "sorceress." The original divine witch, she is no minor spirit, but a goddess of tremendous power. Daughter of Helios and Perse, an Oceanid, Circe comes from a family of divine enchantresses. Relatives include Hekate, Pasiphae, Ariadne, Medea, and Angitia. Circe's most famous appearance is in Homer's *Odyssey*, but she appears in other Greek myths, too. Circe performs the cleansing rituals that purify Jason and Medea after their murder of Medea's brother, Circe's nephew.

According to Homer, Circe dwells in a marble *palazzo* on the Isle of Aiaia (also spelled Aeaea), named for magical Greek vowels. She spends her days singing and weaving, habits associated with the Fates. Circe is a shape-shifter but is most famous for transforming others. When Odysseus and his crew, trying to return home from the Trojan War, land on Aiaia,

they discover an island paradise ruled by Circe and populated by her beautiful handmaidens and strangely human-seeming wild animals.

Circe transforms male visitors into lions, baboons, and other animals, but mainly pigs. Her transformations aren't random: she reveals the true animal identity within each man. Odysseus alone is saved from this fate because Hermes, one of Circe's old boyfriends, warns him, revealing an herbal antidote to her magic, a mysterious plant called moly.

Hermes advises Odysseus not to reject Circe's advances: he stays with her for years, fathering their son, Telegonus. Circe indoctrinates Odysseus into shamanism, teaching him how to journey to Hades, interview dead souls, and return. She is his primary tutor. Foreseeing the future, she offers Odysseus invaluable travel advice. Without Circe, it's doubtful that Odysseus would ever have reached home.

**Manifestations:** Homer called her "the fair-haired goddess." She is eternally young, sexy, and beautiful, but she is a great sorceress and can appear in any form she wishes, with one caveat: as a descendent of the sun, her eyes glint with brilliant light. That's the telltale clue to her identity.

**Sacred animal:** Pigs

**Sacred plants:** Alders, enchanter's nightshade, junipers, and mandrakes

**See also:** *Angitia; Ariadne; Calypso; Fates (1); Hades; Hekate; Helios; Hermes; Medea; Oceanid; Pasiphae; Scylla*

## **Citipati**

*The Charnel Lords; Lords of the Cemetery*

**Also known as:** The Chitipati

**Origin:** Tibet

The Citipati were two ascetics who meditated so deeply that they were completely unaware of being set upon by robbers and beheaded. After death, they emerged as wrathful deities who are invoked as fierce but

ultimately benevolent protectors. The Citipati are companions of Yama, Lord of Death.

The Citipati are laughing, dancing skeletons. They represent the eternal dance of death. They are also erotic spirits: like the Barons, they are lords of sex and death. Their dance embodies the undying life-force. The ritual Dance of the Citipati is commemorated twice annually in Tibet. Post their image for protection and to drive off evil spirits.

**Iconography:** Two grinning, dancing skeletons, usually one is male, the other female; their bodies intertwined, they dance ecstatically and joyfully. The Citipati wear headdresses of five jeweled skulls. Their heads resemble a big skull topped by tiny ones.

**See also:** *Barons; Yama*

### **Clairmesine Clairmeille**

**Also known as:** Klermezine Klermeil; Klèmezine; Saint Claire; Clairmezine Clairmeille

**Classification:** Lwa

Clairmesine is a beautiful, sweet-voiced, dancing mermaid. She travels in the entourage of Ezili Freda Dahomey and may be her sister. Clairmesine may also be Vodou Saint Claire. The glowing monstrosity with which Saint Claire is traditionally portrayed was understood by Vodouistes as a picture of the moon. Clairmesine is a moon-gazer; she dances among the moonbeams. She is very psychic. She and Saint Nicholas are sometimes considered to be the parents of the divine twins, the Marassa.

**Iconography:** Images of Roman Catholic Saint Claire are used to represent Clairmesine, but images of mermaids may be substituted.

**Element:** Water

**Planet:** Moon

**Colors:** Blue and white

**See also:** *Ezili Freda Dahomey; Lwa: Marassa; Mermaid; and the Glossary*

entry for *Syncretism*

## Clodna

**Pronounced:** *Clee-na*

**Classification:** Tuatha Dé Danaan

**Origin:** Ireland

Clodna, goddess of love, beauty, healing, and death, presides over an afterlife paradise where age, death, pain, illness, and decay do not exist, only beauty. Just fragments of her myths survive; presumably once upon a time, there were more. Manannan, King of the Sea, fell in love with Clodna and sent a magical wave to sweep her into his undersea palace. She is a shape-shifter, allegedly incarnate in every ninth wave that breaks on Ireland's shores.

Clodna is now identified as a Queen of Fairies. As a goddess, she lived in a beautiful, lavish underwater palace in Loch Dearg; as a Fairy queen she lives in a barrow near Mallow, County Cork. She reputedly lures human lovers into Fairy Land, from which they never again emerge (perhaps because they're living happily ever after).

**Manifestation:** Clodna is a beautiful woman accompanied by her trio of songbirds.

**Sacred birds:** Clodna's three vividly plumed magical songbirds eat the apples of the Other-world. Their voices are so sweet, they lull ailing people to sleep. When they awaken, they are healed. One bird is blue with a red head; one is red with a green head; and the third is a speckled bird with a golden head.

**Numbers:** 3, 9

**See also:** *Aibheall; Fairy; Fairy Queen; Manannan; Rhiannon; Sidhe; Tuatha Dé Danaan*

Coatlíque

## *She of the Serpent Skirt; Mother of the Heavens*

**Also known as:** Tonantzin

**Origin:** Mexico

The goddess Coatlique, mother of the moon and stars, was keeper of the sacred shrine at Coatepec (Snake Mountain). One day while sweeping, a ball of down feathers fell from the sky. She tucked it into her bosom. By the time she had finished sweeping, the feathers had mysteriously disappeared—and Coatlique knew she was pregnant. It was not a virgin birth per se, but no sex was involved and technically there was no father.

Her daughter, moon goddess Coyolxauhqui, enraged to discover this pregnancy, plots with her four hundred star brothers to kill Coatlique and thus terminate the pregnancy, rather than submit to the forthcoming Huitzilopochtli, Lord of War, gestating in their mother's womb. Coatlique was not unaware of the threat, but the child within her womb comforted her, advising her not to worry. When Coyolxauhqui and her four hundred brothers attacked, slicing off

Coatlique's head, the divine child, Huitzilopochtli, leaped out, fully formed, fully armed (similar to the birth of Athena).

Coatlique is a fierce spirit of fertility. Some consider her the spirit who lies at the root of the Virgin of Guadalupe.

**Manifestations:** Coatlique's head is a human skull or that of a snake. She may have a double snake head. In Hoodoo parlance, a two-headed woman is a conjurer with the power to see into two worlds, usually the past and future or the realms of the living and the dead. Coatlique is a primal two-headed woman. She wears a necklace of human hands and hearts and a skirt of entwined serpents. Her feet are tipped with talons.

**Iconography:** Surviving depictions of Coatlique are reasonably rare, but several colossal statues have been unearthed. Snakes appear where her head and hands should be, representing blood flowing from her severed neck and wrists.

**Realm:** Coatepec: "Snake Mountain"



**Element:** Earth

**Animal:** Snakes, especially coral snakes

**Number:** 5

**Sacred site:** Tepeyac, site of her great temple, was considered a place of tremendous spiritual power and was a major pilgrimage point before the Spanish Conquest.

**See also:** *Anat; Athena; Baba Yaga; Coyolxauhqui; Guadalupe; Huitzilopochtli; Kali*

## Coventina

**Origin:** Celtic Britain

**Classification:** Mermaid

Coventina is a water spirit presiding over the Carrawburgh River, Northumberland, once the Roman settlement of Brocolitia. She heals illness, restores fertility, and was venerated by colonizing Romans as well as Celts. The Romans identified her with Minerva. Her temple surrounded a pool fed by a sacred spring. Although now her only known shrine, she was not a local goddess but was also venerated in northwestern Spain and in Narbonne in Southern Gaul. She was not an insignificant deity—no little mermaid. The language used by the Romans indicates that they considered her to have the rank of a state deity.

Her spring and well were enclosed in approximately 130 CE. The shrine was very popular in the late second and third centuries. In 391 CE, the Theodosian Edict abolished Paganism and ordered the closing of Pagan temples and shrines. Evidence indicates that devotees attempted to hide Coventina's shrine by placing building stones over the well.

**Attribute:** Water lily or water lily leaf

**Sacred site:** Coventina's shrine was at Carrawburgh on Hadrian's Wall.

**Offerings:** Among the offerings recovered from her shrine are terra-cotta ex-votos in the form of parts of the body; as many as 16,000 coins and a

bronze incense burner inscribed with Coventina's name; jewelry; pins (usually indicating petitions for safe childbirth)

**See also:** *Mermaid*; *Minerva*; and the Glossary entry for *Milagro*

## **Coyolxauhqui**

*She of the Golden Bells*

**Origin:** Mexico

Coyolxauhqui, goddess of the moon, is Coatlique's daughter. Her name refers to the metal bells she wears on her face. Furious over her mother's pregnancy, Coyolxauhqui and her four hundred star brothers (known as the Centzon Huitznahua) slew her but in the process, liberated their brother, Huitzilopochtli, who immediately sprang to action, dismembering Coyolxauhqui. Her corpse and severed remains tumbled down Coatepec, Snake Mountain.

The destruction of Coyolxauhqui indicates the rise of the new solar religion associated with Huitzilopochtli and the emergence of the Aztecs as a political force in that region. Coyolxauhqui represents an older, lunar-based pantheon. Her severed white head rolls through the sky nightly, accompanied by her four hundred brothers. (Four is a sacred number in Aztec cosmology, and so four hundred is a random number indicating multitudes. There are actually as many brothers as there are stars in the sky.)

**Iconography:** On the night of 21 February 1978, during construction work, employees of the Mexico City Electric Light Company discovered a massive stone image of Coyolxauhqui with head and limbs severed from her torso at the base of Huitzilopochtli's shrine in Tenochtitlan, now Mexico City. Although Coyolxauhqui is usually portrayed as youthful, her image at the Temple of Huitzilopochtli depicts her as an old woman with sagging breasts and belly, naked but for ornaments associated with warriors. Coyolxauhqui is also sometimes depicted weeping. She may be represented solely by a dead, severed head.

**Metal:** gold, copper

**Flowers:** Aztec marigolds (*Tagetes* spp.) *Ipomoeia alba* and *Datura innoxia*: both species are colloquially known as moonflower or moon vine.

**Planet:** Moon. Coyolxauhqui is especially present when the moon is red-hued and full. She is also associated with the Milky Way.

**See also:** *Arianrhod; Coatlique; Huitzilopochtli; Malinalxochitl*

## Cybele

**See:** *Kybele*

## Cyhyraeth

*The Weeper; The Griever*

**Origin:** Wales

The Cyhyraeth is a Banshee-like spirit from Glamorganshire, Wales. She is rarely seen but is most frequently heard crying and moaning. The Cyhyraeth is a death omen. Like the Banshee or Caointeach, some are associated with specific families. They wail when a member of the family dies far from home. Others weep in association with multiple deaths affecting a community. The sound of her weeping may foretell epidemics or disaster. She is not a killer but a harbinger. She may deliver warnings, if only we knew how to interpret or react to them.

She frequents crossroads and lingers near water. She may be related to the Washers at the Ford. The Cyhyraeth makes herself visible alongside the Glamorganshire coast just before shipwrecks. She wanders weeping, accompanied by corpse-lights (will-o'-the-wisps or phantom lights). In a Christian slant on her legend, she guides the souls of those who perished in shipwrecks to the nearest church cemetery.

**See also:** *Banshee; Caointeach; Llorona, La; Pixie; Washer at the Ford*

## Cymbee Spirits

Simbi survived the Middle Passage from Africa and arrived in South Carolina's Low Country, where this family of water spirits promptly slipped into some water and made themselves at home. In the nineteenth century, both before and after the abolition of slavery, white folklorists, geologists, and land surveyors began recording cymbee stories. Interviews were conducted orally; interviewers spelled the word as it made sense to them: *cymbee*. Cymbees *are* Simbi spirits, but the spelling is now used to distinguish South Carolina manifestations. These written reports tend to emphasize that local black people were frightened of the Cymbees, but it's crucial to keep this in context.

Cymbees were secret, sacred lore: it was not considered wise or beneficial to discuss them too openly. (Cymbee spirits are sensitive to what they perceive as disrespect.) Some of the earliest recorded stories were told as warnings to men sent to brick off a spring or otherwise trouble the waters. These stories were recorded and fascinated other white men, who began collecting them, often emphasizing what they perceived as the ignorant, superstitious nature of their sources.

Each spring or small body of fresh water has its own Cymbee, which has its own unique appearance, size, and habits. Individual Cymbees have names, some wonderfully evocative like "The Great Desire of the Unrotting Waters." Plank bridges placed over the water serve the Cymbees as seats.

Whether in America or Africa, Cymbees are guardians of water. The Middle Passage and the conditions awaiting in South Carolina did not improve the Cymbees' tempers. They are fairly volatile spirits: any disturbance of the spring or disrespect toward it angers them. They show their displeasure via water phenomenon: waters are described as roiling or churning. They also have the power to raise storms. They demonstrate anger by *removing* water: springs drying up are interpreted as the departure or disapproval of the Cymbee.

If you have a spring-or freshwater pond, then you may have a Cymbee, even if it has been lying low. (Alternatively, if you seek one, you can invite one.) In addition to guarding the water, a Cymbee may serve as a personal or family guardian. They bring prosperity, good fortune, and abundance, including fertility, in their wake. Sit quietly near the water (not necessarily *too* near) and see whether the Cymbee

will reveal itself.

**Manifestation:** Cymbees are proportionate in size to the water source they inhabit and are described as vaguely human in appearance. Some have webbed feet or are full-blown mermaids complete with fish tail.

**Offerings:** Always consider their water precious and sacred, treating it respectfully. Small gifts (shiny trinkets, libations, traditional offerings for mermaids) are appreciated as well.

**See also:** *Mami Wata; Mermaids; Simbi*

## D

### Dactyls

*The Fingers; The Kids*

#### **Also known as:** Daktyls

The Dactyls are mysterious metalworking spirits of shamanism, smithcraft, fertility, and magic. Various versions of their origins exist, as well as debates regarding their number. The most famous says that the Dactyls were born when mother goddess Rhea, in the throes of labor pains for Zeus, fell to the ground, plunging her fingers in Earth. The Dactyls, ten iron boys (or five boys and five girls), sprang up where she penetrated Earth. Their very first act was to successfully help Rhea with the childbirth that until then had been going badly.

The sons of the right hand become ironworkers; the sons of her left hand become shamans and magical practitioners. Another version says that the left-hand Dactyls cast spells and the right-hand Dactyls break them. The right hand may be Dactyl brothers; the left hand Dactyl sisters. Alternatively, there may be more or less than ten. There may be twenty on the right hand and thirty-two on the left. There may only be three. Three Dactyls are named:

- Akmon (“Anvil”)
- Damnameneus (literally “the Compeller,” a metaphor for a hammer)
- Kelmis (interpreted as “Knife”)

The Dactyls invented iron smelting. They are spirits of secret metalworking guilds, primordial, phallic spirits concerned with fertility, well-being, healing, and shamanism. They serve as healers and obstetricians and educated Athena in her youth.

**Manifestation:** The Dactyls are of small stature, sometimes described as Dwarves.

**See also:** *Athena; Cabeiri; Hephaestus; Rhea; Zeus*

## **The Dagda**

*The Good God*

**Also known as:** The Daghdha

**Origin:** Ireland

**Classification:** Tuatha Dé Danaan

Chief of the Tuatha Dé Danaan, oldest of the Celtic deities, *Dagda* literally means “the good god.” What is his real name? That information may be reserved for initiates or he may be so old, no one knows any longer. The Dagda is a spirit of magic and abundance. He is the tribal All-Father, deity of the Druids, Lord of Regeneration, provider of plenty, Captain of Abundance. He is the Lord of New Grange; his children, Brigid and Angus Mac Og, are among the most powerful and beloved Irish deities. He plays the role of ideal father for his devotees.

The Dagda’s barrow (*sidhe*) features an inexhaustible supply of drink, three trees that always bear fruit, and a pig that is always alive, even though it’s slaughtered and consumed daily. He may be the prototype of the Grail King. The Romans identified him with Hercules.

The Dagda is the master of paradox. Incredibly wise and powerful, he’s uncouth and bumbling, too. He’s an old, bald, fat, sloppy guy, but he’s a sex master, too, a fertility spirit renowned for virility and sexual prowess. The Dagda engages in the Great Rite with great goddesses like the Morrigan and Boann.

**Manifestation:** A big, bald, bumbler with a beer belly; the Dagda wears a rustic tunic that no longer fits him. It’s too short for him, barely covering his buttocks and periodically exposing them. Don’t be fooled by his appearance. The Dagda only plays the fool; he’s brilliant, wise, and powerful. Furthermore, although it’s his posterior that’s mockingly discussed in myth, at least in the surviving ones recorded by Christian priests, tunics don’t only ride up in the back. Presumably, the Dagda

flashes his groin, too: he is a phallic deity, master of fertility and abundance.

**Attribute:** The Dagda owns several treasures:

- An absolutely inexhaustible cauldron
- A ladle so big, two men can lie down in it
- An iron club, which kills with one end and resurrects with the other; so big and heavy, it takes eight strong men to lift it, though the Dagda has no trouble carrying it on his own
- A magical harp whose sounds affect seasonal changes

The Dagda, master harper, has a repertoire of three types of magical songs: those that make him invisible on the battlefield, and songs to seduce people into sex or foolish behavior, against their better judgment.

**Mount:** A black stallion named Ocean

**Sacred day:** On Samhain, the Dagda performs the Great Rite. On a day otherwise associated with death, the Dagda creates new life.

**Offerings:** Oatmeal, porridge, mead, Irish whiskey, poteen

**See also:** *Angus Mac Og; Boann; Brigid; Caer Ibormeith; Morrigan; Sidhe; Tuatha Dé Danaan*

## Daikoku

*The Great Darkness; The Great Blackness*

**Also known as:** Daikokuten; Daikoku-sama

**Origin:** Japan

**Classification:** Kami

Daikoku pounds out money with his golden mallet. He is the lord of wealth, food, and worldly success. Daikoku, guardian of the household, is the kami of good fortune and an abundant harvest. As Lord of the Kitchen, he is not only venerated in homes but is the special deity of



chefs, cooks, restaurateurs, and those who serve in the food industry.

Daikoku is one of the Shichi Fukujin, the Seven Spirits of Good Fortune. He is associated with the Year of the Rat, guardian of those born in that year.

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*The very first Bank of Japan ten-yen note, issued in 1885, featured an image of Daikoku and is known as a Daikoku satsu.*

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**Manifestation:** Daikoku is a big, friendly, smiling man.

**Iconography:** Daikoku usually wears traditional Japanese robes and a black hat. He carries a loaded sack over his left shoulder and his mallet in his right hand. He is often portrayed seated atop bales of rice.

**Attributes:** A golden mallet, which he shakes in the direction of those he wishes to bless with luck and prosperity; a sack slung over his left shoulder

**Spirit allies:** He is venerated with Okuninushi and with Ebisu. He may be Ebisu's father. Daikokuten is also venerated alongside Benten and Marishi as a triad of lucky spirits.

**Day:** Although he may be petitioned anytime, Kinoene Day, Elder Rat Day, usually celebrated 19 November, is the traditional time to petition Daikoku for good fortune.

**Animals:** Rats, mice

**Altar:** Place his statue and/or altar in the kitchen.

**Offerings:** Mochi (sticky rice cakes); sake; incense

**See also:** *Benten; Ebisu; Kami; Marishi; Okuninushi; Shichi Fukujin*

**Daimones**

**Origin:** Greece, Anatolia

*Daimones* is a corruption of *Theoi Nomioi*, meaning “Spirits of the Countryside” or “Sacred Beings of the Countryside.” They are wild, rustic spirits, inhabitants of forests, mountains, and uncultivated fields. These spirits form entourages for Artemis, Dionysus, Hermes, Pan, and Kybele.

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*The word daimone or daemon means different things in different places and contexts. In ancient Italy, it referred to one’s personal presiding spirit, a sort of guardian angel. This is the meaning from which the animal-daemons of author Philip Pullman’s His Dark Materials trilogy derive. In esoteric circles of the early Common Era, daimone was synonymous with angel.*

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They drink; they dance; they play flutes and percussion instruments. They are spirits of ecstasy, intoxication, and sex. They are not malicious or evil but can be raucous and may find it fun to scare mortals just to see them panic, run, and scream. They may be spirits of temptation, offering pleasures of sex, intoxication, and nature. They don’t want your soul; they just want company and fun.

They are gregarious spirits who travel in fluid packs or gangs. They are happy to expand their circle of acquaintances, providing that you are fun and do not try to exploit them. They may be drunken and rustic, but they’re sharp-witted with a good eye for true inner character. Many can be benevolent and generous, if so inclined. They are spirits of prophecy and can reveal secrets of the past and future. They can locate who or what is missing. They are not tame spirits and will not live happily indoors, at least not for long. Relationships with them may need to be maintained on their turf. Post-Christianity, this unruly, wild bunch was reclassified as “demons.”

**See also:** *Artemis; Demon; Dionysus; Hermes; Kybele; Nymph; Pan*

## Dainichi

*Spreader of Light in All Directions; The Great Illuminator*

**Also known as:** Dai Nichi

**Classification:** Buddha

*Dainichi* is the Japanese name and manifestation of Mahavairocana, the Great Sun Buddha, Lord of the Cosmos, venerated in the Shingon esoteric Buddhist tradition.

**Favored people:** Dainichi is guardian of those born in the years of the monkey and sheep.

**Iconography:** Dainichi, his hair in a top-knot, is enthroned on a lotus. He wears the crown and jewelry of royalty. One hand forms gestures of blessing (mudra).

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*In March 2008, a twelfth-century wooden statue of Dainichi was auctioned for \$14,377,000 by Christie's New York auction house, setting a record for Japanese art.*

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**Attribute:** A medicine jar

**Planet:** Sun

**Direction:** Southwest

**See also:** *Buddha*

## Dakini

*Sky Dancers; Cloud Fairies; Celestial Women;  
Space Travelers; Sky Walkers*

**Also known as:** Khadroma (Tibetan)

**Origin:** Himalayas

Dakinis are flying female spirits, sources of inspiration and power. They are protective *and* terrifying. Although often described as dangerous (some allegedly have a taste for human flesh), they may operate as personal guardian spirits and are invoked for initiation into the secrets of Tantra. Dakinis teach, assist, and initiate great yogis (and yoginis, too).

In pre-Buddhist times, the word *dakini* denoted female death spirits found at battlefields, cemeteries, and cremation grounds, possibly similar to a Valkyrie. In modern Hindi, *dakin* is a “witch.” Dakini is often translated into English variously as “Fairy,” “Fury,” or “yogini.” They are sometimes defined as “Spirits of Wrath.” Some Dakinis are full-fledged Buddhas. They have male counterparts, called *Dakas*, or in Tibetan, *Khadro*. Some are of celestial origin, but others are mortal women who acquired the requisite power and wisdom and transformed into Dakinis.

Dakinis are now most famous as Kali’s attendants. However, from the ninth through at least the thirteenth centuries, they were venerated at their very own temples throughout India. Shrines centered on Tantric practice and adoration of sixty-four Dakinis. Dakini rituals were practiced well into the sixteenth century, when for now unknown reasons they began to fade from mainstream Hindu religion. Temples were eventually abandoned, but many buildings still remain and may be visited. (They were architecturally unique in India as they lack roofs, perhaps to allow the Dakini, sky riders, to fly in and out.)

**Manifestations:** Dakini manifest as beautiful, desirable, naked, but potentially raging and dangerous women. They may appear with a woman’s body but an animal’s head, usually avian, canine, equine, or leonine. Be forewarned: they are shape-shifters who may not be immediately recognizable. (Alternatively, they must be recognized with the inner or third eye.)

**Ritual:** Shamans who contact them wear masks of the bird or animal associated with a specific dakini, for instance Vyaghraakra, the Tiger Face dakini.

**Attributes:** Curved knife, indicating their ability to slice through obstacles and ignorance; a skull cup containing blood; five bone ornaments

**Sacred days:** Dakini Feasts are held on the tenth and twenty-fifth days of the month by those initiated into Dakini Tantric traditions.

**See also:** *Buddha; Chinnamasta; Inari; Kali; Simhamukha; Tara (1); Valkyrie; Vajranairatmya; Vajravahari; Vajravetali*

## **Damballah**

**Also known as:** Danballah; Papa Damballah

**Origin:** Dahomey

**Classification:** Lwa

Once upon a time, there was only Damballah. He lay beneath Earth, a great snake, cushioning and protecting it from falling into the watery abyss below. Although he lay still for a long time, eventually he had to move. His movements raised mountains and created valleys. Stars were shaken up into the sky. Sacred waters were released, forming oceans, rivers, springs, and streams. The first rain began to fall, and Aïdo-Hwedo, in the guise of the first rainbow, appeared. Damballah and Aïdo-Hwedo fell in love. They remain in love today. The intensive all-pervasive power of that love infiltrated the entire universe. That power is manifest in human beings in the form of white liquids: milk and semen.

Damballah, the primordial snake lwa of life, wealth, and wisdom, is venerated in Dahomey as well as in Haitian Vodou. He may also survive in the New Orleans folk saint Blanc Dani.

Damballah is among the most beloved and important lwa. He bestows wealth, prosperity, good health, and fertility to devotees and can expose the location of missing treasure. He regulates moisture and rain. Damballah and his true love, the rainbow serpent, maintain the balance of forces, which sustains all life on Earth (the equivalent of what East Asian cosmology would describe as yin-yang forces). He is incredibly old

and powerful and is usually not bothered for trivial matters. He can be extremely generous, however, and so may be approached when one is genuinely desperate or really in trouble. Despite his venerable age, he remains interested in people. He will engage in sacred marriages with women but also occasionally with men.

Damballah appears in dreams. He does not communicate well. You must pay attention. He is so old and primal that he is pre-articulate; he emerges from a time before speech. Damballah may hiss or make whistling noises but does not speak a human language.

Damballah is syncretized to Saint Patrick and Moses, the law-giver. Damballah is Moses' staff that transformed into a snake. He enjoys the company of Ezili Freda Dahomey.

He is a stickler for cleanliness. He doesn't like strong, pervasive odors of any kind, but especially tobacco. If you smoke, then do so far from his altar space or anywhere associated with him. He may object to cleaning products with strong odors, too, as well as air fresheners with strong aromas. Rooms should smell clean and fresh. Open the window to aerate them. He does not object to light floral odors, like rose or orange blossom water, and traditionally expresses a fondness for Pompeii Lotion, a cologne product found in *botanicas* and spiritual supply stores.

**Manifestation:** Damballah is a huge snake, so big his body forms seven thousand coils.

**Color:** White

**Plants:** Bougainvillea; trees in general, but especially *Bombax ceiba* (silk cotton tree) and the Royal palm

**Day:** Thursday

**Altar:** Keep shallow vessels of clean, fresh water for him to curl up inside.

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*For a very traditional offering, make a bed or hill of white flour on a perfectly clean, pure white plate. Nestle one whole, raw white egg into the center of the*

*flour and serve.*

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**Offerings:** White candles and white foods, like rice; milk; whole, raw eggs (leave them plain or rub gently with rose or other mild-scented, fine-quality floral water); orgeat syrup; for more lavish offerings: luxurious white fabrics, crystal or porcelain eggs, and/or snakes

**See also:** *Aïdo-Hwedo; Ayida-Wedo; Ezili Freda Dahomey; Lwa; Simbi*

### **Damballah La Flambeau**

**Also known as:** Danballah La Flambo

**Classification:** Lwa

Sometimes Damballah the world snake is not so calm and detached; sometimes the snake is fiery.

*Damballah La Flambeau* (“Damballah the Torch”) may or may not be an aspect of Damballah, the Petro path of a lwa usually associated with Rada rites. Damballah La Flambeau may or may not be the same spirit as Simbi La Flambeau.

Damballah La Flambeau is the fiery source of generative energy, the big bang that starts the world turning. Damballah La Flambeau is a magnificently powerful magician who can remove all curses and spells (as well as cast them). There is no illness that Damballah La Flambeau cannot heal.

**Manifestation:** Damballah La Flambeau is a great red snake.

**Offerings:** Eggs dyed red; hibiscus juice

**See also:** *Damballah; Lwa; Petro; Rada; Simbi La Flambeau;* and the Glossary entry for *Path*

### **Damona**

## *The Divine Cow*

**Origin:** Celtic

Damona is a Celtic goddess of healing, venerated in Burgundy. She was venerated together with consorts, but also alone as an independent goddess. Her veneration isn't dependent on her relationship with other spirits.

Damona presided over sacred spring and healing shrines, which featured incubation of healing dreams.

- She was venerated alone at Bourbonne-les-Bains.
- She was venerated alongside the Celtic deity Borvo at Bourbonne-Lancy.
- She was venerated alongside Apollo Moritasgus at Alesia, now Alise-Sainte-Reine.

In addition to her relationships with Borvo and Apollo Moritasgus, Damona also had other consorts about whom now almost nothing is known.

**Iconography:** Her only known image is a carved stone head crowned with stalks of grain. A snake curls around her hand.

**Attribute:** Ear of wheat

**Sacred animals:** Snake, cow

**Offering:** Burgundy wine

**See also:** *Apollo*

## **Dan Galadima**

### *The Prince*

**Also known as:** Dan Galadina

**Origin:** Hausa

**Classification:** Bori



Dan Galadima is the handsome prince, playboy, and gambler of the Bori pantheon. His father is Sarkin Aljan Biddarene, but he was raised in the household of Sarkin Aljan Suleimanu. (Yet another version of his parentage suggests that his real father is the Bori spirit Malam Alhaji.)

Dan Galadima is an exceptionally generous spirit, but his gifts come with strings attached. He expects repayment with interest. Dan Galadima is a bit of a mob boss: once you accept his gifts (and he's very good at determining desires), you owe him. You're obligated to him.

He is a powerful spirit; don't be quick to accept trivial gifts from him. Ask for what you really need or desire, because once you do accept, as with the mafia, this may not be a relationship that you can terminate. Dan Galadima is a lady's man. He may be inclined to fulfill petitions for beautiful women just because he likes their company and attention. He has four wives and one concubine, each from a different Bori house; hence he is extremely well connected. All his children have been given to his cousin, Sarkin Rafi, to raise.

Dan Galadima is a compulsive spender and gambler. He can heal and bestow these afflictions, too. Dan Galadima can break a gambling addiction. Those possessed by him may feel the urgent need to give everything away.

**Plants:** Dan Galadima is associated with sweet, aromatic herbs.

**Offerings:** Fragrant colognes and *eaux de toilettes* (Florida Water; Cananga Water; 4711); luxurious grooming items (he is *very* handsome); hand mirrors to gaze at himself; large white kola nuts; handkerchief with cowrie shells; silk scarves; a fan; things associated with gambling (dice, card decks)

**See also:** *Bori; Inna; Malam Albaji; Sarkin Aljan Biddarene; Sarkin Aljan Suleimanu; Sarkin Rafi*

## Dandalunda

**Also known as:** Ndanda Lunda

**Origin:** Bantu

*Ndanda Lunda* literally means “Lady of the Lunda.” (The Lunda are a Bantu-speaking ethnic group now resident in Angola, Congo, and Zambia.) A spirit of water, the moon, love, beauty, childbirth, and fertility, she is sometimes classified as a Simbi spirit.

Ndanda Lunda traveled to Brazil with enslaved devotees where her name evolved into Dandalunda. She is venerated among the Bantu paths of Candomblé. Candomblé, however, is dominated by Yoruba traditions, and so Dandalunda is often identified with orixas, especially sea spirit Iemanja (Yemaya). She has lost her distinct identity somewhat; *Dandalunda* is sometimes described as just another name for *Iemanja*, and many use the name *Dandalunda* to refer to Iemanja. In Africa, Ndanda Lunda was associated with all kinds of water, fresh as well as salt, and hence she is sometimes identified with the freshwater orixa Oxum, too.

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*The 2001 hit song “Dandalunda” by Brazilian singer Margareth Menezes has become the unofficial anthem of Carnival in Salvador de Bahia, home of Candomblé.*

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**Planet:** Moon

**Element:** Water

**See also:** *Iemanja; Orisba; Osbun; Simbi*

### **Danko Dan Muso**

*Sudden Visitor; Drawer of the Belly*

**Origin:** Hausa

**Classification:** Bori

Danko Dan Muso is head of the Bori snake spirits. *Danko* is an

affectionate honorific; his name literally means “honored little son of Moses.” The Moses in question is the biblical law-giver and snake-master, also identified with the Congolese snake spirit, Simbi, and Vodou Damballah. Danko is a freshwater snake who lives in rivers, streams, and wells. Visitors to these places are cautioned not to disturb him or to intrude on his privacy. He is a shape-shifter and may appear in forms other than serpentine. It is crucial always to be very polite when near freshwater, especially to strangers.

Danko Dan Muso has access to scads of wealth, which he can distribute to human devotees as he pleases. He possesses mediums easily, rapidly, and abruptly, hence his epithet the “Sudden Visitor.” He is a healer but also possesses a large repertoire of ailments with which to afflict people. (He also has the power to remedy any illness he can inflict.) He causes stomach ailments, digestive disorders, and female infertility. Danko causes blindness by spitting into the victim’s eyes, an unpleasant trick he learned from his wife, Kwakiya, the Black Headed Cobra. They have a son, Damatsiri (a type of harmless, green snake).

**Colors:** Black, indigo

**Tree:** African ebony (*Diospyros mespiliformis*), also known as the jackal berry tree

**Offerings:** Danko Dan Muso is always insatiably hungry for raw eggs and raw liver.

**See also:** *Bori; Damballah; Kwakiya; Simbi;* and the Glossary entry for *Possession*

## Daphne

**Origin:** Greece; Anatolia

According to the famous story, Daphne, prophetess of the Oracle at Delphi, was allegedly transformed into the first bay laurel tree when she tried to escape attempted rape by Apollo. The truth is more complex than that legend:

Daphne was more than a priestess; she was an oracular goddess

herself. Daphne was the presiding spirit of another famous oracle, one named in her honor. The Oracle of Daphne was near the cities of Tarsus and Antioch, now in modern Turkey, where the bay laurel tree is believed to originate. The oracle was obtained by dipping bay laurel leaves or branches into a sacred spring.

Her shrine was contained with lush, luxurious groves, which formed sort of a public park so that secular pleasure and spirituality were merged. Heracles allegedly planted the ancient cypresses himself. Daphne's springs were the main water source for the city of Antioch. Her shrine and groves were renowned (or notorious, depending on perspective), for licentious rites and carnal pleasures.

The shrine was dedicated to Daphne. She was venerated alongside Nymphs. Apollo was eventually enshrined there with her. Prior to his arrival, the site of his temple was dedicated to Heracles, although some scholars theorize that the male deity enshrined at Daphne was actually Ba'al, whom the Greeks identified with Heracles.

Before Apollo arrived at Delphi, the oracle belonged to Gaia the Earth. Daphne is the daughter of Gaia and Ladon, the river spirit. According to another version of her myth, when Apollo aggressively pursued her, Daphne called upon her mother for help. The Earth swallowed Daphne up; a bay laurel tree sprang up to mark the spot. Laurel leaves became identified with Apollo. He wore them as a crown. They remain symbolic of victory.

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*Bay laurel leaves have many magical purposes, including protection. The tree offered Daphne her avenue of escape when fleeing attempted rape. Bay laurel leaves reputedly have spiritually protective properties: place at least one in each corner of a room to create a zone of safety and security.*

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Daphne was *not* a virginal spirit: she presides over erotic rites. Whatever objection she had to Apollo had nothing to do with maintaining chastity. Her own shrine and its beautiful groves were an

early casualty of Christianity. Bay laurel is still popularly used in divination, albeit at home rather than in shrines. Divination by bay laurel leaves is known as *daphnomancy*. There are numerous methods: the simplest involves placing bay laurel leaves beneath your pillow when seeking psychic dreams.

Daphne shares the characteristics of her sacred tree. She is a goddess of divination, prophesy, intoxication, spiritual protection and sensual pleasures.

**Manifestation:** She is described as the Nymph of lawless locks, so her hair is unruly. She is allegedly very sensuous and beautiful.

**Tree:** What else? Bay laurel

**Offerings:** Fresh water; bay leaves; divination devices and intoxicants

**See also:** *Apollo; Ba'al; Gaia; Heracles; Ladon; Nymph*

## Daruma

Daruma started as the Japanese path of the Indian sage and Buddhist missionary, Bodhidharma, but has now evolved into a unique and powerful spirit. His essence is contained in his motto, "Falls down seven times, gets up eight." Daruma is persistent and *never* gives up, regardless of adversity and setbacks. He is the spirit of new beginnings, goals, and the refusal to admit defeat. Daruma may not remove obstacles from your path, but he will give you the strength, inspiration, and endurance to bulldoze through them.

Daruma's image serves as a potent and popular amulet. Daruma dolls are papier mâché tumblers designed to right themselves when they tip: knock them down, they bounce back up. In addition to other magical purposes, Daruma dolls are used in a ritual intended to help accomplish goals. Special Daruma dolls are sold for this purpose. Daruma dolls are painted to resemble the famous monk. These special Daruma dolls are crafted with their eyes deliberately left unpainted. The person with the goal performs the ritual and opens Daruma's eyes.

**DARUMA DOLL RITUAL**

- Hold the Daruma doll in your hands while you clearly articulate your goal. Use a different doll for each different goal.
- Activate the doll and initiate the project by painting only one of Daruma's eyes.
- Place Daruma where he's clearly visible and can lend strength and encouragement.
- When your project is complete, paint in the remaining eye.
- Daruma dolls are traditionally kept as mementos of success but should you ever wish not to be reminded, don't throw him out. There are shrines in Japan that accept and ritually care for or dispose of old Daruma dolls.

Daruma is a guardian spirit. He protects horses and monkeys, both literally and also those people born in the Years of the Horse and Monkey. He is the patron of veterinarians who specialize in horses. If there are special monkey doctors, he's their patron, too.

Daruma protects against earthquakes. He is the patron of beggars. He has associations with serious illness. During the Edo period (1603–1867), Daruma emerged as a smallpox spirit and may be petitioned to prevent, avoid, or heal that disease. Daruma supervises smallpox demons and tries to ensure that they won't harm children. The flip side, of course, is that, theoretically at least, those contracting smallpox have been punished, overlooked, or visited by Daruma. Some scholars theorize that a Japanese smallpox spirit may lurk under the guise of the famous Buddhist monk.

- Daruma dolls were traditionally given to children with smallpox.
- Afflicted children were swaddled in Daruma-style red hoods so that they resembled living Daruma dolls.

Although his primary illness is smallpox, Daruma also protects against measles or any ailment that manifests with red rashes, marks, or pustules on the skin. He is an ambivalent spirit. Although Daruma usually protects against disasters, he can cause them, too. Those red robes he favors are sometimes associated with blood. Daruma can inflict any disease that he can heal.

What more auspicious beginning is there than birth? Daruma, Lord of

Beginnings, is associated with sex, fertility, and childbirth. His red cloak is sometimes associated with the amniotic sac, the placenta, or the caul with which some babies are born. Daruma dolls are used by those whose goal is conception: ask for Daruma's blessings when painting in the first eye. Give him a gift when you paint in the second. The nine years that Bodhidharma spent meditating in a cave may be understood as a metaphor for nine months spent gestating in the womb.

In the Meiji era, when phallic amulets were banned, Daruma images were among their replacements. His saying, "Falls down seven, gets up eight," also has erotic overtones, appropriate for a sexual marathon man. Conversely during the Edo era, the name *Daruma* became a euphemism for a prostitute: someone who's constantly falling on her back only to rise and fall over and over.

For a monk, Daruma can be a racy spirit:

- Daruma is depicted in the company of courtesans or prostitutes.
- Daruma is depicted as a prostitute.
- Daruma is sometimes portrayed as a transvestite (his beard betrays him).

Daruma is sometimes coupled with Okame, who sometimes dresses up in Daruma's signature red robes. They are envisioned as a married couple. She's addressed as Mrs. Daruma. Okame and Daruma will share altar space: she keeps him well behaved and ensures that his actions are benevolent.

**Iconography:** Once familiar, Daruma is instantly recognizable: he is a scowling man with bushy black beard, beetle brows, and piercing black eyes, traditionally dressed in a red, hooded cloak, although occasionally Daruma dolls are produced in other colors.

The classic Daruma doll is a legless tumbler. This leglessness is not just a device to keep the doll from tipping: after Bodhidharma meditated for nine years, his legs atrophied. Daruma dolls have magical properties:

- They serve as protective amulets, especially for children.
- They ward off illness.
- Many lesser spirits flee (or at least behave) in the face of the great Daruma.

- Daruma dolls facilitate and ease childbirth.
- They bring abundance and prosperity.

**Sacred creatures:** Silkworms, monkeys, horses, snakes

**Color:** Red

**See also:** *Bodhidharma; Dosojin; Konsei Myojin; Okame*

## **Datsueba**

### *The Hell Hag*

**Also known as:** Shozuka no Baba; Datsue-Ba

**Origin:** Japan

Datsueba is a gateway goddess. Her name is related to words indicating *bathhouse, dressing room, or to undress*. It's theorized that in her earliest incarnation, she was a goddess of birth and death. She presents each new birth with its skin, which must be returned to her at time of death. In the context of Japanese Buddhism, Datsueba is now among the gatekeepers of Hell. It's her job to strip clothing from sinners who arrive at the River of Three Roads, threshold to Hell.

Datsueba stays at the gate. She doesn't cross the river or enter Hell. She is assisted by a male consort, Kenne-o. Datsueba strips off the clothes; he hangs them on trees. The naked souls of sinners are then sent to meet the Kings of Hell. She is not a kind, gentle spirit but a fierce, implacable one. Should someone arrive without clothes, she may strip off their skin.

No need to wait to arrive in Hell to be tortured; Datsueba is also an agent of punishment. While taking clothes, she doles out punishment as deemed appropriate: she breaks the fingers of thieves, for instance. Imagine what she does to rapists.

Datsueba makes no exceptions for children or babies, but strips away their clothing, too. She is accused of tormenting them, encouraging them to build cairns of stones ostensibly as stairways to Heaven but really a



trick. Every time a tiny baby manages to pile up a few rocks, Datsueba or one of her band of demons knocks it over and the baby must start again. Luckily the Bodhisattva Jizo patrols the waterfront, comforting and rescuing these little ones.

Vestiges of other facets of Datsueba sometimes emerge: some Datsueba statues are credited with healing powers and venerated. Women sometimes invoke Datsueba's aid with lactation or to protect children.

**Manifestation:** She is a fierce old hag.

**Iconography:** She is usually portrayed seated on the ground with one knee up and her breasts at least partially exposed.

**See also:** *Bodhisattva; Enma; Jizo; Kings of Hell; Wanyudo*

## Dayamava

**Origin:** India

Dayamava was the beautiful daughter of a learned Brahmin. A street sweeper, a man from a *much* lower caste, fell madly in love with her. He pretended to be a Brahmin and married her. Dayamava went to live with her husband at his mother's house. She was an excellent, devoted wife and bore her husband several children.

All was well for many years, until one day during dinner, her mother-in-law commented that something tasted like beef-tongue. Instantly, Dayamava saw the truth: only street sweepers eat cattle carcasses. Filled with rage, Dayamava killed her children and mother-in-law with a sickle. She burned down the house. Her husband tried to flee, either by hiding *in* a buffalo, behind a buffalo, or by transforming *into* a buffalo, depending on the version of the myth. Either way, it made no difference: Dayamava sliced off his head and the buffalo's, too. Having killed them all, Dayamava transformed into a warrior goddess venerated in southern India.

Dayamava is a village goddess now assimilated into the Hindu pantheon as an avatar of Lakshmi. She is associated with smallpox. Dayamava is invoked for healing, disease prevention, and fertility. A

buffalo representing her husband is sacrificed at her shrine during her annual festival. Should she fulfill a major request, the traditional vow is to donate a buffalo to her shrine, which will be allowed to roam free and remain unmolested.

**Favored people:** Carpenters, masons, blacksmiths, metalworkers, women

**Color:** Red

**Offerings:** Incense; vermilion powder; fruit; cooked food; flowers

**See also:** *Lakshmi*; and the Glossary entry for *Avatar*

## **Dedun**

*Lord of Nubia*

**Also known as:** Dedwan

**Origin:** Nubia

Dedun is the Lord of the Nubian Desert. Spirit of incense, wealth, and trade, he epitomizes the great wealth and treasure of ancient Nubia. He protects and sponsors traders in incense and traditional Nubian arts.

**Manifestations:** Usually depicted in human form but sometimes as a lion

**Offering:** Show him you know what fine incense really is. Offer myrrh, among Nubia's treasures.

## **Delphin**

**Also known as:** Delphinus

**Origin:** Greek

Delphin, whose name literally means "dolphin," is a dolphin spirit in Poseidon's employ. He may be Amphitrite's brother. When Amphitrite

fled from Poseidon's advances, Delphin found her, advised Poseidon of her location, and ultimately persuaded Amphitrite to emerge and marry Poseidon, thus making Poseidon King of the Sea. Poseidon rewarded Delphin by placing him in the sky as the constellation Delphinus.

**See also:** *Amphitrite; Poseidon*

## **Delvcaem**

### *Fair Shape*

**Origin:** Ireland

Conn of the Hundred Battles, King of Ireland, was mourning the death of his beloved wife. Walking by a lonely, desolate shore, he saw a luxuriously dressed, beautiful woman emerge from a tiny boat. When he identified himself, she announced that she wished to marry his son, Art. Conn convinced her to marry him instead. When asked her name, she identified herself as Delvcaem, although later she is discovered to be Becuma, who was banished from the realms of spirits (*all* of them) for sexual infidelity.

The two are happily wed, but disaster befalls Ireland. Crops fail; people starve; illness stalks the land. Becuma is blamed. The kings of Ireland base their right to rule on their relationship with the goddess of sovereignty. Something is wrong with the relationship between Becuma and Conn. The story is mysterious. It was committed to print by later Christian commentators: there is an emphasis on virginity and sexual fidelity, which may not have existed in the most ancient versions.

Becuma has a contentious relationship with Conn's son, Art, who despises her. She sends him on a quest to retrieve someone named Delvcaem.

- Does she expect him to die?
- Is she requesting that he return with her alter ego and in the process save Ireland?

It's unclear. Those who first wrote down the story adamantly considered Becuma the villain of the piece, yet it's she who ultimately

points Art in the right direction to restore life, abundance, and fertility. Delvcaem and Becuma may be alter egos; one may be a goddess of life, the other the spirit of blight. It is also unclear whether Becuma is really named Delvcaem or whether she was trying to steal the other's identity.

Art's fairy tale quest to locate and win Delvcaem includes riding out to sea in the same sort of little boat associated with Becuma. Delvcaem lives on an island ruled by her father, King Morgan, and her mother, Dog Head, daughter of the King of the Dog Heads. An oracle has foretold that when her daughters are wooed, she will die, and so Dog Head attempts to brutally block all suitors from approaching the island. Art eventually prevails, returning to Ireland's royal seat, Tara, with Delvcaem, with whom he has fallen in love.

Delvcaem is described as an amazingly powerful sorceress: when she arrives, Becuma is immediately forced to leave as if the two cannot be in the same place at the same time. Delvcaem weds Art just as Becuma, in the guise of Delvcaem, had wished. Delvcaem is the spirit who presides over taking one's rightful place. She is a great magician and may be invoked for advice and lessons. Delvcaem is a spirit of fertility, abundance, and true love.

**Manifestation:** She is described as beautiful. Her name means "Fair Shape." She may or may not look just like Becuma.

**Attribute:** A chalice filled with wine (she has a sister who bears a chalice of poison)

**See also:** *Becuma; Maeve*

## Demeter

**Origin:** Greece

Demeter is the primordial Corn Mother. She is not an Earth goddess; she is very specifically the spirit of cultivation and crops. *De* refers to divinity, as in *deity*, *dei*, or *deva*; *Meter* is literally *Mother*, and so Demeter is the "Divine Mother" or the "Deified Mother." Another theory is that her name derives from *deai*, the Cretan word for *barley*, and thus her

name would mean “Barley Mother.” Barley was among the very first grains cultivated in that region and frequently the most successful; Crete was a particularly early area of cultivation. Demeter’s myth credits her as being the founder, inventor, and promulgator of agriculture. She is a very great and powerful goddess.

The myth for which Demeter is now most famous involves the abduction of her daughter, Persephone, but it is only one of a wide canon of myths in which she features. She was a tremendously important goddess, an ancient indigenous spirit of Greece incorporated into the Olympian pantheon. Instead of residing in Olympus, however, Demeter preferred to live on Earth.

Demeter was a goddess of the masses and the elite. She presided over Mysteries, most famously the Mysteries of Eleusis near Athens, where she was venerated alongside Persephone. She was venerated with her daughter, Despoena, in Arcadian Mysteries and presided over the Mysteries at Lerna, one of the entrances to Hades. (See the Glossary entry for Mystery for further details.)

Demeter is a great magician with a particular talent for transformation. She bestows healing, fertility, protection, and prosperity. There is virtually nothing she can’t do for those she loves. If she is angry, she punishes by causing insatiable hunger.

**Manifestations:** Demeter is a shape-shifter and can take any form. Famous manifestations are as a horse, hag, or beautiful woman with golden hair resembling a field of ripe wheat.

**Iconography:** Demeter is depicted as a beautiful, regal, mature woman holding wheat in one hand and poppies in the other. Snakes writhe around her. Sometimes she is portrayed as a horse-headed woman, as in the votive imageset inside the cave where Demeter once mourned for Persephone. The image is described as a seated woman’s body with a horse’s head and mane holding a dove and dolphin. Snakes emerge from her head.

Demeter Melaina is the path of Black Demeter, black as the fertile earth: she is the prototype for at least several Black Madonnas.

**Attributes:** Torch; ear of wheat; scythe (lost while searching for

Persephone); basket

**Sacred plants:** Barley, wheat, grains in general, poppies, pomegranates; pennyroyal; *Vitis agnus-castus*; entheogenic and visionary plants; oak trees

**Creatures:** Pigs, horses, snakes, grasshopper, crane

**Number:** 8

**Sacred days:** The women-only Thesmophoria honored Demeter and Persephone. Some scholars date this festival to the Stone Age. Her Eleusinian Mysteries were inaugurated in approximately 1500 BCE and lasted until 396 CE. Other festivals dedicated to Demeter include the Chloeia (festival of sprouting grain), the Haloa (a harvest festival), and the Thalsia (a thanksgiving festival).

**Offerings:** Do not give her wine; Demeter drinks mint-flavored barley water. She accepts wreaths of grain; votive pigs; images of women carrying piglets; foccace bread in the shape of genitals

**See also:** *Arion; Ascalapbus; Baubo; Black Madonna; Ceres; Despoena; Hades; Hekate; Hydra; Mentbe; Olympian Spirits; Persephone; Poseidon*

## Demons

*Demon* is a vague word, which may refer to any number of spirits or types of spirits. It is one of those words that can mean very different things to different people.

The word *demon* is a distortion of *daimone* or *daemon*, which referred to various specific types of spirits, some of them wild and rambunctious but none of them wicked or evil. Post-Christianity, however, the word became a blanket term to indicate virtually any spirit. Christianity forbade interaction with spirits with the exception of angels and officially approved saints. All other spirits were considered, by definition, harmful, deceptive, and evil. Because all these spirits were now considered evil and because all these spirits were lumped together as “demons,” the word took on the connotation of “evil spirit.” People

were also uncomfortable referring to fallen angels as “angels,” and so they became associated with demons, too. Demons have a tendency to be spirits of older, banished, or vanquished pantheons.

*Demon* is sometimes the generic word used to translate the names of distinct classes of spirits in other languages into English:

- Many “demons” of Japanese folklore are really oni or Yokai.
- Many “demons” of Jewish folklore are really Djinn.
- Jewish cosmology sometimes refers to dangerous, destructive angels as demons.

In modern metaphysical circles, demons tend to be low-level spirits of malicious intent; spirits who tend to be hostile to people or at least enjoy causing trouble. Many spirits associated with disease are classified as demons.

Just because they’re called “demons” doesn’t guarantee that they’re negative. Sinhalese spirits classified as “demons” tend to be those exceptionally attached to material things. Western occultists would describe them as being overly attached to “lower planes.” They may be unable to control cravings and desires.

Japanese “demons” serve many functions.

- They serve and attend deities.
- They guard temples, shrines, and sacred places.
- They are employees of Hell regions, where their function is to torment dead souls as punishment for sins committed.
- They serve people, too, especially someone who wins a wager or contest with them. (They don’t have to be forced; they serve voluntarily in this circumstance. Of course, if you lose ...)

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*On television, as in other forms of horror or supernatural based entertainment, demon may refer to any malicious, mean-spirited, or otherwise unappealing or harmful spirit. Some television series, however, like Buffy the Vampire Slayer, Angel, or Supernatural, create intricate mythologies, defining their demons. Not all demons on these shows are*

*intrinsically had. On Angel, for instance, the demon Lome and half-demon Doyle are heroes.*

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Many of these so-called demons are quite benevolent toward virtuous people but will torment wrongdoers, in life as well as after death.

Whether or not they're called demons, some spirits genuinely are harmful troublemakers. No need to panic; effective methods of dealing with them have existed for millennia:

Some ambivalent spirits may be coerced, cajoled, or persuaded into becoming allies instead. Some can be encouraged to reserve malicious inclinations for your enemies. Other spirits are just evil, can't be trusted, and need to be banished. The most effective method of preventing an infestation of malevolent spirits or of eliminating them once they've arrived is cultivating relationships with more powerful but benevolent spirits. Demons may not be afraid of moving into your territory, but few will venture where Kwan Yin, Shoki, or Michael Archangel is resident. Posting images of these spirits or other demon-quellers (see the Appendix) may be sufficient to send demons packing.

Amulets keep demons at bay, as do many botanicals including:

- Aloe vera (*Aloe vera*)
- Coriander, also known as cilantro (*Coriandrum sativum*)
- Flamboyant (*Poinciana regia*)
- Rue (*Ruta spp.*)
- Willow trees (*Salix spp.*)
- Wormwood (*Artemisia absinthium*)

If burned as incense, gum ammoniac (*Dorema Ammoniacum*), harmal, also known as Syrian rue (*Peganum harmala*), and benzoin, also known as jawi (*Styrax benzoin*), allegedly repel demons.

Most low-level demons can only travel in straight lines. Wandering, wavy, or winding paths keep them from arriving at your door. Demons get lost in labyrinths. The more complex the path, the less likely they are to be able to navigate it. If a straight line is unavoidable, as in a hallway,



strategically posted mirrors and amulets may compensate. (This is also true for ghosts.)

Most low-level demons are low-level for a reason: they're not particularly quickwitted; they might even be described as really stupid. Word games, anything clever that will puzzle them, may be sufficient to stop them in their tracks. Jewish tradition advises painting ceilings sky blue. Low-level spirits see the color and think they're outside or have ascended to celestial realms. Their general inclination is to leave. Most low-level demons are afflicted with the spiritual equivalent of obsessive-compulsive disorder. Exploiting this quality provides safety:

- Sprinkle poppy or millet seeds on the ground. Seed beads will work, too: anything abundant, tiny, and difficult to pick up may do the trick. The demons will be compelled to stop and pick up each one.
- Strategically hang a sieve, net, or anything with myriad little holes. The demons will be compelled to stop and count them.

Signs of true demonic attack are rarely as dramatic as on television. Here are some possible symptoms or indications, although these may derive from other causes, too:

- Frequent or repeating nightmares
- Seeing dark, mysterious figures at night, especially with peripheral vision. *Dark* in this context doesn't refer to complexion or clothing but indicates the opposite or absence of light. Demons sometimes give the appearance of a dark vacuum or black hole.
- An unexpected, foul stench with no apparent physical cause or explanation
- Inexplicable showers of pebbles or rocks on a roof

Demons tend to be most active at night or at high noon. They are bullies and so tend to pick on solitary people, especially those in lonely, solitary places. Bright lights, company, or the illusion of it may serve to ward them off. Loud, lively party music sometimes sends them away.

**See also:** *Daemone; Djinn; Fairy, Green; Ghost; Kwan Yin; Mazzik; Michael; Oni; Raphael; Shoki; Yokai*

## Despoena

### *The Mistress*

**Also known as:** Despoine

**Origin:** Greece

Demeter was roaming, mourning, searching for her lost daughter, Persephone, when she caught the eye of her brother, Poseidon, who decided that, even under the circumstances, she still looked pretty good. He pursued her in the form of a stallion. She recognized him and to escape, Demeter took the form of a mare. It didn't work: he mounted her and she conceived, bearing two children. Their son, Arion, is a horse. Their daughter, Despoena, is a Mystery Goddess in human form. (See the Glossary entry for Mystery for further information about these traditions.)

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*A theory suggests that before their incorporation into the Olympian pantheon, Demeter and Poseidon were once a pair of primal horse spirits, possibly as early as 2,000 BCE. The union of Poseidon and Demeter represents union of sea and earth. The story of Despoena's conception may be an attempt to merge vestiges of these ancient myths with those of the later Hellenic era.*

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That's the Hellenic Greek version of this myth. Others theorize that this story actually harks back to Demeter and Poseidon's pre-Olympian identities as horse deities and that the sex between them was consensual. (Both are intensely identified with horses. Demeter is sometimes venerated in a horse-headed form.)

Most modern retellings of Greek myth tend to focus solely on the relationship between Demeter and Persephone. It is often assumed that they are the only members of their small family unit, but in fact, this is not true. Despoena is Demeter's other daughter. Depending on which version of the myth you prefer, Despoena is her older daughter or the

neglected child born while her mother was preoccupied with the loss of Persephone. Classical Greek myth now gives Despoena short shrift, often dismissing her as a “Nymph.” Archaeology and surviving ancient writings suggest otherwise: Pausanias, second-century CE Greek travel writer, writes that the Arcadians worshipped Despoena above all others.

Just as Persephone was venerated beside her mother at Eleusis, so Despoena was worshipped alongside Demeter in an Arcadian Mystery tradition. Their votive statue was made from one block of stone and depicted them sharing a throne. A statue of Hekate stood beside them. A grove stood behind the shrine featuring pine and olive trees growing from one root. (Pausanias suggested it was creative gardening; the Arcadians apparently perceived it as miraculous.) Dad was present, too: an altar dedicated to Poseidon Hippos (Poseidon the Horse) was located just beyond the grove.

Little else is known. Despoena is a fertility spirit. Her name literally means “the Mistress”; her true name was revealed only to initiates of her Mysteries.

**Iconography:** The votive statue in their Arcadian shrine was the result of a dream. Someone was directed to uncover a huge hidden block of stone from within the temple precinct. This stone was carved into a statue depicting Despoena *and* Demeter sitting on a throne with footstools beneath their feet.

**Attributes:** Staff, box

**Offerings:** Fresh fruits but no pomegranates. Seriously.

**See also:** *Arion; Demeter; Epona; Hekate; Olympian Spirits; Persephone; Poseidon*

## **Dharmatala**

**Origin:** Tibet

**Classification:** Arhat

Dharmatala is the servant, supporter, and messenger of the sixteen

Arhats. Together with Hwashang, he is a Tibetan addition to the original sixteen Arhats. In Tibet, Dharmatala is counted as the seventeenth although he is a layperson, not a monk like other Arhats. He is a devotee of the Amitabha Buddha.

**Attribute:** Backpack filled with books

**Sacred animal:** Dharmatala's companion is a magical tiger created to banish malicious spirits. The tiger also carries Dharmatala's books for him.

**See also:** *Arhats; Buddha; Buddha Amitabha*

## **Dhumavati**

### *The Smoky One*

**Origin:** India

She's called "the Smoky One" because Dhumavati is surrounded by the apocalyptic smoke of the burning universe. Dhumavati is the goddess as widow. She is the matron goddess of beggars; lepers; the ailing and miserable; people who are sick and not getting better. She is the guardian of those who are abandoned, overlooked, forgotten, and marginalized; those who see their future and see no hope. She is the lady of widows, orphans, and inconvenient, needy, unpleasant relatives.

Dhumavati is an angry, raging, resentful goddess. She's not afraid of the apocalypse because life as it exists holds no hope. If she expresses your deepest emotions, then she may be your goddess, too. Dhumavati is a clever, quickwitted, quick-tempered, volatile spirit, an expert on the arts of survival. She's popularly petitioned during wartime or disasters for help surviving and even thriving. (*Someone* inevitably benefits from disasters; Dhumavati is petitioned by devotees so that they'll be that someone.)

If you are desperate and really down-and-out, request her assistance. If you'd like to avoid that state, propitiate her and pay her off. Dhumavati is acquisitive and hungry: never forget or delay her offerings. Dhumavati

evokes the power of poverty, defeat, and despair. Is she invoked for cursing? You bet.

**Manifestation:** She's not a sweet, charming old lady; she's a raging, angry, unpleasant hag. Dhumavati is old, tall, and very thin. She has very few teeth left; perhaps one reason why she's always hungry. She's always thirsty, too.

**Attribute:** Winnowing fan

**Consort:** He's dead. She's a widow.

**Sacred bird:** Carrion crows

**Mount:** Crows pull her chariot.

**Sacred sites:** Dhumavati haunts ruins, old battlefields, bombed-out markets, and other scenes of devastation.

**Offerings:** Make sure they're consistent. She's acquisitive, resentful, and always feels like she's being shortchanged. Light incense for her, but give her food and drink, too. Give her whatever you're having because if you don't she'll think you're hoarding the good stuff.

## Diabliesse, La

**Also known as:** Lajabless

**Origin:** Caribbean

La Diabliesse is a nocturnal spirit from the islands of the Lesser Antilles in the Caribbean Sea. During the day, she hides in the big root buttresses of kapok trees. At night, she emerges to roam around, usually on quiet roads, but she may come into populated areas, too, as the desire takes her. She may or may not be a tree spirit.

La Diabliesse resembles a beautiful woman dressed in a long, romantic, flowing dress and a big, floppy hat. Her clothes may sound old-fashioned, but it's a daring, sexy outfit: her skirt is slit high on one side to reveal a shapely feminine leg. Of course, the clue to her identity is the other leg, the one hidden by the voluminous fabric. That's the leg with

the cloven foot. Some manifestations of La Diabliesse may have an entire donkey's leg.

La Diabliesse lures men to secluded areas near the tops of cliffs. They're anticipating romantic assignations or some easy sex: instead she finally removes that big hat, revealing a grinning skull and then kicks her victim off the cliff with her powerful cloven hoof. It is unclear whether her attacks are random or whether she targets specific victims for vengeance, justice, or less commendable reasons. She strongly resembles goddesses Aisha Qandisha or Lilith, who lure men sexually only to punish them, often fatally.

**See also:** *Gran Bois; Hone-Onna; Lady Banana Ghost; Xtabay*

## **Dian Cécht**

**Origin:** Ireland

**Classification:** Tuatha Dé Danaan

Dian Cécht is the lord of healing, divine physician and smith. He heals via a combination of herbalism, metal, and magic, although earlier people may not have perceived those fields as distinct. Dian Cécht crafted a silver prosthetic arm for King Nuada.

Dian Cécht presides over the craft of healing. Healers and physicians may request his sponsorship. He is the progenitor of a clan of profoundly powerful healers. Following a battle, Dian Cécht and his three children revived and resurrected wounded and dead Tuatha Dé Danaan by immersing them in a magical well and singing incantations over them.

**See also:** *Airmid; Miach; Nuada; Tuatha Dé Danaan*

## **Diana**

*The Luminous One; Holy Mother;  
Lady of the Grove; Mother of the Forest;  
Lady of the Wild Creatures; Opener of the Womb*

**Also known as:** Dea Jana

**Feast:** 13 August

Diana is an ancient spirit, indigenous to Italy, possibly Etruscan or Latin. She preceded the Romans in the region, then traveled with them through Europe, becoming well known all over that once heavily wooded continent. Diana has dominion over magic, witchcraft, women and children, wilderness, fertility, hunting, and wild animals. In addition, she is matron of slaves and outlaws, many of whom found refuge in her forest sanctuary. Her veneration may have begun at that sanctuary at Nemi at the foot of the Alban Hills. A temple was eventually dedicated to her on Rome's Aventine Hill, most likely following the Roman victory over the Latins in the fifth century BCE.

Diana may initially have been the preeminent goddess in the Roman region, paired with such important male spirits as Janus and Jupiter. Some suggest she was the ruler of the night while Jupiter ruled the day. She is an anarchic goddess, however, a spirit of ecstasy and independence. Although the Romans incorporated her into their pantheon and venerated her, she was somewhat marginalized and diminished, associated with slaves, immigrants, and disreputable people while Juno became the official state goddess.

Diana was adored throughout Europe. Other versions of her name include:

- Jana, Tana (Italian)
- Debena, Devana (Czech)
- Diiwica (Serbian)
- Dziewona (Polish)
- Gana (Transylvanian)

Efforts to identify her with Artemis may have been part of this process of diminishment. Diana's identity was subsumed by Artemis. Over the centuries Diana became intensely identified with Greek Artemis; their names are often used interchangeably, and it can be difficult to distinguish between the two although they were initially distinct spirits. The names Artemis of Ephesus and Diana of Ephesus are also used

interchangeably.

Most surviving information regarding her worship and influence comes from her enemies, Saint Paul of Tarsus and other early Christian writers. Diana's cult was so popular throughout Europe and Asia Minor that early Christians perceived it as among their major rivals. The subsequent destruction of Europe's forests and wildlife, especially wolves, may have been a method of eradicating Diana's power and influence.

When Christianity achieved political power, Diana was completely vilified. In 1487, Spanish Inquisitor Tomas de Torquemada flatly stated, "Diana is the devil." *The Society of Diana* was among the Inquisition's terms for witchcraft. No deity was more associated with witchcraft during the Burning Times. Devotion to Diana survived the witch hunts and remains vital. She is among the most beloved of contemporary deities and is central to the Italian witchcraft tradition, Stregheria.

**Favored people:** Thieves; outlaws; slaves; shamans; witches; fortune-tellers; Diana has dominion over women but men worshipped her just as passionately: what are described as werewolves may really be male wolf-shamans or lunar priests dedicated to Diana.

**Manifestation:** Although usually envisioned as a beautiful young woman, in Celtic Europe, Diana was worshipped in the form of a log.

**Iconography:** Images of Diana and Artemis tend to be used interchangeably.

**Sacred sites:**

- Oak groves
- Forests in general
- The famous witches' walnut tree in Benevento, Italy
- Lake Nemi and the entire Forest of Nemi: A stream flowed into the lake from a sacred grotto near Diana's Temple. The *Mirror of Diana* names the volcanic lake surrounded on three sides by forested cliffs.
- Temple on Rome's Aventine Hill
- The present Cathedral of Saint Etienne in Metz, France, built on the site



of her temple

**Time:**

- The Festival of Torches was held annually in Diana's honor beginning 13 August. Women carried torches to her temple at Nemi and elsewhere engaged in torchlit processions.
- On 15 August, women would journey to the Arician Woods to offer thanks and beseech Diana for future blessings. They were accompanied by crowned hunting dogs, leashed so as not to disturb Diana's wild creatures.
- A Friday the 13<sup>th</sup> falling in the month of August is believed especially sacred to Diana.

**Consorts:** Virbius, Janus

**Spirit allies:** Egeria, Hekate

**Animals:** All wild creatures, but especially wolves, dogs, deer, and black cats

**Elements:** Fire and water

**Planet:** Moon, the light of the night

**Offerings:** Diana likes a drink. Strega liqueur, allegedly inspired by an Italian witches' recipe, is a favorite, but she'll drink grappa, too. Cakes in the shape of the moon, topped with lit candles—the original birthday cake—are a traditional offering. At Diana's ancient festival, the celebratory meal included wine, roasted young goat, cakes served hot on plates of leaves, and apples still hanging in clusters on their boughs. Offerings on behalf of wolves, wild creatures, and preservation of wilderness may also be appreciated.

**OFFERING BOWL FOR DIANA**

- Pour a little Strega liqueur in a fireproof bowl, preferably an iron cauldron.
- Stand back and set it aflame using a long fireplace match as an offering for Diana.

- Only use a little Strega. *Do not fill the bowl all the way or even halfway! Be sure to stand away from the bowl: do not hover over it.* There's an old joke about Italian witches with singed eyebrows, but it's no joke if you're harmed. As soon as the Strega is lit, there is a tendency for high flames to shoot up, considered a sign of Diana's favor, but not if you are burned or if the house catches fire. Exercise caution, and always be aware of fire safety.

**See also:** *Aradia; Artemis; Artemis of Ephesus; Egeria; Gana; Hekate; Herodias; Irodeasa; Janus; Jupiter; Virbius*

## **Dianus**

**See:** *Janus*

## **Dictynna**

**Also known as:** *Diktyнна*

**See:** *Britomartis*

## **Dike**

*Just Retribution*

**Pronounced:** *Dye-kee* (rhymes with *Nike*)

**Origin:** *Greece*

Dike is the goddess of righteous judgment and punishment. She is an avatar of her mother, Themis, but fiercer. Dike is the Accuser. She reports human wrongdoing to her father, Zeus.

Dike lived among mortals during a Golden Age when peace reigned over Earth, hence her excellent vantage to report on human sins and crimes. Initially there were few crimes to report, but gradually human behavior worsened. Conflicts and wars began. Dike doesn't have to actually witness crimes; she *feels* them. Lies, slander, unethical behavior,

and so forth actually cause her to feel pain.

She begged humanity to behave, but over time, they listened to her less and less. Overwhelmed, she withdrew into the mountains. As matters on Earth deteriorated, Dike kept ascending, basically trying to put distance between herself and people until finally she reached the sky. Zeus took pity on her and transformed her into the constellation Virgo. She hasn't completely retired, however. To commune with her, locate the constellation in the sky or gaze at images representing Virgo.

**See also:** *Nike; Themis; Zeus*

## Dinh Cô

### *The Palace Damsel*

**Origin:** Vietnam

According to myth, once upon a time, Dinh Cô preferred death to returning to her parental home. She drowned at sea but emerged as a powerful goddess. Dinh Cô began her incarnation as a fishing goddess of the southern Vietnamese coast. She protects people at sea and thus became spiritual guardian of the mass exodus of Vietnamese known as the "boat people." She was petitioned for safety and success. She is credited with protecting and sponsoring those who reached land, too, enabling them to start anew and find success.

Dinh Cô's popularity has soared since the late 1980s as former refugees returned to her shrine to offer lavish gifts in gratitude, often in fulfillment of vows. These offerings testified to her prowess and attracted new devotees. As her reputation increased, Dinh Cô took on new roles: since the late 1990s, she has emerged as the matron goddess of women who work in Ho Chi Minh City's markets. They now make up a substantial portion of her devotees. Hundreds of thousands visit her beachside shrine in Long Hai, east of Ho Chi Minh City, annually. She has a similar volatile nature as her sister goddess, Ba Chua Xu, and so it is crucial to fulfill all vows made to Dinh Cô.

**Favored people:** Dinh Cô is the matron of female urban entrepreneurs.

**Sacred site:** Her seaside shrine at Long Hai on the southern Vietnamese coast

**Sacred day:** Annual festival on the twelfth day of the second month of the lunar calendar

**See also:** *Ba Chua Xu*

## Dione

**Origin:** Greece

Dione, water goddess of fertility and divination, is a shadowy figure in Greek mythology: she's Zeus' first wife. Dione and Zeus presided over the Oracle of Dodona in northwestern Greece, described by Herodotus as the oldest Hellenic oracle. Scholars now believe it to be pre-Hellenic and prehistoric. Although Zeus and Dione were venerated there together as a couple, some theorize that Dione was there first, only later joined by Zeus.

Dione is the wife left behind. It's theorized that the Hellenic people first emerged in the Dodona region. Zeus then led them through Greece, from Thessaly on to Athens and Crete. Dione stayed behind in Dodona while Zeus married other goddesses, most notably Hera.

Dione is a water spirit. She presided over the freshwater springs at Dodona while Zeus delivered oracles from its oak groves. Although Dodona is now almost universally described solely as Zeus' oracle, Dione delivered prophecies, too.

There are different versions of her parentage:

- Hesiod describes Dione as a daughter of Oceanus.
- Followers of Orpheus said Dione was a daughter of Uranus.

Although the most famous myth regarding Aphrodite's origins describes *her* as a dramatically conceived daughter of Uranus, other myths describe her as the daughter of Zeus and Dione. In Homer's *Iliad*, when Aphrodite is wounded on the battlefield, she runs to Dione for comfort, sinking onto her lap. Aphrodite was sometimes called Dione, and it's possible that Dione herself may lurk beneath some aspects of

Aphrodite.

**Bird:** Dove

**See also:** *Aphrodite; Hera; Leto; Themis; Zeus*

## Dionysus

### *The Night Prowler*

**Also known as:** Bacchus

Dionysus is popularly called the God of Wine, however that classification doesn't begin to do him justice as this powerful deity is so much more than that:

- Dionysus presides over Mysteries of birth, life, death, and resurrection
- He is the spirit of untamed wilderness and irrepressible male procreative energy, intoxication, shamanism, magic, joy, hallucinations, madness, and sexual healing.

He was the last of the twelve deities incorporated into the Olympian pantheon and so is usually classified as a "Greek god," but his original homeland is believed to be Thrace: modern Bulgaria and Romania both claim to be his birthplace. Dionysus was accepted as an Olympian by the fifth century BCE but was known to the Greeks since at least the end of the Bronze Age.

Dionysus was originally served only by women. His female devotees were known as Maenads (Greece) or Bacchanals (Rome). Although men served him, too, women were leaders and initiators in the Dionysian rites, and certain rites were reserved for women. Ecstatic veneration was integral to his rites. To resist his call was to risk madness. Dionysus presides over the *orgeia*, literally "rites performed in the forest," from which the modern word *orgy* derives. His devotees danced themselves into trances: they danced until they tranced.

Dionysus was twice born, first as the child of Zeus and his daughter, Persephone. Zeus named him Zagreus and designated him his heir over all his other children. Jealous Titans kidnapped Zagreus, ripped him to

pieces, and ate him, except for his heart, which Athena rescued. Livid Zeus reduced the Titans to ashes and formed humans from these ashes, thus all people share in Dionysus' (Zagreus') essence.

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*According to one myth, Demeter hid Persephone in a Sicilian cave guarded by two dragons, Zeus secretly slithered into the cave in the form of a snake and seduced Persephone, who conceived. A prophecy foretold that this child would rule over Zeus' other children, and so Hera sent Titans to kill the baby. The Titans whitened their faces with chalk so that they appeared to come from the realm of death. Attacking the child, they cut him into seven pieces, boiled his flesh in a cauldron, then roasted him on seven spits. (This reproduces animal sacrifice rituals of the time.) Zeus, lured to the cave by the sublime fragrance, realized the situation and hurled the Titans into Tartarus.*

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Zeus brewed a love potion from Zagreus' heart and fed it to Princess Semele. She conceived Dionysus but died before giving birth. Zeus rescued the unborn child, removing him from his mother's body and sewing him up in his own thigh to incubate until ripe and ready to be born. Dionysus was then hidden away for his own safety; he grew up in the wilderness of Thrace, nursed by goats.

Dionysus was persecuted. Various spirits attempted to prevent him from achieving full power, most notably Hera, who struck him mad. Kybele healed and then initiated him. Reaching maturity, Dionysus led a caravan through Egypt, the Levantine Coast, Asia, and India, accompanied by a parade of Maenads, satyrs, and panthers. Wherever Dionysus traveled he taught people assorted agricultural and artisanal arts, especially viniculture, the creation of wine, and overcoming military opposition, when necessary. Dionysus is not a fighter and does not usually harm anyone directly. Instead, he strikes them temporarily insane so that they harm themselves, sometimes fatally. Dionysus also liberates from madness and heals mental illness. Among the punishment he inflicts may be alcoholism. If propitiated, he can heal and relieve this

ailment, too.

In addition to wine, Dionysus is associated with opium and mushrooms. His festivals featured nocturnal processions with music and masked, costumed revelers. These processions may be understood as armies of spirits, animals, musicians, and women exulting in their sexuality. Dionysus has dominion over all theatrical and dance performances. He is the patron of actors. He was invoked before all performances and presided over drama competitions.

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*The floats, masks, clowns, dancing, public drunkenness, and erotic theater that characterize modern Carnivals and parades are descendents of Dionysian rituals.*

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**Manifestations:** Dionysus typically manifests in the form of a man, lion, bull, or goat. He is the horned Green Man, crowned with snakes. He is sometimes described as androgynous or effeminate with long, beautiful, dark, wavy or curly hair. Dionysus is wine: by drinking wine, one shares the sacrament of Dionysus' body.

**Iconography:** He is sometimes venerated in the form of a huge phallus.

**Attributes:** His primary attribute was the *thyrsus*: a wand (originally a fennel stalk) topped with a pinecone; also cymbals, frame drums, and other percussion instruments.

**Sacred animals:** Leopards and panthers, snakes, mules, donkeys, goats, and lions

**Mount:** Dionysus rides a chariot drawn by griffins.

**Plants:** Grapevines, ivy, walnut trees, fig trees

**Colors:** Purple, wine

**Spirit allies:** Dionysus only wants to be alone when he's hungover. He is a gregarious, friendly spirit usually surrounded by a retinue including

devotees, sacred animals, and other deities. His allies include:

- Apollo
- Demeter and Persephone
- Hekate
- Kybele
- Pan
- Satyrs
- Semele
- Silenus

**Sacred site:** Dionysus eventually became Apollo's altar-equal at Delphi, taking over the shrine in winter. He was considered Apollo's opposite, representing hot ecstatic energy rather than Apollo's cold rationalism. The coasts of southern Italy are allegedly among Dionysus' favorite places.

**Sacred days:** Devotion to Dionysus once dominated Greek winters. In Athens, he was honored by four festivals:

- Dionysia (end of November/beginning of December)
- Lenea (approximately one month later)
- Anthesteria (end of January)
- Great Dionysia (end of February)
- 6 January, now celebrated as the Feast of Epiphany, is the day celebrated by Eastern Christians as the anniversary of Jesus' baptism in the Jordan River but was once known as the Theodosia (the "Gift of God"), the day the water in the sacred spring of Dionysus' temple in Andros, Greece, tasted like wine. Clement of Alexandria (140–215 CE), early Church father, wrote that 6 January was Dionysus' birthday.

**See also:** *Apollo; Ariadne; Bendis; Demeter; Green Man; Hera; Kybele; Leto; Olympian Spirits; Persephone; Semele; Shiva; Silenus; Titan; Zemele; Zeus*

## Dioscuri



**Also known as:** The Gemini

**Origin:** Greece

The Dioscuri are the sacred twins known to the Romans as Castor and Pollux and to the Greeks as Castor and Polydeuces, sons of Leda and brothers of Helen of Troy and Clytemnestra. Zeus seduced Leda, wife of a Spartan king, in the guise of a swan. Theoretically only one (Pollux) was of divine origin; Castor was the son of Leda's mortal husband, but the myths are confused on this point. Sometimes both are mortal or both are immortal. Sometimes Castor is Zeus' son. *Dioscuri* derives from *Dios kouroi*, the God's boys, translated as "sons of Zeus."

When it was time for Castor's death, Pollux refused to part from his beloved twin. He negotiated with Zeus, who allowed them to stay together, alternating one day in Hades, the next on Mount Olympus. Because of their dual residence, they are amazingly well-connected spirits and are thus able to provide exceptionally well for their devotees.

Pollux is a boxer, Castor an equestrian. They are patrons of the sports. The Dioscuri were very popular deities in Greece and Rome. They protect soldiers on the battlefield and are guardians of the sea. Allegedly Poseidon gave them power over waves and winds so they were worshipped as patrons of sailors and mariners. They are sometimes venerated alongside their sister, Helen of Troy.

Saint Elmo's Fire in the form of double-lights was welcomed by ancient Greek mariners as a manifestation of the Dioscuri. A single flame was considered a harbinger of doom, however, as it was a manifestation of Helen, who leads ships to death, as opposed to her brothers, who guide them to safety.

**Favored people:** Those born under the astrological sign Gemini; twins; equestrians; horse breeders; boxers; sailors; mariners

**Manifestation:** The Dioscuri are handsome twins who ride white horses and wear egg-shaped helmets crowned with a star.

**Sacred day:** 27 January, the day their Roman temple was dedicated in 484 BCE

**See also:** *Helen of Troy; Iphigenia; Zeus*

## **Dirt Woman**

**Also known as:** Soil Woman; Mud Woman Dirt Woman stalks people's dreams. She is primeval. She probably does not speak although she may make sounds. She probably means no harm, but she is so primordial that her presence can be frightening and overwhelming. She appears in Jungian discussion but rarely in mythology because Dirt Woman is so old, she has no myth. She just is.

Dirt Woman is the primordial woman. The spirit of Earth is among the earliest goddesses: not Earth herself, but something that emerged from Earth, an avatar of Earth. Thus in Greek mythology, Gaia is sacred, prescient Earth, but Rhea is the spirit of Earth, her daughter, avatar, and emissary on Earth.

Modern mythology books feature illustrations of spirits of Earth dressed in beautiful, clean gowns with elegant jewels and perfectly coiffed hair. Dirt Woman looks like mud took the form of a woman and started walking. One version of the biblical story of Creation says that man and woman were formed together from Earth: that primeval first woman is Dirt Woman. The earliest, most primordial origins of the goddess Kali may lie in manifestations of Dirt Woman.

The appearance of Dirt Woman signals the beginning of a psychic or spiritual journey you must take. She may appear if you are consciously or subconsciously resisting a spiritual calling. Modern niceties mean nothing to Dirt Woman; she only comprehends and values primeval emotion, action, and human skills, including divination. She can be a fierce guardian and may be invoked to help you guard your children.

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*The figure of the dream - stalking First Slayer in the television series Buffy the Vampire Slayer resembles Dirt Woman.*

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She appears in dreams and visions: sometimes people describe seeing her from the corner of their eye although when they turn to face her, she has vanished. Dirt Woman stalks silently like a leopard (and sometimes appears with feline spots on her body, possibly painted on), the animal that author Bruce Chatwin described as humanity's primeval predator.

She sometimes manifests briefly in person; encounters with her are often emotionally harrowing. Dirt Woman may be invoked via visualization and divination (especially scrying). She is afraid of nothing and can banish demons.

**Manifestations:** Dirt Woman's skin is coated with dirt or mud. She may be any color including brown, dull green, or ghostly chalk white. She may be covered with thick layers of multicolored dried mud. Twigs and leaves may stick to her hair and body. She may decorate herself with stripes or patterns of different-colored clay or chalk. She may be naked. She may be draped with a mud-covered animal skin. She may wear shells, teeth, or pebbles. Her teeth may be large and prominent.

**See also:** *Gaia; Kali; Lilith; Pandora; Rhea*

## Djab

**Origin:** Haiti

Djab are mercenary spirits: spirits for hire. Each Djab is an independent contractor who can be paid or bribed to do magical work for you. (The word *Djah* is singular *and* plural.) Theoretically they can be compelled, too, but that course of action is not advised. Eventually, inevitably, the Djab will turn the tables.

Djab are invoked in rituals and spells to perform magical work on behalf of the spell-caster. Typically, they're invoked in aggressive, less savory spells—spell-work that other spirits will refuse. If safer spirits would participate in such spells (usually those that cause harm to others or that make others do what they do not wish), then no one would invoke Djab.

Djab is a corruption of *Diable*, French for "devil," but the Djab are not necessarily diabolical. Some are scary and unpleasant; others are just

exceptionally independent. There may #not be one clear-cut, precise definition for *Djab*, if only because each may manifest a little differently. They make up their own rules. Although potentially dangerous spirits who are willing to do malevolent work from which other spirits may shy, *Djab* also serve as guardians if so requested, aggressive bodyguards willing to search out and destroy enemies. *Djab* are sometimes invoked to serve justice when it will otherwise not be found.

Some *Djab* are affiliated with a person or family who may or may not be able to exert control over the *Djab*. Others are wild, autonomous spirits who play by no rules other than their own.

Exactly like an independent contractor, they must be paid per job and they can be very aggressive about collections, to the point where they can be described as loan sharks. Should one find oneself in trouble with *Djab*, whether by one's own devices or via someone else's malicious magic, preventive and safety measures do exist, but they must be performed by experienced practitioners.

**See also:** *Baka*; *Lwa*

## Djinn

**Also known as:** Jinn; Genie; Jinni

Djinn are the indigenous spirits of the Middle East and North Africa. They preceded Judaism, Christianity, and Islam in the area but have since traveled the world with Islam and are now found far from their original home. In Neil Gaiman's novel, *American Gods*, a Djinn is envisioned driving a taxi in New York City. There's no reason to think this far-fetched.

*Djinn* is sometimes used to indicate both singular and plural, but in Morocco, *Djinn* refers to an individual spirit. The plural is *jnoun*.

Djinn constitute a vast community of spirits. They come in all shapes and sizes and vary in power and temperament. Djinn have hierarchical societies that parallel those of humans. Thus Chemharouch is a king of Djinn. Some Djinn are fascinated by people and behave very much like orishas. They can be benevolent protectors. Others just want to be left

alone.

The name *Djinn* derives from Old Arabic and means “covert” or “darkness.” Most Djinn are secretive, covert spirits who are invisible most of the time. Many are ambivalent toward people. They are nocturnal, preferring to sleep during the day. They haunt ruins, cemeteries, and crossroads. Blood appeals to them, and so they may be found in slaughterhouses.

Djinn like liminal spaces: they have a tendency to take up residence at the threshold of homes. It’s crucial not to step on the threshold but over it and also never to throw anything on the ground without giving warning, especially liquids or waste products. Djinn who are rudely awakened tend to reflexively strike out: they cause illness, sudden stroke, and/or paralysis that will resist medical treatment, responding only to magical and shamanic cures.

- Some Djinn are skilled shape-shifters and may appear in any form.
- Some Djinn are consistently benevolent and are venerated and loved.
- Some Djinn are consistently temperamental, treacherous, hostile, and malevolent: the very embodiment of evil spirits. People may propitiate them, but the motivation is fear.

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*In recent years, Djinn have been blamed for encouraging suicide bombers.*

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Djinn are spiritual devotees, too. There are Pagan, Jewish, Christian, and Islamic Djinn; each is allegedly most likely to help humans who share their religious persuasion although the most generous Djinn are kind to all and the most malevolent are equal-opportunity offenders. Djinn love and crave heat. They live in the desert, by hot springs, and in bathhouses. They despise the cold, and Djinn in colder climes tend to be grouchy.

Djinn *hate* salt and fear iron and steel. All may be used to keep them far away. They don’t like noisy, crowded places although they are curious spirits and will venture out to observe or even participate in

fairs, markets, and festivals. Djinn enjoy stories and can be pacified or lured by telling exciting, suspenseful tales. They will hover quietly in corners and listen. In the manner of Scheherazade, should you need to keep a Djinn calm or play for time, keep telling stories. If you anticipate dealings with Djinn, it's not bad to maintain a repertoire of tales, just in case.

Djinn have a code of honor. Even the most malevolent Djinn will honor a promise or vow. (Make sure that you do, too.) Djinn appreciate favors done for them and respectful behavior.

**Manifestations:** Djinn famously manifest as snakes, cats, or dogs. It's considered dangerous to injure, kill, or even annoy any of these creatures as it may be a Djinn in disguise.

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*The most powerful individual Djinn have personal preferences in terms of offerings as well as colors. Please see individual entries for more details.*

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**Offerings:** The traditional offering involves pouring oil over flour. Jewish Djinn like fruit jam. Christian Djinn have the reputation of eating anything, but that may just be from the Islamic perspective. Djinn tend to like alcoholic beverages, candles, and incense, especially benzoin.

They *hate* salt. Make sure anything given to them was prepared without salt, or it will be rejected and their enmity earned.

**See also:** *Afrit; Aisba Qandisba; Bagblet el Qebour; Bori; Chemharouch; Genie; Jezibaba; Kel Asuf; Lalla Malika; Lalla Mira; Lalla Mkouna Bent Mkoun; Lalla Rehya Bint El Khamar; Maezt-Dar L'Oudou; Mimoun, Sidi; Mimouna, Lalla; Zagaz; Zar*

## **Domovoi**

**Origin:** Russia

The Domovoi is a Russian house spirit. His primary function is to protect

the family, property, and animals associated with the home where he resides. He protects the family living in his home and warns them of impending disaster. (If a family member is awakened in the middle of the night by a cold, hard, furry hand, disaster looms.) The Domovoi is sometimes a harbinger of death; if the Domovoi dons the clothing of the head of the household or is witnessed imitating this person, his or her death is imminent. The Domovoi is most frequently witnessed as night.

The Domovoi may be an ancestral spirit. Address him respectfully as “Sir,” “Master,” “Uncle,” or “Grandpa.” The Domovoi may live in the big traditional Russian stove or in liminal areas: the cellar, attic, or over the home’s main entry threshold. It’s traditional to leave offerings in areas of the home he’s known to frequent.

The Domovoi may be attached to the house, but some Domovoi become quite attached to people. If you move, it’s crucial to formally notify the Domovoi of the move and request that he accompany his family to their new home. The Domovoi should also be formally introduced to any new horses living with or belonging to the family. Request his care and protection for the horse. Otherwise, if this is not done, the Domovoi may play tricks: tangling the horse’s mane, for instance, stealing its food, or moving its tack and grooming supplies so that you must search for them. He can also ride a horse to exhaustion at night. Once upon a time, Russians purchased horses in the color that their Domovoi preferred. The Domovoi grooms his favorites, braiding their manes and tails.

**Manifestations:** The Domovoi is usually heard, not seen. He likes to be invisible. His presence is revealed only by rustling noises. When visible, the Domovoi resembles a tiny old man with grey, tangled, locked hair and a bushy beard. He may be entirely covered in soft, downy fur, including his palms and soles. However, the Domovoi is a shape-shifter and may also manifest as a dog, cat, frog, rat, mouse, or other animal.

**Animal:** Horse

**Offerings:** Kasha, bread, old-fashioned bast sandals (hang them up in the yard; he’ll find them)

**See also:** *Kikimora*

## Dosojin

### *Road Blocking Spirits*

**Also known as:** Sae no Kami; Doosojin

**Origin:** Japan

**Classification:** Kami

Dosojin are roadside deities and spirits of the crossroads. There is not one spirit named Dosojin; instead this is a type of spirit. There are many Dosojin; Daruma is sometimes classified among them, as is Chimata. Dosojin offer aid and protection to travelers and are venerated at roadside shrines and shelters. Their images are traditionally placed at crossroads, at village boundaries (thresholds) and along country roads to protect and bless residents and travelers. They are sometimes found amid old mountain passes. Dosojin protect towns and villages from illness, epidemics, droughts, and vermin infestation. Although traditionally associated with rural areas, Dosojin are now sometimes placed at busy urban traffic intersections to protect pedestrians at these dangerous modern crossroads. Dosojin ward off danger, disaster, and malicious spirits.

Dosojin frequently, though not always, come in pairs, envisioned as an older married couple. This type of Dosojin serves a double function: not only are they crossroads spirits but they are also the kami of marriage, fertility, pregnancy, and childbirth. They bestow happy marriages, easy fertility, and safe, reasonably painless childbirth. The spirits are believed present in their stone images. In addition to the protective powers associated with Dosojin images in general, married-couple Dosojin images also serve to ensure and boost fertility and virility for women and men, respectively.

**Iconography:** Images of Dosojin are usually small to medium-sized carved stone statues, often phallic shaped. Many have human figures carved onto them; sometimes of an individual but usually depicting an older couple (one male and one female), often engaged in oblique or explicit sex.



**See also:** *Chimata; Daruma*

## **Dragon Goddess of Borneo**

**Origin:** Dayak (Borneo)

The Dragon Goddess of Borneo protects the living and guards the dead, guiding them to the next realm. She is the preeminent goddess of the Dayak, the indigenous people of Borneo. Her image is ubiquitous in Dayak culture, appearing on everything from baby carriers to funerary monuments. Dragon imagery is incorporated into traditional architecture so that she serves as a personal home guardian.

The Dragon Goddess is the source of agricultural and personal fertility. She commands thunder and lightning. Her consort and male counterpart is the Rhinoceros Hornbill, among the largest hornbills and now an endangered species. This hornbill rules the Upper World while the Dragon Goddess rules the Underworld. Together they preside over a Tree of Life, linking the realms.

**Elements:** Earth, water

**See also:** *Dragon Queens*

## **Dragon King of the Sea**

**Origin:** East Asia

Dragon kings appear in the mythology of various East Asian people; they may or may not be the same spirit. Although there are many dragon spirits resident in the sea, the Dragon King is their chief, lord, and master.

The Dragon King is the lord of water; he controls precipitation and thus helps or hinders agriculture. He controls sea waters, stilling them as desired or raising storms. He remains an important deity for sailors and those who fish or otherwise ply the waters. He is not limited to salt water but has dominion over rivers, too.

According to Chinese myth, the Dragon King of the Sea lives in a

beautiful underwater palace. Crabs and lobsters serve as his courtiers. In Korea, the Dragon King is the complementary power to the Mountain Spirit: they represent yin and yang respectively (in Korean: um and yang). Even though the Dragon King is male, he epitomizes um.

The Dragon King has a beautiful daughter, often depicted in human form riding a dragon similar to images of the Japanese goddess, Benten. The Dragon King and his family are master magicians and transformation artists: they are not restricted to only one form.

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*The Dragon King of the Sea is a pre-Buddhist spirit. Since the ascension of Buddhism, Kwan Yin has assumed many of his responsibilities and powers. The Dragon King is often depicted serving Kwan Yin or being subservient to her, although whether or not this is true is subject to debate.*

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A method of requesting the Dragon King's aid or sending him a message involves feeding fish:

- Whisper your message, needs, or desires over bread.
- Feed this bread to river or ocean fish.
- Tell the fish to please deliver your message to the Dragon King of the Sea.

**Attributes:** Flaming pearl, red coral branch

**Realm:** The Dragon King of the Sea lives in an underwater palace formed from coral. The exact location is subject to speculation: arguments are made for the East Sea (Sea of Japan) or the East China Sea (Yellow Sea).

**Sacred date:** Taeborum, the Dragon Festival, is celebrated in Korea on the first full moon of the lunar calendar. The Dragon King is invoked and honored at the harbor. Women wade into the river to launch miniature boats bearing lit candles. Written wishes and messages to the Dragon King are attached to the boats.

**See also:** *Benten; Dragon Queens; Mountain Spirit; Ryujin; Tamatori-Hime; Toyotami-Hime*

## Dragon Queens

**Also known as:** Dragon Ladies

Before there were Dragon Kings of the Sea, there were Dragon Queens. These sacred Dragon Ladies control winds and precipitation. They protect sailors, travelers, ships, and all those who ply the sea, whether for food or trade. The Dragon Queens provide people with protection and prosperity. They are healing spirits who can cure illness and provide or enhance fertility. The Dragon Queens are among the most ancient East Asian deities.

Post-Confucianism, however, it was considered unseemly for women to rule men. (See also: *Abka Hebe*.) The Dragon Queens were reenvisioned as male to suit official court mythology. (Alternatively, the Dragon Queens' sons, fathers, and husbands were promoted at the expense of their female relatives.) Although their original gender and identity were suppressed, they were never entirely erased. Dragons as a species are emblematic of yin, the primal force identified with the female powers of the universe (as opposed to yang, the universe's opposing and balancing male force). This is as true of Dragon Kings as Queens. Dragon Kings command the yin element of water and are associated with moisture, rain, and damp, dark caves.

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*The Dragon King has a daughter who is prominently featured in his iconography and veneration. Some theorize that she was the original Dragon Queen, now demoted but never completely removed.*

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Although Dragon Queens are among the most primordial sacred forces, many no longer recognize the spiritual implications of the phrase "dragon lady," which is now frequently construed and intended as an

insult, indicating a scheming, aggressive woman or a devious femme fatale, a predatory bitch goddess rather than a beneficent guardian.

This misogynistic definition has historically been used as a pejorative stereotype for East Asian women. However, any negative implications associated with the title “dragon lady” are solely of Western origin and probably did not exist before the twentieth century.

In East Asian cosmology, dragons are not evil or even particularly aggressive. They are regal, powerful, and benevolent. Western usage of the title “Dragon Lady” may derive from the scheming pirate queen character in Milton Caniff’s comic strip, *Terry and the Pirates*, which debuted in 1934. True Dragon Ladies are great, generally benevolent goddesses who are no more or less temperamental and volatile than any other spirit of the sea. Although the Dragon Queens have been laying low in recent centuries, they may still be invoked in the same manner as their male counterparts.

**See also:** *Aryong-Jong; Benten; Dragon Goddess of Borneo; Dragon King of the Sea; Green Jade Mother; Long Mau; Ryujin; T'ai Shan, Lord of; Toyotama-hime; Yemaya*

### **Drake, Sir Francis**

Sir Francis Drake (circa 1540–1596), navigator, pirate, politician, and reputedly a wizard, was the first Englishman to circumnavigate the globe (1570–1580). His ship was named the *Golden Hind*. According to legend, Drake had a magic mirror that enabled him to see ships all over Earth. Another legend suggests that Drake was among the coven of Devon witches who cast spells and raised storms that sank the Spanish Armada.

In 1596, Drake died of dysentery aboard his ship near Puerto Bello, Panama. On his deathbed, he ordered his drum, which had accompanied him on all his journeys, sent back to his home, Buckland Abbey in Devonshire, advising that if England was ever endangered, someone should beat on his drum. The sound would summon him to appear and lead the country to victory. All sorts of legends exist regarding Drake’s drum; notably that it beats spontaneously whenever England is threatened. Drake’s drum was heard at the start of World Wars I and II.

Sir Francis Drake leads the Wild Hunt accompanied by his Wish Hounds (possibly a corruption of Witch Hounds). He's described as driving an old-fashioned carriage-hearse pulled by headless horses. His barking Wish Hounds may be headless, too.

**See also:** *Annwn, Hounds of; Wild Hunt*

## **Draugr**

**Also known as:** Draugar; Draugr is singular *and* plural

**Origin:** Scandinavia

The Draugr are the living dead: animated corpses who emerge from the grave to roam about, causing havoc, trouble, and mayhem, not to mention panic. Draugr may be the walking dead, but they're not horror movie zombies. They are not mindless, slow, or plodding. Instead, the Draugr develops magical powers. They become oracular, possessing information from past, present, and future. Some Draugr can shape-shift, making them even more dangerous as they gain access to people and places not normally given to walking, decaying corpses.

The Draugr is simply unable to rest in peace. It's hostile toward the living in general, although Draugr tend to target their own relatives first. It is insatiably, eternally hungry and cannot be sated. The Draugr is not a ghost with a mission who will go away once that mission is accomplished. The Draugr seems unable to fully, completely die and is angry, resentful, and violent. At daybreak, they return to their graves only to rise again at night.

A clue that a corpse will become a Draugr is if it displays "restless behavior" during the funeral or en route to burial. Those who are killed by Draugr may be destined to join them. Their graves often give off eerie lights, sometimes even supernal flames. If a potential Draugr is suspected, precautions may be taken:

- The corpse is bound to the grave with magical incantations and bindrunes.
- The corpse's big toes may be tied together to hobble and prevent it

from walking.

- The corpse is removed from the home via special corpse doors, bricked up when not needed, so that it can't find its way home. (It will still walk, but it won't come home—or at least not quickly.)

Draugr chase livestock until the animals drop. Sometimes they ride them. They torment and torture people, especially those walking alone at night. People are warned to beware of knocking after dark as it may be a Draugr, although it's unclear why the Draugr bothers to knock. It's powerful enough to break down doors.

Iron amulets protect against Draugr. If one does rise, methods of stopping it do resemble horror movies: the Draugr must be staked through the heart or beheaded with its own sword. The corpse cannot be reburied but must be cremated with the ashes dispersed at sea or in remote, secret places, far from people's residences.

**Manifestation:** They look like what they are: corpses. The Draugr is not a sexy vampire; they are decaying cadavers, which become huge, bloated, and very heavy. The stench of death emanates from them. Many are shape-shifters, however, and full of surprises.

**Time:** Draugr activity tends to increase in the winter.

**See also:** *Ghost; Vampire*

## Dryads

**Origin:** Greece

Dryads are female woodland spirits. Attendants of Artemis, they are the guardians of trees, groves, and forests. The dryads live in trees but should not be confused with *hamadryads* who are stationary spirits of individual trees and who die when a tree is felled. Dryads, on the other hand, move around quite easily. To see them was considered unlucky, but this may be because as vigilant guardian spirits they most frequently made themselves visible when displeased and intent on inflicting disciplinary action.

- If trees must be cut, Dryads should be given due notice and propitiatory

offerings.

- If trees have already been cut, erect an altar by the tree with lavish offerings and hope for the best.

**Offerings:** Milk, water, wine, oil, and honey

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*Paracelsus used the name Dryad to classify a group of Elemental Spirits.*

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**See also:** *Artemis; Nymph; Ondine*

## **Dschuma**

*The Fierce Virgin*

**Origin:** Romania

Dschuma is a disease demon, a spirit of cholera. She is a harbinger of illness. She only appears when illness and epidemic are imminent. She wanders through the night, naked and wailing. She's not mourning her victims; she's crying because she's cold. She's a little girl spirit and possesses little empathy. If she'll put some clothes on and warm up, she may go away and take the threat of epidemic with her. Once she has been spotted, a ritual is immediately required to forestall an epidemic:

- Seven post-menopausal women must spin and sew one single red shirt while maintaining total and complete silence.
- The shirt must be completed in one single night.
- Once complete, the shirt is hung outside as an offering for Dschuma.
- If there's no cholera outbreak, then you'll know she's accepted the offering.

**Manifestations:** Although she usually appears as a fierce young girl, she occasionally takes the form of an elderly, toothless hag.

**Color:** Red

## Duende

**Pronounced:** *Do-en-day* (or, if spoken quickly, *dwen-day*)

In Spain and Portugal, the word *Duende* refers to spirits like goblins or sprites. Like the English term *goblin*, *Duende* is a vague term. A Duende may be any kind of small spirit. In general, they are associated with wild nature, very like a sprite, although the word is sometimes also used to indicate small household helper spirits, like a brownie or lutin. They are mischievous and sometimes have a wicked sense of humor but are generally not harmful (although there are exceptions).

In parts of Latin America, however, the term *Duende* refers to a more specific type of spirit. Duendes are tiny ghosts: souls of fetuses and unbaptized infants. They are hungry, persistent, nagging ghosts. It is difficult to reason with them or propitiate them because they do not speak or comprehend: they just yearn and crave.

The most dangerous Duendes are souls of undesired, discarded newborn infants who have been killed (suffocated, strangled, drowned, whatever) or just abandoned and left for dead. Duendes haunt sources of fresh water—rivers, streams, or springs—but they usually try to rejoin the families into which they had anticipated being born. It is unclear whether they are angry and intend to cause harm or whether their presence alone is sufficiently toxic. They are potentially harmful, especially to living siblings who are often the only ones able to see them. Duendes should be professionally exorcised, but because many are the result of secret pregnancies, they are left to cause illness and harm.

**See also:** *Lutin*

## Duna

**Also known as:** Baleri

**Origin:** Hausa



**Classification:** Bori

Duna belongs to the Seventh House of Bori spirits. He and his sorceress wife, Ladi Mayya, have three children:

- Kure the Hyena, their eldest son
- Manzo Maye, who lives with Ladi Mayya's parents in the Twelfth House of Sorcerers
- Ciwo Babu Magani, "Illness with No Medicine," who is the second wife of Dan Galadima

Duna is a master archer; his specialty is shooting women so that they are unable to bear live children. Duna's arrows cause miscarriage and stillbirth.

Duna is a nocturnal spirit, a frequent visitor in human dreams. He prefers to visit people and communicate with them via nightmares rather than ritual possession.

**Manifestation:** Duna is described as standing like a hyena; long black monkey fur hangs from his face.

**Color:** Black

**See also:** *Dan Galadima; Kure*

## Durga

*The Unconquerable One; The Invincible;  
The One Who Eliminates Suffering*

**Origin:** India

An immensely popular and beloved goddess, Durga, originally a ferocious tribal spirit, was incorporated into the Hindu pantheon as the fierce warrior path of Parvati. Durga removes physical, mental, and spiritual pain and misery. She laughs in the face of evil spirits and they flee. (Those that defy her are quickly dispatched. And if Durga can't eliminate them, her alter ego and sister spirit, Kali, can.)

Durga is a spirit of fertility and protection. She provides wealth,

eliminates obstacles and enemies, and helps attain desires. An annual fair is held during the nine-day Durga festival in Mahuadham in Bihar, India, where those afflicted or obsessed by malevolent spirits, ghosts, or vampires can be healed, exorcised, or otherwise protected.

**Manifestation:** She is blindingly beautiful with three flashing eyes and usually ten arms (occasionally she has eighteen).

**Iconography:** A beautiful, bejeweled woman rides a lion or tiger into battle. She is often depicted slaughtering a buffalo demon, her most famous myth.

**Attributes:** Trident, thunderbolt, discus, conch shell, bow and arrows, lotus, and sword

**Emblem:** Durga's yantra, a magical geometric figure, is engraved onto metal (gold, silver, copper) and worn as an amulet for a multitude of purposes.

**Mount:** Lion or tiger

**Element:** Earth

**Number:** 18

**Plants:** Turmeric; pink lotus and marigolds (*Tagetes spp.*)

**Sacred spaces:** Forest groves

**Sacred days:** Her nine-day festival, the Durga Puja, is among the most important and widely celebrated throughout India.

**Altar:** Durga's shrines are decorated with elaborate flower arrangements.

**Offerings:** Flowers; fruit, especially mangoes; sweets and incense; adorn her image with marigold garlands.

**See also:** *Kali; Parvati; Phoolan Devi; Santoshi Ma*

## Dwarves

**Origin:** Germanic; Norse

Dwarves are famous as Snow White's cuddly forest companions, but there's nothing dopey or silly about Dwarves. The fierce, warrior Dwarves of J. R. R. Tolkien's *Hobbit* and *Lord of the Rings* series of novels are truer to form. Dwarves are ancient, primeval Earth spirits, more likely to live within mountains, mines, or otherwise underground than in messy little forest cottages. Some Dwarves live near trees under great rocks or even within rocks.

Dwarves are guardians of Earth's treasures and master craftsmen. They know occult secrets in general, as well as the mysteries of metals, gems, and minerals. Crystal healers may call on them in visualizations for advice and knowledge. Dwarves are masters and teachers of smithcraft. They craft magical swords and magical jewelry. Dwarves are frequently described as greedy, but they may simply be protecting troves of treasure they have been entrusted to guard.

Dwarves are spirits of fertility and abundance. They heal and enhance personal fertility for humans as well as animals. Once upon a time, Dwarves were the subject of genuine veneration, although post-Christianity they were recast as demons, blamed for bringing disease and trouble. They are stubborn, proud spirits and not likely to accept surreptitious veneration.

Dwarves are touchy and volatile. Always address them respectfully: they are elders of the Earth. They are suspicious, cynical spirits who assume, possibly correctly, that others are always out to steal their treasure. If they can be persuaded otherwise, if you do not demonstrate acquisitive behavior, they can be exceptionally generous. They bestow knowledge and skill. Although they may not part with their own treasure, they have been known to craft special gifts for devotees. They know the secrets of healing; they can recognize illnesses modern medicine is unable to diagnose and can remedy infertility.

Norse cosmology classifies Dwarves as Dark or Black Elves. *Dark* or *Black* refers to their dwelling place, not their appearance, although Dwarves of the mines are likely as covered with soot and grime as any other miner. *Light Elves* live above ground in the sunlight; *Dark Elves* or Dwarves spend their time in subterranean realms. They may be affiliated with the Vanir spirits. They crafted Freya's priceless necklace, named

*Brisingamen*. Dwarves forged the treasures of the Aesir spirits including Odin's magic spear and Thor's invincible hammer.

**Favored people:** Smiths, masons, miners, shamans, herbalists, warriors, healers

**Manifestation:** They resemble small but sturdy and exceptionally strong humans.

**Offerings:** They are masterful bargainers and know the worth of what they produce and possess; Dwarves are not shy: they're likely to inform you what they wish to receive; don't be afraid to bargain-respectfully, of course! In the meantime, Dwarves like to drink hard liquor and have hearty appetites.

**See also:** *Elves; Freya; Knockers; Kobolds; Odin; Thor; Tommy knockers; Vanir*

## Dybbuk

According to Jewish tradition, some souls are so wicked or have committed such grievous sins that, after death, not only can't they enter Paradise, even Hell doesn't want them. There's no place for them. Instead evil angels refuse to allow these souls to rest, lashing them with fiery whips and driving them endlessly all over Earth. Jewish cosmology understands this punishment to be worse than Hell. Sometimes, however, the souls manage to escape from the avenging angels, at least for a little while.

When they escape, they attempt to hide by jumping into the nearest object or living being.

Dybbuks will enter sheep, horses, or dogs, but as human souls, it's not a comfortable fit. Dybbuk possession may also be too much for the animal, which may die shortly thereafter, either of "natural" causes or as a result of frenzied behavior intended to drive out the invader. The Dybbuk is then left exposed unless it can quickly find another host. The ideal host for a Dybbuk is another human being.

Dybbuk possession is uniformly negative. There is no such thing as

positive or benevolent Dybbuk possession. Essentially a Dybbuk is a restless, frightened, frustrated soul who may genuinely have been guilty of terrible things while alive and now takes possession and advantage of a living person. The person may be a complete stranger, simply the most convenient possible host. There are legends of Dybbuks hidden in horses jumping into the stable boy in the same way that someone upgrades their seat on an airplane.

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*Dybbuks are already dead. There's little that can be done to punish them. There's nothing you can do that's worse than those avenging angels. The crucial part of exorcism is protecting and saving the Dybbuk's living host. Exorcism is a sensitive balance of coercion and negotiation. Certain magical passages or biblical verses may force the Dybbuk to leave, but it's crucial that the Dybbuk be cooperative or else the host may be harmed, possibly fatally.*

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The word *Dybbuk* derives from a Hebrew root word meaning “to cleave to” or “to stick to.” That’s exactly what a Dybbuk does: it attaches itself to another being and refuses to leave. Dybbuks *can* be exorcised, usually by shamanic rabbis who may be able to negotiate better afterlife terms for the Dybbuk, either shortening their stay with their pursuing angels or arranging for the expiation of crimes and sins so that the Dybbuk can enter Paradise. Dybbuk exorcism must not be done by amateurs, because if done incorrectly the host can be harmed or killed. The Dybbuk is usually forced to leave the body from beneath the nail on the big toe, as that is where departure will cause the least damage to the host.

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*The Dybbuk is the most widely produced play in Jewish theatrical history, translated and performed in English, French, German, Polish, Japanese, Swedish, and many other languages. It serves as source material for two operas. The 1937 Yiddish movie version is available on DVD.*

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Some Dybbuks attempt to live silently within their hosts; their presence may remain undetected for a long time. The host simply sometimes behaves erratically or *differently*, but this Dybbuk tries very hard to stay secret and silent. Other Dybbuks assert their presence: speaking through the mouths of their hosts. The host may suddenly betray knowledge that they previously lacked. They may suddenly be fluent in languages previously unknown. Someone else's voice may emerge from the host's mouth. Some Dybbuks are arrogant, making demands, convinced that they can't be forced to leave. The most powerful may resist several exorcists. More than one attempt may be required to make them leave.

Concurrent to the European witch panic, Central and Eastern European Jewish communities had a Dybbuk panic. Most Dybbuks are male, but their victims were almost uniformly young women. Exorcists are also almost uniformly male, which makes for some interesting sexual dynamics in a sexually conservative society.

Dybbuks assumed a romantic air in the twentieth century in the wake of the hit Yiddish play *The Dybbuk* written by S. Anski (1863–1920), the pen name of folklorist Solomon Rappaport.

Anski's *Dybbuk* is a romantic tragedy: its Dybbuk is a young, poor scholar who only wishes to be with the girl he loves and had hoped to marry. It changed forever the way Dybbuks were envisioned.

**See also:** *Erinyes*; *Ghost*; *Ibur*; and the Glossary entry for *Possession*

## **Dzunukwa**

### *Wild Woman*

**Also known as:** Tsonoqua

**Origin:** Kwakiutl

Dzunukwa, an extremely complex spirit, may cause death and destruction or bestow blessings, life, wealth, and knowledge. Dzunukwa,

the Wild Woman of the Woods, lives in the mountains and deep forests of the Pacific Northwest, a dreaded cannibal who feasts on children. Hence, she serves as a warning to children not to run off alone in the woods. (“Behave yourself or Dzunukwa will get you!”) She also serves as a bogeywoman, a threat to make children behave, because allegedly her favorite food is disobedient, rebellious children.

Dzunukwa has tremendous physical and supernatural powers. Brawn or magical skill may be insufficient to defeat her. Luckily, Dzunukwa is a very literal thinker; her powers of thought are limited, and so she is easily tricked or outwitted. Myths of kidnapped children tend to end happily as the children usually manage to fool her and escape.

Dzunukwa is sometimes described as stupid, but that’s not really accurate. She has tremendous knowledge, even esoteric knowledge, of the woods, animals, and secrets of life, death, and nature. She just doesn’t think in the same way that a person does. She becomes easily disoriented when outside the forest and is not happy removed from wild nature. (In some ways, Dzunukwa resembles Baba Yaga except that Baba Yaga is very clever and sharper than most humans. *She* outwits *us*; Baba Yaga’s favors are earned via good manners and hard work.)

Dzunukwa likes to snack on children, and she can be hostile to people in general. Her best relationships tend to be with adult men. Those who can soothe and tame her may receive tremendous gifts from her. Dzunukwa can bestow wealth and good fortune. She is a font of rare knowledge, and she owns the Water of Life.

Through her son, Dzunukwa is an ancestral spirit and may protect those perceived as descendants. Dzunukwa masks are incorporated into sacred Kwakiutl ceremonies and rituals, especially those indicating her wealthy, generous aspects.

**Manifestation:** Dzunukwa is a giantess—twice human size. She’s covered in black fur and has long pendulous breasts. She’s often heard before she’s seen, making a characteristic owl-like *Hooo* sound.

**Attribute:** A large burden basket in which she carries off disobedient children (or potentially any child she can catch)

**Color:** Black

**Tree:** Cedar

**Metal:** Copper

**See also:** *Baba Yaga; Bukwas*



## **E**

### **E Bukura e Dheut**

*Earthly Beauty; Beauty of the Earth*

**Classification:** Fairy

**Origin:** Albania

E Bukura e Dheut, Queen of Albania's Fairies, rules over a host of other beautiful spirits. They are volatile, capricious, and utterly unpredictable. When encountered they may be generous and kind or maliciously destructive. E Bukura e Dheut herself is the epitome of beauty and happiness; her name is sometimes used to describe an ideal woman. She may be petitioned for help if any of her subordinates are misbehaving.

Before E Bukura e Dheut was an Albanian Fairy, she was an Illyrian goddess of beauty and love. Her lover is Tomor, supreme deity of the Illyrians, an Indo-European people, ancestors of many Albanians.

**Realm:** E Bukura e Dheut lives in a fairy-tale castle atop a mountain guarded by fabulous beasts and creatures. She may also possess an underworld realm.

**See also:** *Ana; Tiinder Ilona*

### **Each Uisge**

**Also known as:** Aughisky (Irish)

The Each Uisge is considered the most dangerous of Scotland's water spirits. *Each Uisge* literally means "Water Horse" in Gaelic, indicating its most famous manifestation. The Each Uisge is a shape-shifter; it is not limited to one form. It may appear in the guise of a sea bird or a

handsome young man with seaweed in his hair. The usual manifestation, however, is as a strikingly beautiful, mysterious, prancing horse or pony. The Each Uisge appears to be a friendly horse, someone's pet who's just wandered off. It may approach people and beckon them to mount. It's a trap. Mount the Each Uisge and it will quickly and abruptly plunge deep into the sea. Once drowned, the victim is devoured by the Each Uisge.

The Each Uisge lives in the sea and in Scotland's deep lochs. It does not necessarily target people; it's happy to consume sheep or cattle, too, although obviously it must use different ruses. It is smart and insatiably hungry. Attempts made to poison an Each Uisge who lived in Loch na Beiste, Inverness, failed. The best way to survive the Each Uisge is caution and avoidance. Should one wish to beckon them closer, the scent of roasted meat on a deserted shore in a region they are known to frequent allegedly serves as a lure.

**See also:** *Kelpie*

## **Ebisu**

**Also known as:** Yebisu; Ebisu-sama

**Origin:** Japan

**Classification:** Kami

Ebisu, kami of happiness, luck, and abundant harvests from land and sea, is one of the Shichi Fukujin, Seven Spirits of Good Fortune. Ebisu is guardian of the morning sun. He is often partnered with Daikoku, who may be his father. An alternative theory suggests that Daikoku and Ebisu are respectively master and apprentice. Two smiling spirits, they enjoy each other's company and will happily share altar space. Merchants and shopkeepers often maintain altars honoring Daikoku and Ebisu. Ebisu brings the fish. Daikoku brings the rice. Together they deliver complete and abundant bounty. This may be understood literally or as a metaphor for financial success.

Yet another myth identifies Ebisu with Hiruko, the leech baby or watery child; very first child of the primordial couple, Izanami and

Izanagi, who was born either lacking limbs or lacking bones as punishment for spiritual transgressions during his parents' wedding ceremony. When he was almost three and still unable to stand, he was placed in a boat of reeds and cast out to sea. He survived and, with time, healed. The only obvious sign of his previous disability is his limp. (Yet *another* version of the story suggests that Ebisu is the man who rescued and raised baby Hiruko.) Ebisu may be invoked to safeguard the health of young children.

Place his altar in the kitchen. Restaurants are frequently named in Ebisu's honor, especially restaurants specializing in fugu, the potentially toxic puffer fish and high-priced Japanese delicacy. Only specially trained chefs are legally permitted to serve fugu: Ebisu is their patron spirit and the guardian of their restaurants. Should you ever be unfortunate enough to suffer fugu poisoning, he is the spirit to invoke for help. (No known medical antidote exists.)

Ebisu is a bit deaf. In Osaka, devotees strike the walls of his shrine with mallets to make sure they have his attention—just something to keep in mind when attempting to communicate with him.

**Favored people:** Fishermen, those who serve in the fishing industry, children

**Iconography:** Ebisu is a smiling, bearded man wearing a tall black hat. He holds a fishing rod in one hand and a big fish in the other, usually a red sea bream.

**Attributes:** Fishing rod, fan

**Sacred creatures:** Sea bream (called *tai* in Japanese and considered *the* lucky red fish); sea bass; jellyfish; fugu; octopus

**Planet:** Sun

**Sacred day:** The twentieth day of the tenth month of the traditional Japanese calendar, known as the month without kami. All the other kami gathered for their annual convention at the Grand Shrine in Izumo. For whatever reason, possibly because he didn't hear the summons, Ebisu failed to go and so is available when all the others are not. He is also venerated in Osaka on 9–10 January and 20 October.

**Offerings:** Serve him Yebisu beer, which features a picture of him on the label; pickled daikon radish; incense.

**See also:** *Daikoku; Izanagi; Izanami; Kami; Shichi Fukujin; Susano'o*

## Echidna

**Origin:** Greece

Echidna, the snake woman, is the daughter of Gaia the Earth. (An alternative myth suggests that she's the daughter of Keto and Phorkys.) Typhon is her brother, lover, and father of her children: Cerberus; Orthrus, the Chimera; Hydra; the Nemean lion; Ladon; and the sphinx (or at least the Greek sphinx).

Echidna was born in a cave and dwells deep in a cave. She is a great goddess, mother of a pantheon of spirits, an alternative to the Olympians. Modern children's mythology books often dismiss Echidna as a cave monster. Her children are vilified as monsters; Heracles was deputized to kill many on behalf of Zeus. Hesiod described her as ageless and immortal. She was worshipped as an earthquake goddess in Phrygia, now in modern Turkey.

Echidna is a guardian of Earth's treasures. She is a repository of ancient wisdom. She can be a protective guardian. Earthquakes are the result of Echidna, the great snake, uncoiling and moving about. She is invoked to prevent earthquakes or to provide safety and minimize the damage should one occur.

**Manifestation:** Echidna is a beautiful woman from the waist up; below the waist, she is a snake. She may have wings and/or a double-tail. She possesses a snake's venom.

**Altar:** Echidna is a very private and primordial spirit. An altar in a quiet cave or grotto is best. Altars within homes should be placed in quiet corners. She may be venerated alongside Typhon, her children, Keto, and/or Gaia. Decorate altars with serpentine imagery or images of her children.

**See also:** *Car; Gaia; Heracles; Hydra; Keto; Kybele; Ladon; Olympian*

*Spirits; Pbookys; Sphinx; Typhon; Zeus*

## **E'epa**

*E'epa* is a Hawaiian term indicating a person born with something marking their close affiliation with spirits. This something, whatever it is, will manifest early; if not at birth, then in infancy or early childhood. The mark of the E'epa may be a gift: some sort of special ability, particularly psychic talents. It may be a physical manifestation, such as a baby born with a caul or teeth. It may also be what conventional society might now consider a physical disability.

The E'epa maintains relationships with spirits during life, serving as a mediator for other people. After death, the E'epa will transform into a spirit. (Special funeral rites may be required.) E'epas transform into all kinds of spirits, but many have a propensity for becoming tricksters. E'epas generally become family or ancestral spirits, protecting the family into which they were born. Because their future spiritual destiny is recognized, bonds and relationships between the E'epa and future devotees can be developed and negotiated while the E'epa is still in human form.

**See also:** *Aumakua; Kihawahine*

## **Egeria**

*Giver of Life*

**Origin:** Italian

**Classification:** Nymph

Egeria is the wise Nymph who resides with Diana in the Forest of Nemi. She is Diana's servant and assistant midwife and may be venerated independently or together with Diana. Plutarch reported that Egeria's spring gushed from a giant oak. Her waters allegedly conferred wisdom, prophetic vision and fertility. She may still be invoked for these gifts.

Egeria is a spirit of wisdom and healing. She was the lover and advisor

to Numa Pompilius, second king of Rome (after Romulus), and is credited with helping him establish official Roman state religion.

**Manifestations:** A beautiful woman or a mermaid

**Element:** Water

**Sacred sites:** Egeria is venerated in wells, springs, and grottoes within groves.

**Offerings:** Libations of spring water or milk; terra-cotta exvotos similar to modern *milagros* have been found in her spring at Nemi; *milagros* formed of any material may be offered to her now.

**See also:** *Diana; Mermaid; Nymph;* and the Glossary entry for *Milagro*

## **Eight Dharma Protectors**

### *Defenders of the Law*

**Also known as:** The Dharmapalas; Eight Terrible Ones

**Origin:** Tibet

The Dharmapalas or Dharma Protectors are guardians of truth and defenders of Buddhism. Although fierce, wrathful deities, they are simultaneously Buddhas and Bodhisattvas and so beings of sublime compassion and wisdom. They wage merciless war against enemies of Buddhism and evil spirits who prey on their devotees.

There are hundreds of Dharmapalas, but some are more widely venerated than others. The eight most popular and significant are known as the Eight Dharma Protectors:

- Begtse
- Hayagriva
- Kubera
- Mahakala
- Palden Lhamo

- Tsangpa Drakpo
- Yama
- Yamantaka

Seven are male; Palden Lhamo is the lone female. They are known as the terrible ones because of their ferocious appearance, but they are terrible in righteousness, not evil.

The Eight Dharma Protectors are among the most popular subjects of Tibetan art. Images of them are contained in most Tibetan Buddhist temples. They are perhaps the most significant subjects of devotion for ordinary Tibetans. In Tibetan folk religion, the Dharmapalas are considered somewhat akin to guardian angels. Over generations, many families share devotion to specific Dharma Protectors similar to the way generations of a family may venerate saints. Many clans and families claim affiliation with specific Dharmapalas. (Not necessarily one of the eight; there are hundreds.)

**See also:** *Begtse; Bodhisattva; Bon Spirits; Buddha; Hayagriva; Kubera; Palden Lhamo; Yama; Yamantaka*

## **Eight Immortals**

**Also known as:** Pa Hsien; Ba Xian

**Origin:** China

The Eight Immortals are Taoist spirits who, though each also venerated separately, are venerated together as a group to reinforce each other and provide even greater inspiration, wisdom, healing, and protection, similar in manner to the Seven African Powers or the Shichi Fukujin (Seven Spirits of Good Fortune). The Eight Immortals are spiritual guardians, advisors, and tutors. Allegedly historic people who achieved immortality through mastery of Taoist alchemy, some are even documented.

- They offer instruction to those deemed worthy and ready to receive it.
- They offer help and protection to the needy and desperate.

There are at least one thousand Immortals, but the ones classified

among the eight are the most popular and widely venerated. Symbolic of good fortune, their images are ubiquitous. Although individual members may vary, the standard group includes:

- Cao Guo-Jiu
- Chang Kuo-Lao
- Chung-li Ch'uan
- Han Hsiang-Tzu
- Ho Hsien-Ko
- Lan Ts'ai Ho
- Li Tieh-Kuai
- Lu Tong-Pin

**Iconography:** They are often depicted together, crossing the sea in a boat. In addition to images of the individual eight, they are sometimes represented by their attributes: sword, fan, flower basket, lotus, flute, gourd, castanets, and fish drum.

**Sacred site:** In addition to their individual shrines, they are venerated together in Taiwan's Temple of the Eight Immortals.

**See also:** *Bao Gu*; *Shichi Fukujin*; and individual entries for the Eight Immortals

## Eileithyia

**Also known as:** Eleutheria; Ilithyia; Genetyllis

**Origin:** Crete

Eileithyia is the ancient goddess of childbirth, midwifery, and birthing pains. Eileithyia is believed to be a Minoan goddess assimilated into the Greek pantheon as Hera's daughter. She works very closely with Hera and is Hera's weapon in her struggle to prevent Zeus' other wives from giving birth and threatening the sovereignty and statues of her own children. Without Eileithyia's cooperation, labor cannot go well and perhaps cannot occur at all.



Eileithya was venerated by pregnant women and those in labor to provide safety success and to lessen pain. Although comparatively little attention is paid to her in mythology books, she was actually subject of great popular veneration; she had many shrines and was considered an extremely significant deity.

**Favored people:** Midwives

**Iconography:** A woman bearing a torch or with hands upraised, as if beckoning. Some times there is one Eileithya, but sometimes she is portrayed as a pair of spirits.

**Attribute:** Torch

**Spirit allies:** Eileithya may be venerated alongside Hera and/or Artemis.

**Sacred site:** The Cave of Eileithya near Knossos, Crete, is allegedly her birthplace and was an important pilgrimage site; she is associated with caves, in general. Eileithya was a widely venerated goddess with shrines throughout Greece.

**Offerings:** Exvotos (*milagros*) in the shape of breasts; incense; water

**See also:** *Artemis; Hera; Leto; Semele; Zeus*

## **Ekajata**

**Origin:** Tibet

Ekajata, originally the Bon sky goddess, is now more popularly known as Blue Tara. She is described as wrathful, lustful, and radiant. Ekajata appears in company with Khadiravani and sometimes in the entourage of Green Tara.

**Attributes:** Skull bowl, curved knife

**Colors:** Sky blue, dark olive green

**See also:** *Bon Spirits; Dakini; Khadiravani; Tara, Blue*

## Ekeko

**Also known as:** Iqiqu (Aymara)

**Origin:** Aymara (Andes)

Ekeko, spirit of joy, abundance, and good luck, was born in the Andes but has now traveled all over the world. Ekeko, Lord of Abundance, is originally from Bolivia. His traditional image serves as a talisman to attract luck, wealth, and fertility. Since the 1970s, Ekeko has been venerated worldwide. Place Ekeko's image in the bedroom to preside over sexual activity. That is, unless you *don't* want children.

**Iconography:** Ekeko is depicted as a jovial rotund man dressed in traditional Aymara clothing. He is covered with tiny charms representing whatever he is expected to bring: moneybags; food; grain; animals; babies; household appliances and utensils; you name it.

**Festival:** The Alaska, originally celebrated near the Summer Solstice, is now held from the last week of January to the first week of February. Devotees petition Ekeko by building miniature houses in which they place tiny animals, tools, furniture, clothing, and babies, representing needs and desires for the coming year. Ekeko is expected to provide the genuine article prior to the next fair. Vendors sell a variety of tiny images at the fair.

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*There's a place for a cigarette to be inserted on many Ekeko statues (although not all). This cigarette is not only an offering but a communication device and oracle: Light the cigarette and insert it into the statue; then watch the smoke. If it resembles an actual exhalation, that's Ekeko's signal that your petition has been accepted and your wish will be fulfilled.*

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**Offerings:** A bit of whatever you are hoping to receive from him. This can be the actual article (small cash bills if you're hoping for a larger payoff) or miniature representations: tiny doll babies if you seek fertility,

for instance. Ekeko statues are now sometimes designed to hold a cigarette, similar to statues of Maximon. Other traditional offerings include Coca-cola or coca leaves.

**See also:** *Maximon*

## Elf

**Origin:** Teutonic

Elves are mysterious Northern spirits, sometimes equated with Fairies. Like Fairies, Elves have now been cleaned up and made over to suit sanitized children's fiction, often portrayed as miniature, whimsical busy bees: Santa's little helpers. Originally Elves were human-sized, sometimes taller, and they were renowned archers, artisans, and healers; author J. R. R. Tolkien's portrayal of the sacred but dangerous Elven folk in *The Lord of the Rings* trilogy of novels hews closer to mythic tradition.

Elves live in a realm that parallels humans. Norse myth divides the Elves into Light Elves and Dark Elves, otherwise known as Dwarves. Scholars disagree as to whether the Elves and the Vanir spirits are the same, but they are closely affiliated. The Vanir spirit Freyr is the Elven King.

Elves are beautiful, volatile spirits of wild nature. They were not trivial spirits; once upon a time, bulls were sacrificed to them. Their significance is recalled in human names like Alvin, Elvis, Elva, and Elvira. Elves feature prominently in Anglo-Saxon spells and charms, many intended to protect from the Elves themselves. A hostile relationship between Elves and people is often now presumed, but before Christianity, spiritual alliances existed between Elves and people. Once this alliance ended, embittered Elves, previously helpful, may have turned dangerous, or, conversely, people were taught to fear Elves specifically so that they would *not* continue Pagan devotions. In Scandinavia, however, relationships between people and Elves were generally positive.

Like Fairies, Djinn, and Bori spirits, Elves can be benevolent or hostile; some can even cause illness. Elves strike at people with the poison

known as Elf-shot, which cause illness and malaise. They may cause paralysis or stroke, too. Elves sometimes target cattle and livestock, as well as people. Various spells, charms, and amulets serve to protect against them. Elves are sources of wisdom, fertility, and wealth (when they want to be). They love music and dancing.

**Manifestation:** Seductively, alluringly beautiful

**Realm:** Alfheim (“Elf Home”)

**Plants:** Elder trees, rosemary

**Sacred time:** Offerings are traditionally left out for Elves on Christmas Eve. Although this now appears to derive from the myth of Santa’s workshop, it may actually be related to Old Norse traditions. Yuletide was a traditional time for visitations from other realms.

**See also:** *Dwarves; Freyr; Hulda; Vanir*

## Ellegba

**See:** *Eshu Elegbara*

## Elvis

### *The King*

**Classification:** Unofficial saint (some sincerely consider him an angel—no joke)

No need for last names. Go virtually anywhere in the world and mention the name Elvis and people will recognize the amazingly popular American singer Elvis Presley (8 January 1935–16 August 1977). Even those unfamiliar with his music or his biography recognize his name and/or image. He is an icon.

He may be a folk saint, too. In the years since his death, some fans have evolved into devotees. Home shrines, some small, some massive, are dedicated to the man known as the King. Visits to his grave have

taken on the aura of pilgrimage. Offerings are left for him. Elvis himself was a man with deep spiritual interests. (The book he was reading when he died, *A Scientific Search for the Face of Jesus*, is about the Shroud of Turin.)

The concept of a beloved, deceased entertainer evolving into a folk saint may be unusual in the United States but not elsewhere: for example, in Argentina, singers Carlos Gardel and Gilda are potent and popular unofficial saints. Elvis seems well on his way:

- In her essay, “Saint Elvis,” contained in the 1999 book *Elvis Culture*, author Erika Doss quotes an Elvis devotee who calls Elvis a mediator or intercessor between her and God.
- Frequent post-death sightings imply that he has somehow cheated, escaped, defeated, or transcended death.
- In life, Elvis was perceived as caring about people, including strangers. Stories circulated about extravagant gifts (Cadillacs, charitable donations). A generous, caring, empathic nature is often considered a prerequisite of sainthood.
- In the truest sign of a saint, Elvis has begun to be credited as a healer. Healing has occurred in response to his image (icon) as well as his voice.

Elvis is frequently compared to an angel and depicted as one. He was cherub of the month in a 1995 issue of *Angel Times Magazine*. Although some consider these comparisons to be humorous or poignant, others intend them quite literally.

As with the phenomenon of his musical career, the spiritual phenomenon of Elvis is multinational and international: he is a frequent subject of Mexican Day of the Dead altars and art. Images are often simply labeled *El Rey* (the King), no name needed at all. Elvis is frequently depicted as a winged angel with pompadour and cigarette.

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*An apparition of Elvis appears in Jim Jarmusch's 1990 film Mystery Train.*

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**Iconography:** Elvis was photographed *endlessly*; virtually all phases of his life are documented.

**Dates:** Elvis is feted at his birthday and memorialized on his death day. There is an annual Elvis Week every August in Memphis.

**Sacred sites:** Pilgrimage sites include:

- Graceland in general, but especially the Meditation Gardens, where Elvis, his parents, and paternal grandmother are buried
- Sun Studios in Memphis
- Sites associated with his childhood in Tupelo, Mississippi

**Offerings:** Flowers and teddy bears are particularly popular; if you'd like to cook for him, several cookbooks feature Elvis' favorite recipes.

## **Endymion**

### *He Who Finds Himself Within*

**Origin:** Greece

Endymion was a shepherd boy so beautiful that the moon fell in love with him. Selene, Goddess of the Moon, placed Endymion under a spell so that he'll sleep eternally in a mountain cave; never aging, never dying. Selene spends her days with him in the cave; all they do is make love. Endymion experiences his life as a dream, but their love is real as is the sex: Selene constantly conceives and bears their children.

Endymion is more than just Selene's lover: he was venerated as a deity on Mount Latmos in Caria (now part of modern Turkey.) Endymion sleeps eternally but simultaneously generates loads of children: he is as much a source of fertility as Selene and may be invoked independently or together with her.

He may be more than just a shepherd boy, too. Alternative myths hint that he was really royalty or that Zeus put him to sleep for daring to put the moves on Hera. Selene discovered him already sleeping in the cave and fell in love.

**See also:** *Hera; Selene; Zeus*

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*Endymion and Selene's children include the fifty Menae, the goddesses who rule the fifty lunar months of the Olympiad (a basic unit of time in ancient Greece.) Their human children are the Lorialets, also known as moon children or lunatics, although that word was not initially imbued with the modern meaning of insanity. Instead these moon-touched children are prone to fantasies and psychic vision. Lorialets are mortals. If you or someone you know is a Lorialet, then Selene and Endymion are your spiritual guardians.*

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## **Enki**

*Lord of the Earth; Lord of Waters*

**Also known as:** Ea; Oannes

**Origin:** Sumeria; Mesopotamia

Enki is the Sumerian lord of water, abundance, and wisdom. Depending on myth, he may be the creator of the universe or at least its most recent edition. He taught humanity the arts of civilization and established the rule of morality.

Enki is a trickster spirit and the owner of magic. He can heal any illness and resurrect the dead. According to Sumerian myth, Enki is the deity responsible for saving humanity from the deluge that blanketed Earth (similar to Noah's flood.) He is also ultimately responsible for rescuing and reviving Inanna-Ishtar when she is trapped in the Realm of Death.

Enki is sexually voracious. He rules semen and can bestow fertility to women as well as heal male infertility. He also bestows protection and prosperity.

**Favored people:** Enki has vowed to help anyone who seeks his aid.

**Manifestations:** He may be a merman, part human, part fish.

**Attribute:** A pair of entwined snakes. Their image closely resembles the double-helix of a DNA strand.

**Creatures:** Fish, snake

**Element:** Water

**Plant:** Reeds

**Planet:** Mercury

**Offering:** Beer

**See also:** *Ereshkigal; Inanna-Ishtar; Nanshe; Nidaba*

## **Enma**

### *Regent of Hell*

**Also known as:** Emma-O; Emma; Enmaten; Emmaten; Emma-sama; Enma-sama; Emma-Daio

Enma, Japanese Buddhist Lord of Hell, a path of Yama, Lord of Death, is the most powerful of the Kings of Hell. He rules Jigoku, the hell realm of Japanese Pure Land Buddhism. After death, Enma decides whether a human soul has been sinful or virtuous and determines their next destination. During life, people are cautioned to behave ethically because Enma is *always* watching. Enma is served by Oni. His primary opponent is the Bodhisattva Jizo.

**Manifestation:** Enma-sama is a large, imposing red-faced, black-bearded man.

**Flower:** Spider lily (*Lycoris spp.*)

**See also:** *Amida Buddha; Datsueba; Jizo; Kings of Hell; Oni; Wanyudo; Yama*



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*Enma and his son, Koenma (“Little Enma”), run the Spirit World in the Japanese manga/anime series YuYu Hakusho.*

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## **Enyo**

*Warlike*

**Origin:** Greece

Enyo is Ares’ sister, friend, lover, and companion. She accompanies him on the battlefield where she exults in battle. Enyo may or may not be the same as Ares’ sister, Eris. She is the spirit who destroys cities during war.

**Manifestation:** She often, but not always, appears covered in blood.

**See also:** *Ares; Eris*

## **Eos**

**Origin:** Greece

**Classification:** Titan

Eos, Goddess of Dawn, is the sister of Helios and Selene. Every morning, at dawn, she opens the gates of the sky with her rosy fingers so that Helios can ride. She is the dawn: when dawn is visible, that means Eos is present.

She is a golden goddess who wears robes dyed gold, orange, and crimson with saffron, Earth’s most expensive, luxurious spice. Native to Western Asia, saffron is believed to have been first cultivated in Greece. It produces beautiful dyes, long associated with spirituality: the robes of Buddhist monks are dyed with saffron. The color ranges from yellow to deep red. Saffron is also an aphrodisiac: Eos is a lusty goddess, a free spirit who takes lovers as she will. She is a spirit of fertility: she and Astraios are the parents of the winds, many stars, and the planet Venus.

Eos is a warrior goddess: she emerges at dawn to drive off recalcitrant

nocturnal demons. They flee at her presence. Her son, Memnon, an Ethiopian king, fought on the side of the Trojans during the Trojan War and was killed by Achilles. Eos' tears moved Zeus, another of her lovers, to resurrect Memnon and grant him immortality. The image of Eos cradling the corpse of her naked bearded son was immensely popular and may have served as a model for the Christian Pietà. The poses are virtually identical.

Eos is a goddess of wisdom and a defender against demons. Ask her to banish malevolent nocturnal spirits. She is an erotic goddess of fertility and may be petitioned for assistance with romance and conception.

**Manifestation:** Eos is a radiantly beautiful woman. She may have wings.

**Iconography:** Eos is portrayed flying across the sky of her own volition, powered by her wings, or driving a golden chariot pulled by winged horses.

**Plant:** Saffron crocus

**Creature:** Snake

**See also:** *Aurora; Helios; Selene; Thetis*

## **Epona**

### *Lady of the Stables*

**Origin:** Celtic

Epona is a great and important goddess, guardian spirit of horses and their riders. Her name derives from *Epos*, a Celtic word indicating "horse." She is never portrayed without one, but Epona is more than just a spirit who oversees horses. She is an extremely complex deity who was once widely venerated throughout Europe.

Epona is a spirit of abundance and plenty, healing, and death. She is a goddess of peace and the matron of soldiers. Her shrines incorporated therapeutic healing springs.

Her carved image appears several times within an ancient Pagan

cemetery near what is now Metz, France. Epona may be a psychopomp. One cemetery carving depicts Epona riding her mare, followed by a man whom she may be leading to the Afterlife.

The ancient Celts perceived horses as oracular animals, more closely attuned to the will and desires of spirits than human beings, even shamans and priests. Various rituals involving horses were intended to reveal the desires of the deities. Epona is likely to have been an oracular spirit. She may or may not be the same spirit as Rhiannon.

As with virtually all Celtic goddesses, little documentation regarding Epona exists. Attempts are made to piece together her myth and history using archaeological evidence. She was popular throughout virtually the entire ancient Celtic world. Roman soldiers encountered her in Gaul and adored her, literally. Uniquely for a Celtic deity, Epona was brought to Rome, enshrined, and assigned her own official feast day, indicating her official recognition as part of the Roman state religion.

Epona was especially popular during the first through the fourth centuries CE. She was venerated by a wide spectrum of Romano-Celtic society. Epona was beloved by Roman cavalry officers who adopted her as their own guardian goddess. The Roman legions carried veneration of Epona throughout the Roman Empire. Epona was venerated in Britain, Gaul, the Rhineland, North Africa, Rome, and as far away as Bulgaria. Her major Celtic shrine was in Burgundy, renowned as a center of horse breeding.

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*Epona was not identified with any Roman goddesses but incorporated into the Roman pantheon in her own right.*

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Epona is the matron of soldiers. She has dominion over horses, donkeys, and mules. Those who care for them may consider themselves under Epona's dominion, too. Those who abuse them should probably avoid attracting Epona's attention.

**Favored people:** Horse breeders, horse traders, horse whisperers, horse

doctors, equestrians, cavalry

**Iconography:** Epona is never represented without a horse. A typical image portrays Epona riding side-saddle on a mare. A foal sleeps beneath its mother, suckles from its mother, or eats from a plate that Epona offers. Alternatively Epona is portrayed sitting between several horses that approach her in homage, or she sits between male and female ponies and feeds them. She is occasionally portrayed as a mermaid on horseback.

**Attributes:** A key, cornucopia, basket of fruit, the cloth once traditionally used to start horse races

**Spirit allies:** The Mothers are Epona's sometime companions.

**Sacred animals:** Horses, but also dogs and ravens

**Sacred day:** 18 December, her Roman feast

**Offerings:** Cakes, fruit, and something for her horses

**See also:** *Despoena; Macha; Mermaid; Mothers; Rhiannon;* and the Glossary entry for *Identification*

## **Ereshkigal**

### *Great Lady Beneath the Earth*

**Also known as:** Allat; Allatu (The Goddess); Irkalla

**Origin:** Sumeria

Ereshkigal is the Goddess of the World Below, the Land of No Return. She rules the Mesopotamian realm of death. Ereshkigal is Inanna's sister, rival, or alter ego. Descriptions of Ereshkigal and her realm are found in the Sumerian hymn, *The Descent of Inanna* (available in English translation). The descent that Inanna makes is to Irkalla, Ereshkigal's realm of death.

Ereshkigal is great and powerful, if forbidding. Queen of the Dead, she also possesses power over life: Ereshkigal has access to the Water of Life,

capable of resurrecting the dead.

Ereshkigal is a tempestuous, volatile, aggressive spirit. She commands and compels the dead. Her powers are invoked in necromantic spells from the magical papyri of Alexandria, Egypt. An Akkadian hymn recounts the union of Ereshkigal and Nergal. Nergal was delegated to deliver food offerings to Ereshkigal; unexpectedly they fell passionately in love and she conceived. When Nergal returned to his home in the court of the spirits, Ereshkigal threatened the supreme authorities with a zombie army, unless Nergal was sent back to her. She vows to raise the dead so that they devour the living. Unless her “request” is granted, the dead will outnumber the living. No attempts were made to call her bluff. Nergal was allowed to return.

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*Ereshkigal is sometimes called Allat, a title that means “goddess” or “feminine divine.” Some scholars speculate that she is the same spirit as the Arabian deity also named Allat, although from the modern perspective, their dominions seem very different. Allat may have been a title for many female deities. Much information has been lost regarding pre-Islamic Middle Eastern goddesses; however, for what it’s worth, contemporary Greeks compared Arabian Allat to Athena and Aphrodite, not Persephone.*

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**Manifestations:** Ereshkigal may manifest as a woman but she may also appear with a lioness’ head on a woman’s body.

**Attribute:** Her scepter is a snake.

**Consort:** Nergal

**Spirit allies:** Gestinana and Belit-Seri, Lady of the Desert, serve as Ereshkigal’s personal secretaries, writing down her decrees.

**Animals:** Snakes, scorpions, lions

**Realm:** The “Big Land” Irkalla, realm of no return (*Irkalla* names Ereshkigal and her realm in the same way that *Hades* is lord and realm)

**Offerings:** Offerings made to the dead eventually find their way to Ereshkigal.

**See also:** *Allat; Gestinana; Hades; Inanna-Ishtar; Nergal; Tammuz*

## **Erichtonios**

**Origin:** Greece

Erichtonios is Athena's serpent son. Hephaestus is generally considered to be his father. Various myths explain the circumstances of Erichtonios' conception:

- Having married Athena, Hephaestus leads her to the bridal chamber to consummate their union. At the crucial moment, Athena vanishes. Hephaestus ejaculates on the ground from whence Erichtonios emerges.
- Hephaestus, lusting for Athena, pursues her and tries to assault her, but she escapes, leaving him to ejaculate on the ground, from whence Erichtonios emerges.
- Hephaestus rubs up against Athena and ejaculates on her leg. She wipes away the semen with some wool, from which Erichtonios emerges.
- Hephaestus and Athena secretly marry and conceive Erichtonios the old-fashioned way. Athena gives birth to him secretly, but his serpentine appearance reveals her own secret, suppressed snake identity. It is not sufficient to abandon this baby; he must be hidden along with his mother's true identity.

Athena put Erichtonios in a round, covered basket or chest, which she gave to the three Aglaurides sisters to guard, forbidding them to look within. Of course, they peeked and then threw themselves from the Acropolis to their deaths.

The festival of Chalkeia celebrated Athena and Hephaestus' nuptials, complete with a bridal ritual. Nine months later, the Panathenaea enacted the Mysteries of Erichtonios, his birth. As a Mystery spirit, little clear information survives about him.

**See also:** *Aglaurides; Aglauros; Athena; Gaia; Hephaestus; Metis*

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*The famous statue of Athene Parthenos (“Athena the Virgin”) featured a serpent behind her shield, allegedly a portrait of Erichthonios.*

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## **Erinle**

### *Elephant of the Earth*

**Also known as:** Inle; Eyinle

**Origin:** Yoruba

**Classification:** Orisha; Orixá

**Feast:** 24 October

Erinle is the beautiful orisha of wealth, fertility, and abundance. He is the spirit of having it both ways. He is the underwater king and a spirit of the bush. Erinle is a water spirit. The source of Nigeria’s River Erinle is near Oshogbo, location of Oshun’s major shrine. (After Oshun’s period of devastating poverty, she wed Erinle and was restored to a position of wealth.) Erinle is present where salt and sweet waters meet and merge.

He is also a hunter who lives in the forest together with his close allies, Ogun, Ochossi, and Osain. He is a warrior and a healer. He is the divine physician.

- Erinle is syncretized to the Archangel Raphael.

**Favored people:** Although many of his devotees are heterosexual, Erinle is considered the special patron of gays, lesbians, bisexuals, and the transgendered. Children born with umbilical cords twined around their arm are believed to be under his dominion.

**Manifestation:** A handsome, androgynous man lavishly dressed in luxurious fabrics and bedecked with coral and cowries

**Attributes:** Cowries, emblematic of wealth; fishing rod; bow and arrows

**Colors:** Coral, indigo, turquoise

**Metal:** Gold

**Number:** 7

**Altar:** Activate his altar with river pebbles.

**Offerings:** Small metal fish charms; sparkly fish images; Swedish fish candy

**See also:** *Abatan; Boyuto; Logunedé; Ochossi; Ogun; Orisha; Osain; Oshun; Raphael*

## Erinyes

*The Strong Ones; The Angry Ones;  
The Night Born Sisters; The Kindly Ones*

**Also known as:** The Furies; the Eumenides; Errinys

**Origin:** Greece

When Kronos castrated Uranus, drops of blood fell onto Gaia and she conceived the Erinyes, infernal spirits of justice, vengeance, and righteousness.

There are three Erinyes:

- Alecto: “Never Ending”
- Megaera: “Envious Anger”
- Tisiphone: “Face of Retaliation”

The Erinyes are not interested in legal codes; they are spirits of primeval natural law and severely punish those who flout these laws. They are scary spirits. Among the crimes they punish are homicides, perjury, crimes against deities, and murder against one’s own blood kin. When the Erinyes are not busy on Earth, they serve Hades and Persephone, supervising (and inflicting) punishment in Hades’ dungeons. They may also serve Ananke. They call Hades their home.



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*Other versions of their ancestry suggest that the Erinyes are the daughters of Nyx or Eurynome. Disciples of Orpheus claimed that the Erinyes were the children of Hades and Persephone.*

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The Erinyes may appear on their own volition in response to crime, but they may also be invoked to provide justice. Victims may call down the curse of the Erinyes against those who have harmed them. The Erinyes are particularly involved in family feuds, especially when one family member kills another. It may have been considered safer to allow the Erinyes to prosecute these crimes rather than extend blood feuds.

The Erinyes are particularly defenders of motherhood and Mother Right, the matriarchal concept that emphasizes the sacredness of mothers (as opposed to the authority of fathers). They appear when mothers are insulted, abused, or murdered. They will defend the rights of other family members, too (fathers, eldest brothers), but Mom is their priority. They pursue those who flout blood kinship.

Their most famous myth is the story of Orestes, son of Clytemnestra and Agamemnon. Clytemnestra murdered Agamemnon in revenge for his sacrificing their daughter, Iphigenia. Apollo ordered Orestes to avenge his father by killing his murderer, even if it was his mother. When Orestes fulfilled the command, the Erinyes attacked. This eventually led to a dispute between deities as to which was most crucial: avenging your father or not killing your mother. Apollo and Zeus led the former argument; the Erinyes insisted on the latter. The Erinyes would have been victorious in this dispute between the old primeval order and what mythologist Karl Kerényi calls “the whole new theocracy founded by Father Zeus” until Athena cast the deciding vote for Zeus.

Athena renamed the Erinyes, calling them the Eumenides, “the Kindly Ones.” This allegedly marks a transformation in their nature, although many believe it to be merely a euphemism, the equivalent of hopefully addressing a snarling dog as “good doggy.” The Erinyes star in “The Kindly Ones,” part of author Neil Gaiman’s *The Sandman* comic book series.

The Erinyes are invoked when you seek justice and revenge. They afflict their victims with insanity and madness, their wrath placated only with correct ritual cleansing (hence the need for Medea to receive cleansing rites from Circe following the murder of her brother). They may also set acts of penance, which must be accomplished.

**Manifestations:** The Erinyes bark: that's the telltale sign of their approach. You'll hear their barking before you see or smell them. The Erinyes are spirits out of a horror movie. They are not alluringly beautiful spirits. Their bodies and breath smell bad. They have venomous serpents for hair. Blood and some kind of venomous moisture exudes from their rheumy eyes. They may have wings like a bat or large bird. The Erinyes may wear black mourner's robes or dress in the short skirt of a hunting maiden (like Artemis). They may appear dancing a circle-dance. Tisiphone is described as wearing a bloodstained sheet. She is the guardian of the gates of Tartarus.

**Iconography:** Frequent subjects of artwork, generally they are portrayed as far more attractive than their descriptions.

**Attributes:** Whips with brass-studded thongs; torches

**Animals:** Dogs, snakes

**See also:** *Alastor; Ananke; Apollo; Athena; Circe; Eurynome; Gaia; Gorgons; Hades; Iphigenia Keres; Kronos; Medea; Nyx; Orpheus; Persephone; Zeus*

## **Eris**

*Strife*

**Also known as:** Discordia

**Origin:** Greece

Eris, goddess of discord, chaos, and strife, is the sister of Ares and among the spirits who accompany him onto the battlefield. Her most famous appearance in mythology is a nonappearance: Eris was snubbed. She did not receive an invitation to Thetis' wedding, a major social event for the

Olympian pantheon. Her revenge was subtle: she tossed a beautiful golden apple inscribed simply “For the fairest” into the banquet room and watched chaos and discord ensue. Hera, Aphrodite, and Athena all vied for the apple. (Apparently no one considered that it might be for the bride.) Resulting strife led to the Judgment of Paris and ultimately the Trojan War.

- Eris is the primary deity of the Discordian religion, also known as Erisian.
- She makes frequent appearances on the animated television series *The Grim Adventures of Billy and Mandy*.

**Iconography:** Eris is portrayed as a pretty woman with dark wings. Her feet may also be winged.

**Attribute:** A golden apple: the Apple of Discord

**See also:** *Aphrodite; Ares; Athena; Hera; Thetis*

## **Erlík Khan**

**Origin:** Mongolia

In a primordial era, prior to creation of our world, Erlík Khan was the spirit of Venus, the Morning Star. Each morning before dawn, he slaughters all the other stars. After Earth was created, Tengri, supreme creator, destroyed Erlík’s celestial territory. Erlík Khan requested even a tiny plot of land on Earth, but apparently no room could be found for him: he was given a subterranean realm instead. He is King of the Mongolian Underworld, a Hades-like figure. Under Buddhist influence, he was further demoted and classified as a demon.

Erlík Khan is a proud, brooding spirit. He has spent centuries plotting his revenge. In the Mongol vision of the Apocalypse, at the end of time, Erlík Khan will emerge from his realm accompanied by an entourage of nine iron warriors riding nine iron horses. Everyone and everything in their path will be destroyed. People will beg for help from various deities but will receive no response, possibly because Erlík Khan’s posse got to them first. His two most powerful warriors will attack Buddha

Shakyamuni. Earth will be consumed by flames emerging from his blood. Until then, Erlik Khan waits ...

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*A character named Erlik Khan is an arch-foe of Marvel comic book hero Dr. Strange.*

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**Metal:** Iron

**Planet:** Venus

**See also:** *Buddha; Demon*

## **Eros**

**Origin:** Greek

Eros is not just the little winged fat angel baby found on Valentine's Day cards, the equivalent of Cupid. He is a profound, primeval force of love. According to Hesiod's *Theogony*, in the beginning there was Chaos. From Chaos emerged Gaia (Earth), Nyx (Night), and Eros (Love and the erotic impulse).

That's one version of his origins, but there are many:

- He may be the child of Nyx and the Wind, hatched from a silver egg, known as the firstborn of the gods.
- He may be the son of Aphrodite and either Hephaestus or Ares.

Eros is the spirit of beauty, youth, vitality, desire, sexuality, and pleasure. He is the erotic impulse without which life would cease. He has a double, a twin or alter ego, called Himeros "Desire." In some versions, Aphrodite brought Eros to live on Earth as her companion and servant. Second-century Pagan Gnostics considered Eros the spirit closest to people. They envisioned him as an eternal child (hence all those greeting card images).

**Manifestation:** A radiantly beautiful androgynous young man who may have wings

**Sacred site:** He had a shrine in the ancient Greek city of Thespieae, near Mount Helicon.

**See also:** *Anteros; Aphrodite; Ares; Eros; Gaia; Hephaestos; Nerites; Nyx*

## **Eros**

**Also known as:** Amoretti; Putti

**Origin:** Greek

The Eroses are winged spirits of love, servants and messenger of Eros (who is sometimes classified among the Eroses). They accompany humans during life. After death, they serve as psychopomps, guiding souls to the next realm.

The following spirits may be considered Eroses:

- Eros: primeval spirit, eldest of the Eroses, Lord of Love
- Anteros: spirit of requited love
- Hedylogos: spirit of sweet talk, pillow talk, and the come-on line
- Hermaphroditus: spirit of the perfect, complete union of female and male
- Himeros: spirit of sexual desire
- Hymenaios: spirit of the wedding
- Pothos: the spirit of yearning

**See also:** *Anteros; Eros*

## **Eshu Elegbara**

*Tree of Justice*

**Also known as:** Elegba; Elegua; Legba; Papa Legba; Atibon Legba

## **Origin:** West Africa

Eshu Elegbara is the master of the crossroads. He is the lord of communications, guardian of gates. He is the owner of all roads, paths, and thresholds, literal and metaphoric. He owns the highway, the path to your door, and the Road to Success.

Eshu Elegbara is venerated throughout West Africa. He is incorporated into different pantheons, and thus different myths are told of him; however, his essence remains the same. Because he is venerated by different cultures with different languages, different variations of his name exist:

- Eshu
- Elegba
- Legba

Eshu Elegbara journeyed to the Western Hemisphere with enslaved devotees, where he emerged as one of the most significant, widely venerated spirits of African-Diaspora religions. He is called Papa Legba in Haiti, Elegua in Cuba, and Exu in Brazil. He may or may not be the same spirit as Palo's Lucero.

Eshu opens and closes roads. He is invoked to remove obstacles from your path and to obstruct enemies and misfortune so they can't reach you. He is an intense trickster but also a force for justice. Eshu is a lover of truth. Nothing can be hidden from him.

Eshu Elegbara mediates between people and the other spirits. Traditionally when one wishes to communicate with other spirits, one first asks Legba to open the door. He is the first spirit invoked in African-Diaspora spiritual ceremonies. Legba opens the gate for the other spirits to follow.

Papa Legba may be invoked when you stand at any crossroad and need direction. If you are literally lost and don't know which way to turn, call his name and wait for a sign. Invoke him when spiritual communications are not going well. Invoke him by crossing bones at a crossroads or by leaving a small cairn of bones for him there.

Theoretically there is nothing Papa Legba cannot do. He enables the lame to walk. He transforms bad luck into good and vice versa. Eshu

Elegbara blesses devotees with the gift of manual dexterity, thus he is beloved by musicians as well as gamblers, dice players, and practitioners of three-card monte. Legends of bluesmen like Robert Johnson receiving extraordinary musical talents at the crossroads may derive from vestigial memories of Papa Legba. All one must do to receive these blessings is go to the crossroads and ask. There's no selling of souls involved. At worst, Elegba will ignore you and you're left where you started. Bring your instrument to be blessed (guitar, dice, whatever).

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*Eshu Elegbara is something of a practical joker. He likes word games. Be careful how you phrase requests, and cultivate a sense of humor. He is an easily pleased spirit and not particularly avaricious: a glass of rum once a week and a cigar or some candy on special occasions keeps him content. He is among the most powerful and proactive of spirits: don't ask for his help unless you're ready for change.*

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He is syncretized to the Holy Child of Atocha, the Anima Sola, Saint Anthony, and Saint Peter, another guardian of gates.

**Manifestations:** He may have over 121 paths and manifestations. His original form in Africa was as a handsome, virile young man. This manifestation did not survive the Middle Passage. In the Western Hemisphere, Eshu Elegbara may manifest as a merry, tricky little boy or as an old limping man, weary from walking the world. He may dress in Masonic garb.

**Iconography:** In Africa, he is sometimes venerated in the form of a phallus. His iconic image is a ritually prepared concrete head with cowrie shell eyes and ears. Statues of the Holy Child of Atocha are used to represent him. His image is usually kept near or behind the front door.

**Attributes:** Key, cross, crutches, cane, shepherd's crook, walking stick

**Colors:** Red, black

**Number:** 3 (two legs and a phallus)

**Animal:** Mouse

**Planet:** Sun

**Day:** Monday

**Tree:** Calabash

**Offerings:** Rum, candy, cigarettes, candy cigarettes, toys; he likes his food spicy: lace with hot sauce and peppers.

**See also:** *Carrefour, Maitre; Exu; Legba; Lucero*

## **Europa**

**Origin:** Greece

Europa may be among the daughters of Tethys and Oceanus. She evoked Zeus' lust when he saw her picking flowers near the Phoenician seashore. He approached her in the form of a beautiful, fragrant tri-colored bull. Europa sat on his back and let him carry her out to sea. Zeus brought her to Crete, which became their love nest. His wedding gift to her was a gold necklace crafted by Hephaestus and a spear that never missed its target. Various magical creatures were sent to serve as her guardians, including a brass dog and Talos, the brazen robot. Beneath the myth may lurk a primordial moon goddess; possibly a Minoan sacred cow.

**Manifestation:** A radiantly beautiful woman, possibly winged

**Attributes:** Fish, flowers, vines laden with grapes

**Planet:** Moon

**Constellation:** Zeus allegedly placed Taurus in the sky to honor Europa.

**See also:** *Hephaestus; Oceanus; Tethys; Zeus*



## Eurybia

**Origin:** Greece

Eurybia is the Spirit of the Mastery of the Sea. Her name means “wide force.” She is not the spirit of the sea itself but of the various forces that influence the sea, including winds and weather. The moon is still recognized as influencing the tides, but once upon a time different planets, stars, and constellations were understood as also affecting the sea. Eurybia has charge of all of these.

Her parents may be Gaia and Pontus. Depending on the version of the myth, Eurybia is the mother or grandmother of many spirits, including Astraios, Astraea, Hekate, the Anemoi, Nike, Bia, and Selene. (See their individual entries for further details.)

**Consort:** Krios, a Titan

## Eurynome

**Origin:** Pelasgian

In the beginning, according to the creation story of the Pelasgians, early inhabitants of Greece, Eurynome, the All-Goddess and primal mother, rose from Chaos. Dividing the sky from the waters, she began to dance on the waves. Out of the wind, Eurynome created a huge serpent and named him Ophion. They danced together, then Ophion coiled about her and she conceived. Eurynome transformed into a dove and brooded over the waters. She laid the universal egg and bade Ophion coil around it until it was time to hatch. Out of that egg emerged all of Creation, Earth’s planets, and all living creatures, all children of a goddess and a primordial snake.

Eurynome was assimilated into the Greek pantheon as a Titan. She may be the mother of the Erinyes and Charites.

**Manifestation:** Eurynome may manifest as a winged woman or as a mermaid.

**See also:** *Atargatis; Charites; Erinyes; Jabi; Nyx; Titan;* and the Glossary

entry for *Pantheon*

## Exotika

**Origin:** Greece

Greek spirits aren't only ancient or Classical: the Exotika are a pantheon of modern Greek spirits. Exotika means "things outside" or "things beyond." They are non-Christian spirits existing in Christian context. From a Christian perspective, spirits are either allied with God or the devil. The Exotika are spirits who are non-or pre-Christian, thus they are generally considered malevolent or, at least, outside the pale of safety.

**See also:** *Charos; Gello; Gorgon; Kallikantzari; Lamia of the Sea; Lamiae; Neraida; Zeus*

## Extra-terrestrials

**Also known as:** Aliens

Why are spirits and deities called celestial beings? Because many come from the sky. Once upon a time, people told tales of supernaturally powerful beings arriving from the sky and called them gods. In a scientific world, very similar beings are now called "extra-terrestrials."

The stories are old, but the perpetrators have been reevaluated. Tales of human women forcibly impregnated to spawn offspring for invaders from the sky could as easily be told of Zeus as aliens. Stories of alien abduction and people eventually returned, but never the same, could be as easily told of Fairies as of aliens. The Raelian Movement suggests that extra-terrestrials created Earth. It denies the existence of a being called God; instead extra-terrestrials sparked spiritual traditions, which evolved into major religions.

In the second season of the new *Dr. Who* television series, Madame du Pompadour addresses the time-traveling alien known as "the Doctor" as a "lonely angel." Each avatar of the Doctor has a title: the title given the tenth Doctor is "the lonely god." In episode two of the fourth season,

“The Fires of Pompeii,” a family that the Doctor has rescued from the eruption of Mount Vesuvius is shown worshipping the Doctor at a very authentic Roman household altar. The Doctor and Donna, his traveling companion, are venerated as this family’s protective household gods.

On the other hand, spirits are also invoked to prevent alien abductions. Modern Mexican exvotos testify to help given by the Holy Mother and various saints in protecting devotees from aliens.

**See also:** *Fairy; Zeus;* and the Glossary entry for *Avatar*

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*The October 5, 2007, issue of The UK Times Online listed the Lord God as the number-one top ranking of the forty most memorable aliens.*

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## **Exu**

**Pronounced:** *Eh-shoo*

The West African trickster spirit Eshu Elegbara is Master of Roads. He determines whether someone’s path is clear or blocked with obstacles. Eshu determines how easy or challenging an individual’s life will be. Devotion to Eshu Elegbara was widespread; he is common to many West African pantheons. Because of this, Eshu Elegbara exists in virtually all African-Diaspora traditions although, as befitting a trickster, his name, appearance, and personality is slightly different wherever he manifests.

In Brazil, Eshu Elegbara evolved into Exu, a special, unique kind of spirit. He manifests differently in Brazil than elsewhere. The Exus are a category unto themselves: there are many Exus or at least many individual aspects or manifestations of one Exu. He serves as a messenger and medium. Each orixa has its own Exu serving as a private messenger. This definition of Exu is common to Afro-Brazilian traditions.

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*Theoretically the female path of Exu is known as Exua; however, his usual*

*consort and female alter ego is Pomba Gira.*

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Perceptions of Exu depend upon spiritual convictions of the perceiver. Those with more purely African or Pagan orientations perceive Exu as dangerous and volatile but not inherently evil. He is a miracle healer and provides opportunities and good fortune. Those of a more conservative Christian orientation, however, perceive Exu as evil or even as the devil, which may not stop them from asking for his help but will color the way they behave toward Exu—and perhaps vice versa.

Exu is closely identified with the Christian devil; the two are sometimes perceived as synonymous. Like the Christian devil, Exu signals his appearance with the scent of sulphur. Statues of horned red devils are used to represent Exu.

He is a trickster; he likes to have fun. Only those with a sense of humor should invoke him: expect the joke to be on you. If you are afraid of him and expect the worst, don't invoke him. He can read your heart and may have fun fulfilling your expectations. However, he can be a dedicated guardian and a very benevolent provider. There is no illness he cannot cure. Invoke Exu for protection from evil. He fears *nothing*; there is no road he is afraid to travel.

- Ask him to scare away the devils that frighten you.
- Ask him to protect you from your own evil impulses.

**Iconography:** Typically as a red or black devil, but he has many manifestations. Some images feature dapper dress; others are very primal and phallic.

**Attributes:** Pitchfork; an iron trident

**Colors:** Red, black

**Numbers:** 3, 7

**Plant:** Wormwood (*Artemisia absinthium*), known as Absinto in Portuguese

**Offerings:** Tobacco products; sugarcane; honey; favored beverages

include Cachaça (Brazilian white rum), absinthe, and rum, especially rum steeped with hot peppers:

- Cut slits into a lot of spicy hot peppers\* and place them in a glass decanter.
- Pour rum over them and seal the decanter.
- Let the rum steep for a while (three weeks? seven weeks?).
- Serve the rum to Exu. Be careful! It's hot.
- Ideally use Brazilian peppers such as bird or malagueta peppers, but not the Brazilian pepper tree (*Schiaus terebinthiflorius*), which is not a true pepper. Be sure not to touch your eyes or other sensitive parts of the body before cleaning your hands *very* well.

**See also:** *Eshu Elegbara; Fairy, Green; Padilha, Maria; Padilla, Maria de; Pomba Gira*

## Ezili

**Classification:** Lwa

**Origin:** Dahomey (Benin)

Ezili names a family of freshwater spirits from Dahomey who are now among the most powerful and significant female spirits of Haitian Vodou. Their name derives from Lake Azili, which is approximately fifty miles east of Abomey. The Ezilis are beautiful snake-women spirits similar to Mami Waters. The snakes with which the Ezilis are associated are beautiful, glittery, potentially deadly snakes. In her most traditional aspect, Ezili is a woman from the waist up, a snake down below. Their common attribute is a jeweled knife. They are spirits of wealth, abundance, beauty, and fertility. When Dahomean slaves arrived in what was then Saint Domingue but is now Haiti, they saw the Mater Dolorosa, an iconic image of Mary that features a beautiful, bejeweled woman pierced by swords. They recognized the essence of Ezili in the image.

That's one way of looking at Ezili. Alternatively there was originally only one African snake spirit named Ezili. She traveled to Haiti; her reaction to the trauma of slavery and its aftermath was to fracture. She

is one spirit possessing multiple personalities. Yet another way of comprehending Ezili is as sisters in one family and their different destinies. Ezili Freda, the sister who can pass for white, became a courtesan. Her darker-skinned sister, Ezili Dantor, became a revolutionary.

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*Some perceive all the Ezilis to be aspects of Ezili Freda Dahomey.*

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The most prominent of the Ezilis is Ezili Freda Dahomey. If people discuss Ezili as if there is only one, then she is almost invariably the one they mean. The Ezilis are competitive spirits. Like sisters, they engage in rivalries and do not necessarily get along. It is not considered beneficial to ask different Ezilis to work on the same issue for you. They will just squabble with each other and never get around to you. Different Ezilis are syncretized to different manifestations of Mary.

**See also:** *Hera; Laveau, Marie; Mami Waters; Sili Kenwa*

### **Ezili Baleine**

**See:** *Baleine, La*

### **Ezili Dantor**

**Also known as:** Ezili Danto; Sili Danto

Ezili Dantor is Ezili Freda's hardworking black sister. She is independent and beholden to no one. Ezili Dantor is sick of crying. She's had enough tears. She's a spirit of rage and initiative instead. Ezili Dantor is honored as the spirit who initiated the Haitian Revolution. She fought in the Revolution alongside men. Her lover and partner was Ogoun. When the revolution ended, he cut out her tongue so she couldn't reveal secrets. In addition to Ogoun, her consorts include Ti Jean Petro and/or Simbi

Makaya. Some say she only has sex with male spirits so as to have the children she adores. She really prefers sex with women.

Ezili Dantor lives and breathes for her daughter, Anais. Some consider Anais her only child, but she may have others, too, including a son, Jan Dantor. Some say she has seven children and place seven dolls on her altar to represent them. An image of another daughter, Manbo Zila, as created by Haitian artist Pierrot Barra, is included in Donald Cosentino's book, *Vodou Things*. Ezili Dantor serves as inspiration for artist Betye Saar's 1996 mixed media assemblage, "Midnight Madonnas."

Ezili is a guardian of women, especially single mothers.

- Ask her to help you collect your child support.
- Ask her to help you become so financially self-sufficient that you don't need anyone else's money.
- Ask her for help if you are trapped in an abusive relationship.

Ezili punishes or manifests anger via shooting, stabbing pains. Someone who has offended her (or harmed her devotee) may begin to inexplicably vomit blood. She may cause rapists to hang themselves.

She engages in mystic marriages with devotees, female as well as male. (See the Glossary entry for Marriage for further details.)

Ezili Dantor is syncretized to the Black Madonna of Czestochowa. (The image was brought to Haiti by Polish legions sent to fight for Napoleon. Appalled by the slavery they witnessed, many Polish soldiers mutinied and switched sides.) The child in her arms has been reinterpreted as Anais. The scratches on her face were inflicted by her sister, Ezili Freda. (The knife in Ezili Freda's heart was inflicted by Dantor.)

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*Ezili Dantor may be venerated alongside her daughter, Anais. Anais understands her mother perfectly and is very articulate. She often serves as her mother's translator.*

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**Favored people:** Single mothers; working women; market women;

lesbians; female soldiers; stroke victims; her children (that's *you*, if she accepts you as a devotee)

**Manifestation:** A sturdily built dark-skinned woman; she may have facial scars; she may or may not be able to speak. She holds a child with one hand and a knife in the other.

**Iconography:** Ezili Dantor is represented by the Black Madonna of Czestochowa. La Madama statues are also used to represent her, as is the Queen of Spades playing card. A tarot Queen of Swords card may also be used.

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*Various Ezilis span the spectrum of rage: Ezili Freda is so frustrated that she weeps uncontrollably. Ezili Dantor is seething but still stolid and under control. Ezili La Flambeau is enflamed with rage. Ezili Ge-Rouge is so livid, the blood vessels in her eyes are popping. If she were a mortal woman, not a goddess, she'd be having a stroke.*

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**Emblem:** Bowl of blood

**Animal:** Haitian black pig (a specific breed)

**Perfumes:** Rêve-d'Or (L. T Piver); Florida Water

**Days:** Tuesday, Saturday

**Colors:** Red, blue

**Plants:** Red hibiscus (*Hibiscus spp.*); *Eugenia crenulata* (in Haiti: *zo-devan*)

**Offerings:** Cigarettes; Barbancourt rum; homebrew; pineapples; sweet red wine; knives; daggers; fried pork; pepper jelly; corn products: corn sprinkled with gunpowder; corn and pepper omelette; corn bread, muffins, and tortillas; honey with cinnamon and cayenne pepper sprinkled over it; *milagro* of heart pierced with swords

**See also:** *Anais; Black Madonna of Czestochowa; Ezili; Ezili Freda*



*Dahomey; Madama, La; Marinette; Ogun; Petro; Simbi Makaya*

## **Ezili Freda Dahomey**

*Maitresse Mambo*

**Also known as:** Erzulie Freda Dahomey

Ezili Freda is envisioned as a stunning, colonial era mixed race woman. Ezili Freda is a wealthy courtesan with a taste for only the finest in life.

She is the Queen of Love, beauty, romance, and riches: life as it should be. She is the most beautiful of the lwa. Ezili Freda dances with Papa Gedé: he *adores* her. She stimulates and epitomizes love that transcends death.

Ezili Freda is described as a wanton virgin. She does what she chooses; she sleeps with whomever she desires and yet retains her virginity. Ezili Freda lives life as in a dream: she only wishes to see the good and beautiful. The world she envisions has nothing but kindness and graciousness. Everyone has good manners. Nothing is ugly, sordid, or crass. There is no racism, sexism, poverty, or perversity. Harsh reality inevitably intrudes, and Ezili Freda begins to weep. Her weeping floods the entire world. Her theme song could be “Cry Me a River.”

Ezili Freda Dahomey is the spirit of heartbreak, hope, and disappointment. Life never fulfills her expectations. She may weep but she is never cynical. She wears three wedding rings symbolizing her marriages to three spirits: Agwé, Damballah, and Ogun. Yet each treats her like a concubine or mistress. She is more vulnerable than a wife.

- Damballah’s primary partner and soul mate is Ayida Wedo.
- Agwé's wife is La Sirène (who may be an aspect of Ezili).
- Ogun’s partner and ally is Ezili Dantor, who is Ezili Freda’s primary rival (and possibly her sister or alter ego).

Ezili Freda is tragic and beautiful, yet she is also difficult. She can be very capricious. She puts on airs and graces. She much prefers men to women, especially handsome young men (and if they’re *rich*, young, and handsome, all the better!). Women who seek to work with her must be

willing to sublimate themselves—to humble themselves and serve her the way a handmaid serves a great queen. She will, however, share the essence of her beauty and charisma with female devotees and bless them with good fortune. Ezili Freda Dahomey sends prophetic dreams and may be invoked to interpret dreams.

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*Petite Freda Lwa may be an aspect of Ezili Freda Dahomey, her little sister or a spirit in her entourage. She sometimes serves as Ezili Freda's messenger.*

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It is crucial to recall that Ezili Freda is a great goddess. She is not a courtesan; she only plays one. Pay her the respect due or expect to see demonstrations of her power. Ezili Freda can be exceptionally generous. Ask her to help you achieve the financial status needed to keep her in the offerings she enjoys. In order to have a happy relationship, she must be your primary goddess. She's not too willing to share her spotlight, especially with any other beautiful female spirit. You must adore her; she must be special to you, or she won't be happy. Ezili Freda engages in sacred marriages. (See the Glossary entry for Marriage for further details.)

Invoke her assistance with financial and romantic matters. It is in Ezili Freda's nature to be acquisitive and never satisfied. It is crucial to set clear boundaries with her, or she will potentially ruin you financially. No offering is ever quite lavish enough. Do not forget if you owe her an offering: she won't.

**Manifestation:** A gorgeous fair-skinned woman who is always stylishly and impeccably dressed

**Iconography:** Ezili Freda is represented by images of the Mater Dolorosa, the beautiful woman whose heart is pierced by swords. However, Ezili Freda is beloved by Haitian artists, and many modern visions of her exist, too.

**Emblem:** Heart, or a heart pierced with a dagger or sword

**Attributes:** A boat, mirror

**Element:** Water

**Days:** Tuesday, Thursday

**Animal:** Snake

**Bird:** Flamingo

**Metal:** Gold

**Plants:** Basil, fig tree, bay laurel

**Colors:** Pink, light blue, white

**Perfume:** Anaïs Anaïs (Cacharel)

**Altar:** Although many do venerate Ezili Freda much more simply, her altars are renowned for being sumptuous, lavish, and large. Some dedicate entire rooms to Ezili Freda, gradually furnishing them with offerings including bedroom furniture and filling her closet with luxurious garments. Alternatively, erect her altar atop a stylish dressing table.

**Offerings:** French pastries; café au lait; French champagne (none of the cheap stuff); Madeira wine; Virginia Slims cigarettes; rice cooked in cinnamon milk; fried bananas sprinkled with confectioner's sugar; white cake; luxurious fruits; jewelry; clothing; silk scarves; luxuries

**See also:** *Agwé; Damballab; Ezili; Ezili Dantor; Lwa; Metresili; Ogun; Sirène, La*

## **Ezili Ge Rouge**

*Red Eyed Ezili*

**Also known as:** Ezili Je Wouge

Ezili Ge Rouge is the shadow side of Ezili Dantor. They may or may not be the same spirit. Allegedly the most volatile and dangerous Ezili, she is

the reckless, fearless spirit who fought during Haiti's war for independence. She is inarticulate. She can't verbalize her rage. The men whom she fought beside didn't trust her to keep their secrets, and so they cut out her tongue. Alternatively, technically she has the capacity for speech, but she's so livid with rage, words no longer flow from her mouth. She's past the point of speaking. Ezili Ge Rouge is invoked in the most desperate situations. She is too angry to be afraid of anything.

**Color:** Red

**Offerings:** Rum laced with gunpowder

**See also:** *Ezili; Ezili Dantor; Ezili La Flambeau*

## **Ezili, Grann**

### *Grandmother Ezili*

How did Ezili Freda become a courtesan, anyway? Her grandmother sold her. Ezili's beauty was perceived as the ticket to family stability. Grann Ezili arranged her courtesanship and profits from it financially. (In some versions, she's Ezili Freda's mother, not her grandmother.) She is the matron spirit of sex workers, especially madams. She is invoked by sex workers for protection and prosperity. She is syncretized to Saint Anne.

**Manifestation:** An old, once beautiful woman, now crippled by arthritis. She drags herself along with a cane.

**Colors:** Pink, white

**Offerings:** Similar to what would be given to Ezili Freda Dahomey

**See also:** *Ezili; Ezili Freda Dahomey*

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*On the positive side, Grann Ezili is a spirit of female wisdom who may be invoked to reveal the secrets of the ages. She is a font of romantic, sexual, financial, esoteric, occult, and folkloric knowledge.*

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## **Ezili La Flambeau**

*Ezili the Torch*

**Also known as:** Ezili La Flam bo

Ezili La Flambeau is the fiery aspect of Ezili Dantor. She's not raging quite as out of control as Ezili Ge Rouge, but she's well on her way. Ezili La Flambeau is Ezili Dantor enflamed with jealousy, resentment, anger, and rage.

**See also:** *Damballab La Flambeau; Ezili; Ezili Dantor; Ezili Ge Rouge*

## **Ezili Mapyan**

Ezili Freda and Ezili Dantor have autonomy over their sex lives. They sleep with whom they want; they reject those they do not desire. Not everyone is so fortunate. Ezili Mapyan is a spirit in the guise of an enslaved woman. Her master raped her, and so she killed him. She is a powerful spirit of rage who is invoked by those seeking revenge and justice.

**See also:** *Ezili; Ezili Dantor; Ezili Freda Dahomey*

## **Ezili of the Waters**

**See:** *Sirène, La*

## **Ezili Zandor**

Ezili Zandor is the matron of the Haitian sorcerers' secret societies known as The Red Sects. She is a great sorceress and the Bizango spirit queen of transformation: Red Sect members travel at night in the form of black cats, black pigs, crocodiles, horses, leopards, owls, and wolves. Ezili Zandor is a spirit of justice but may be invoked by devotees for less than just goals.

**See also:** *Bizango; Ezili; Marinette*

## F

### Fairy

**Also known as:** *Faerie; Fee; Fay; Fae; Fada; Fata; Hada; Draga; Encantada; Damizelos*

The word *Fairy* has become a catch-all for all kinds of tenuously related spirits. In general, what they share in common are associations with wild nature and an interest in human life cycles, especially birth. *Fairy* is also the standard word used to translate amorphous, volatile, sexy nature spirits from around the world, especially if they're female. Thus Vila, Rusalka, Keshalyi, and Tündér are all referred to as Fairies although they are all distinct types of spirits.

The word *Fairy* is related to *fate*. Birth Fairies—those spirits who arrive shortly after a birth to announce a baby's future and fortune—may be the “true” Fairies. This is more obvious in Italian than in English: the word for *Fairy* in Italian is

*fata* or *fada*. Fata Morgana is literally Fairy Morgana. (See also: *Fairy, Birth; Fata Morgana*.)

For many people, *Fairy* means the Sidhe of Ireland and the Scottish Highlands. The word is commonly used in Ireland as the English translation for *Sidhe*. When people describe green as a Fairy color, for instance, they are referring to the preferences of the Sidhe. (Balkan and Slavic “Fairies” tend to prefer white.)

- Shamanic healers and herbalists who work with Sidhe are known as Fairy doctors.
- The old shamanic tradition of venerating and working with Sidhe is the Fairy Faith.

**Animals:** Frogs, toads, dragonflies, butterflies, horses, cattle, deer, and foxes are among the creatures most identified with Fairies.

**Plants:** Wildflowers in general

### ***Plants Traditionally Associated with Fairies***

- Blackthorn (sloe)
- Bluebells
- Brambles
- Briar roses and dog roses
- Crocuses, especially saffron
- Ferns
- Foxglove
- Hawthorn
- Heartsease
- Hollyhocks
- Lavender
- Morning glories
- Mushrooms, especially *amanita muscaria*
- Pansies
- Poppies
- Primrose (Allegedly primroses serve as keys to Fairy Land.)
- Ragweed (a.k.a., Fairy's Horse)
- Rosemary

**Time:** Fairies favor nocturnal hours and threshold times, for instance, twilight and dawn.

**Sacred dates:** Fairies are particularly active from May Eve (Beltane, Walpurgis) until a last annual fling at Halloween.

**See also:** *Fairy, Birth; Fairy, Flower; Fairy, Green; Fairy Queens; Fates; Gwillion; Ho Hsien-Ko; Hulden; Huli Jing; Ielle; Keshalyi; Ma Gu; Ma Zu; Nymph; Rusalka; Sidhe; Tündér; Vila*

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*Allegedly, if you stand beneath an elder tree on Midsummer's Eve, you will be granted a vision of reveling Fairies.*



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## Fairy, Birth

**Also known as:** Fates

In the famous story *Sleeping Beauty*, a king and queen, celebrating the birth of a long-awaited royal heir, throw a festive banquet for Fairies. Each Fairy brings a blessing as a baby gift. One Fairy fails to receive an invitation. *Why* the invitation was never received depends upon the version of the story, but the inevitable end result is that she bestows a curse, not a blessing.

This scenario is no mere fairy tale, but a description of rituals once common throughout Europe in French, Slavic, Celtic, and other regions, as well as among the Roma (Gypsies). Birth Fairies foretell (and may bestow) a baby's fate. They are direct descendents of the Moirae, Parcae, and other Fate goddesses.

Following a baby's birth, it was traditional to create an offering table for these Fairies. Ritual details depend on specific spirits to whom the ritual is devoted. There will be a set number of spirits and they will arrive on schedule. Most frequently, three are anticipated, but sometimes there is only one and occasionally as many as thirteen, as in the original version of *Sleeping Beauty*. Usually the spirits are female, but the Roma, for instance, have male *and* female birth spirits.

The offering table is the crucial element. A table is laid as if for a festive meal. Fairies, the honored, desired guests, are expected to come and dine: food and drink are offered. The table is set with individual place settings, napkins, glasses, the whole works. (Each tradition will specify how many Fairies are expected, although as in *Sleeping Beauty*, it's usually best to be prepared for extra guests.)

**See also:** *Béfind; Betben; Fairy; Fates (1); Fates (2); Fatit; Hatbor, Seven; Laimos; Moirae; Oosood; Our Good Mothers; Parcae; Ursitory*

## Fairy, Flower

**Also known as:** Devas

Tiny little winged spirits, flitting from flower to flower: these are flower Fairies. Regular Fairies compare in size to humans, although many are skilled shape-shifters who can take any form. Flower Fairies are a separate, distinct species of spirit.

Theoretically, every flower may have its own Fairy. A field of wildflowers or a lush, flower-packed backyard contains a universe of spirits. Flower Fairies' natures reflect the type of flowers with which they're associated. Flower Fairies associated with the beautiful blossoms of poisonous plants, like belladonna or wolfsbane, have different personalities and interests than those associated with daisies and buttercups.

Flower Fairies suffer from habitat loss. Give them a home and they will come. Plant your favorite flowers and see what types of Fairies arrive with them. In general, Fairy gardens should not be overly manicured: allow a little wilderness to creep in so that the Fairies feel at home. Give them a little room for privacy, places to hide and observe where they won't feel exposed. Add Fairy flowers, especially bramble bushes, wild roses, and hawthorn trees. Fairies enjoy the company of other species, too. Add butterfly gardens; bird and squirrel feeders; and/or bat houses. Incorporate a source of water: if a pond or stream is unavailable, a birdbath may suit them. They may be happy to share a hot tub with you, too. Ornaments like crystals, statues, or witch balls are the equivalent of interior decorating for Fairies. Flower Fairies tend to make themselves visible to children. (Alternatively, many children are very good at seeing them.)

**Iconography:** Modern perceptions of flower Fairies are heavily influenced by the popular works of Cicely Mary Barker (1895–1973), the author and illustrator of the “Flower Fairy” series of books.

**Offerings:** Creation and preservation of habitat is the ideal offering. Once at least a little habitat exists for them, invite flower Fairies with offerings of honey, nuts, and thimblefuls of milk.

**See also:** *Fairy; Fairy, Green; Gabriel*

## Fairy, Green

**Also known as:** Absinthe; *La Fée Verte* (French)

The Green Fairy is the Absinthe Fairy. *Absinthe* may refer to two things: absinthe names the herb *Artemisia absinthium*, more commonly known in English as wormwood. Absinthe also names the potent, mysterious, and controversial alcoholic beverage distilled from the leaves of this herb.

The term *Green Fairy* may refer to three things:

- The Green Fairy is the presiding spirit of absinthe, its matron goddess.
- The Green Fairy is also a nickname for absinthe (the drink) itself.
- The Green Fairy refers to a specific experience involving absinthe.

*Some absinthe aficionados describe a point when, having imbibed a sufficient quantity of absinthe, a unique clarity of vision is achieved, leading to the heightened possibility of psychic and artistic inspiration. This experience is described as “meeting the Green Fairy,” which may or may not be intended literally.*

The Green Fairy’s origins are ambiguous: She may have emerged from visions inspired by drinking absinthe or she may have emerged as a literary metaphor for the absinthe experience and for the beverage’s unique and lovely green color. *Regardless*, even if once originally a metaphor, the Green Fairy has stepped out of the bottle and off the pages of poets: she is alive, well, and thriving in the twenty-first century.

Wormwood is an unusual and powerful herb; absinthe is an unusual and powerful drink; and the Green Fairy is an unusual and powerful spirit. Although she may physically resemble a Flower Fairy, the Green Fairy is a city girl: absinthe’s popularity coincided with popular migration from Europe’s countryside to urban centers. The Green Fairy may be a Flower Fairy who joined this migration.

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*Author and master magus Aleister Crowley called the absinthe spirit the Green Goddess.*

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Many Flower Fairies prefer to avoid people; the Green Fairy's favored haunts include crowded cafés, bars, dance halls, and night clubs. She chooses not to stay in the garden amid living wormwood plants; rather, she is a goddess of magic potions, romance, and illusions. The Green Fairy is a beautiful enchantress who rules dreams, visions, and psychoactive experiences. She inspires, heals, and protects but is also potentially dangerous. In Czech, she is called *Zelena Muza*: the "Green Muse."

Wormwood, the plant also known as absinthe, is an herb with a reputation. Herbal concoctions have been brewed from wormwood for millennia:

- Wormwood's healing properties are cited in the Egyptian Ebers Papyrus, dating from circa 1550 BCE.
- In classical Greece, wormwood leaves were infused in wine to create medicinal potions; Hippocrates recorded its virtues, as did Pythagoras.

Wormwood has formidable magical properties: it allegedly enables one to communicate with the dead; potions were concocted for such purposes. Wormwood is used to protect against malevolent magic. It may be a witch's tool (for good or ill) or conversely guard against witchcraft.

In the Middle Ages, an English ale was brewed with wormwood. However the modern beverage known as absinthe did not exist until the very late eighteenth century. The Green Fairy did not emerge until that time either—or at least not in her modern form. Absinthe in its modern form was invented in either 1792 or 1797 by Swiss country doctor, Pierre Ordinaire. Originally marketed as a panacea, a health tonic, absinthe eventually became popular among the Paris *demi-monde*, the bohemian community of artists, poets, and free thinkers. (In *Moulin Rouge*, director Baz Luhrmann's 2001 cinematic tribute to this era, the Green Fairy is incarnated by Australian actress, Kylie Minogue.) Absinthe spread through Europe's cities and then to the Western Hemisphere, especially New Orleans.

Absinthe developed a reputation as a magical, enchanted potion. It retained wormwood's associations with witchcraft: posters advertising absinthe frequently feature black cats, seductive women, and the ever-

present Green Fairy. (These associations were conscious: a 1915 poster, entitled *Death of the Green Fairy*, protesting prohibition of absinthe depicts the Green Fairy being burned at the stake like a witch.)

Absinthe also developed a dangerous reputation. Because of the chemical constituents inherent in wormwood, absinthe potentially has narcotic and psychoactive effects. In addition, the marketed, distilled beverage possessed extremely high alcohol content: it was bottled between 120 and 160 proof (although many drink it heavily diluted with water). It is now generally acknowledged that absinthe's dangers derived largely from this unusually high alcohol content. In addition, at the height of its popularity, cheap, inferior bootleg absinthes flooded the market. These often incorporated toxic adulterants leading to health hazards like heavy metal poisoning.

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*Among the many creative geniuses associated with absinthe are authors Oscar Wilde, Mary Shelley, Edgar Allan Poe, Ernest Hemingway, and Alfred Jarry; poets Charles Baudelaire, Pablo Neruda, Paul Verlaine, and Arthur Rimbaud; and painters Toulouse-Lautrec, Vincent Van Gogh, Pablo Picasso, and Paul Gauguin. The Green Fairy developed a reputation as a muse who provided creative inspiration and who could stimulate the talented to their utmost potential.*

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Because absinthe was among the first beverages marketed toward women and because of its powerful associations with artists, free thinkers, and free lovers, conservative elements of society despised absinthe, associating it with society's degeneration. Calls to ban absinthe were at the vanguard of the Prohibition movement. Absinthe was banned in Switzerland in 1907; in the United States in 1912; and in France in 1915.

The twenty-first century has brought the Absinthe Renaissance and the public reemergence of the Green Fairy. Legal restrictions on absinthe have been lifted throughout the world. More varieties are now available

than ever before, and it is considered as safe as any other alcoholic beverage when consumed in moderation.

**Favored people:** Poets, painters, and creative people; absinthe lovers; mixologists; alchemists

**Manifestations:** The Green Fairy is often envisioned in the traditional guise of a flower Fairy: a tiny, sparkly, winged being, small enough to emerge from a bottle.

**Iconography:** The Green Fairy, featured in absinthe advertising, posters, and on bottle labels, is usually depicted as a winged Fairy, approximately the size of a butterfly. She may be dressed in green or actually be green. Occasionally she is depicted as a human-sized green sylph. She is usually sexy, seductive, flirtatious, and very charming.

**Spirit ally:** The Green Fairy may be venerated together with Artemis, the goddess with dominion over the Artemisia family of plants, which includes wormwood.

**Color:** Green, especially emerald or chartreuse green, and acid or iridescent hues

**Animal:** Black cat

**Time:** *L'Heure Verte*, or the Green Hour, technically the after-work cocktail hour, roughly five in the afternoon, but really any time that is suffused with absinthe

**Sacred places:** Montmartre; New Orleans; Prague; the shrine you build for her or any place powerfully associated with absinthe

**Altar:** Drinking absinthe is often heavily ritualized. All sorts of paraphernalia have evolved to serve these rituals, including special spoons, carafes, and glasses. These may rest on an altar when not in use. Decorate with vintage absinthe posters or paintings inspired by the Green Fairy.

**Offerings:** Absinthe, of course, but also absinthe paraphernalia (spoons, glasses, carafes), plus uranium glass, sugar cubes formed in the shape of card suits (clubs, spades, diamonds, hearts) and perfumes inspired by the

scent of absinthe

**See also:** *Artemis; Fairy, Flower; Fairy Queens; Leanan Sidhe; Muse*

## Fairy Queens

Post-Christianity, some powerful Pagan spirits were reclassified as saints. (See also: *Brigid*.) Others were reclassified as Fairy Queens. Fairy Queens tend to be goddesses who refused to disappear or whose devotees refused to let them go. They are sexually assertive female spirits and hence not easily assimilated as saints. Describing them as Fairy Queens offers these spirits an acceptable mask, enabling their devotees to maintain their sacred traditions, similar to the way Yoruba *orisbas* became Santeria saints.

Many, although not all Fairy Queens derive from the family of spirits known as the Tuatha Dé Danaan. Many are now frequently described as malevolent; however, they may just be angry, frustrated, and in a bad mood. Their present treatment is not necessarily what they envisioned or what they experienced over thousands of years. If they perceive that you are a sincere devotee, they may become very benevolent guardians.

However, once burned, twice shy: these tend to be insecure, volatile spirits. Make sure devotions are consistent. If you are ill or taking a vacation or somehow unable to fulfill their expectations, communicate this clearly to the spirit. Request their help so that devotions may continue or at least so that you can claim that it's not entirely your fault that devotions have ceased.

Many Fairy Queens may be ritually channeled in the manner of other spirits.

**See also:** *Aibheall; Aine; Aynia; Béfind; Fand; Maeve; Titania; Tuatha Dé Danaan*

## Fand

*The Pearl of Beauty*

**Origin:** Isle of Man

Fand, a sea spirit, was once the bride of Manannan, powerful king of the sea. (They divorced, but periodically reconcile.) She manifests in the guise of a beautiful woman but also as a magical sea bird whose sweet song can lull humans to sleep. She travels among a flock of similar magic birds: they travel in pairs linked by silver chains. Only Fand and her sister, Liban, are linked by a gold chain, indicating their power, supremacy, and uniqueness.

Fand is most famous from a myth involving Irish hero Cu Chulain. Seeking to capture a pair of these beautiful birds for his wife, of course, he sought the pair with the gold chain. He threw his spear, which went between their wings. The birds mysteriously disappeared, but later Fand and Liban manifesting in the form of women appeared to Cu Chulain in a vision and brutally horsewhipped him. Visions can be real: Cu Chulain was ill and incapacitated for a year. (Eventually, following his recovery, Fand sought his help in battle. They fell in love and had a passionate affair, much to the displeasure of Cu Chulain's wife.) This seductive, beautiful, powerful spirit is now classified as a Fairy Queen.

**Manifestation:** Fand allegedly wears a green cloak.

**See also:** *Aife; Fairy Queens; Manannan; Scatach*

### Fata Morgana

**See:** *Morgan le Fay*

### Fates (1)

*Fates* is a general term for goddesses who control destiny. Technically, it refers to the Moirae, the Greek goddesses of fate. However, similar goddesses exist elsewhere, and the name has evolved into a blanket term for them all. Thus, the Norns are also known as Fates. In general, Fates come in groups, usually three, although not always.

Fates mimic the phases of the moon, hence their tendency to appear in



triplicate. The New Moon is tiny like a human infant. It waxes; reaches full strength, and wanes; finally disappearing as if in death. Typically the Fates are spinning goddesses: they weave a person's fate as if it were a tapestry, cutting the thread when the tapestry and life is complete. *Fates* may also be used to indicate birth Fairies, although whether they actually control the fate they arrive to announce is subject to debate.

**See also:** *Fairy, Birth; Lady Tung; Moirae; Norns; Parcae*

## Fates (2)

**Origin:** Greece

The Moirae, or Goddesses of Fate, of ancient Greek mythology and religion were banished with the adoption of Christianity, along with the entire Pagan pantheon. They eventually reemerged, although not quite in the same positions of power. The Fates of modern Greek folklore are birth Fairies, members of the Exotika.

The Fates consistently show up on the third night following the birth of a baby. Where will they appear? Wherever the baby is, that's where. If the baby is at home, then that's their destination. If the baby is in a hospital, they'll turn up there, too, although it may be more difficult to arrange the offering table they anticipate.

Lock up the dog. Clear a path. Remove anything that could trip or obstruct these little old lady spirits. It does no good to annoy them. Make them feel welcome. Leave them a mode of entry, an open window, or an unlocked door. Theoretically, they can even get through a pet door, although this may put them in a bad mood.

These are all formalities, signs of respect. Locking doors and windows won't keep them out if they're determined to get in. However, a warm welcome puts them in the mood to deliver a happy, auspicious fate or perhaps to mediate and intercede if the decreed fate is dire. Unlike the ancient Moirae, it's unclear whether modern Fates decree fate or just deliver the news.

1. Leave a light burning for the Fates. Candles or oil lamps are

traditional, but they're modern spirits: a small electric lamp works, too. Keep lights low, not too harsh.

2. Place an offering table in the center of the room in which the baby sleeps.
3. Set it with three chairs, stools, or cushions, the lower to the ground the better.
4. 4. Burn aromatic herbs in the room to welcome them.
5. Offer them cakes made with salt and honey so that they'll reveal the fate. (Traditionally only the baby, the mother, and possibly the midwife is able to see them.)
6. Give them lots of honey so that their decrees will be sweet. (See also: *Kitchen God*.)
7. Give them a dish of honey (preferably Greek honey but any will do) with white almonds sprinkled on top.
8. In the morning, wrap up everything in a clean white cloth and respectfully dispose of it outside the house.

**Manifestation:** The three Fates traditionally manifest as elderly women. At least one is always spinning. One carries a book to record decrees and one ominously carries a pair of shears. They are temperamental and sometimes a little grouchy but can be very kind and generous if treated with deference and respect.

**See also:** *Fairies, Birth; Fates (1); Exotika; Moirae*

## Fatit

**Singular:** Fati

**Also known as:** Miren

**Origin:** Southern Albania

Fatit are Birth Fairies. Their name derives from *Fate*. *Miren*, another name used for them, derives from the Greek *Moirae*. Fatit are pretty, if extremely powerful spirits, tiny enough to ride butterflies. On the third

day following a baby's birth, three Fates approach the cradle and determine the baby's destiny.

**Offerings:** Tea, milk, and cookies; also sprinkle some sugar water on fresh flower blossoms as treats for their butterfly mounts.

**See also:** *Fairies, Birth; Fates; Moirae*

## Faun

**Origin:** Italy

Fauns manifest as men with goat's legs and horns, similar to Pan and the satyrs. Fauns are among the spirits in the retinue of Faunus. Like satyrs, they have a reputation for being lascivious, wild, and lustful. Artist Franz von Stuck's 1918 painting, "Faun and Nixie" depicts a faun carrying off an exultant Nixie. (See also: *Nixie*.)

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*The title of Guillermo del Toro's 2006 Spanish language movie, El Laberinto del Fauno, was translated into English as Pan's Labyrinth, but it literally means "The Faun's Labyrinth." The Greek deity Pan does not appear in the movie. The character played by actor Doug Jones is a faun.*

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**See also:** *Faunus; Pan*

## Fauna

**Also known as:** Fatua and Bona Dea

**Origin:** Roman region

Fauna is the goddess of wildlife, forests, and fertility. She is Faunus' daughter and among those spirits who possessed Mysteries, meaning that while certain of their rituals were open to the general public, others (the

Mysteries) were reserved solely for initiates. Fauna is among the spirits known as Bona Dea, literally the “Good Goddess,” but also indicating that their interaction is solely with women. (See also: *Bona Dea* and the Glossary entry for *Mystery*.)

Fauna was an extremely important goddess. She was enshrined on Rome’s Aventine Hill, but her annual Mystery was held in the home of Rome’s leading magistrate under the direction of his wife, who was assisted by Vestal Virgins. A women-only event, even representations like sculptures or portraits of men or male animals were covered or removed. Fauna’s Mysteries were secret upon pain of law. Were men curious? They must have been. Legal records exist of men prosecuted for attempting to sneak into her rites. Her Mysteries remain secret and thus unknown today.

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*In 62 BCE, Publius Clodius Pulcher dressed in drag and tried to sneak into the Mysteries, held that year in the home of Julius Caesar. He was caught. The scandal resulted in a trial, but he was acquitted via bribery. Rumor on the street was that he was conducting or attempting to conduct an affair with Pompeia, Caesar’s wife. Although no evidence indicated this to be true, Caesar divorced her, famously saying that the wife of Caesar must be above suspicion. Pulcher was assassinated in 52 BCE.*

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In addition to secret, mystic rites, Fauna was also very publicly a goddess of physical healing. The sick were tended in her temple’s garden of medicinal herbs, essentially a sacred hospital. In Rome, snakes were associated with healing in general, but especially with women’s reproductive health. Snakes, Fauna’s sacred creature, were housed in her temple gardens.

**Iconography:** Fauna is portrayed seated upon a throne, holding a cornucopia.

**Creature:** Snake

**Element:** Earth

**Day:** December 4<sup>th</sup> commemorates the anniversary of her Mystery.

**Offerings:** There is controversy as to whether wine is forbidden from Fauna's rites. One theory is that, because wine was once taboo for Roman women, any wine brought into Fauna's temple was euphemistically called "milk." Alternatively, the legend goes that wine and myrtle were banned because Faunus once got drunk and beat Fauna with a myrtle branch. That may be a euphemism for the myth in which Faunus rapes his daughter (who may also be his consort).

**See also:** *Asklepios; Faunus; Vesta*

## Faunus

*The Benefactor; The Wild One*

**Also known as:** Lupercus

**Origin:** Roman region

Faunus, among the most ancient, primordial spirits of the Roman region, epitomizes the generative force inherent in the universe. He is the essence of unconstrained male vitality. Faunus is a woodland spirit, a spirit of the forest and wild nature. He represents the innate fertility of land and people, a surging force that *cannot* be contained. He is sometimes described as a grandson of Saturn. Another tradition says that Faunus (or his avatar) was a king of Latium, deified after death.

Faunus is a giver of oracles, a bestower of psychic ability. People once slept in his sacred groves in order to have their future revealed. He is petitioned to improve human fertility: his sexual vitality is so powerful that just being in his presence may have a positive effect. He is petitioned to heal infertility, male and female.

Faunus doesn't know the slightest thing about romance: he is a spirit of unrepressed sexual force and the biological imperative toward procreation. He is the ancient essence of the forest, so primordial that he is pre-verbal. Faunus doesn't talk; he cannot communicate as a human

does, but speaks through forest noises and nature sounds. (See also: *Damballab; Leshii*)

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*If you petition him for fertility and he visits you in a dream and hits you, consider yourself blessed. Faunus hits women with tree branches or leather thongs to help them conceive. (If he arrives and doesn't hit you, hold out your hands, palms up, so that he will.) He's not gentle; he's violent. He's the force of untamed forest growth, but he is benevolent and protective.*

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Faunus is not for the faint of heart. Those who petition him should be aware that his response traditionally comes in the form of nightmares and violent dreams. The good news is that nightmares provoked by Faunus are often a positive, auspicious sign. He doesn't mean to be scary; he's just so wild and primordial that his presence overwhelms, evoking primal human fears and emotions. Because of this, he is traditionally evoked alongside his more articulate, civilized allies: his daughter, Fauna, and especially Juno, who may arbitrate for him. He likes women although he may become sexually aggressive with them.

Faunus oversees the balance between livestock and wolves. He may be petitioned to guard livestock from wolves and wolves from people.

**Manifestation:** Horned male spirit. He may manifest as a human male with horns or with only his upper torso in human form while the lower bears the form of a goat. Faunus wears a wolf skin. Images of Faunus are often mistaken for the more famous Pan.

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*February 14<sup>th</sup>, or the full moon of the last Roman month, marked the beginning of the Lupercalia, the annual festival honoring Juno and Faunus. The festival began when the Luperci, the priests of Faunus, arrived at the Lupercal, the cave on the Palatine where the wolf nursed Romulus and Remus. Sacrificed dogs and goats were eaten by the priests. Goat skins were*

*sliced up. The Luperci were smeared with goat's blood and dressed in "Juno's cloak," torn patches of goatskin. Pieces of goatskin were formed into whips.*

*The priests or specially chosen young boys would run around the Palatine striking people with these whips. Women who were struck were believed rendered fertile. Conception, easy childbirth, and healthy babies were believed to be ensured. Women positioned themselves strategically around the hill to guarantee that they would be struck, usually upon their outstretched hands.*

*The Lupercalia was celebrated until 494 CE. In January 2007, Italian archaeologists announced that they had located the site of the Lupercal.*

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**Attributes:** Goblet and wreath

**Sacred animals:** Goat, wolf

**Sacred dates:** 5 December, the Faunalia; 14 February, the beginning of the Lupercalia, possibly Rome's oldest ceremonial

**Offerings:** Spring water; it may not be advisable to give him too much (or any) alcohol as he is uncontrollable enough without it; offerings on behalf of wolves, especially Italian wolves; attempts to preserve wild nature

**See also:** *Faun; Fauna; Juno; Pan; Saturn*

## **Feng Popo**

*Madame Wind*

**Also known as:** Feng Pho-Pho

**Origin:** China

Feng Popo is the Chinese Mistress of the Winds. She manifests as an old lady who rides a tiger along a celestial road of clouds. The winds are stuffed into a bag she wears slung around her shoulder. On a day when the weather's calm, she has the winds all locked up. When they get too heavy and her shoulders start to ache, she releases them.

**See also:** *Szélanya*

## **Fergus**

*Lord of Fertility*

**Also known as:** Fergus mac Roich

**Origin:** Ireland

Fergus is a euhemerized deity, meaning a deity who appears in myths and legends disguised as a human being, usually as royalty or a hero. Legends of Fergus were written down by monks who loved the stories but could not in good faith celebrate a Pagan god. Instead Fergus is portrayed as among the primary heroes of Ireland, a super-human figure.

The first syllable of the name Fergus is cognate with the Latin *vir* (“man”) as in *virile*. Fergus’ name has been interpreted to mean “Male Ejaculation, Son of Super Stallion.”

- Seven fists fit in his penis.
- His scrotum is the size of a bushel bag.
- He has voracious sexual appetites: it takes seven women to satisfy him (or just Maeve).

Fergus may be the son of Macha. He is the lover and first husband of Queen Maeve. Flidais is his consort. Fergus is foster father of hero Cu Chulain. Invoke him for safety, protection, enhanced courage, fertility, and virility.

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*Fergus was the champion of Ulster, chosen as the escort to bring the epic heroine Deirdre; her lover, Naoise; and his brothers home to the court of Deirdre’s husband, King Conchobar. Fergus gave them his word that they’d be safe. Their betrayal and thus the loss of his good word and honor caused him to leave Conchobar’s court for Connacht and the arms of Queen Maeve.*

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**Manifestation:** Fergus is allegedly tall as a giant and possesses the strength of seven hundred men.

**Attribute:** A magic sword that stretches as long as the rainbow

**Sacred animal:** Horse

**Number:** 7

**See also:** *Flidais; Macha; Maeve; Tanuki*

## Ferronia

**Also known as:** Feronia

**Origin:** Italy

**Feast:** 15 November

Little information now survives regarding this ancient, mysterious deity. Ferronia may have started as an Etruscan or Sabine spirit, eventually adopted by Romans. Her rites included fire-walking. Devotees walked or danced over glowing coals and burning ploughshares.

She is a goddess of abundance, prosperity, and freedom. Her Roman temple featured a sacred stone. If a slave sat on that stone, their freedom was instantly granted. (It's not clear exactly what kind of machinations were necessary in order to reach this stone.) The spirit of Ferronia allegedly still haunts the traditional marketplaces of Italy, territory she once ruled. Having been banished, post-Christianity, Ferronia apparently refused to abandon her old stomping grounds but transformed from a benevolent spirit of freedom and prosperity into a bad-tempered witch in the guise of a shabby, elderly, muttering beggar-woman.

Don't let her disguise fool you: she's still working magic. Those who are polite and kind to her discover themselves blessed with good fortune. Those behaving otherwise are treated to *very* effective (and feared) curses.

**Favored people:** Beggars, refugees, slaves

**Manifestation:** Ferronia haunts old-fashioned markets in the guise of an old, homeless beggar woman. She's unlikely to be sweet and charming; rather, she is none too clean and worse for wear. She tends to accost people: be polite. The things she asks for are usually small: spare change, cigarettes, a bite to eat, maybe even a smile is sufficient. Her blessings and curses should be taken seriously.

**Consort:** Soranus

**Animal:** Wolf

**Sacred sites:** Now she is Queen of the Marketplace but, once upon a time, she had temples, including one in Rome's Campus Martius. She was venerated with Soranus at Mount Soracte.

**See also:** *Befana; Soranus*

## **Fish, Sir**

**Also known as:** Ca Ong; Mr. Fish; Grandfather Fish; Lord Fish

**Origin:** Vietnam

Sir Fish is not exactly a fish: he's a whale. Sir Fish, King of the Sea, is a guardian deity in the form of a whale. He is the patron of fishermen whom he protects out on open waters. Sir Fish is widely venerated along the central and southern coasts of Vietnam. Festivals are held in his honor. He may be an incarnation of the Lord of the South Seas. Sir Fish is associated with prominent Vietnamese male military or naval heroes and may be enshrined alongside them.

Whales are Sir Fish's sacred messengers and must be treated with immense respect. (Disrespect directed toward his messengers is the equivalent of disrespect directed towards Sir Fish.) The first person to catch sight of a whale carcass is considered as one of Sir Fish's elder sons and must arrange and observe appropriate funeral rites for the whale. The whale carcass must be respectfully interred. In return, the man will receive blessings of good fortune from Sir Fish.

**Favored people:** Fishermen and men in general; Sir Fish is a men's

deity.

**Sacred sites:** Whale bones that have washed ashore are enshrined in his many temples along Vietnam's southern coast.

**See also:** *Baleine, La; Dragon Kings of the Sea*

### **Five Sisters of Good Fortune**

The Five Sisters are guardian spirits of the Himalaya Mountains. Their ranks include:

- Dirghayusi (she rides a snow lion)
- Sugati (she rides a dragon)
- Suganthi (she rides a stag)
- Sumukhi (she rides a wild ass)
- Sumati (she rides a tiger)

The Five Sisters only concern themselves with people who venture into their mountains. If you're trekking in the Himalayas, their favor is essential. If the sisters like you, they'll aid and protect you, so it's extremely important to stay on their good side. If you aggravate them or if they take a dislike to you, their weapons include storms, icy cold weather, accidents, and avalanches.

**Favored people:** Hermits and spiritual seekers who dwell in Himalayan mountain caves

### **Flidais**

**Origin:** Ireland

**Classification:** Tuatha Dé Danaan

Flidais is the beautiful goddess of deer, also known as "Fairy cattle." She is a goddess of the forest, wild nature, and rampant, joyful sexuality. Flidais may go through thirty men a day—unless she has Fergus, who alone is able to satisfy her. (The feeling is mutual; allegedly Fergus needs

seven women to replace Flidais. The only other one who can fulfill him is Maeve.)

Flidais is a spirit of abundance. She also owns a herd of magical cows: her prize cow gives enough milk daily to feed three hundred families. Flidais is the guardian of the forest, its trees and animals. She also allegedly has a soft spot for human outcasts; those marginalized by society; people who, once upon a time, would have been inclined to take shelter in the forest.

**Manifestation:** Flidais may appear in the guise of a beautiful, sexy woman or as a doe. She reputedly has beautiful hair.

**Mount:** Her chariot is pulled by deer.

**Sacred animals:** All forest animals, but especially deer

**See also:** *Artemis; Diana; Fairy; Fergus; Maeve; Tuatha Dé Danaan*

## Flora

**Origin:** Sabine or Oscan

Flora is the spirit of blossoming flowers and springtime. She embodies the flowering of all nature, including humans. Flowers indicate the promise of reproduction. Flowers lead to fruit as surely as sexual intercourse leads to babies. Flora is the spirit who embodies both the pleasures of the moment and the promise of the future. She is the spirit of the pleasures of the flesh.

**Manifestation:** A lush beautiful woman crowned and adorned with flowers

**Flowers:** Although, by definition, *all* flowers are sacred to Flora, her favorites are fragile, transient lupine (bean) blossoms.

**Festival:** Her festival, the Floralia, is considered the mother of all May Day festivities. Celebrated annually from April 28<sup>th</sup> through the beginning of May, the Floralia honored the female body. Beautiful Flora may be understood as the original Queen of the May.

The festival was celebrated in the nude until the third century CE, when Roman authorities demanded that revelers be clothed. The festival survived in this fashion until the following century, when all Pagan festivals were banned.

**Offerings:** Flowers! Italian lupini beans; flower waters and sexy floral perfumes; honey; spring water

**See also:** *Carna; Lady of the Waterside; Maia*

## Fortuna

*Lady Luck; She Who Brings*

**Origin:** Roman region

Fortuna may originally have been an Etruscan or Latin goddess. When the Romans encountered her, they too fell in love with Lady Luck. Fortuna is the spirit of opportunity, fortune, fertility, abundance, or the lack thereof. Although now not as well known as Juno or Diana, she was an extremely significant deity, beloved by the masses. Augustus Caesar claimed that she had adopted him as her favored son. That was perhaps a bit of a threat to his enemies: if Fortuna favors you, who can harm or defeat you?

Fortuna, the original Lady Luck, genuinely does not correspond to any Greek goddess. She doesn't fit neatly into mythology books based on identification, and so she is often ignored. (Athena is Minerva; Zeus is Jupiter; and so forth. See the Glossary entry for *Identification* for further explanation.) Yet Fortuna was widely adored. Roman soldiers carried her veneration to England, where she shared altar space in Gloucester with Mercury and Rosmerta.

Fortuna personifies good fortune. She rules oracles, fate, and chance. She protects married women and is especially venerated by mothers. She controls the energy that leads to reproduction. She does, unfortunately, have a bit of a reputation for being fickle.

Fortuna is an oracular goddess. It was possible to have your fortune told in her shrines. She was not specifically a goddess of gambling, more

of the fortunes of life; however, she does bestow luck: it can't hurt to invoke her blessings for gambling success.

Fortuna may survive under the mask of Catherine of Alexandria, the saint with the wheel.

**Emblem:** The Wheel of Fortune, as in a roulette wheel

**Attributes:** Wheel, rudder (both can instantly change direction, move, or stay still, just like luck), a spinning globe, also a cornucopia

**Sacred dates:**

- 1 April is Fortuna's holy day in her guise as Fortuna Virilis, the spirit who causes men to desire women. Wives traditionally invoke her to retain or revive their husbands' sexual interest. (However, anyone could invoke her for this purpose, married or not.)
- 11 June was the dedication day of Fortuna's temple in Rome's Forum Boarium.
- The Fortunalia, Fortuna's festival, coincides with the Summer Solstice.

**Sacred sites:** She had a major shrine in Trastevere, as well as in the Forum, and a temple in Praeneste, now modern Palestrina. In 2008, archaeologists uncovered a temple apparently dedicated to Fortuna and Jupiter in Zippori, Israel, capital of the Galilee region during the era of Roman rule. A church was built over the site during Byzantine rule.

**Offering:** Her traditional offering was a blend of honey, milk, and poppies, plus cakes in the shape of a wheel.

**See also:** *Athena; Jupiter; Lakshmi; Mercury; Minerva; Rosmerta; Zeus*

## Fox Spirits

**Also known as:** Kitsune (Japan); Kumiho (Korea)

**Origin:** East Asia

Fox Spirits, seductive, sneaky, and often treacherous, are staples of modern manga, anime, and other forms of entertainment. Once upon a

time, Fox Spirits were considered protectors, teachers, providers, and sponsors of the occult and alchemical arts. Even now some Fox Spirits are saintly and helpful. The foxes that serve as Inari's messengers are miracle workers, understood as sacred and godly. (See also: *Inari*.) Fox Spirits may once have been a feature of pre-Buddhist East Asian shamanic religion. Fox Spirits tend to be sexually assertive, female spirits. As centuries passed and, society became more conservative, women were expected to be modest and subservient. Fox Spirits developed a bad reputation and became feared, especially in Japan and Korea. (Their reputation is somewhat milder in China, although the same sexual associations exist.)

- Fox Spirits cause illness and misfortune.
- They possess victims, similar to possession by demons or dybbuks.

Fox Spirit possession isn't ritual possession or channeling; it's involuntary and invariably unpleasant. Degrees of Fox Spirit possession exist, depending upon the innate strength of the Fox and its victim. (Some resist better than others.) Full possession—true spiritual takeover—may result. Alternatively only symptoms may manifest. Symptoms of Fox Spirit possession include:

- Hearing voices when none should be heard
- Insatiable and indiscriminate appetite (the person may eat *anything*, even food they wouldn't normally eat; even things humans wouldn't normally eat)
- Nocturnal sensations of suffocation and paralysis
- Increasing facial resemblance to a fox: the person develops a visible foxy snout

Eventually the Fox Spirit may push the true individual out, taking over body, mind, soul, and personality, either full-time or just intermittently. The Fox Spirit speaks through the person's mouth, often indulging in obscenities, frequently sexual, which the person would normally *never* use.

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*Among the functions of Chinese Fox Spirits is protection of archivists and*

*librarians. If a book or document cannot be found, ask the Fox Spirits for help. Make an offering alongside the request. (Offerings should be proportionate in size to the importance of the request.) Then leave the room for a little while to give the spirit space and opportunity to work some magic. If the Fox Spirits have cooperated, whatever you're looking for should stick out or somehow draw attention to itself.*

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Although most Fox Spirits are perceived as greedy or power hungry, spiritual motivation may exist, as well; what the Fox Spirit may really desire is a shrine and daily offerings. The only way for them to make their desire known is through a human mouth, similar to African Zar spirits. Sometimes this is enough to satisfy them and the Fox Spirit evolves into an ally, rather than an enemy. Fox Spirits provide for their devotees, although it's generally believed they do this by redistributing wealth. Just like real foxes are believed to raid chicken coops, so Fox Spirits are believed to rob the neighbors.

What they provide for their devotees rightfully belongs to others but has been stolen. Very ancient Fox Spirits, however, may have developed the alchemical and magical skills to actually produce wealth, no stealing required.

Fox Spirits can be exorcised by knowledgeable shamans; however, gifted exorcists tend to be tainted by their very success. Extortion rackets are suspected: the exorcist who specializes in Fox Spirit removal may actually be in cahoots with the Fox Spirit, who may be his servant. No wonder he can exorcise the spirit: the Fox is his familiar who always does his bidding. Independent practitioners are particularly suspect. Exorcisms may also be successfully performed at Inari shrines.

Fox Spirits are also attached to specific families and individuals, whom they may serve in exchange for care, feeding, protection, and veneration, or perhaps because they are ancestral spirits. Fox Spirits run in families. Families who are hereditary owners of foxes typically transmit this hereditary power through the female line. Association with Fox Spirits may indicate vestigial memories of ancient fox-oriented shamanic religion. For centuries tremendous fear and social stigma have



been attached to families rumored to be Fox Spirit owners.

**Manifestation:** Fox Spirits are *not* ordinary foxes. They are spirits whose true form is a fox shape in the same way that other spirits take the form of humans, cats, snakes, or birds. Fox Spirits may resemble ordinary foxes. The older a Fox Spirit gets, the more powerful it becomes. Age and power may be displayed by additional tails. The most powerful and ancient Fox Spirits are nine-tailed foxes. (Theoretically, ordinary foxes can eventually evolve into Fox Spirits in the way that humans can evolve into spirits, too.)

Most Fox Spirits are shape-shifters; they can take many forms, including that of humans. Often they appear in the guise of seductive young women; however, any form is possible. Fox Spirits can also shape-shift so that they appear identical to a specific person. Thus, someone may recognize a friend or relative at the door and open it, only to admit the Fox Spirit in disguise.

**Offering:** Fox Spirits' very favorite food of all is *inarizusbi*: fried tofu bags (*aburaage*) filled with sushi rice; however, you can negotiate their actual diet. Feed daily. Foxes get hungry.

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*A brave Fox Spirit stars in Neil Gaiman and Yoshitaka Amano's illustrated novella, Sandman: The Dream Hunters (2000).*

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**See also:** *Demon; Dybbuk; Hsi Wang Mu; Huli Jing; Inari; Kumiho; Neko-Mata; Tanuki; Zar*

**Freda**

**See:** *Ezili Freda Dahomey*

**Freya**

## *She Who Shines over the Sea*

**Also known as:** Valfreya; Freyja

**Classification:** Vanir

Freya, most beautiful of the Norse spirits, has dominion over love, sex, fertility, magic, witchcraft, warcraft, death, pleasure, and glory. *Freya* literally means “Lady” and may be a title, not a name. (Her twin brother is *Freyr*, or “Lord.”) She is simultaneously a spirit of fertility and death, beauty and war.

Freya, daughter of Njord and Herta (Nerthus), Sea and Earth, is among the Vanir hostages who joined the Aesir to maintain spiritual peace. Freya, however, quickly became a dominant force in her new realm. When she first arrived in Asgard, she taught the Aesir how to craft charms and potions. She inducted Odin into the world of magic.

Freya is invoked for love, romance, and fertility, but she is a death goddess, too. Under the name Valfreya, she leads the Valkyries to the battlefield where she lays claim to half the dead who are brought to dwell in her beautiful palace, *Folkvang*, where love songs play continuously.

Freya was no obscure goddess but beloved and worshipped over a vast European territory including Scandinavia, Iceland, Greenland, the Germanic lands, Holland, and Anglo-Saxon Britain. She remains among the most beloved and widely venerated Pagan goddesses today. No spirit annoyed Christian authorities more than Freya. Ironically, the result was that Freya survives more vividly than virtually any other female European spirit. Constant condemnation kept Freya from fading into obscurity.

Freya was denounced as a Queen of Witches. Women who venerated her were automatically branded “witches.” And, of course, Freya’s rites and traditions *did* encourage magical practice, mediumship, shamanism, and female autonomy with Freya herself as the role model, behavior the new regime considered abhorrent and sinful.

- Freya weeps tears of amber.
- Honey contains her essence.

- Freya knows the power of the runes. They can be used to communicate with her.

**Favored people:** Soldiers, veterans, jewelers, seers, shamans, practitioners of the magical arts

**Manifestations:** Usually as a golden, beautiful, charismatic woman, but she is a shape-shifter and can take any form.

**Attributes:** Magical falcon feather cloak enabling her to fly; *Brisingamen*, the glowing necklace forged by dwarves

**Metal:** Gold

**Planet:** Moon

**Day:** Friday (literally: Friday is Freya's Day)

**Number:** 13 (the number of months in a lunar year)

**Sacred date:** Any Friday the 13th

**Flowers:** Primroses; mugwort; bird berry; holly; bedstraw; flax; hemp

**Runes:** The runes with which Freya is associated include Berkano and Ehwaz

**Animals:** Cats, rabbits, boars, oxen; lady-bugs

**Birds:** Cuckoo, falcon, swallow

**Mounts:** Two grey cats pull Freya's chariot, possibly lynxes.

**Offerings:** Honey; mead; flowers; sing love songs for her or compose poetry; Freya will accept humble offerings, but she has fine taste and will gladly accept lavish offerings of jewelry and perfume. Freya's devotees held dinners in her honor, offering her ale, apples, barley, and pork. It is traditional to feed stray or feral cats as an offering to Freya. Adopting some cats may get you into good graces, too, provided that you treat them well.

**See also:** *Aesir; Dwarves; Freyr; Frigg; Herta; Odin; Valkyrie; Vanir* and the Glossary entry for *Rune*

## Freyr

*Lord; Master; The Generous One; Wise Fruitful*

**Also known as:** Frey; Fro; Frothi; Frodi; Yngvi; Ing

**Origin:** Norse

**Classification:** Vanir

Freyr is the Lord of Peace, Plenty, Prosperity, and Pleasure. Freya's brother and lover, he is a spirit of rain, sun, and bountiful harvests. He is the Elven King. He dispenses wealth, love, and fertility to adults and good luck to children.

In comparison to Thor and Odin, relatively little is known regarding Freyr. Later chroniclers of Norse myth were less interested or identified less with Vanir spirits, or perhaps the Vanir are just innately more shadowy and mysterious. Freyr is a divine ancestor, a spirit of growth. He is venerated as a phallic deity. Although Freyr is a lover, he's a fierce warrior, too. His nature may be epitomized by the fierce, virile boars that are his sacred animal.

Freyr was especially popular in Sweden where, in ceremonies similar to those dedicated to his mother, Herta, his sacred image was carried from farm to farm annually in a wagon. It was expected to stimulate abundance, fertility, prosperity, and good fortune. Freyr was considered an ancestral spirit by the kings of Uppsala, who may have used his name as a title. (*Freyr* literally means "Lord" and *is* a title.) Some Icelandic chiefs bore the title "Priest of Freyr."

**Favored people:** Seafarers; lovers; brewers

**Iconography:** An image thought to represent him depicts a man in a pointy cap, holding his beard in his hand. In his shrine at Uppsala, Freyr was represented as a virile man with a large, erect penis. An alternative image portrayed him as a young boy traveling across the sea. His image was featured on armor and weapons.

**Attributes:** A sword, which emerges independently from its scabbard, creating a field of carnage wherever its owner directs; a ship whose sails

always attract favorable winds but could be folded up and carried

**Colors:** Brown, gold, green

**Mounts:** A golden boar named Golden Bristles. Freyr's chariot is drawn by two boars. He also rides a horse named Bloody Hooves.

**Place:** Center of veneration was in Uppsala, Sweden, where it continued long after most of Scandinavia had converted to Christianity

**Runes:** The runes with which Freyr is associated include Ehwaz, Fehu, and Ingwaz

**Offering:** The Yule boar, or male pig, commemorates the annual sacrificial boar offered to Freyr in winter. Serve Freyr libations of fresh water, barley wine, ale, or mead.

**See also:** *Elves; Freya; Gerda; Herta; Odin; Shiva; Thor; Vanir* and the Glossary entry for *Rune*

## **Frigg**

### *Well Beloved Lady*

**Also known as:** Frigga; Fricka; Saga

Frigg is a spirit of divination, fertility, matrimony, and childbirth. Her husband is Odin the Allfather, Leader of the Aesir. Her father is Fjorgin. The identity of her mother is unclear. It is also not entirely clear to which pantheon Frigg herself belongs: Aesir, Vanir, or other.

It can be very difficult to distinguish Frigg from Freya. Although clearly distinct spirits in Scandinavia, the two may have merged into one spirit in the German lands, although as so much information has been lost, suppressed, and garbled, it's now impossible to definitively determine. Ironically, because Christian authorities despised Freya so intensely, more lucid, substantial information regarding her and her traditions survive. Frigg is more elusive than Freya. Her primary surviving myths involve her identity as wife and mother. She battles Odin's infidelities and actively attempts to save their doomed son,

Baldur.

Frigg knows every person's destiny but will not reveal it. She is a spinning goddess associated with the Norns: she spins the thread they weave and cut. Frigg has powerful associations with mediumship. Quieter and less flamboyant than Freya, Frigga lives in the company of masters (Odin, Freya) and manages to hold her own.

She may be particularly sympathetic to those who have suffered the unspeakable tragedy of losing a child. Frigg is petitioned for fertility.

**Favored people:** Women; mothers

**Manifestation:** She wears a belt from which keys hang, indicating her ability to unlock all doors, as well as her oracular power.

**Attribute:** Distaff

**Element:** Water

**Constellation:** In traditional Norse cosmology, the constellation now popularly known as Orion's belt was called Frigg's distaff or spindle.

**Runes:** Mannaz, Pertho, Wunjo

**Bird:** Stork. (That old saw about storks delivering babies refers to Frigg.)

**Hall:** Frigg's hall, Fensalir ("Marsh Hall"), is the after-death destination for happily married couples who can thus spend eternity together.

**See also:** *Aesir; Balder; Fates (1); Freya; Herta; Norns; Odin* and the Glossary entry for *Rune*

## Fu Xi

**Also known as:** Fu Hsi

**Origin:** China

Fu Xi invented all aspects of civilization, giving them to people as gifts. He is humanity's first teacher. His inventions include astrology, agriculture, medicine, music, and writing. Fu Xi taught survival skills and

bestowed the gift of fire. Fu Xi taught people to be self-sufficient. His name literally means “hidden victims” because he taught the arts of netting fishes and snaring animals.

Who knows what further gifts he has? He remains humanity’s benefactor, provider, and protector, although he has largely withdrawn and may have to be sought out.

**Manifestation:** Part man, part dragon

**See also:** *Nu Kua*

## **Fuath**

Fuath is a generic Gaelic term for water spirits, including the Glaistig and kelpies. They may be fresh-or saltwater spirits. Although frequently described as “evil,” this is because they are not Christian, not because all are vicious or untrustworthy. Some Fuath are benevolent and helpful. However, they are volatile and quick to anger. Some have a propensity for violence. Male Fuath spirits sometimes engage in mystical marriages with human women. Iron repels and banishes Fuath.

**Favored people:** Human children of Fuath, literal or spiritual, have webbed fingers and/or toes.

**Color:** Green

**Time:** Fuath are generally nocturnal.

**See also:** *Glaistig; Kelpie*

## **Fudo**

*The Immutable One*

**Also known as:** Fudo-sama

Fudo, Lord of Wisdom and Fire, may be the Japanese manifestation of Dainichi Buddha. Emerging as an independent entity in the twelfth

century, Fudo protects against danger and disaster. He is invoked against fire and theft. Fudo brings devotees financial prosperity. He banishes evil spirits. Fudo is the guardian spirit of the Year of the Rooster and those people born under that Chinese astrological sign. He demonstrates wrath by causing sudden blindness.

**Favored people:** Astrologers

**Iconography:** An elderly man surrounded by fire; a man

**Attributes:** A rope with which to bind evil spirits and a sword to sever ties to the material

**Element:** Fire

**Direction:** West

**Creature:** Dragon

**Sacred site:** A temple atop Mount Okiyama; Fudo Taki, “Fudo’s Waterfall,” on Japan’s Mount Akakura

**See also:** *Buddha*

## Fugen

*The One Who Is All Pervadingly Good*

**Also known as:** Henkitsu

**Classification:** Bodhisattva; Bosatsu

Fugen is the Japanese manifestation of Samant-abhadra, the Great Conduct Bodhisattva. He teaches that actions and conduct are equally important as thought and meditation. Fugen encourages devotees to diligently dedicate themselves to Buddhism. Fugen protects those who teach and uphold the Dharma.

**Favored people:** Fugen is the guardian of those born in the Years of the Snake and Dragon.



**Spirit allies:** Fugen and Manjusri are often venerated together as emblematic of wisdom and action.

**Attributes:** Lotus

**Direction:** Southeast

**Vehicle:** A six-tusked white elephant

**See also:** *Bodhisattva; Bosatsu; Manjusri*

## Fuji

### *Woman's Best Friend*

**Also known as:** Fuchi

**Classification:** Kamui

**Origin:** Ainu

Fuji is the Ainu word for “fire.” The Ainu are an indigenous people of Japan. Fuji is the original goddess of Mount Fuji. The mountain retains her name even after she was replaced by the Japanese shamanic goddess, Konohana, now Mount Fuji’s presiding spirit. Fuji may have had shrines on Fujiyama as late as the ninth century.

Fuji is not specifically a mountain goddess; Mount Fuji is a volcano. She’s a fire goddess. Fuji dwells in the hearth of every home. The hearth serves as her altar. Offerings may be fed directly to the fire.

Known as the woman’s best friend, Fuji protects reproductive health and bestows fertility. An ancient ritual to counteract infertility involved having the barren woman lie on another woman’s fresh afterbirth while a circle of women surrounded her, invoking Fuji’s blessings to allow her to conceive. She also protects children. Fuji’s essence is contained in fireplace ashes. These may be collected into small bags and worn or carried as protective amulets.

**Element:** Fire

**Offerings:** Millet beer, rice beer, and a well-tended flame

**See also:** *Kamui; Konohana*

## **Fukurokuju**

**Also known as:** Fukurokujin

**Origin:** Japan

Fukurokuju is Lord of Wealth, Happiness, and Longevity. He is believed to derive from a Chinese Taoist spirit but is now considered the kami of popularity. He is among the Shichi Fukujin, the Seven Spirits of Good Luck. Fukurokuju is often found in the company of Jurojin; the two are happily venerated together. Together, they may double the blessings they bring.

**Manifestation:** He is an elderly man with a long, white beard and an unusually shaped bald head with an exceptionally elongated forehead. Once you know what he looks like, he's hard to miss.

**Iconography:** Some images emphasize the phallic appearance of his head.

**Attribute:** Long staff with a scroll attached

**Animals:** Bat, stag, tortoise

**Bird:** Crane

**See also:** *Jurojin; Kami; Shichi Fukujin*

## **Fukusuke**

**Origin:** Japan

Fukusuke's name means "good fortune." He is a spirit of general prosperity but is especially associated with merchants. Before the remarkable ascendance of Maneki Neko, images of Fukusuke were kept by merchants and shopkeepers to attract prosperity, business, and customers. They may still be used in this way. Fukusuke and Maneki

Neko will happily share altar space or a storefront. Although he is not counted among what is now the standard group, in the past Fukusuke has sometimes been classified among the Shichi Fukujin, the Seven Spirits of Good Luck.

Fokusuke has a family who may be venerated alongside him. His wife's name is Ofuke, and their daughter is Fukumusume. All may be venerated together. Keeping his family near may enhance Fokusuke's powers. Place Fokusuke's image by the main entrance or in a shop window, looking outward so that he can attract and greet customers and business.

**Favored people:** Merchants; storekeepers

**Iconography:** A friendly man with a disproportionately large head and big, prominent ears (the better to hear you with) is depicted in the act of bowing respectfully to customers and patrons. His ear lobes hang, indicating his wealth by the weight of the earrings he customarily wears. He usually wears a formal kimono.

**Offerings:** Sake

**See also:** *Maneki Neko; Okame; Shichi Fukujin*

## **Furina**

**Also known as:** Furrina

**Origin:** Etruscan or Italian

Furina is the ancient and mysterious matron goddess of thieves and robbers. Her name derives from the same root word as "fortune." Furina was not a forbidden or suppressed goddess venerated only by miscreants. She was officially incorporated into Roman state religion. Furina had her own annual festival. She had a priest, a temple, and a sacred grove on the Janiculum ridge alongside the Tiber's west bank. (The site is now occupied by the Villa Sciarra.) Furina may have been associated with a spring in her grove. Some scholars theorize that she was originally a spirit of the watery depths.

**Favored people:** Thieves, robbers

**Element:** Earth; possibly water

**Time:** After dark

**Feast:** The Furinalia was celebrated on 25 July.

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*The name Furina now applies to a genus of venomous Australian snakes.*

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**See also:** *Fortuna; Laverna*

## G

### Gabija

#### *Goddess of Ashes*

**Also known as:** Gabeta; Pelenu Deive; Ponike; Ramuté; Ugnine; Ungula

**Origin:** Lithuania

Lithuania was the last heathen nation in Europe, not officially accepting Christianity until 1387. Before Christianity, Gabija, primordial fire goddess, was venerated in the form of sacred fires in grove-sanctuaries on hilltops or riverbanks, served by priestesses called *Vaidilutes*. Working in pairs; relieved from other duties, these priestesses' sole responsibility was tending Gabija and caring for sacred serpents.

Following eradication of the groves, veneration of Gabija moved into the home. Gabija lives in the family hearth or stove and is still tended by women. (If the lady of the house is unavailable or if there is no lady, then the eldest male cares for Gabija. She cannot be left untended. It's not safe.) Every night before the family goes to sleep; Gabija is put to bed, too:

- Ashes and coals are neatly banked up.
- Only fresh, clean water may be used for cleaning up: anything else hurts Gabija's eyes.
- A bowl of fresh, clean water is placed beside the hearth in case Gabija wishes to bathe.
- Gabija is politely and reverently requested to please stay in bed and not go wandering.

It's crucial to keep Gabija happy and content because otherwise she might decide to "go for a walk," leaving disaster behind. Gabija is a positive, benevolent spirit: there is no warmth or cooked food without

her, but her potential for destruction is ever-present. She must constantly be propitiated. Gabija is fire. It's her nature to be fiery and volatile.

Despite superficial resemblances, she is very different from fellow hearth-goddesses Hestia or Vesta. Gabija is not passive, maternal, or especially gentle. She is an assertive, aggressive spirit who takes offense easily:

- Nothing unclean, impure, or disrespectful can ever be thrown into flames.
- Never toss garbage into the hearth.
- Always extinguish flames using only pure, clean water.
- Keep the hearth or stove clean.

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*Gabija is not an easy-going, tolerant spirit who laughs off insults. Dire consequences await those who spit, stamp, or, worst of all, urinate on fire. Urinate on fire and you urinate directly on Gabija.*

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Gabija is an alert, active spirit, invoked before initiating *any* activities involving fire (stove, hearth, or otherwise). She serves as a mediator between people and spirits:

- She accepts sacrifices on behalf of other deities (burned offerings).
- She is an intermediary between people and oracular spirits (fire divination).

Gabija has eyes: she sees *everything* that goes on in the house (or at least in the vicinity of the hearth or stove). Gabija is not limited to one fire or a single hearth: her essence pervades all fire. Light a match and Gabija is present. If content, she serves as a guardian. Gabija is invoked to protect a household against thieves and evil spirits.

Following the advent of Christianity, Gabija was syncretized to Saint Agatha. Old Lithuanian invocations and prayers survive, identical in form to those of centuries past; the only difference is the substitution of Saint Agatha's name for Gabija. (Sometimes saint and goddess are

invoked simultaneously.)

**Manifestation:** Gabija is fire, but she takes other forms, too. She may appear as a woman clothed in crimson, who may or may not have wings. She may manifest as a cat.

**Animals:** Cat, snake

**Color:** Red

**Offerings:** Gabija traditionally receives salt and food offerings, placed directly into the fire. (Do it reverentially, not carelessly.) Should salt or food ever accidentally fall into the fire, leave it there. Don't remove it. It may genuinely be just an accident or it may be Gabija practicing self-service. Graciously address the fire, acknowledge the offering, and very respectfully request that Gabija be satisfied. (The Lithuanian phrase is "*Gabija, bak pasotinta,*" or "Gabija, be satiated.")

**See also:** *Agni; Hestia; Vesta*

## Gabriel

**Also known as:** Abruel; Gavriel; Jibril

Gabriel is the great and powerful angel of hope, love, light, and illumination. He is an angel of justice, joy, and sometimes death. He is righteous, benevolent, and compassionate.

Gabriel is the Angel of the Holy Spirit and Guardian of the Holy Waters of Life. He stands to the left of the Divine Chariot and serves the Creator directly. Gabriel is believed to maintain close communications with the Creator and thus is a particularly powerful intercessor. In Ethiopia, where he has historically been deeply venerated, Gabriel is considered the archangel most likely to perform miracles. Although all the archangels are miracle-workers, Gabriel produces more and is most generous. Gabriel is renowned as the angel with the horn, which he will blow to signal Judgment Day.

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*Gabriel is revered by Jews, Muslims, Christians and the unaffiliated. Before he was an archangel, Gabriel was venerated as a deity in Babylonia. According to a Yezidi version of Creation, Gabriel created Eve from Adam's shoulderblade or from the flesh beneath his armpit. (See also: Peacock Angel for more information about the Yezidi.)*

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Archangel Michael may be humanity's defender, but Gabriel is our provider. Moroccan folklore explains that when Adam and Eve were thrust from Paradise, Gabriel brought them a cow, goat, wheat, and a plough and personally taught Adam how to plow.

Gabriel has dominion over birth and death:

- He is among the angels most frequently invoked to heal infertility.
- Many scholars believe him to be the angel sent to destroy Sodom and Gomorrah.

Jewish angelology ranks Gabriel among the Angels of Death. It is considered an honor and blessing to have Gabriel as an escort to the Beyond (as opposed to some of his scarier comrades). Gabriel presides over a palace in the Sixth Heaven, where lucky souls get to spend eternity. Christians consider Gabriel the patron saint of happy death.

- Gabriel is one of only two angels identified by name in the Bible. (Michael is the other.) Gabriel explains Daniel's visions in the Book of Daniel 8:15–26.
- The Kabbalah associates Gabriel with the Sefirah of Gevurah (Power).
- Gabriel is the Angel of the Annunciation: the Gospel of Luke 1:26–38 names Gabriel as the angel who hailed Mary and revealed her destiny.
- Gabriel may have been the angel in the Garden of Gethsemane.
- According to pre-Islamic Syrian angelology, Gabriel is the highest and foremost among angels. He serves as mediator between Creator and creation.
- In Islam, Gabriel is the angel who dictated the Koran to Muhammed.
- As Angel of Communications, Gabriel is considered presiding Angel of



the Internet.

As the Angel of the Annunciation, Gabriel is the subject of countless icons and paintings. Among the artists he has inspired are:

- Leonardo Da Vinci
- Fra Angelico
- Titian
- Donatello
- Henry Ossawa Tanner
- Edward Burne-Jones
- Dante Gabriel Rossetti
- John William Waterhouse

Gabriel is the Angel of Dreams. Invoke his aid to improve your dreaming skills, eradicate nightmares, or to provide prophetic dreams.

#### **ARCHANGEL GABRIEL DREAM SPELL**

The Rider-Waite-Smith Tarot Judgment card depicts Gabriel with his horn in the act of waking the dead. (Many other decks also use this image, although not all.) Gabriel is the subject of a dream divination intended to improve your dreaming skills or provide prophetic dreams:

1. Just before going to sleep, hold the card in your hands and articulate an invocation to Gabriel. Describe precisely what you need.
2. Place the card beneath your pillow together with a twig of wormwood (*Artemisia absinthium*); go to sleep and pay attention to your dreams.
3. Repeat as necessary. (Don't get discouraged too quickly; sometimes it takes a little while.)

Gabriel is among the spiritual guardians of Earth, invoked to protect sacred places. Request his help if a sacred site is endangered. He is also frequently petitioned for fertility. The traditional Ethiopian vow is to promise to name the baby in his honor.

**Favored people:** Gabriel is considered the guardian of those born under the sign Cancer; however, he may have dominion over all water signs, Scorpio and Pisces, too. He is the patron of postal workers, stamp collectors, astrologers, and dreamers.

**Iconography:**

- Gabriel is the subject of countless religious artworks: his image appears in churches around the world. Gabriel appears on virtually all the Royal Doors ornamenting Eastern Churches.
- With the exception of generic, anonymous angels, Gabriel is the most commonly identifiable angel depicted in cemetery statuary. His image symbolizes a wish for the eventual reunion of loved ones following death: his horn signals a soul's departure from the Earthly plane and presumed arrival in Heaven. It will also wake the dead on Judgment Day, another opportunity for reunion.
- Gabriel is among the most popular central figures incorporated into the traditional Mexican ceramic candelabras known as Trees of Life, beloved of folk art collectors. Raphael and Michael appear sometimes, too, but nowhere near as frequently as Gabriel.

**Attribute:** Trumpet (horn)

**Planet:** Moon

**Star:** Fomalhaut

**Element:** Water

**Day:** Monday

**Direction:** North and/or west (sources disagree)

**Season:** Winter (especially the month of January)

**Jewel:** Emerald, moonstone and/or pearl

**Metal:** Silver

**Colors:** Shades of the sea: greens and blues

**Sacred dates:** 26 March; 24 July; 8 November (Eastern churches); 24

March was Gabriel's original Roman Catholic feast; 1969 church calendar reformers eliminated that date and had Michael share his feast (29 September) with Raphael and Gabriel.

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*Songwriter Cole Porter exhorted the archangel to "Blow, Gabriel, Blow," a song from his 1934 Broadway musical, Anything Goes.*

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**See also:** *Fairy, Green; Guardians of the Sky; Michael; Peacock Angel; Raphael*

## Gaia

**Also known as:** Ge (as in geology or geography)

**Origin:** Greece

Instead of looking up to the skies for the Creator, look underfoot. Gaia is Earth and Gaia is *the* Goddess. In the beginning, before anything existed, there was Chaos; the void. Gaia, the Earth, emerged from Chaos and formed the sea (Pontus) and the sky (Uranus) from her own body. Thus begins an ancient Greek creation saga. It is the point from which virtually every general Greek mythology book begins.

- Hesiod's version of Creation skips right over the part with Chaos and starts with Gaia.
- Gaia is praised in the Homeric *Hymns to Ge* as the oldest of divinities.

Gaia and Uranus become lovers and generate more beings (the Titans and Cyclopes, for instance). Following their separation, Gaia begat more children with Pontus. Gaia is literally the Earth: you can stand on her, but she is an active goddess with a personality, too. She is not a goddess of agriculture (that's Demeter). Instead she is the spirit of the wild, sacred Earth containing untold treasure and potential.

Gaia is devoted to all her children, accepting them as they are, unlike the many fathers (Uranus, Kronos, Zeus) of Greek mythology who prey

upon their heirs and seek to suppress them. Gaia battles with gods on behalf of her children.

This mythic Gaia is based on the cosmologies of Greece and southern Italy, regions highly prone to earthquakes, where Earth is experienced as an active, living presence. She is not static or motionless but very much alive. Earthquakes may be perceived as expressions of divine anger, but they also physically resemble birthing contractions. I lived at the epicenter of the 1994 Northridge, California, earthquake just four months after giving birth and can personally vouch for the resemblance between aftershocks and labor contractions.

Gaia is an ever-present spirit of justice. She is never absent. Greek citizens swore public oaths to her. Shrines were dedicated to her; they were built near deep chasms, believed to be the most accessible place to communicate with her. Her shrines were associated with oracles such as those at Delphi, Athens, and Aegae (Macedonia). Delphi was the most famous oracle of the ancient world: Gaia's priestesses, known as pythonesses, prophesied after inhaling vapors emerging from a fissure in Gaia. Essentially, they spoke directly with her. The oracular spirit Apollo staged a coup, slaying the shrine's sacred serpent and installing himself as deity in charge. However, even after Delphi was rededicated to Apollo, the pythoness began her formal address to the deities with the words, *"First in my prayer before all other deities, I call on Earth, primeval prophetess."*

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*The Greek-influenced Russian Church officially places Gaia under the dominion of the Creator. According to a Russian folk legend, Gaia complained bitterly to the Creator about the pain humanity causes her. The Creator advised her not to cry as "in the end, you'll eat them all."*

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**Sacred site:** Earth is her body; all of Gaia is sacred, but her place of utmost power is Delphi, her navel chakra.

**Offerings:** Traditionally Gaia was given simple primeval foods like

barley cakes and honey, as well as libations of pure water; offerings may be given at any time but are especially important before plants are gathered or when there is to be digging and extraction; place offerings in small holes directly in Earth.

**See also:** *Apollo; Daphne; Demeter; Eurynome; Kronos; Kybele; Nyx; Pandora; Rhea; Titan; Typhon; Zeus*

## **Gajasura**

*Elephant of the Asuras*

**Origin:** India

Ganesha's head didn't come from just any old elephant. Gajasura, an elephant Asura, adored Shiva. His devotion and veneration pleased Shiva so much that he offered to grant Gajasura any wish. Gajasura asked to have Shiva in his stomach. His wish was fulfilled. There are two interpretations of this wish:

- Gajasura loved Shiva so much he wished to have him always near.
- Those perceiving Asuras as demons consider it an assassination attempt.

Parvati, Shiva's true love, was devastated and requested Vishnu's help. Vishnu disguised himself as a wandering musician and coerced Brahma into accompanying him on the tabla. Nandi, Shiva's mount, masqueraded as a dancing bull.

Gajasura was so impressed with Nandi that he offered the musicians any gift. They requested that he return Shiva. Gajasura acquiesced but knew that the act of disgorging Shiva would kill him. He requested that his elephant head be preserved and given so much importance that *everyone* would worship it. Eventually that head wound up on Ganesha's shoulders.

**See also:** *Ashura; Ganesha; Nandi; Parvati; Shiva*

## **Gamayun**

## *The Prophetess Bird*

**Also known as:** Gamaon

**Origin:** Russia

The Gamayun is among the magical spirit birds of Russian lore, related to Alkonost and Sirin although she appears independently. She is an oracular spirit, able to impart wisdom and prophecies. She also serves as an inspiration to artists; examples include Alexander Blok's poem, "Gamayun, Bird of Prophecy," and painter Viktor Vasnetsov's portrait, *Gamayun: The Prophet Bird*. Gamayun is a favored subject of folk art.

The Gamayun dwells in the Russian magical paradise island located to the east.

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*Meditate upon Gamayun's image, using it in visualizations to obtain prophecies from her.*

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**Manifestation:** A large bird with a woman's head

**See also:** *Alkonost; Sirin*

## **Gana**

**Origin:** Transylvania

Romanian is a Romance language, closely related to Latin. After Roman authorities withdrew from what is now modern Romania, the Romanized people speaking that Romance language were besieged by waves of Slavs and Magyars. Their response was to head for the hills, ascending ever higher into the Transylvanian mountains where they could preserve their culture in isolation. The goddess Diana traveled with them.

Diana, the Forest Goddess, was the presiding spirit of Transylvania, the land beyond the forest. *Gana* is the Transylvanian manifestation of

*Diana*, the regional pronunciation of her name. After Transylvania converted to Christianity, Gana became reclassified as a Queen of Witches. She is often now described with fear and dread, as if she were a demon, but this is a Christian perspective. If you are afraid of her, however, allegedly carrying a piece of linden wood serves to counteract and keep her away although it's unclear why a forest goddess would fear a piece of wood.

Gana is attended by an entourage of Fairies and witches. Modern witches should feel welcome to join them. Gana is at the peak of her power in springtime.

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*A Transylvanian legend retold by author and folklorist Charles Godfrey Leland in his book, Gypsy Sorcery and Fortune Telling, says that anyone who drank mead from Gana's wild ox drinking horn would die. This legend may be propaganda intended to discourage Walpurgis Night revels, but it may also indicate vestigial memories of human sacrifice or of Gana's role as a psychopomp.*

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**Manifestation:** She's described as fierce and beautiful.

**Sacred day:** May Eve (Walpurgis Eve), the night of April 30

**See also:** *Diana: Ielle; Irodeasa*

## **Ganaskidi**

**Also known as:** Ghanaskidi

**Origin:** Navajo

**Classification:** Yei

Ganaskidi is the name of the Navajo deity who leads a group of spirits called the Ganaskidi. They are spirits of abundance and the harvest. Ganaskidi literally means "humpback." Images of the Ganaskidi seen as

pictographs or petroglyphs sometimes resemble the more ubiquitous Kokopelli. Both Kokopelli and Ganaskidi have close associations with precipitation and mountain sheep.

The hump on Ganaskidi's back is actually a cloud sack loaded with mist, rainbows, and produce, especially corn. The cloud bag is so heavy, Ganaskidi must lean over and brace himself with a staff. Ganaskidi appears in ancient canyon petroglyphs, modern Navajo carpet motifs, and as a sacred mask. There is a famous 1905 photograph by Edward S. Curtis of a Navajo man wearing a Ganaskidi mask.

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*Take good care of those mountain sheep! Anyone may be a spirit in disguise.*

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**Manifestation:** Ganaskidi manifest in their classic image but also in the form of Rocky Mountain Bighorn Sheep.

**Iconography:** Ganaskidi wears a crown formed from a basket ornamented with eagle feathers, so as to resemble the sun's rays emerging from behind a cloud. His head may be crowned with ram's horns instead, in which case the solar ray-like feathers may emanate from his hump.

**See also:** *Yei*

## Gandharvas

**Origin:** India

Wild, rambunctious, male forest spirits, the Gandharvas are the sexy counterparts and companions of the Apsaras. Many, although not all Gandharvas are equine spirits. They are virile spirits, sometimes blamed for seducing, loving, and leaving young girls. They're fertility spirits, and so the abandoned girls tend to be pregnant and left to face the music alone. (Alternatively, Gandharvas take the fall for illicit pregnancies.) Gandharvas may be invoked to heal infertility and miraculously cause



conception. They may be petitioned for exceptional musical skills, too.

Gandharvas are celestial musicians. The Rig Veda calls them guardians of Soma.

**Favored people:** Musicians

**See also:** *Apsara*

## Ganesha

*Lord of New Beginnings; Lord of Obstacles; He Who Bestows Blessings*

**Also known as:** Ganapati

**Origin:** India

Elephant-headed Ganesha may be the most beloved deity of the modern Hindu pantheon; venerated by *millions*. He is invoked by Buddhists, Jains, and Neo-Pagans, too. He is benevolent and generous to all.

Lord of Beginnings, Ganesha's blessings are sought before initiating any new enterprise. Ganesha is the Lord of Obstacles, removing but also creating them, sometimes from anger but sometimes just to attract further veneration. The flip-side of Ganesha is that he must be propitiated before new ventures lest he place obstacles in your path.

Ganesha bestows success, victory, prosperity, material comfort, romance, love, better sex, and supernatural powers and skills to his devotees; however, he can block all these things, too, although he is unlikely to do so unless insulted and angered. Ganesha is a generous, sympathetic spirit, quick to bestow favors. He is a trickster, but on behalf of his devotees and those he loves. Ganesha has a fast, volatile temper, but he calms down quickly, too, and can be soothed and appeased. (But remember the old saying: an elephant never forgets!)

- Ganesha is the first deity worshipped during Hindu rituals.
- His is the first image at the head of all processions.
- He is an indispensable component of all Hindu ceremonies except funeral rites.

Historical evidence indicates that Ganesha was known as early as 1200 BCE; however, surviving depictions are rare before the fourth century CE. He was incorporated into the Hindu pantheon comparatively late, in approximately the fifth century CE.

Ganesha is believed to have begun his incarnation as a pre-Aryan elephant spirit venerated by jungle tribes. In addition to his other gifts, he was invoked for protection from elephant herds. He was absorbed into the Hindu pantheon as the son of Shiva and Parvati. Various myths explain why Ganesha has an elephant head. In one, Parvati creates her son from the scrapings of her own skin. Ganesha was born while Shiva was away long-term practicing austerities.

Ganesha is extremely close to his mother. When she asked him to guard her privacy in the bath, he took up his position at the door. This was the moment Shiva returned. Father and son didn't know each other. Shiva wished to see Parvati; Ganesha refused to let him pass. Shiva beheaded him. Parvati came to see the source of the commotion and was distraught. Now comprehending the situation, Shiva revived Ganesha but was forced to find a new head. The first to be had was an elephant's. (See also: *Gajasura*.)

Ganesha is lord of entrances, thresholds, and crossroads. Let him guard your door. It's traditional to place his image above main entrance thresholds so that he is always encountered when entering. Ganesha is happy to be venerated alongside other deities; however, never forget that he is the Lord of Beginnings. If you feed him, feed him first before any other spirits. There may be conflict if you venerate him alongside other spirits who also expect to be first served, for instance, Eleggba.

- Ganesha heals physical, spiritual, and emotional ills.
- Ganesha has the power to liberate from the karma of past lives.
- He is invoked for children by the childless.

Petition him at a home altar or in a temple. Ganesha is the subject of a fertility ritual conducted at his temple in Madurai, India: allegedly if you bathe his image and circumambulate around it for forty-eight consecutive mornings, he will grant your wish for children.

Ganesha is a popular Tantric deity, too: his trunk and single tusk are phallic symbols. Early Hindu texts suggest disapproval of Ganesha, who

was then associated with “orgiastic rituals.” He remains associated with Tantra among Buddhists. Ganesha communicates with devotees in dreams.

**Favored people:** Ganesha will allegedly help anyone who approaches him with a pure heart. He is the special patron of musicians who play the tabla and/or mridangam (percussion instruments), as well as authors, poets, and writers. In Thailand, Ganesha is considered patron of elephant trainers.

**Manifestation:** Ganesha has an elephant’s head on a man’s pot-bellied body. He has one broken tusk. His skin usually has a rosy hue. His big ears signify his capacity to listen and hear. His forehead is marked with vermilion, indicating his tendency to involve himself in issues associated with women (and his generosity toward female devotees).

**Iconography:** There are *countless* images of Ganesha sitting, standing, dancing, or riding his mouse. Once you know what he looks like, he’s very recognizable.

**Attributes:** Axe, lotus, elephant goad, rosary, noose

**Spirit allies:** Ganesha serves Parvati and Shiva. He may be enshrined with Lakshmi and Sarasvati.

**Realm:** Ganesha’s home is a celestial realm called the Abode of Bliss (*Svaanda Dhama*). He lives in a marvelous palace surrounded by a forest of wish-fulfilling trees and an ocean of sugarcane juice.

**Color:** White, red, pink

**Element:** Water

**Numbers:** 1, 3, 5

**Animals:** Mouse, snake

**Mount:** Mouse

**Offerings:** Ganesha is easy to please, but he cannot be fooled. He will accept the most modest offerings but only if given with sincere intent and devotion. His favorite offering is said to be *modaka*, a type of sweet

rice or wheat cake. Allegedly the more *modaka* you give him, the more inclined he is to work on your behalf. Ganesha also accepts peanuts; fruits, especially bananas; sweets, candy, and sugarcane.

**See also:** *Esbu Elegbara; Gajasura; Kangi Ten; Lakshmi; Parvati; Santosbi Ma; Sarasavati; Shiva*

## Ganga

**Origin:** Himalayas

Ganga is the goddess of India's holiest river, the Ganges. She is a spirit of abundance, health, and vigor, bestowing fertility, happiness, health, and material comforts. Ganga, a spirit of incredible power, is the absolute essence of the water of creation.

The Ramayana recounts Ganga's birth. Her father is Himavat, Lord of the Himalayas. In one legend, Ganga agrees to marry the mortal king Santenu on the condition that he never address even the tiniest reproach to her. He observes this stipulation strictly until, witnessing her drown each of their children in the Ganges, he comments upon her strange notion of maternity. Ganga abandons her husband on the spot, although not before informing him that the children she had borne and drowned were actually divinities, forced into mortal birth as punishment. Her act of throwing them into the river actually purified their sins and released them to continue their divine existence.

Ganga soothes mental disturbance and emotional ills. She provides fertility and physical healing. She removes anger and guilt. She heals, cleanses, and purifies those who loathe themselves or are overwhelmed by shame or guilt.

**Manifestations:** Ganga is the Ganges River, but she also manifests as a woman or mermaid. When manifesting as a woman, she is too beautiful to be mistaken for a mortal. Her hair is long and flows in waves. She often wears a belt of pearls. In the Bengal, she is a white-colored woman. She may be depicted with either two or four arms.

**Attributes:** Ganga holds a pitcher and a lotus flower.

**Mount:** Ganga rides the Makara, part fish and part elephant or crocodile.

**Element:** Water, specifically Ganges River water, considered to contain tremendous spiritual powers. Water is carried away in small sealed pots to be placed upon household altars. The full efficacy of the water's powers, however, is obtained by bathing in it.

**Animals:** Doves, goats, pigs

**Sacred sites:** Ganga is present in every drop of Ganges River water; however, temples have been raised alongside Ganges riverbanks. Millions of devotees are on her banks at all times. Principal centers of worship include:

- Gengotri (the source of the river)
- Haridwar (where the Ganges meets the plains)
- Allahabad (where the Ganges joins the Yamuna River)
- The holy city of Varanasi (Benares)
- Sagara Island, where the Ganges flows into the Bay of Bengal
- Lake Ganga (Ganga Talao) in Mauritius, the largest Hindu pilgrimage outside India

**Time:** Bathing fairs are held in honor of Ganga's birthday each spring. Every twelve years, a great festival is held in Haridwar to coincide with Jupiter entering Aquarius.

**Offerings:** Pilgrims launch small boats made of leaves bearing marigold petals dipped into clarified butter (*ghee*) and set alight.

**See also:** *Apsaras; Shiva; Vishnu*

## Ganymede

**Origin:** Greece

Ganymede was a Trojan king's gorgeous young son, described as the handsomest boy in the world, the male equivalent of Helen of Troy. His beauty attracted Zeus, who transformed into an eagle and abducted

Ganymede, carrying him up to Olympus to be his lover. Another version of the myth suggests that Eos stole Ganymede away first, only to have Zeus cut in on her romance. Ganymede was appointed official cupbearer in Olympus. It's not entirely clear if Ganymede was general cupbearer to *all* the Olympians or exclusively Zeus' private servant. Eventually Zeus placed Ganymede in the heavens as the constellation Aquarius. Modern astronomers are most familiar with Ganymede as the largest of Jupiter's moons. (Others include Zeus' lovers, Callisto, Europa, and Io.) If you need an intercessor with Zeus, Ganymede is a top choice.

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*In some versions of the myth, the eagle that captures Ganymede in its talons is Zeus in disguise. In others, the eagle is Zeus' servant, Aetos. Aetos is no ordinary eagle but a spirit, born from Earth, like the Dactyls. He grew up to be a very beautiful boy and Zeus' very close, personal friend. Hera didn't just hate Zeus' female lovers: she transformed Aetos into an eagle. Zeus was never able to break Hera's spell, so he kept Aetos close to him at all times as his lightning bearer.*

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The name *Ganymede* became synonymous with homoerotic beauty and homosexual love. In seventeenth-century French, the word *ganymede* was defined as a "passive homosexual partner."

**Favored people:** Ganymede is the patron of wine stewards.

**Sacred bird:** Cockerel

**See also:** *Callisto; Dactyls; Eos; Europa; Hebe; Hera; Io; Zeus*

## Garuda

*The Devourer*

**Also known as:** Karura (Japanese); Galon (Burmese)

Garuda's mother and the mother of the Nagas shared the same husband. He offered to grant each wife one wish. The mother of the Nagas wished for one thousand children. Garuda's mother wanted only two but demanded that they be superior to all the Nagas. Rivalry between the two wives escalated until finally Garuda's mother lost a bet and became the prisoner/slave of the Nagas' mother. Garuda freed her by stealing the nectar of immortality from the Devas. He vowed eternal vengeance on the Nagas.

Rather than be angry at the theft, Vishnu was so impressed with Garuda that he offered to grant him a wish. Garuda's deepest wish was to serve as Vishnu's mount.

Garuda is the King of Birds. Although he is a unique, mythic bird—Garuda names its own mythic species—he is sometimes associated with eagles or kites. He serves Vishnu and incessantly hunts Nagas. Sometimes Garuda wears Nagas as jewelry.

Hindu Garuda tales date back over three thousand years. The war between Garuda and the snake spirits called Nagas is mythic but allegorical, too. The Nagas represent indigenous spirits and traditions. Legends of Garuda overcoming them represent the victory of Hinduism over tribal religion.

Garuda is venerated by both Hindus and Buddhists, playing a similar role in both faiths. However, Hinduism acknowledges one single Garuda while in Buddhism, Garuda names a class of guardian spirits who wrestle with Nagas until they, too, accept Buddhism.

Garuda is venerated independently of Vishnu. Invoked to protect against snakes and snakebite, he is an excellent guardian for those who fear snakes. Garuda is fearless and may be invoked to banish ghosts and malevolent spirits. He is a storm bringer and has dominion over weather. Although Naga-lovers may feel differently, for many, Garuda epitomizes strength and righteousness. His name and/or image are ubiquitous:

- Garuda is the national symbol of Indonesia and Thailand.
- Garuda is the name of Indonesia's national airline and countless Indonesian restaurants.
- The yoga pose known as Garuda-asana, or the Eagle Pose, helps relieve leg cramps.

- Garuda the Wind Spirit appears on the animated children's show *Yu-Gi-Oh!*
- Garudamon is an ultimate Digimon on the animated children's show of that name.

**Manifestations:** Garuda is an extremely large hybrid man-bird, usually appearing with a horned bird's head and wings on a human body. In Tibet, he manifests with an eagle's head but human arms. He can, however, transform into man or bird.

**Iconography:** Hindu Garudas usually have wings and four arms. Buddhist Garudas may have only wings. He is frequently depicted in battle with Nagas or clutching one in his beak or talons. Images of Garuda kneeling respectfully are placed opposite the main shrine in Vishnu's temples.

**Planet:** Sun

**Element:** Air

**See also:** *Naga; Nandi; Vajrapani; Vishnu*

## **Gaude, Frau**

**Also known as:** Frau Gode; Frau Wode

Frau Gaude, the Boar Hound Goddess, roams the streets during the Twelve Nights of Christmas and especially on Christmas Eve, accompanied by a pack of hell hounds with glowing eyes. She used to ride in an old-fashioned carriage. These days she may drive a hearse or an SUV. People are advised to keep their doors and windows shut. Otherwise, one of her dogs may slip inside to sit beside the fire (or the radiator, as the case may be—not having a fireplace won't protect you). If the dog is left alone, all will be well. If someone tries to dislodge the dog, or shoo it away, Gaude's puppy will tear the person to pieces. And that's not the worst of it.

People have attempted to kill the canines, but they're spirit dogs: they don't die. Instead, the dog transforms into a rock that returns to life as a



dog every midnight. It doesn't matter if the rock is removed from the home; the dog returns howling at midnight. Every howl is an individual curse directed at the family in the house. (Curses include illness, accidents, and general disasters.) The only one with the power to remove these curses (and the dog!) is Frau Gaude, but she only performs curse removal services on Christmas Eve.

Frau Gaude heads her own Wild Hunt or travels in Berchta's entourage. She is a pre-Christian Germanic dog goddess, originally a psychopomp and spirit of healing. By only removing curses on Christmas Eve, Frau Gaude may be attempting to reassert her veneration. Alternatively it's a ploy by old devotees to excuse continued devotions. No one can blame you for attempting to remove a curse, but if you're busy petitioning Frau Gaude on Christmas Eve, clearly you're not at midnight mass.

Frau Gaude rewards those who do her a good turn with gifts of prosperity. She is also known as Frau Wode, essentially Mrs. Woden (Odin). Speculation as to her true identity runs rampant. Odin likes the ladies, and she may be his local wife. However, some suspect that she's really Odin in drag.

**Spirit allies:** Among the spirits who travel in her entourage are Frau Gaude's twenty-four daughters who may appear in the guise of dogs or women. At least some of her hunting hell hounds are believed to be enchanted young women, transformed into dogs by wicked sorcerers.

**Offerings:** Give Frau Gaude offerings comparable to Berchta; also offerings on behalf of dogs, her own or boar hounds in general.

**See also:** *Berchta; Odin; Wild Hunt*

## Gedés

**Also known as:** Gédés; Guedes

The Gedés are a category of Haitian Vodou spirit. They may be a subdivision of lwa or they may be their very own category, a parallel class of spirits. They are wild, rambunctious spirits, not easily

categorized or pigeonholed. They are mediating spirits:

- The Gedés mediate between the Rada and Petro pantheons.
- They negotiate between the realms of death and life.

The Gedés are spirits and guardians of the dead. Some Gedés may be dead souls, but not all. The dead reside in the cemetery, but so do liminal spirits who straddle the frontier between life and death. Many Gedés belong to this category. They are sacred clowns from beyond the grave, spiritual caretakers of the cemetery.

In Haitian Vodou, Barons and Gedés share the cemetery, but they are two different pantheons. Although they share much in common, interact, and often appear together, they are not exactly the same. Distinctions between them are fine:

- The Barons are Spirits of Death.
- The Gedés are Spirits of the Dead.

The Gedés may be the spirits of the Gedeve (literally “children of Gedé”), the original inhabitants of the Abomey Plateau (Dahomey). After the Fon conquest, the Gedeve were forced to become a caste of grave diggers but were eventually sold into slavery en masse as their presence made the Fon nervous, not only for political reasons but because of their alleged great magic powers. Their associations with the cemetery, originally intended to weaken and humiliate them, instead had the result of making them feared as their magical powers were suspected of being increased. Gedeve ancestors were incorporated into the Fon pantheon as “Lords of the Earth.”

The Gedés are spirits of death *and* life. Masters of the libido, they preside over the start *and* conclusion of life. The Gedés are beyond social taboos. They have the freedom of those who have lost *everything*: they say and do anything they please. They are irreverent spirits who mock sanctimony and enjoy exposing the hypocritical and prim. They enjoy sex, ribaldry, and obscenities.

During ritual possession, Gedés like to reveal secrets (the more embarrassing the better!). Gedés are rude, vulgar, painfully truthful, and honest. If you can get them to answer a question for you, they will tell you the truth. Tricksters and social satirists, the Gedés are fierce

protectors of children. They can be powerful healers, especially on behalf of children. Their specialty is terminal illness. Appeal to them if a child is at death's door. The Gedés are Death's doorkeepers.

Gedés may also be invoked for fertility. Although they tend to be involved with big issues of life and death, they will help with money or material needs if a child's welfare is at stake.

There are countless Gedés, with more joining their number all the time. They tend to travel in packs. Some are famous; most are anonymous. Rank-and-file Gedés are often the forgotten dead, those without proper funerals or lacking descendents to honor them.

The Gedés are syncretized to Saint Gerard Majella (because his attribute is a skull) and because of his associations with pregnancy.

**Attributes:** Skull, cross, shovel, grave digger's tools, phallus, baton

**Colors:** Black, purple

**Date:** November 2<sup>nd</sup>, All Souls Day

**Realm:** Gedés live at the crossroads, as well as in the cemetery.

**Days:** Monday, Friday or Saturday

**Offerings:** The Gedés are voracious; they like substantial servings and have a tendency to serve themselves. Favored offerings include salted herring; bottle of raw rum (*kleren*) infused with hot peppers; *lots and lots* of peppers and extra hot sauce to warm them up; black rooster feathers; skeleton toys (the more obscene, the better!).

**See also:** *Barons; Gedé, Papa; Lwa; Petro; Rada*

## Gedé Nibo

**Also known as:** Gedé Nimbo; Ninbo

**Classification:** Gedé

Gedé Nibo is the son of Baron Samedi and Madame Brigitte. Ogun is his godfather. Gedé Nibo is the bridge between Barons, Gedés, and Lwa.

He is the prince of the cemetery, the phallic lord of the dead. Gedé Nibo is a great healer and a tremendous guardian of children.

Gedé Nibo straddles the borders between death and life, sex and death, and between genders, too. Nibo may wear mixed feminine and masculine attire. A witty trickster with an eye for a joke, he is simultaneously macho and feminine. Gedé Nibo is variously described as pansexual, transgendered, and also homoerotic.

**Manifestations:** His traditional apparel includes a riding coat, old pants, a crooked hat and a black scarf around his neck, but he enjoys sowing confusion.

**Color:** Black

**Offerings:** In addition to the usual offerings made to Gedés, Gedé Nibo accepts cash. Bring it to the cemetery for him.

**See also:** *Barons; Baron Samedi; Brigitte, Madame; Gedés; Lwa; Ogun*

## Gedé, Papa

**Classification:** Gedé

Papa Gedé is the leader of the Gedés, landlord of the cemetery, its spiritual superintendent. Some people use this name to indicate Baron Samedi. Some consider Baron Samedi to be Papa Gedé, leader of the Gedés as he is of the Barons. However Baron Samedi is a very distinct spirit. Once you know him, it's hard not to recognize him. There is also *another* spirit called Papa Gedé who does not dress or act like the Baron but plays the shambling buffoon. (He's not; don't be fooled. He's a powerful spirit wearing a guise, but the guise he consistently wears is of a socially disreputable, aggravating bumpkin.) That Papa Gedé is the leader of the Gedés. Whether he reports to Baron Samedi or not is between them. Papa Gedé adores Ezili Freda Dahomey. Sometimes she tolerates him.

If you have business in the cemetery, especially of a magical nature, it may be best to propitiate Papa Gedé. If you are planning any sort of expedition or excavation (digging for graveyard dirt; taking cemetery

rocks, communing with the dead, raising the dead), it might be wise to give him a heads-up. He is the custodian of the graveyard: if you seek information regarding someone who has passed over, Papa Gedé has it.

**Manifestation:** Papa Gedé speaks with a nasal voice.

**Offerings:** He does not particularly like fire, but he does like cigarettes, which he may smoke two at a time. Bring him a pack and something to drink.

**See also:** *Baron Samedi; Ezili Freda Dahomey; Gedés*

## Gello

**Also known as:** Gyllou (Ethiopia)

**Origin:** Greece

Gello, a young woman from the isle of Lesbos, died without bearing children. The spiritual ramification of this is that, having left no descendents, she cannot assume the functions of an ancestral spirit. Instead, Gello became a killer ghost. In revenge for her own untimely death, Gello preys upon the children of women whose maternity she envies.

Gello the baby killer eventually developed into a much feared demon. Like the Lamia, Gello multiplied. The plural of Gello is Gelloudes. The Gelloudes, multiple manifestations of Gello, almost like clones, spread out so that they could do even more damage. The Gelloudes are now considered a distinct class of spirit, classified as Exotika.

Gello survived the abolition of Pagan religions, continuing to prey on babies although now combated by saints, especially Saint Sisinius. According to one legend, Gello killed the children of Melitene, the saint's sister. He pursued her, determined to end her reign of terror. Gello fled, shape-shifting to avoid detection, but was eventually trapped. Gello was forced to cough up a list of twelve and a half names, which protect against her depredations. Post the names so that they're visible and Gello will leave you alone. Alternatively, the sight of the name *Sisinius* is sufficient to keep her away. (A large cottage industry in Sisinius amulets

once existed.)

Gello and the Gelloudes have never disappeared, remaining a fixture of modern Greek folklore. Newborns and young babies who fail to thrive are described as “eaten by Gello.” In addition to Sisinius amulets, Ethiopian magic scroll amulets are designed to protect against her. Because Gello may kill babies slowly, time may exist to expel her. This modern ritual is intended to supplement medical intervention, not replace it:

#### **GELLO CURE RITUAL**

This entire spell must be accomplished between sunset and dawn.

1. Go to the shore at sunset; your goal is to collect forty small round stones thrown up by forty waves (one stone per wave). It may be necessary to wait for more than forty waves. Only one stone may be obtained per wave.
2. If you are unable to collect forty stones by sunrise, go home, leaving whatever you've collected. Begin anew at sunset. (However, this is an inauspicious sign and should stimulate intensified prayer and petition. If the spirits are with you and luck is on your side, then the stones will appear quickly.)
3. When forty stones are collected, take them home and boil them in vinegar.
4. Allow the vapors to permeate your home. (Do *not* feed the potion to the baby. This spell is *not* for internal consumption.) Gello's influence will allegedly be broken by dawn.

**Manifestation:** Gello is an amazing shape-shifter who takes completely unexpected forms. Saint Sisinius once discovered her in the guise of a single goat hair clinging to a king's beard.

**See also:** *Ancestor; Exotika; Ghost; Lamia; Lilith*

#### **Genie**

Find a mysterious, antique oil lamp and rub it. A fabulous, powerful

genie will emerge and be beholden to you. This classic fantasy is the beloved subject of fairy tales, movies and television shows alike. Variations on the theme exist: the lamp may be ornate and precious or plain, old and dusty. The enchanted object may not even be a lamp: stories also tell of rings containing trapped genies. The genie may be a willing slave or obligated to fulfill a certain number of wishes, usually one or three.

It's a popular fantasy but genies don't exist only in bottles waiting to serve. Genies *are* Djinn. *Djinn* is an Arabic word: there are tremendous variations in colloquial spoken Arabic and so pronunciation of the word *Djinn* varies depending on location. In some regions, "Djinn" is pronounced "jinni". *Genie* is a European attempt at transliteration of that word; *Genie* was already a familiar word as it is the French variant of the Latin *genius*, meaning 'spirit.'

But the spirits are the same. *Genies* and *Djinn*: the words are technically synonymous. *However*, in popular culture, the words possess different connotations: Djinn are depicted as threatening monsters while genies are helpful, whether willingly or not. Thus the main character on the American television series, *I Dream of Jeannie* is a genie but her big, mean, blue enemy is the Blue Djinn although it is never implied that there is anything different about them other than temperament.

Genies first came to popular Western attention through the collection of fairy tales known as the *One Thousand and One Nights* (also called *The Arabian Nights*), which features the story of Aladdin and his lamp. This legend of the genie in the lamp was conflated with King Solomon's Seventy-Two Spirits (see entry) who were trapped in a brazen vessel so that they would be on-call whenever Solomon sought their power.

Genies became extremely popular fantasy figures. The 1940 movie, *The Thief of Baghdad* stars Rex Ingram as the genie. The hit television series, *I Dream of Jeannie*, which aired from 1965 until 1970, featured Barbara Eden as a sexy, headstrong and willful genie: not out of character for this species of spirit. Once she determines that Tony, the astronaut who liberates her from her bottle is hers, there is little he can do about it. (See also: *Lalla Malika*; *Lalla Mira*.) Genies came to the popular forefront once again with the 1992 Disney animated film, *Aladdin*, featuring Robin Williams as the big, blue genie. (The Disney

genie can only use his power when his master wills it; some may find this fallacy comforting but it's not true.)

Rings, lamps and bottles allegedly containing genies just waiting to be commanded are frequently available for sale or auction on e-Bay. The word *genie* has also come to mean anything with allegedly miraculous helpful powers thus the existence of products like the Diaper Genie or the Genie Garage Door Opener. (Whether true genies would appreciate these associations or be offended is subject for debate.) Perhaps because of the many popular misconceptions of genies, serious students of the occult and traditional spirituality tend to use the term *Djinn* exclusively. See the entry for *Djinn* for practical information regarding working with these spirits

## Genius

### **Plural:** Genii

The next time someone says you're not a genius, don't be insulted. The original definition of that word has nothing to do with intelligence. *Genius* literally means "spirit" and is a Roman name for a type of spirit being. To say that one possessed a genius for something, perhaps making candy or designing dresses, wasn't synonymous with having a natural talent. It meant that you possessed a guardian spirit offering assistance in that particular department.

Countless genii protect objects, areas, and organizations. For example, the Genius Loci, meaning the Spirit of the Place, guards specific locations. Genii tend to be anonymous, at least to those who don't know them personally. Whether Genii display individual personalities or bear individual names is now unknown. If names exist, they were kept secret. For example, inscriptions are simply dedicated to the Genius Loci.

**See also:** *Genie*

## Genius Cucullatus

### **Plural:** Genii Cucullati



The Genii Cucullati are mysterious spirits whose images appear throughout the Celtic world during the era of Roman domination. *Genius* means “a spirit.”

- A cucullus is a type of hood.
- The Genii Cucullati are literally the “hooded spirits.”

Whether the Genii Cucullati were mysterious fifteen hundred years ago is now unknown. They are mysterious to us because no surviving documentation explains their identity or function. Instead what we know of them is pieced together from archaeological evidence and surviving inscriptions. Basically what we know derives from connecting the dots.

Genii Cucullati appear throughout Celtic Britain and Europe. They were usually but not always depicted in groups of three. Each individual genius wears the distinctive cucullus. Some scholars theorize that this hood is an artistic motif indicating that the beings depicted are normally invisible. Sometimes, however, the hoods appear very phallic. Sometimes the phallic imagery is overt: some Cucullati have removable hoods revealing the phallus hidden within. An exposed phallus traditionally serves as an amulet against the Evil Eye, promotes personal fertility, and magically averts death. It may also chase away ghosts and many evil spirits. On the other hand, some perceive the hoods as resembling breasts similar to iconography associated with Artemis or Saint Agatha.

Genii Cucullati are healing spirits associated with therapeutic spa sanctuaries. They are divine escorts and bodyguards who serve humans and other spirits like Rosmerta, Mercury, and the Mothers. Wearing the image of the Genius Cucullati offers spiritual protection and wards off the Evil Eye.

**Manifestation:** Genii Cucullati manifest as different ages: young, mature, or old. Not all are male; however, in groups of three at least one is consistently male (or at least among images so far unearthed). Many but not all seem to be dwarves.

**Iconography:** They are depicted together with the Mothers and horned deities.

**Attributes:** Eggs, moneybags, swords

**Bird:** They may be depicted with a raven.

**See also:** *Artemis of Ephesus; Genie; Mercury; Mothers, the; Rosmerta*

## Gerda

**Origin:** Norse

**Classification:** Jotun

Gerda, the beautiful Snow Queen, daughter of Angerboda and the giant Gymir, shines so blazingly white that she rivals the sun. Gerda is the Goddess of Snow Blindness. Like Hans Christian Andersen's Snow Queen, she allegedly had a heart of ice. Freyr the Elven King, Lord of Fertility, took one look at her and fell madly in love. He sent his trusted servant, Skirnir, to beg for her hand in marriage. Skirnir first attempted to woo Gerda via bribery. He offered her magical, golden apples and Odin's magical golden arm ring. (Every ninth night, eight more gold rings dropped from the first.) Gerda spurned these, saying she had more than enough gold of her own.

- Skirnir threatened Gerda with violence, saying he would cut off her head if she didn't marry Freyr, but she laughed at his threats and called his bluff.
- Finally Skirnir threatened Gerda with magic, saying he would carve runes on his magic wand and strike her with it if she didn't marry Freyr. These runes would doom her to eternal loneliness and longing: she would forever lack family, friends, or children. All food and drink would taste foul.

That gloomy fate depressed Gerda so much she agreed to rendezvous with Freyr in the forest. Surprisingly, considering this not very romantic courtship, Freyr and Gerda were allegedly the happiest married couple in the world. The warmth of Freyr's love melted the Snow Queen's heart and they lived happily ever after. That said, Gerda demanded that Freyr relinquish his magic sword as her bride-price, ultimately leaving him virtually weaponless at Ragnarok, armed only with stag's antlers.

**Manifestation:** Gerda is blindingly, dazzling white. She shines so brightly that, as with angels, it's almost impossible to keep one's eyes open in her presence

**Color:** White

**Celestial:** Gerda is associated with the Aurora Borealis, the Northern Lights.

**See also:** *Angerboda; Freyr; Jotun*

## **Gestinana**

*The Mother Vine of Heaven;  
Lady of the Wilderness; Lady of the Underworld*

**Also known as:** Ama-Gestin-Anna; Belili; Belit Seri; Geshtinana

**Origin:** Sumeria

In the myth of Inanna's descent into the realm of death, Gestinana appears to have little importance other than as Dumuzi's self-sacrificing sister. She was, however, a sacred goddess in her own right, once widely venerated thorough Mesopotamia. She is the Goddess of the Grapevine, Lady of Intoxicants.

Gestinana initially tried to hide Dumuzi from the demons sent to escort him to Death, refusing to reveal his location even when tortured. When a friend of Dumuzi betrayed him to the demons, Gestinana negotiated so that she could alternate with her brother, taking his place in Hell for half the year. While living in the Realm of Death, Gestinana serves as scribe and recording secretary to Ereshkigal, its queen.

Gestinana is the sacred brew master who may or may not be identical with Siduri. She is a singer and interpreter of dreams.

**Offerings:** Beer, wine

**See also:** *Dionysus; Ereshkigal; Inanna-Ishtar; Siduri; Tammuz*

## Ghantapa

**Also known as:** Shamvara; Shambara

Ghantapa, Prince of Nalanda, home of renowned Nalanda Buddhist University in Bihar, India, renounced his crown and took a vow of celibacy, becoming a scholar monk. He developed a reputation for his austerities. Ghantapa took up solitary residence near the court of King Devapala (reigned c. 809–849 CE), who invited him to live in his palace. Ghantapa refused because he said the king was insincere. (An alternative version says that he called the king a sinner.)

Stung and angered, the king placed a price on Ghantapa's celibacy, offering a substantial bounty. A local courtesan sent her beautiful adolescent daughter to seduce Ghantapa. He succumbed and they became lovers, in all senses of that word. When the girl bore Ghantapa's child, the king had his evidence. He sought to publicly shame Ghantapa. In the meantime, however, unbeknownst to the king, Ghantapa had experienced a profound Tantric revelation.

Accompanied by a huge entourage, King Devapala confronted Ghantapa, accusing him of gross misconduct. Presumably he hadn't anticipated Ghantapa's reaction. Ghantapa smashed the baby and a gourd of wine onto the ground. Earth opened up and water flooded out, the operative word being *flood*.

Baby and gourd transformed into a vajra and bell, symbolizing male and female genitalia respectively and now Ghantapa's attributes. Ghantapa rose into the air, high above the floodwaters, transforming into Paramasukha-Chakrasamvara Buddha. His consort transformed into Vajravahari. Avalokiteshvara arrived to rescue king and crew from the rising waters. They implored Ghantapa's forgiveness and he initiated them into the magic circle of bliss. Ghantapa remains a highly esteemed Tantric master and deity.

In his guise as Shamvara, he was first venerated by wandering ascetics (*sadhus*) of medieval India. Shamvara wears a crescent moon in his hair and lives on Mount Kailash just like Shiva. Shamvara may have been the official Buddhist replacement for Shiva, patron of yogis and ascetics.

**Iconography:** Ghantapa is traditionally portrayed in mystic union with

Vajravahari.

**Attributes:** Bell of wisdom, vajra of compassion

**See also:** *Avalokitesvara; Buddha; Dakini; Vajra; Vajravahari*

## Ghosts

The simplest definition of *ghosts* is that they are souls of the dead. Theoretically the word *ghost* encompasses all dead souls. However, dead souls who fade away and never reappear are memories, not ghosts. The word *ghost* implies that the dead soul maintains a presence in the realm of the living or perhaps refuses to leave. Some ghosts may not realize they're dead or may not know how to leave or where to go. In these cases, the living can intervene to help them transition via rituals, through shamans, or by requesting that a psychopomp escort the dead soul to safety. (See also: *Psychopomps*.)

Whether the presence of a ghost is intrinsically harmful is subject to debate. In some cultures, contact with ghosts is toxic to the living either because of malintent or just because contact with the dead is debilitating. Other cultures consider each ghost an individual case. Some are benevolent; some are lethal; others are just neutral presences having little effect one way or the other.

Some ghosts exhibit scary behavior, but many people find *all* ghosts frightening just because of their associations with death or the supernatural. No chain-clanking or nocturnal groaning is required: the ghost doesn't actually have to *do* anything to cause fear other than be present. Not all ghosts mean harm. Some simply enjoy lingering near the living. They do feed off human energy, tapping into the energy of individuals as if it were a power source: there's a bit of a vampiric quality to this, but if not excessive it will not harm the average healthy individual. (A ghost may be less energy-draining than some living "psychic vampires.")

Ghosts who linger without causing trouble can be tolerated. Some people enjoy the presence of ghosts. The reputed presence of ghosts is a selling point for many hotels, inns, and bed-and-breakfasts. Sensitive

people can see ghosts, even if the ghosts don't want to be seen. Put out an offering for them periodically. Make them feel welcome and this type of ghost can transform into an ally or be helpful in emergencies.

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*Movies about helpful ghosts include Ghost, The Ghost and Mrs. Muir, and possibly The Others and Volver.*

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Some ghosts remain on the earthly plane because they are caught in a time warp: they constantly relive a tragedy that they experienced while alive.

- Some ghosts won't leave because they have a mission. It may be to protect someone, to reveal information, or to seek revenge.
- Some ghosts are consumed with rage and resentment.

Raging ghosts who loathe and envy the living are dangerous ghosts. The most powerful can manifest in corporeal form and harm the living. Ghosts who are powerful enough to exert their individuality often transcend ghost status to become spirits. If honored and propitiated, even hostile ghosts can sometimes be persuaded to use their power benevolently. (See also: *Mae Nak, Oiwa.*)

Spirit mediums channel dead souls for benevolent purposes. Séances invite participation of dead souls so that they can provide information, comfort, and healing. Some dead souls, however, possess the living for their own selfish or destructive purposes. These *must* be exorcised or somehow made to leave. (See also: *Dybbuk, Preta.*)

Various spirits are renowned ghost busters. Sometimes even an image or amulet bearing their name is sufficient to send ghosts packing. (A list of Ghost Busters is found in the Appendix.)

If a ghost can't be exorcised, it can be distracted. Many ghosts, like low-level demons, demonstrate obsessive-compulsive behavior: Scatter tiny poppy or millet seeds. The ghost may feel compelled to pick up or count each and every one.

- Hanging up a many-holed sieve or fish net may have the same effect.

- Alternatively leave a ghost some thread and a needle with a broken eye. Some ghosts will spend eternity attempting to thread the needle, in the process, ceasing their depredations.

How someone died may affect what type of ghost they become. Allegedly those who die suddenly, violently, or before their time are more likely to become malevolent ghosts. In many parts of the world, the most feared ghost is a woman who died in childbirth. It's crucial to point out, however, that not everyone who dies violently becomes a harmful ghost. Clearly most murder victims do *not* transform into rampaging supernatural beings, or there would be far less murder. It is not entirely clear why some victims of violent crimes turn into benevolent helpers (see also: *Tzu Ku*), while others become utterly consumed with rage and anger toward the entire world.

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*An extensive selection of rituals and spells for summoning ghosts, communicating with them and banishing them may be found in Judika Illes' Encyclopedia of 5000 Spells.*

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**Plants:** Various botanicals are said to discourage the presence of ghosts, especially rue and garlic. A strong scent of real carnations also allegedly discourages and pacifies ghosts. (Synthetic scent will not have the same effect. The best method is to strategically place bouquets of carnations replacing them as their aroma fades.) Hawthorn allegedly repels evil ghosts, while permitting the entry of helpful souls. Maintain a barrier of living hawthorn bushes and trees outside the home or bring branches within: the catch to the latter plan being that hawthorn is among the plants most associated with Fairies. Do *not* break off a branch without first seeking permission from the Fairies, lest ghosts become the least of your problems. (Branches found already fallen may be considered a gift and safely retrieved.)

**See also:** *Ancestors; Arang; Demon; Fairy; Goryo; Gran Pays; grey Lady; Green Lady; Mae Nak; Obake; Oikiko; Oiwa; Phii Mae Mai; Phii Ruan; Phii*

*Tai Hong; Phii Tai Tang Klom; Vampire; Yurei*

## **Ghoul**

**Also known as:** Ghool; Ghul; Feminine: Ghula

Ghouls are a lower order of extremely malicious Djinn. They are murderous, treacherous, voracious spirits who will kill and devour humans, and not in the potentially good shamanistic way that serves as initiation. Ghouls are just killers. They are classified as cannibals because of their preference for human flesh.

Ghouls may first have appeared in Egypt or Arabia. They existed long before Islam but now appear throughout the Islamic world, sometimes far from their original territory. Ancient Arabic legends suggest that ghouls took the form of beautiful, shapely women in order to lure travelers. Ghouls haunt burial grounds and cemeteries, where they feed upon cadavers. They linger amid ruins, isolated areas, and in the desert wilderness.

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*In modern Egypt, the word ghoul may indicate any kind of bloodthirsty cannibal, not necessarily a spirit being.*

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**Manifestation:** Ghouls sometimes manifest as animals and often as “monsters”; they are shape-shifters who will choose their form based on whatever is most likely to entrap victims. Moroccan ghouls frequently appear as hairy giant women with pendulous breasts and goat’s feet. They can transform into young beautiful women, too, when they wish.

**See also:** Afrit; Aisha Qandisha; Djinn

## **Giltiné**

**Origin:** Lithuania



Giltiné is a snake goddess of death. She roams cemeteries at night, licking coffins and corpses, collecting the poison of the dead, which she will then use on the living whenever their destined time comes. Unlike so many Angels of Death who only appear after someone has died to serve as escorts to the next realm, Giltiné actually pulls the plug: she terminates life.

Giltiné and Laima are sisters. Sometimes they work in tandem, as a pair of death goddesses. Laima distracts and comforts the dying person while Giltiné delivers the coup de grace. Giltiné has a venomous tongue like a serpent: she delivers the kiss of death. Alternatively she suffocates or strangles victims. Giltiné may be depicted with a sickle like the Grim Reaper, but allegedly she does not like shedding blood if only because it may mar her white dresses.

Giltiné can be delayed (a popular folklore theme), but ultimately she cannot be stopped. She magically opens all doors or locks. She cannot be prevented from entering or from performing her killing function, if it's genuinely someone's time to go. Giltiné usually takes her place at the head of the sickbed.

**Manifestations:** Giltiné manifests as a tall, cadaverously thin woman dressed in white. She may be wrapped in a shroud or in a romantic Gothic white dress. Giltiné can make herself so tiny she fits in a nutshell. Alternatively she manifests as a venomous snake or even just as a shadow. Giltiné may be invisible. She may manifest only as the sound of a whip cracking three times. The psychically gifted may sense Giltiné as a chill down the spine.

**Bird:** Owl

**Animal:** Snake

**Colors:** White, yellow

**See also:** *Laima; Psychopomp; Sbekhina*

**Glaistig**

*The Green Lady*

**Pronounced:** *Glah-shtig*

**Origin:** Scotland

The Glaistig may be a Highland Fairy or a once-mortal woman who has joined them. Her name literally means “water sprite” or “water imp.” Several kinds of Glaistigs exist. The most famous may originally have been a goddess of herds: cattle, goats, and sheep. Some Glaistigs are extremely helpful and benevolent. Some are not. It is advised to always be polite to her as earning her enmity can be dangerous. There are legends of once-benevolent Glaistigs who transformed into vengeful spirits when the milk given them as offerings was so hot it burned.

The Glaistig protects cattle, herds, and herders. She may guard children while their parents milk and care for livestock. However, Glaistigs also have associations with death, at least as harbingers. They are witnessed laundering linens in streams and so are classified among the spirits known as Washers at the Ford. They are also classified among the Green Ladies.

**Manifestation:** The Glaistig is a goat woman. Her upper half resembles a beautiful, longhaired woman. Her lower half is that of a goat; however, this may not be immediately apparent as she usually dresses in long, flowing green garments.

**Offering:** Fresh milk ideally served in a naturally hollowed-out stone.

**See also:** *Aisba Qandisba; Diablesse; Fairy; Flidais; Fuatb; Green Lady; Washer at the Ford*

## Gnome

**Origin:** Teutonic

Gnomes are subterranean spirits now most associated with garden statuary. They resemble tiny people: Paracelsus described gnomes as two spans high. (A span is the width of an outstretched human hand.) Unlike dwarves or kobolds, gnomes are not mine or cave spirits but tend to live beneath human gardens. They have a reputation for emerging at night to

do a little helpful garden work. Garden gnomes allegedly bring luck.

Gnomes tend to be quiet, private, taciturn spirits, but they respond well to gifts and offerings. They can be persuaded to become loyal allies, guardians, and helpers. Female gnomes may be especially taciturn; they are rarely depicted. However folklore indicates that there are entire gnome communities with male and female gnomes of all ages. Gnomes maintain good relationships with birds, rabbits, foxes, hedgehogs, and squirrels.

The earliest gnome statuary was produced in Thuringia, Germany, in the early nineteenth century and was based on German folklore. Gnome statues potentially welcome and attract real gnomes, as well as Flower Fairies or other benevolent spirits. The earliest statues were carefully wrought, hand-painted terra-cotta and were *exceptionally* popular.

By the 1960s, cheaper plastic and resin versions were mass-produced. The old terra-cotta ones are now extremely valuable and are family heirlooms. Garden gnome statues tend to evoke very visceral responses. Some people adore and collect them. Others loathe them so much that they feel justified destroying or removing other people's property.

Gnomes are the subject of modern entertainment as well as old folktales: The animated children's television show *The World of David the Gnome* was highly unusual in that it depicted both female and male gnomes.

- The gnomes in J.K. Rowling's *Harry Potter* series are garden pests, not helpers.

**Iconography:** The standard garden gnome depicts an older male gnome with long beard and peaked red hat. He wears a big belt over leggings, a blue tunic, and boots. Sometimes they wear gardeners' aprons.

**Emblem:** Mushrooms, especially *amanita muscaria*

**Plant:** The presence of galbanum (*Ferula gal-baniflua*) allegedly invites the protection of the gnomes.

**See also:** *Dwarves; Fairy, Flower; Kobold*

## Gobbo

**Origin:** Italy

Once upon a time, the image of a hunchback represented abundance because the hump on the back was interpreted as a bag so packed and full that it forced the person carrying it to hunch over. That bag of gifts is not dissimilar to the big bag Santa Claus is still depicted carrying.

Gobbo literally means “hunchback” in Italian. (The Italian title of Victor Hugo’s classic is *Il Gobbo di Notre Dame*.) *Gobbo* is also the name given to an ancient Italian spirit of abundance, fertility, and the life-force. Although Gobbo is now considered his name, it may originally have been a title or euphemism.

The most ancient manifestations of Gobbo somewhat resemble the Egyptian spirit Bes: he is a small virile man whose presence stimulates prosperity and plenty. He transitioned to Christianity, although his famous virility was toned down. Gobbo appears as an ornamental motif among Gothic churches, in the same manner, if less frequently, as the Green Man. The identity of the treasure Gobbo brings was reinterpreted: in Verona, Italy’s thirteenth-century Gothic Church of Saint Anastasia, Gobbo bears the holy-water font.

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*A very long time ago, in some societies, human beings with hunchbacks were considered sacred. Centuries later, however, those with hunchbacks would become persecuted or marginalized, the only lingering vestige of their previously higher status other peoples’ annoying desire to rub their backs for good luck. The hump was perceived as bringing luck to others, not necessarily to the person carrying it.*

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Gobbo’s mischievous trickster nature and powerful libido refused to be stifled: he was eventually identified with imps and minor devils. Gobbo degenerated into a good-luck charm, which is where you’re most likely to find him now. Gobbo decorates automobile rearview mirrors and key

chains. The legend says that if you rub his hump, he'll bring you luck and good fortune, but Gobbo can do more. He breaks the power of the Evil Eye, banishes malevolent forces, and provides fertility, too.

**Iconography:** The modern image of Gobbo usually depicts him as a dapper little man in a dress suit and a black top hat, but variations exist. Sometimes he's a man from the waist up; a vivid red horn from the waist down. That hybrid image officially combines two amulets: Gobbo and the phallic *cornuto* (horn), but it actually discreetly returns Gobbo's own phallus, once prominently displayed à la Priapus.

**Attributes:** Horseshoe; red horn; crowned horn; red pepper; umbrella; various Italian amulets like the *Mano Cornuto* (horned hand)

**Offerings:** Go ahead and keep Gobbo in your car or pocket, but place another image on an altar and see if he doesn't do more for you. Feed him espresso; food with peppers; phallic-shaped bread; and lots and lots of Italian liquor (wine, grappa, limoncello).

**See also:** *Bes; Kokopelli*

## Goibniu

**Also known as:** Goibhniu; Gofannon

**Origin:** Celtic

**Classification:** Tuatha Dé Danaan

Goibniu is a sacred smith. He creates weapons for the Tuatha Dé Danaan as well as favored devotees. Goibniu's magical weapons always find their target and they always kill.

Goibniu also hosts an Otherworld feast at his roadhouse. He's a brewer as well a smith. Goibniu brews a very special ale from the fruits of an Otherworld Tree. Those who drink it remain eternally youthful and vital, becoming immortal. (Manannan has a stock of Goibniu's special brew, too.)

**See also:** *Manannan; Tuatha Dé Danaan*

## Golden Boy

**Also known as:** Ghost Boy; Guman Thong; Kumanthong

**Origin:** Thailand

Golden Boy refers to a spirit, to an amulet intended to house this spirit and to a class of enslaved child spirits. The first documented reference to a Golden Boy amulet occurs in a nineteenth-century Thai literary classic, *Khun Chang Khun Phan* (“Mr. Chang and Mr. Phan”), based on historic events of the fifteenth century. Mr. Phan, the “hero” of the saga, was exiled to the hinterlands because of the treachery of his nemesis, Mr. Chang. Phan, a military hero renowned for his occult knowledge and his way with women, sought three things that he believed would give him ultimate protection: a magical sword, a magical horse, and a Golden Boy spirit child.

Phan met a brigand’s beautiful daughter and magically charmed her father into giving permission for their marriage. She conceived and Phan plotted to kill her and transform their child into Golden Boy. Phan manipulated her into dedicating her child to him, enabling him to control the baby’s soul. The hero waited until his wife was sleeping before stabbing her to death. Phan then removed the male fetus, taking it to a remote, deserted monastery, where he performed the rituals required to transform an ordinary fetus into Golden Boy, spirit ally and servant. He roasted his son on a spit, turning it constantly so that the flesh would dry evenly meanwhile chanting magical mantras intended to empower Golden Boy. Phan’s son was the first recorded Golden Boy amulet but not the last.

The Golden Boy spirit exists independently of amulets. No need to roast fetuses. There is an archetypal Golden Boy spirit whose blessings may be accessed via petitions or mass-produced statues and amulets. This archetypal Golden Boy is no one’s slave, however. He is petitioned in the same manner one petitions other spirits and he chooses whether to bestow his blessings.

This type of spirit, however, is not what sorcerers who wish to completely command and control Golden Boy seek. Golden Boy thus also names a class of spirits individually captured and commanded by

sorcerers. Souls of dead infants or young children are lured into amulets where they may be commanded. Golden Boy is the prototype spirit, but the name is also used to refer to any of these individual enslaved baby souls. Three types of Golden Boy amulets exist:

1. Actual fetuses that are transformed into Golden Boy via specific rituals, ceremonies, and spells required to activate the spirit. This type of Golden Boy amulet has long been outlawed by Thai legal code but allegedly still exists.
2. A fetus is not required for a Golden Boy amulet. A child's soul may also be magically lured into a bone or into images crafted from wood or sacred materials like those salvaged from abandoned or demolished temples. (Star gooseberry wood is favored, as is wood from dead trees.) Magical mantras and incantations are chanted as the image is painted gold. Spells in Khmer script, which allegedly possesses runic, magical properties, are written over the image.
3. Mass-produced, inexpensive statues that are easily and inexpensively obtained serve as altar images and focus for veneration; they allegedly possess magical powers of their own to attract prosperity, luck, and better business. They may be used to contact the archetypal Golden Boy, but they may not actually house a distinct spirit. These images may be crafted of metal, resin, or other materials.

The first two types of amulet, whether formed from wood or flesh, can only be prepared by Buddhist monks possessing arcane, esoteric knowledge. Unlike other amulets, Golden Boy cannot just be worn as jewelry or placed on a shelf to radiate power. A Golden Boy amulet is the equivalent of adopting a child. The amulet associated with Golden Boy is extremely labor-intensive. Golden Boy *must* be fed daily and often must be verbally coaxed to eat, like a child.

- When traveling or otherwise away from home, either invite Golden Boy to join you or direct him to stay home and guard the property.
- You *must* tell Golden Boy where you're going and when to expect your return.
- If you're delayed, you should probably call home and leave a message

on the answering machine for him with an explanation.

- If you take him with you, Golden Boy can't be packed into a suitcase or bag but must be carried like a child.
- Golden Boy must be formally introduced to all family members.
- Any children in the family are expected to treat him as a favorite sibling.

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*When going on vacation or otherwise away from home, either take Golden Boy with you so that he can be cared for, or explicitly tell or show him where the food is kept. Graciously invite him to serve himself.*

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Golden Boy is an active, vital presence. To be in possession of a Golden Boy amulet is the equivalent of housing a demanding, mischievous, tricky, but spiritually very powerful little boy. Golden Boy demands attention. He can be very sweet, but he can throw tantrums, too. Golden Boy may or may not be a benevolent spirit, depending on the intent of the sorcerer who commands him. Although often associated with nefarious goals, Golden Boy can just as easily be put to honorable purposes.

Golden Boy is an oracular spirit. He reveals the future and provides winning lottery numbers. Golden Boy speaks to devotees in dreams although some claim to hear his voice while conscious and awake, too. His voice is experienced as if someone were whispering in your ear. Golden Boy protects against danger.

- He attracts wealth, luck, and better business.
- Golden Boy serves as a home guardian.
- He transmits messages of love, typically from men to women.

Golden Boy is a favorite spirit of smugglers or those traveling with false documents because he can distract airport security, customs officials, and other bureaucrats. He is an ally of exorcists, who send him into a victim's body to drive out possessing spirits.



Should you take pity on what is essentially an enslaved soul, Golden Boy may be released and liberated by Mae Khongka (Mother of the Waters) or Mae Thoranee (Earth Mother). He may be brought to their shrines, buried in Earth, or gently placed in water accompanied by offerings of flowers and incense and Thai Buddhist prayer and ritual.

**Favored people:** Golden Boy tends to be considered a man's amulet or spirit helper. He is also associated with specific professions: images of Golden Boy are ubiquitous on the home altars of spirit mediums, palmists, tattoo artists, as well as monks who specialize in the occult.

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*Golden Boy also has a less well-known sister with whom he shares his altar.  
Her name is Golden Gumaree, Gumareethong, or Kumara.*

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**Iconography:** Various mass-produced images exist. Golden Boy is portrayed as a child with his hair in a topknot, wearing traditional Thai trousers. He may have only one testicle, which is intended to symbolize profound reservoirs of magical and sexual energy. Golden Boy is sometimes depicted in the arms of his father, who rides a rooster indicating his virility and power.

**Attribute:** Moneybag (Statues incorporating moneybags are believed best for attracting better business and prosperity.)

**Offerings:** Incense; flowers, especially roses; also whatever you would give a little boy: toys, snacks, sweets

**See also:** *Khun Paen; Mae Thoranee*

## Gorgons

**Origin:** Greece

Three Gorgon sisters, daughters of sea spirits Keto and Phorkys, lived on an island in the Western Ocean, in the direction of Night, past their

sisters the Graeae near the Garden of the Hesperides:

- Sthenno
- Euryale
- Medusa

Two sisters were immortal like their parents; Medusa's alleged mortality left her vulnerable to Perseus, the Greek hero who would eventually cut off her head. The Gorgon Sisters have brass heads, golden wings, and tusks like boars. Snakes entwine their heads and bodies. They possessed a special power: anyone who looked at the Gorgons turned to stone. It must be said, in all fairness, that the sisters did not exploit this power. They lived alone on an incredibly remote island and did not go visiting others. It took a lot of effort to reach their island, as the myth of Perseus demonstrates. Those Gorgons were no threat to anyone except those who went out of their way to find them.

It is possible that there is more to their myth than is now known. Hidden beneath the monster story may lie ancient goddesses who epitomize the magical and spiritual powers of menstruation. The Gorgons live in extreme isolation and only among other women similar to the tradition, once common among many cultures, for menstruating women to retreat to isolated menstrual huts shared only by other women for the duration of their periods. Menstruating women were feared as it was believed that they possessed many supernatural powers including the ability to paralyze men who gazed at their faces.

The Gorgons in their classical form were venerated by Neo-Platonists in Harran (now modern Turkey) in the tenth century CE. Vestiges of a Mystery Tradition may have survived.

The Gorgons survived the murder of Medusa and the fall of Paganism to reemerge transformed. In modern Greek folklore, Gorgon also refers to a type of potentially dangerous mermaid. The Gorgons have moved east: their original island was in the Atlantic past the Moroccan coast. Mermaid Gorgons favor the Black Sea. They emerge from the waters to ask sailors whether King Alexander yet lives. That's Alexander the Great, and it's a ritual formula question, not a request for a history lesson.

1. Tell the Gorgon mermaid that Alexander does indeed live and reign.

2. Offer her heartfelt blessings and she will sing to you with her beautiful voice. You will arrive on shore safely and blessed with good fortune.
3. If you reveal that Alexander is dead, she may personally and immediately capsize your boat or raise a storm from which there is no escape.

The word “gorgon” is sometimes used to describe any mean, ugly or repulsive woman. In *The Gorgon*, the 1964 Hammer Studios horror film, the spirits have moved north to Germany and become aggressive: venturing out to attack people when the moon is full. With the exception of Medusa, the film substitutes the names of Erinyes for those of the real Gorgons.

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*Legend has it that when Alexander the Great was conquering the known world, he got as far as the gates of Paradise. The gates opened. He was invited to drink from the fountain of immortality with the proviso that once he did, he would no longer be human but a spirit and thus must stop his military campaign. Alexander declined but many in his entourage accepted the offer. They transformed into sea spirits who still concern themselves with the fate of their erstwhile ruler. They do not want to hear that he's dead.*

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**Manifestation:** The modern Gorgon, a beautiful fish-tailed mermaid, does not resemble the classical Gorgon. (The same word refers to both types.)

**Attributes:** She holds a ship in one hand and an anchor in the other.

**Iconography:** The mermaid gorgon is painted on the walls of Greek *tavernas*; she appears on menus and is a popular tattoo design.

**Time:** Mermaid gorgons are most active and likely to emerge on Saturday nights.

**See also:** *Erinyes; Exotika; Graeae; Jabi; Kanayago; Keto; Kurukulla; Lamia of the Sea; Medusa; Mermaids*

## Goryo

**Origin:** Japan

The term *Goryo* first emerged in the eighth century CE to refer to the dangerous, angry ghosts of nobles who had died in political intrigues. Because the person's life ended amid public humiliation, their ghostly anger and vengeance manifested against the mass public. *Goryo* were associated with epidemics, wars, and disasters, as opposed to the standard angry, vengeful ghost who may target one single victim or family.

*Goryo* could be accessed through divination and shamanic or necromantic rituals. By communicating with them, they can be appeased and propitiated. *Goryo* could be transformed from malevolent forces into benevolent spirit guardians, which may have been the original intent of their rampages. By calling public attention to themselves and their power, they could receive the honors denied to them while alive. Often the unjust circumstances of their deaths were exposed.

Over time, however, the term *Goryo* was loosened and expanded to refer to any hostile, unfriendly ghost. Anyone, even the most mundane person, can transform into a *Goryo* by sheer will or by the intensity of rage experienced at time of death. *Goryo* now generally refers to the ghosts of those who died sudden, unexpected, and/or violent deaths.

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*An example of a traditional Goryo situation may be witnessed in the 2001 Japanese movie, Onmyoji.*

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*Go* is a prefix honorific; *ryo* refers to souls. It is a respectful euphemism. Shinto tradition suggests that those who died violent, unexpected deaths or in a state of extreme anger or resentment must be

buried with extra-special reverence and care. Many are enshrined so that they can be honored on a regular basis. Special religious services are held for them. Otherwise, if not propitiated, they can cause disaster of one sort or another.

**See also:** *Hannya; Obake; Tenjin*

## Graeae

### *The Grey Goddesses*

**Also known as:** Graiae; singular: Graia

**Origin:** Greece

The Graeae are sea spirit sisters whose parents are Keto and Phorkys. The number of Graeae is unclear. There may originally have been two:

- Pemphredo (“well-clad”)
- Enyo (“saffron-robed”: not the same Enyo as the one in Ares’ entourage)

A third named Deino (“The Terrible”) is sometimes added, and there is even occasionally a fourth. The Graeae live in a cave beyond the ocean in a place called *Kistbene*, “the land of rock roses.” The Graeae guard the road that leads to the Gorgons. Their most famous appearance in mythology is when Perseus, aided by Athena, forces the Graeae to betray the location of their sisters, the Gorgons.

**Manifestation:** The Graiae are described as grey-haired but with beautiful faces. This is usually considered to be a euphemism because they are also described as sharing one eye and one tooth between them. However, that may be meant metaphorically: the shared eye may refer to a lamp or other divination device like a crystal ball. The single tooth may refer to a shared weapon. The Graeae are described as being “born grey”: they were old at birth. They are also described as resembling swans.

**Flower:** Rock roses (*Cistus* spp.), which are also sacred to sea goddess, Aphrodite

**See also:** *Athena; Gorgons; Keto*

## **Gran Bois**

**Also known as:** Gran Bwa

**Classification:** Lwa

Gran Bois is the Father of the Forest, a divine healer who presides over botanical secrets and the sacred power of the forest. He is a primordial and exceptionally powerful lwa. He may be of Congolese origin, although some believe him to have originally been a Taino spirit incorporated into the Vodou pantheon. (See also: *Anacaona*.)

Gran Bois is considered the head of Vodou's Kongo and Petro pantheons and is the patron of initiation. He forms a trinity of master magicians with Baron Cimitière and Maitre Carrefour. Gran Bois is the Tree of Life connecting the celestial realms with those of the living and the dead. He rules the forest but also Ginen, the mystical undersea island, home of ancestors and lwa, the Vodou realm of the dead. Essentially Gran Bois knows all secrets of life and death.

Gran Bois is syncretized to Saint Sebastian, traditionally depicted bound to a tree.

**Manifestation:** Gran Bois is usually envisioned as a kind of tree-man with roots for feet. He is traditionally considered mute, as he is so primordial that he is pre-speech. (See also: *Damballah; Faunus*.)

**Animals:** He protects all forest animals, but his own special sacred creatures include monkeys and red snakes (tree dwellers).

**Colors:** Brown, green, red

**Tree:** Mapou (*Bombax ceiba* or *Ceiba pentandra*)

**Altar:** If possible, hang offerings from a tree branch or lay them at the foot of the tree.

**Sacred sites:** The forest in general; in Brooklyn, New York, home to a substantial Haitian community, Prospect Park has emerged as the sacred

domain of Gran Bois.

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*The Mapou, a type of silk-cotton tree associated with Vodou rites, was held sacred by the Taino, the indigenous inhabitants of Haiti, long before the arrival of Europeans or Africans. The Haitian Mapou tree was almost eradicated during an “anti-superstition” campaign sponsored by local Roman Catholic Church authorities in the 1940s. Attempts were made to eradicate Vodou by eliminating whatever was sacred, including trees.*

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**Offerings:** Cornmeal; honey drizzled over cornmeal; cassava bread; flowers; leaves; roots; fallen branches; tobacco; preservation of forests; the reforestation of Haiti

**See also:** *Baron Cimitière; Carrefour, Maitre; Diabliesse, La; Lwa; Xtabay*

### **Gran Pays**

The cemetery may be envisioned as a necropolis: a city of dead souls. The Haitian name for the dead residents of the cemetery that you are personally unable to name is *Gran Pays* or “Great Country.”

To enlist the aid of an entire cemetery or to summon supernal assistance when you don't know who to ask or, for whatever reason, prefer not to approach a specific strange grave, address the cemetery at large:

1. Enter the cemetery with a candle and pick up a stray rock or stone, one not affiliated with any specific grave.
2. Holding the rock in one hand and the candle in the other, address the community of souls requesting, “Grand Community! Please, I need you to do me a service.”
3. Explicitly but very politely explain what you need.
4. Place the stone under a tree (the original Haitian ritual recommends

a fruit tree so that your plan bears fruit, but the type of tree will depend on cemetery location).

5. Place the candle on or beside the stone and light it.
6. Leave and don't look back.
7. If the Gran Pays or a specific ghost fulfills your request, return with offerings of gratitude.

**See also:** *Ghost*

## **Grannus**

**Origin:** Celtic

Grannus is a healing spirit associated with therapeutic springs. Roman historian Dio Cassius, who lived in the late second and early third centuries, placed Grannus in the same league as Asklepios and Serapis. (Apparently Emperor Caracalla could not be cured at any of the three deities' shrines.) Grannus was a major Celtic deity, venerated over a wide swathe of territory from Brittany in the west as far as Hungary where a third-century CE temple was dedicated to Apollo Grannus and Sirona. The Romans identified Grannus with Apollo.

Grannus had shrines throughout Europe, including one at the hot springs of what is now Aachen in modern Germany, once called *Aquae Granni*, "Waters of Grannus." Devotees came to bathe in the sacred waters. Grannus' temples contained dormitories where sleeping petitioners could incubate dreams and receive healings and visitations directly from Grannus.

**Consort:** Sirona

**Planet:** Sun

**Offerings:** Ex-votos (Milagros)

**See also:** *Apollo; Asklepios; Serapis; Sirona* and the Glossary entry for *Milagro*



## Grey Ladies

The grey Ladies are a type of ghost, described as “grey” because they tend to manifest in shades of grey. Green Ladies or White Ladies are so described because of the color of their gowns. Grey Ladies don’t necessarily dress in gray. They have been witnessed wearing black, brown, or white; however, when you catch sight of them, especially briefly from the corner of your eye, the first impression is of a gray, amorphous form.

Gray Ladies tend to be the ghosts of women who died for love, either violently or by pining away. They haunt houses and castles seeking to reunite with loved ones. In general, they are not dangerous, although some have been associated with poltergeist-like activity.

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*The term Gray Goddesses may refer to the Erinyes, the Moirae (the Greek Fates), or the Graeae. See their individual entries for further details.*

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**Manifestation:** Some Gray Lady ghosts are famous (at least in the world of ghost hunters and aficionados) and maintain regular routines, appearing on schedule to search for loved ones. Those unable to see them may still be able to feel their presence, which is accompanied by a chill in the air and the sense of overwhelming sadness.

**See also:** *Ghost; Green Lady; White Lady*

## Great White Brotherhood

**Also known as:** The Great White Lodge or the Great Brotherhood of Light

According to some Theosophical schools, the Great White Brotherhood is a group of mysterious, highly evolved supernatural beings whose goal is to further Earth’s spiritual evolution. To further this goal, individual members of the Brotherhood will contact and communicate with human

beings.

Some consider the term *Great White Brotherhood* and its variations to be synonymous with Ascended Masters; others perceive them as a similar but distinct group of beings. There is some overlap, however, even by those who perceive them as distinct: some of the most significant spiritual teachers like Serapis Bey are Ascended Masters *and* members of the Brotherhood.

**See also:** *Ascended Masters; Blavatsky, Helena; Hidden Company; Serapis Bey*

## Green Jade Mother

*Lady of the Azure Clouds; Old Mother*

**Origin:** China

The Green Jade Mother is the Jade Emperor's sister. They once ruled Heaven together; then they descended to Earth at T'ai Shan, the sacred Taoist mountain in China. There, brother and sister brought Creation to life, creating plants, birds, fish, and animals. The Green Jade Mother created people, too. Together with the Jade Emperor, she ruled over Earth from T'ai Shan.

Exactly what happened next is unclear, but the Jade Emperor now rules alone, a remote, bureaucratic figure. The Green Jade Mother has faded into obscurity even on her sacred mountain. She is called the Old Lady of T'ai Shan. The mountain is now dominated by her husband and daughter. The Green Jade Mother's daughter bears the title "Lady of T'ai Shan" and is popularly venerated alongside her father. (All have been somewhat eclipsed by Kwan Yin, who now shares altar space on T'ai Shan.)

**Sacred site:** The Green Jade Mother has a small cave shrine near the summit of T'ai Shan.

**See also:** *Jade Emperor; Kwan Yin; Nu Kwa; T'ai Shan, Lady of; T'ai Shan, Lord of*

## Green Lady

**Origin:** British Isles

The Green Lady is a type of apparition who appears throughout the British Isles. There are many Green Ladies who may have little in common beyond their supernatural nature and the green dresses that explain their name.

Most Green Ladies are considered to be ghosts. Various castles and manor homes claim to be haunted by their very own Green Ladies. Green Ladies may also haunt moors, ruins, or wild, desolate locations. Some Green Ladies are categorized as demons or spirits. The *Glaistig* is sometimes classified as a Green Lady, as are the *Baobhan Sidhe*.

**Manifestation:** The typical Green Lady is a beautiful, pale, longhaired woman dressed in a flowing green gown. Some Green Ladies are goat women: their nether regions are goat-shaped. This may be camouflaged by their loose, flowing clothes.

**See also:** *Banshee; Baobhan Sidhe; Ghost; Glaistig; Gray Lady; White Lady*

## The Green Man

The Green Man is the Spirit of Irrepressible Life. Pave over Earth as much as you like: weeds will continue to poke through. That irrepressible urge to live and procreate is the Green Man. He personifies the regenerative powers of nature. He is the essence of the life-force, the libido, the male impulse to procreate. The Green Man is also emblematic of decay: the body returned to Earth, covered in foliage. The Green Man is lord of the eternal cycle of life and death.

The Green Man appears in the form of a tree man: a man completely covered in vines and leaves. If Earth (Gaia) is perceived as a fertile woman, then trees are big, hard erections eternally penetrating her. Tree sap was once equated with semen.

The Green Man names a spirit but also an architectural, ornamental motif. In terms of visual imagery, there are basically two forms of Green Men:

- A male head that is formed from leaves or extensively crowned with leaves (the oldest form).
- Foliage emerges from the Green Man's mouth and occasionally through other orifices, too. (One way of interpreting this is the Green Man speaks through plants.)

The Green Man is an extremely Pagan-looking image: he's a wild man of nature. However, although the Green Man predates Christianity, it is now most famous as an architectural motif featured on Gothic churches. Green Men are found in Bamberg, Chartres, Dijon, Norwich, and Fribourg, as well as many other cathedrals and churches. There are twenty Green Man carvings within Exeter Cathedral.

Images of the Green Man proliferated in conjunction with the cult of Black Madonnas. Many cathedrals were built over sites once dedicated to Isis. Dale Pendell, author of *Pbarmako/Poeia*, theorizes that if Isis is the Madonna and Horus is the Divine Child, then the Green Man hiding among foliage may be Osiris, who in Egyptian myth was hidden in foliage. Dionysus is sometimes considered the prototype for the Green Man. Others associated with him include Robin Hood and Saint George.

Meditate on the image of the Green Man or surround yourself with his images when you need a fertility boost or seek reinvigoration—physical, spiritual, or emotional.

**Iconography:** Assorted art books compile historic photographs of the Green Man. The Green Man is a popular Scottish cemetery motif representing new life emerging from death. He is also beloved by Neo-Pagans, who incorporate his image into outdoor shrines.

**Sacred animal:** Snake

**See also:** *Black Madonna; Dionysus; Faunus; Gran Bois; Horus; Isis; Kbidr, Al; Osiris*

**Grid**

*Peace*

**Also known as:** Hag Grid

**Origin:** Norse

**Classification:** Jotun, Frost Giant

Grid is an unusual Frost Giant if only because she's friendly toward the Aesir spirits. In her most famous myth, she rescues Thor from certain doom. Having been convinced to visit the hostile Jotun, Geirroth, without his magic hammer, belt, and iron gauntlets, Thor stops to spend the night at Grid's hall. She perceives his danger, although he does not. Grid instructs and cautions Thor, insisting that he take her own pair of iron gloves and her unbreakable shield and girdle of might. Thor survives because of her. She is a goddess of caution and forethought. Grid is the mother of Odin's son, Vidar, destined to avenge his father at Ragnarok.

**See also:** *Aesir; Jotun; Odin; Thor*

## **Guadalupe**

*Queen of Mexico*

**Also known as:** The Virgin of Guadalupe; La Guadalupana

**Origin:** Mexico

**Feast:** 12 December

The distinctive image of Guadalupe appears *everywhere* in Mexico, including tattooed on skin. She appears in the most sacred of imagery and as kitsch. She is the Queen of Mexico and Latin America. In recent years, her influence has spread over the world. She is among the most beloved and revered manifestations of the Virgin Mary and possibly the most famous of all Marian Apparitions.

Guadalupe evokes profound passions and fighting words:

- Many are shocked and highly offended at the suggestion that she might be anyone other than an apparition of Mary, Mother of Christ.
- Others are entirely convinced that she was originally an indigenous goddess who tolerates the guise of Mary in order to maintain influence and contact with devotees.

- Still others perceive her as a bridge between European Catholicism and indigenous Mexican spirituality. She is considered the glue that holds Mexico's disparate roots and influences together.

In the famous story, Guadalupe appeared to a "humble Indian" named Juan Diego on 9 December 1531 as he was passing Tepeyac Hill. She spoke to him in Nahuatl, language of the Aztecs, directing him to advise Spanish Church authorities that she wished to have an abbey built on Tepeyac and dedicated to her. Needless to say, the Spanish did not initially take Juan Diego seriously. The Lady appeared to Juan Diego four times demanding her shrine. Eventually the Spanish bishop requested a miracle to prove his assertion.

The Lady directed Juan Diego to gather flowers from the hillside and bring them to the bishop. Although it was winter, he discovered unusual flowers growing. He gathered them in his agave-fiber *tilma*, an indigenous cloak, and carried them to the bishop, who recognized them as gorgeous, fragrant Castilian roses, which had miraculously appeared out of season and out of place. Even more miraculously, the image of the woman that Juan Diego had witnessed was now emblazoned on the tilma.

Centuries later, that image remains. The tilma is housed in the Basilica of Guadalupe on Tepeyac Hill near Mexico City. The Church officially sanctions that miracle. The Apparition received the abbey that she had requested. It is now considered the most sacred place in Mexico and the subject of the greatest pilgrimage in the Western Hemisphere.

There is more to this story than first meets the eye. Juan Diego (1474–30 May 1548) was not just a "humble Indian." His original name before baptism had been Cuauhtlatoatzin meaning "He Who Speaks Like an Eagle." Little is known about him, but his name indicates influence and status. Some suggest that he was a shaman or priest before conversion to Christianity.

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#### Time Line:

*Hernan Cortes arrived in Tenochtitlan, now Mexico City, in 1519 Guadalupe appeared to Juan Diego in 1531.*

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The apparition appeared to Juan Diego four times on Tepeyac Hill ordering that a church be constructed for her right there. Tepeyac was the site of the Great Temple of Coatlique and considered a place of incredible power. Those who consider Guadalupe to be truly an Aztec goddess usually suggest Coatlique as the top contender for her true identity, although other goddesses are also suggested, including Cihuacoatl. (See also: *Coatlique*; *Cihuacoatl*.)

The Apparition appeared a fifth time to Juan Diego's uncle, Juan Bernardino, who was deathly ill with smallpox, an ailment that had just been introduced to Mexico and thus defied local healers. She spoke with him and healed him, telling Juan Bernardino to pass on her true name so that everyone could know and use it. He told Church officials that her name was Tecuauhtlacuepeuh. They understood this as "Guadalupe," but it may have different meanings in Nahuatl:

- She Who Crushed the Snake's Head
- She Who Comes Flying from the Region of Light Like a Fiery Eagle
- She Who Banishes Those Who Ate Us

The Spanish may have heard "Guadalupe" because it sounds similar but also because many were already devotees of the Black Madonna of Guadalupe in Extremadura, the Spanish province from whence many of the conquistadors including Cortes derived. They may initially have expected to honor the Black Madonna from Spain, but the Apparition of Tepeyac Hill quickly asserted her own strong personality. (See also: *Black Madonna of Guadalupe*.)

She was revolutionary because she manifested in the guise of an Indian woman. Her image on the tilma made that very clear. (Although Guadalupe is visualized as a brown-skinned Madonna, she is not usually classified among the Black Madonnas.) She physically resembled the new community of Indian Christians. The immediate result of the apparition and the miraculous image on the tilma was mass conversion of Indians to Catholicism. Miracles associated with Guadalupe included healings and resurrections. A healing spring appeared at the site where Juan Diego met the Lady. Miracles were performed for Indians, Spanish, and

Mestizos alike.

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*Scientific analysis indicates there was some later embellishment of the tilma (the golden rays, moon, and the angel at Guadalupe's feet, the most European part of the image), but the main portion of the image remains inexplicable and cannot be satisfactorily explained. Allegedly no signs of human creation exist. The blue pigment of the cloak is apparently some natural pigment that cannot be reproduced or identified. Furthermore, the cloak is woven from maguey (woven agave fibers), which has a life expectancy of about ten years before it disintegrates. The sheer continued existence of the tilma may in itself be a miracle.*

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Veneration of Guadalupe was not without controversy, and controversy still remains. No written record of the Apparitions or of Guadalupe as we know her today exists prior to the mid-seventeenth century. Before 1648, all surviving documents attack veneration and pilgrimages associated with Tepeyac. New-Agers and Neo-Pagans were not the first to suggest that Guadalupe was really a Pagan goddess in disguise. Spanish Church officials suspected the same. Fray Bernardino de Sahagun wrote, "It is clear that in their hearts the common people who go there on their pilgrimages are moved only by their ancient religion."

However, by the eighteenth century, she was the official matron saint of Mexico. She was the heroine of the Mexican Revolution associated with the fight for independence from Spain. She remains an emblem of national identity. *Guadalupism* is the name given the popular veneration of Our Lady of Guadalupe. Guadalupe is invoked for every possible miracle and all kinds of help.

**Iconography:** The image of Mexican Guadalupe is of a young, brown-skinned Indian woman dressed in Indian clothing (as opposed to the European clothing most Madonnas wear). Her mantle is not the traditional blue of a European Madonna but teal (blue-green); a color



that in Aztec cosmology symbolizes abundance and prosperity. She does not physically resemble the Black Madonna of Guadalupe whose statue portrays a mother and child. Mexican Guadalupe stands alone and is pregnant. The image is subtle; you might not realize she was pregnant. The traditional Aztec black maternity band around her waist is the clue.

**Sacred site:** Her Basilica on Tepeyac Hill; however, countless shrines, churches, and home altars are dedicated to her, too.

**Offerings:** Candles, fruit, flowers, musical performances, pilgrimage

**See also:** *Black Madonna; Boldog Asszony; Guaicapuro; Kablo, Frida; Maria Lionza*

## Guaicaipuro

**Also known as:** Guacaipuro

**Origin:** Venezuela

Guaicaipuro (died c. 1568) was a historic person who is now among the most important spirits of the Venezuelan spiritual tradition, Maria Lionza. He was the Chief of the Caracas and Teques people: Caracas, capital city of Venezuela, is situated on their ancestral territory.

Guaicaipuro led a federation of tribes in resistance against the Spanish during the 1560s, including obstructing their efforts to mine for gold. Ironically his image now frequently appears on gold medallions. He was assassinated: a band of Spanish men acting under the orders of Diego Losada, Spanish mayor of Caracas, attacked his village. Guaicaipuro's house was set on fire. Ambushers waited for him to run outside, where he was killed. Guaicaipuro belongs to various Courts of Maria Lionza:

- The Three Potencies
- Court of the Liberators
- He is the leader of the Indian Court, which also includes his son, Baruta.

Guaicaipuro is invoked for protection from one's enemies: to divert evil intentions and break harmful magic spells.

**Color:** Yellow

**Sacred site:** Guaicaipuro's remains were symbolically installed in the National Pantheon in Caracas on 8 December 2001. ("Symbolic" because the location of his actual remains, if they exist, is unknown.)

**Offerings:** Water, tobacco products, hard liquor similar to *aguardiente*

**See also:** *Maria Lionza*

## Guardians of the Sky

**Also known as:** Royal Stars

**Origin:** Persia

The Royal Stars, Guardians of the Sky, are spirits and stars, first discussed by Persian astrologers some three thousand years ago. The Guardians of the Sky are visible spirits. You can look up and see them, each so bright, they dominate the heavens for a season. As above, so below: these stars are guardians of the heavens and Earth. (Modern names of the stars are used below.)

- Aldebaran, Watcher of the East, Guardian of the Vernal Equinox
- Regulus, Watcher of the South, Guardian of the Summer Solstice
- Antares, Watcher of the West, Guardian of the Autumnal Equinox
- Fomalhaut, Watcher of the North, Guardian of the Winter Solstice

Regulus, the brightest star in the constellation Leo, is foremost of the Guardians.

**See also:** *Gabriel*

## Gullveig

**See:** *Angerboda*

## Gunlod

## *Mother of Poetry*

**Also known as:** Gunnlod

**Origin:** Norse

Troll queen, Gunlod, was the guardian of the Mead of Poetry, which bestowed poetic skill. After Odin had acquired all the secrets, wisdom, and memory of the Nine Worlds, the Mead of Poetry was the one thing he lacked. He determined to obtain it as he perceived being a poet to be as significant as being a warrior or mage. This precious mead was hoarded beneath a mountain and guarded by Gunlod. It was an important job, but she was bored. After various risky escapades, Odin transformed into a snake and sneaked into the mountain stronghold, where he transformed back into a man and charmed and seduced her. Odin stayed with her for three days, drinking a barrel of mead each day. On the fourth day, he changed back into a snake, slithered out of the mountain, then transformed into an eagle and, in full possession of the mead, flew away. (From thence, poetry was known as “Odin’s gift.”) Odin left more than memories behind: during their brief rendezvous, Gunlod conceived Bragi, eventually Lord of Poetry.

**See also:** *Bragi; Odin*

## **Gwillion**

**Also known as:** Gwyllion

**Origin:** Wales

The Gwillion are Welsh female mountain spirits, often categorized as a kind of less than friendly Fairy. Their leader is the Old Woman of the Mountain. The Gwillion have strong associations with foul weather and may be storm spirits. They have something of a malevolent reputation, allegedly preying on solitary travelers. Brandishing an iron or steel knife in their direction allegedly wards them off.

The Gwillion usually choose to avoid people but occasionally come down from their mountain peaks to knock on human doors. Usually they

need something, perhaps a meal but often tools or supplies. If treated with courtesy, they may leave gifts or at least do no harm.

**Manifestations:** Goats or women; they are most frequently witnessed in the form of bent, old women out walking on mountain roads during storms. You'll know them by their characteristic cackling laugh.

**Animal:** Goat (They groom goats; combing their beards.)

**See also:** *Fairy*

# H

## **Hachiman**

**Also known as:** Yawata

**Classification:** Kami, Bosatsu

Hachiman the Divine Warrior is the patron, guardian, and defender of Japan. In his past life, he was Emperor Ojin, son of Empress Jingu. Mother, son, and Ojin's wife, Himegami, are venerated together as a triad at Hachimangu shrines. Hachiman may or may not also be Bishamon in disguise. Hachiman transcends boundaries: he is venerated at Shinto shrines and Buddhist temples. Originally a shamanic spirit, he became patron of the Minamoto Clan and was revered by samurai and peasants alike.

**Favored people:** Soldiers, warriors, archers, the Japanese

**Iconography:** Hachiman is usually depicted in the guise of a Buddhist monk.

**Bird:** Dove

**Number:** 8

**Sacred sites:** There are thousands of Hachiman shrines (*Hachimangu*) including:

- Usa Shrine in Usa
- Todaisi Temple in Nara
- Tsurugaoka Hachiman Shrine in Kamakura
- Iwashimizu Hachiman Shrine in Yawata
- Tomioko Hachiman Shrine in Tokyo

**See also:** *Bishamon; Bosatsu; Jingu, Empress; Kami*

## Hades

*The Wealthy One; The Hospitable One; Receiver of Many Guests*

**Also known as:** Aidoneus, Pluto

Hades is the Greek Lord of Death. *Hades* is not actually his name: it refers to the extensive realm of death he rules, which is also known as Hades. His true name is a secret. It's considered safer not to utter or even think it, lest he respond to the call. Hades is the original He Who Must Not Be Named. He's also the one who must not be seen. Not only did people not articulate his true name, instead referring to him by euphemisms, they tried to avoid looking at him, too. When addressing Hades or giving him an offering, it's traditional to avert one's eyes. Eye contact is definitely not recommended.

Hades was traditionally honored during funeral rituals, but, as befitting a deity whose name people were afraid to utter, Hades was not otherwise often invoked. He is, however, a spirit of justice and was traditionally requested to avenge crimes against the deceased, especially dishonor or defamation. He can be requested to punish murderers, too. Hades fears no one: all will ultimately bow before him; thus he is invoked against perpetrators perceived as otherwise above the law (dictators; mob bosses; drug lords). Hades is a spirit of last resort. He is petitioned by those experiencing maximum rage, despair, or grief—those who don't care whether they live or die and hence are not afraid to summon the Death Lord.

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*The most famous myth involving Hades concerns his abduction of Persephone. She is traditionally venerated alongside him and is considered a mollifying influence on her husband. (If you fear you have offended him, invoke Persephone's aid to calm him down.)*

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Hades is also an oracular spirit, lord of necromancy: any sort of divination involving receiving information from the dead, including

séances and ouija boards, is under his domain. Hades, together with Persephone, may be propitiated when seeking consultations or visitations with the dead. Hades potentially controls dreams sent by the dead:

- If you seek such dreams, he can arrange to have them sent.
- If you suffer such dreams, he can make them stop.

When Circe gave Odysseus directions to the House of Hades in Homer's *Odyssey*, she wasn't being metaphoric. "House of Hades" refers to the realm of death but also to a *Nekromanteion*, a type of oracle house. One has been unearthed near Parga in northwestern Greece at the confluence of the Acheron and Cocytus Rivers, pretty much where Circe told Odysseus it would be.

Incorporated into a shrine dedicated to Hades and Persephone, priests serving this oracle lived on-site. The shrine also contained room for travelers to be housed. Pilgrims stayed for days performing rituals of purification and following a strict diet incorporating lupine seeds and a type of fava bean that can theoretically induce visions. In addition, archaeologists have unearthed large quantities of decayed hashish.

Pilgrims descended into labyrinthine passageways via an iron-bound door until reaching a portal where conversations with the dead were allegedly possible. For example, Periander, Tyrant of Corinth, sent a delegation to ask his dead wife where she hid the treasure. The shrine, which existed at least as early as the seventh century BCE, was destroyed in 167 BCE when the Romans ravaged this region as reprisal for backing its enemy, Macedonia, during a war. Some fifteen thousand people were sold as slaves. The oracle house was destroyed. The site was uninhabited for almost two thousand years until the eighteenth-century Monastery of Saint John the Baptist was built over the site. Archaeological excavation began in 1958 and continues.

**Manifestation:** A large man with a curly black beard

**Attribute:** A helmet that confers invisibility

**Familiar:** Hades is usually depicted together with Cerberus, his three-headed guard dog

**Ritual:** Invoke Hades by falling to the ground and banging on it. Use an open palm, not your fist. (The goal is to request help, to demonstrate your desperation, not to injure or insult Gaia.) When you feel you have his attention, speak into the Earth.

**Altar:** For obvious reasons, Hades is usually not invited into the home. Instead temporary altars are set up outside:

1. Dig a grave or door-shaped pit.
2. Pour libations within. Offerings are placed inside, too.
3. Leave the pit open while incense or candles are burning, but it can be covered once your invocation is complete. Leave offerings inside.

**Plants:** Black narcissus, mint, cypress tree, fava beans

**Color:** Black

**Metal:** Iron

**Animals:** Black ram, wolf, bear

**Sacred site:** He had a shrine on Mount Mentha in Tryphelia, Elis; Hades was also worshipped with Athena at her temple near Koroneia in Boeotia.

**See also:** *Athena; Charon; Circe; Demeter; Menthe; Olympian Spirits; Persephone; Thanatos*

## Hafgan

**Origin:** Wales

Hafgan was the ruler of an Otherworld, a realm of death, which shared his name. He is the rival of Arawn, King of Annwn. Their legend is retold in the First Branch of the Mabinogi. Hafgan could only be killed by a mortal. Arawn switched identities and places with Pwyll, Lord of Dyfed (ancient kingdom in what is now southwest Wales). Pwyll killed Hafgan. Arawn then ruled Annwn and Hafgan's realm as one united kingdom.



**See also:** *Arawn; Rhiannon*

## **Hammu Qaiyu**

**Also known as:** Hammou Ukaïou; Hammu Ukaïou; Ba'al Hammou

Hammu Qaiyu is the male counterpart of Aisha Qandisha. Just as she lures men into danger, so Hammu's pursuit of women traveling alone at night often has fatal or at least scary consequences. Hammu Qaiyu is not only a nocturnal pest, however. He is a powerful oracular spirit, summoned during ceremonies to engage in ritual possession. When possessed, his devotees dance with knives, swords, and daggers.

He is considered Aisha's official husband. Like her, his identity is subject to debate. He may be a powerful Djinn or even an Afarit. Alternatively he may be Ba'al Hammon whose fortunes have taken a downturn since the days when he was widely venerated in Carthage. Hammu Qaiyu craves blood, perhaps harking back to the days when he was offered blood sacrifices. He lingers near slaughterhouses and abattoirs. He has a fondness for menstruating women. He is a dangerous spirit, but if he likes you, he can be an exceptionally powerful and aggressive guardian.

**Favored people:** Butchers

**Color:** Blood red

**Offering:** Red jawi incense (*Styrax benzoin*)

**See also:** *Afarit; Aisha Qandisha; Ba'al; Ba'al Hammon; Djinn*

## **Han Hsiang-Tzu**

**Also known as:** Han Xiang-Zi

**Origin:** China

Han Hsiang-Tzu, one of the Eight Immortals, was the favorite student of another Immortal, Lu Tungpin, and the nephew of famed scholar,

statesman, and Neo-Confucianist, Han Yu (768–824 CE). Han Yu wanted his nephew to study and strive for a court career. Han Hsiang-Tzu devoted himself to music and magic instead. He wandered the countryside, Orpheus-style, playing his flute and charming birds and predatory animals. His flute can make flowers bloom and resurrect the recently dead.

Conflict and reconciliation between nephew and uncle is a large part of Han Hsiang-Tzu's myth. Taoism was then under siege by

Confucianism and Buddhism: Han Hsiang-Tzu vigorously defended the old order. Eventually Han Yu ran afoul of the government and was exiled for penning a protest against Buddhism: he is often portrayed reading from the scroll containing that protest, standing beside Han Hsiang-Tzu.

**Favored people:** Han Hsiang-Tzu is the patron of musicians.

**Emblems:** Flute, castanets, crucible (because he's an alchemist, too)

**See also:** *Eight Immortals; Lu Tungpin*

## Hannya

**Origin:** Japan

Hannya are Japanese horned female spirits and they are dangerous. The Hannya doesn't need an iron club like her male compatriots, the Oni. The power of a woman scorned trumps iron weapons. According to folklore, women who die while consumed with rage and jealousy transform into Hannya, vengeful, powerful spirits. Women who committed suicide because they have been spurned, insulted, rejected, or scorned by lovers are believed especially likely to become Hannya.

The Hannya lingers on Earth, a malicious, destructive ghost, her anger overriding any residual human emotions or conscience. Hannya are perceived as negative, dreadful creatures; it is a terrible fate to become a Hannya, and so the implicit message is that women must avoid, suppress, and sublimate rage, anger, jealousy, and other dangerous emotions lest they, too, become rampaging evil spirits.

The Hannya mask, maybe the best known of Japanese Noh masks, has sharp fangs and horns and bears the name of the spirit it portrays. Older Hannya masks appear more serpentine than modern ones, where the emphasis is on horns. Hannya who are sometimes described as “snake demons” may originally have been snake spirits.

**Manifestations:** The Hannya may sprout actual horns or her hair may form horn shapes.

**Animal:** Snake

**See also:** *Obake; Oiwa; Okiku; Oni; Yokai*

## Hanuman

**Also known as:** Anjaneya

**Origin:** India

Hanuman, spirit of victory, heroism, and determination, may be a tribal monkey god incorporated into the Hindu pantheon. He is now an immensely popular and beloved Hindu deity with numerous shrines and temples dedicated to him. There are different versions of his birth:

- His parents are the King and Queen of Monkeys.
- He is the son of Anjani, an Apsara, and Vayu the Wind.

Hanuman is the divine child in the form of a monkey. Since earliest childhood, he demonstrated extraordinary powers: he is brilliant, powerful, and a trickster. Once when he was hungry, Hanuman jumped up to catch the sun because it looked like a mango. Hanuman cannot be harmed by weapons, fire, or water. He is the hero of the Ramayana, the one who engineers the rescue of Sita.

Reciting the hymn *Hanuman Chalisa* allegedly earns Hanuman’s blessings:

- Recite *Hanuman Chalisa* for forty mornings for blessings of health, wealth, success, happiness, wisdom, valor, and courage.
- Read *Hanuman Chalisa* 108 times and all obstacles are overcome. (English translations are available.)

Hanuman brings blessings of a clear, focused, unclouded mind. He removes obstacles from the paths of devotees. He protects against traffic accidents. His image is placed on mountainous or winding roads to provide safety for travelers. It may also be placed within the vehicle.

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*Hanuman is renowned as a celibate ascetic and for providing women with blessings of fertility.*

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**Favored people:** Kickboxers; wrestlers; bachelors; women seeking to conceive

**Manifestation:** Hanuman is a monkey.

**Iconography:** Hanuman is depicted in the guise of a crowned monkey or a crowned monkey's head on a man's body. His recognizable image appears on *many* amulets from Bali, India, Myanmar, and Thailand, created for various purposes but especially victory, fertility, protection, and prosperity.

**Attribute:** Mace

**Sacred animal:** Monkeys in general but especially the Hanuman langur, also known as the common, gray and Entellus langur.

**Sacred sites:** There are many shrines and temples dedicated to Hanuman.

**Days:** Tuesday, Saturday

**Offerings:** Traditionally butter or butter carvings; lamps fueled by clarified butter (ghee)

**See also:** *Anjani; Sita*

**Harionna**

## *Barb Hair Woman*

**Also known as:** Harionago; Hari Onna

**Classification:** Yokai

**Origin:** Japan

Harionna roams the streets at night. She looks like a young, attractive woman with seductively long, beautiful, fragrant hair, which she tosses and twirls to lure young men to her side. Beware: her hair is her weapon. Each individual hair is tipped with iron or thorn-like barbs. Harionna literally means 'barb hair woman'.

The Harionna is a mysterious, ambivalent spirit: it is crucial not to offend her or touch her hair without her express invitation or permission lest she attack you. Harionna is most famous for the part she plays in horror stories, but she may be a goddess in disguise: she allegedly brings those she loves to live with her in her magnificent palace. (A hair demon in the manga/anime series *Inuyasha* seems to be inspired by Harionna.)

**Iconography:** Harionna is sometimes portrayed with red hair, but in Japanese artwork this can be code to identify demons and so may not be intended as an accurate depiction.

**Offerings:** Hand mirrors, combs, hair ornaments

**See also:** *Hone-Onna*; *Kuchisake Onna*; *Yokai*

## **Hariti**

### *Bringer of Happiness*

**Also known as:** Heli-di (China); Karitei-Mo; Kishimojin (Japan)  
Yid'prog-ma (Tibet)

**Origin:** Turkestan

Hariti once ate human babies but has now reformed, becoming their guardian. Rather than stealing children, Hariti now assists couples having difficulty conceiving. Originally a disease spirit, Hariti's

conversion to Buddhism transformed her into a benevolent deity of health and conception.

Hariti was the mother of five hundred demons whom she fed daily on a diet of human babies. People complained to the Buddha, who came to their assistance by seizing Hariti's youngest son and hiding him under a begging bowl. In despair, Hariti searched the world for her child. Advised to inquire of the Buddha, he told her, "You have five hundred sons. Yet you are desolate over the loss of one and search everywhere for him. Humans often have only one child, yet you take them." Hariti got the message. She instantly converted and reformed. Her son was returned. Fearing that hunger might make her revert to her old habits, the Buddha promised her that in all monasteries, part of the monks' food would daily be reserved for her and her children. Buddha encouraged Hariti to bite into pomegranates, which give the illusion of blood rather than babies. Hariti is invoked for fertility and to heal infertility.

- She is invoked to heal ailing children and protect them from epidemics.

**Iconography:** Hariti is depicted carrying a child or surrounded by children; India's Ajanta Caves feature depictions of Hariti. These monastery caves in the northwest Deccan region were hand-hewn from solid rock. Hariti is featured in Cave 2, dating from the sixth century CE. Her legend is retold through sculpted friezes. Hariti's image also appears in Cave 7 in Aurangabad, the Buddhist caves carved out of the Sahyadri range.

**Attributes:** Pomegranate, flywhisk, cornucopia, the flower of happiness

**Consort:** Pancika, commander of the Yaksha army (he is sometimes identified with Jambhala)

**Animal:** Mongoose

**Number:** 5

**Places:** Once worshipped throughout a wide swathe of the Buddhist world, Hariti remains actively venerated in Nepal. She has a shrine near the Monkey Temple in Katmandu, where she is worshipped as the Spirit of Smallpox and Fertility.

**Offerings:** Cooked rice, water, betel nuts, incense; pomegranates; in China, women seeking children offer Hariti paper shoes.

**See also:** *Bon Spirits; Buddha; Jambhala; Palden Lhamo*

## Harpokrates

**Also known as:** Harpocrates

Harpokrates is the Greek name for Horus. (It's a corruption of the Egyptian Har-Pa-Khered.) Harpokrates is a Hellenized vision of Horus. The Greeks did not approve of animal-human hybrid deities and so Harpokrates has shed his associations with falcons and instead appears exclusively as the Divine Child.

According to Egyptian myth, Isis was destined to bear a miraculous, magical child with her true love and brother, Osiris. When Osiris died before she conceived, Isis refused to accept that the prophecy was wrong or moot. Instead, Isis, world's greatest sorceress, worked her magical skills to revive and restore Osiris long enough to conceive her predestined baby. In Greek versions of this myth, sometimes Serapis replaces Osiris. Isis, Harpokrates, and Serapis were venerated together in an Alexandrian Mystery tradition.

Harpokrates' birth defied all odds. Harpokrates affirms life against all odds. His image was used to create healing potions. He is the spirit who removes all obstacles. He is the promise of salvation: the potential savior of the world in the form of a small boy. Veneration of Harpokrates spread from Egypt to Greece and Rome. He may be the prototype for the various Divine Children now so beloved in Christianity, for example the Infant of Prague or the Holy Child of Atocha.

**Iconography:** He is a beautiful, radiant small boy wearing the side lock of youth or a crown. He often has one finger pressed to his lips as if cautioning silence.

**Planet:** Sun (Harpokrates is the newborn sun that rises each day.)

**See also:** *Horus; Isis; Osiris; Serapis* and the Glossary entry for *Mystery*

## Harpies

### *The Snatchers*

**Origin:** Greece

The Harpies are winged bird women, similar to spirits like the Sirens, Russian magical bird spirits, and Lilith. Their name has developed negative connotations. A “harpy” is an unrelenting, nagging, shrewish woman. The Harpies are now frequently classified as monsters but they are really spirits of vengeance, death, and justice in the employ of Zeus. Known as the Hounds of Zeus, he assigns them tasks of punishment.

In their most famous myth, the Harpies mercilessly plagued Phineus until Jason’s Argonauts rescued him. Phineus, once King of Thrace and a prophet, prophesied a little too well, aggravating Zeus, who blinded him and sent the Harpies to punish him. Every day just as Phineus sat down to eat, the Harpies swooped down from the sky, stealing and befouling his food. (Imagine a picnic attacked by aggressive swarming gulls.)

The Harpies are death goddesses. Those who disappeared at sea were described as snatched by the Harpies. Archaeologist Marija Gimbutas theorized that their origins lie in Old European/Anatolian vulture goddesses. The number of Harpies is variable. This is the standard list although there may be more Harpies, too:

- Aello (Aellopus): “wind-foot”
- Okypete (Okypode, Okythoe): “swift-footed”
- Podarge: “fleet-footed”

**Manifestation:** The Harpies are winged women with birdlike talons rather than fingers. In early depictions, they are beautiful if fierce. Only later would they be portrayed as consistently monstrous and terrifying.

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*The Harpy Podarge, raped by Zephyr, gave birth to the immortal horses Balios and Xantho, similar to Medusa, whose liaison with Poseidon resulted in the winged-horse Pegasus.*

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**Spirit ally:** Their sister, Iris

**Realm:** Allegedly when not flying around, the Harpies live deep beneath Crete.

**See also:** *Erinyes; Iris; Lilith; Medusa; Poseidon; Sirens; Sirin; Zephyr; Zeus*

## Hathor

*The Great One of Many Names; The Golden One; Lady of Malachite, Lady of Turquoise; Lady of the Sycomore; Lady of the Date Palm; Lady of the West; Lady of the Dead; The Womb of Horns; House of Horns; Lady of the Evening; My House in the Sky; Lady of the Uterus; Lady of the Vulva; The Womb Above*

**Origin:** Egypt

Hathor is the matron goddess of women; the guardian of females of all species. She is the embodiment of the female principle. Hathor is the spirit of joy, love, dance, alcohol, and perfume. A primordial spirit, she has dominion over sex, birth, pleasure, intoxication, magic, music, and death. Hathor has dominion over human reproduction and the fruits of love making.

Hathor is the celestial cow; the Milky Way spills from her breasts. One of the most ancient Egyptian luminaries, her veneration extended as far as Ethiopia, Somalia, Libya, and Phoenicia. Hathor may or may not be the same spirit as Lady Asherah of the Sea, with whom she shares dominion of the Sinai Peninsula.

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*Without Hathor's assistance and protection, the dead cannot reach their next realm nor achieve everlasting life.*

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**Favored people:** Women, musicians, dancers, singers, perfumers, aromatherapists, cosmeticians, brewers, vintners, magicians,

fortunetellers, diviners, and henna artists

**Manifestations:** Hathor most often manifests as a cow with the solar disk and plumes between her horns or as a woman whose crown is a solar disk held between a pair of cow horns. However, Hathor is a talented shape-shifter, capable of showing herself in any form she chooses. She manifests in various forms depending upon her mood. Historically, she has appeared as a cat, falcon, fig tree, vulture, hippopotamus, and cobra. At her most ferocious, she is a lioness. When in human form, Hathor is consistently kind and beautiful. She manifested as a snake spirit in Byblos, now modern Lebanon.

**Iconography:** A tree with a woman's breast, with which she nourishes pharaohs. A jar from Tutankhamun's tomb depicts Hathor wearing a necklace of water lilies and mandrake fruit.

**Attributes:** Mirror, frame drum, and sistrum: the sistrum, a percussion instrument, is sometimes decorated with Hathor's image, as are Egyptian hand mirrors.

**Animals:** Cow, gazelle, cat

**Bird:** Goose

**Plants:** Myrrh tree, date palm, sycamore fig, papyrus, and henna

**Stones:** Malachite, turquoise

**Metal:** Gold, copper

**Number:** 4

**Color:** Red

**Planet:** Moon. Hathor also has associations with the Dog Star, Sirius, which the Egyptians called Sothis, the Great Provider, also known as the Womb of Hathor. She may also have a solar aspect.

**Places:** Unlike huge temple complexes, which were largely inaccessible to all but the pharaoh and the priestly elite, most Hathor sanctuaries were places where anyone could offer a petition. Hathor's principal sanctuary was at Dendera, on the edge of the desert between Luxor and

Abydos, where it is believed her cult first began. The present ruins date from a temple completed in the first century CE. However, according to inscriptions, the site had already been sacred to Hathor for ten thousand years; the original temple was a mud hut. Dendera was a healing center, the Lourdes of its day. The Egyptians considered it the Navel of the Universe, Earth's spiritual center.

- Hathor was worshipped in the Deir el-Bahri area since at least the First Intermediate Period (2150–2040 BCE), possibly originally in a cave shrine.
- Hathor owns the mountain range to the west of the Nile River.
- Marshes are sacred to Hathor.
- She owns the Sinai Peninsula. Many statues of her have been found there as well as in Israel. Some scholars think that the biblical Golden Calf is Hathor's son. Descriptions of fierce, warlike nomads enslaved by the Egyptians and forced to tend Hathor's shrines in the Sinai may be the earliest written references to the Hebrew people.

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### The Seven Hathors

*Hathor is a famed shape-shifter. The Seven Hathors may be aspects or avatars of Hathor, but they may also be her daughters or attendant spirits. They appear at births to pronounce the baby's destiny. It is unknown whether food offerings were given to them, although this was customary in Egyptian tradition. They were, however, offered seven red ribbons, one for each Hathor. The Seven Hathors may be the earliest documented evidence of birth Fairies. They were associated with the Pleiades. See also: Fairy, Birth.*

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**Time:** An annual festival of appeasement was timed to correspond with the rising of Sothis (Sirius) and works out to roughly 20 July by our calendar. Hathor was offered copious amounts of beer and pomegranate juice, shared by celebrating devotees.

**Petition:** Burn myrrh to summon Hathor. She enjoys a joyful

atmosphere, full of music and dance. She plays the frame drum and will communicate through drumming.

**Offerings:** A gift of two mirrors is her traditional votive offering. Hathor is the spirit of alcohol and she likes a drink. Beer or wine is appropriate. Other traditional votive offerings include fabrics, scarabs, and other amulets; images of cats and cows; jewelry; and ex-votos (*milagros*) in the form of eyes or ears to encourage Hathor to see or hear petitioners.

**See also:** *Horus the Elder; Isis; Sekhmet;* and the Glossary entry for *Milagros*

## Haumea

**Origin:** Polynesia

Haumea, sometimes identified as the First Woman, is a goddess of fertility and childbirth. She introduced and explained the birth process to people, who previously had been cutting women open to extract babies with fatal results. Haumea still presides over childbirth and may be requested for help and protection. Her own children include Pelé, Hi'iaka, and many other Polynesian deities. Haumea is also a great sorceress, possessing incredible magic powers. She sometimes works in tandem with Pelé.

**Manifestation:** Haumea is a shape-shifter who transforms from a youthful, lovely young girl to a desiccated old crone and all points in between.

**Consort:** Ku

**Sacred creature:** Eel

**Plants:** Morning glories, breadfruit, and all wild, uncultivated plants

**See also:** *Hi'iaka; Hina; Kapo; Ku; Pelé*

## Hayagriva

## *The Horse Necked One*

Hayagriva is a primordial horse spirit too powerful to fade away:

- Hayagriva was incorporated into the Hindu pantheon as an avatar of Vishnu.
- Buddhism considers him a wrathful manifestation of Avalokitesvara.
- Hayagriva is one of the Eight Dharma Protectors.

Hayagriva is a fierce, protective guardian and healer. He is the guardian of sacred texts. Hayagriva heals all illnesses, especially ailments that manifest on the skin including the once-dreaded leprosy. He is invoked to banish all evil spirits.

Hayagriva has never lost his powerful association with horses and is especially venerated by Tibetan horse dealers.

**Manifestations:** There are believed to be 108 forms of Hayagriva. He drives away demons by neighing like a horse.

**Iconography:** Hayagriva is identified by a small horse's head, which surmounts his primary head (it sometimes resembles a hair ornament). His image often appears on phurpa daggers as well as on amulets intended to ward off harmful spirits.

**Attribute:** *Phurbu* (also known as *phurpa*), the triangular ritual dagger used to exorcise evil spirits. A true phurpa contains the essence of Hayagriva.

**Animal:** Hayagriva is the patron of horses. His mantra requests the protection of all horses.

**Consort:** Marichi

**Offerings:** Cooked oats (as for a horse)

**See also:** *Avalokitesvara; Bon Spirits; Eight Dharma Protectors; Marichi*

## **Hebe**

*Flower of Youth*

**Origin:** Greece

Hebe is the beautiful daughter of Hera and Zeus, sister of childbirth goddess, Eileithyia. Hebe is the goddess of youth and beauty. She attends her mother and Aphrodite. Hebe was given in marriage to Heracles after he was deified and raised to Mount Olympus.

Hebe served as sacred cupbearer for the spirits of Mount Olympus until replaced by her father's young lover, Ganymede. (It's unclear if Ganymede took over Hebe's job completely or if he serves Zeus and Hebe still serves everyone else. It's doubtful that Hera would welcome Ganymede serving her ambrosia.) Hebe is petitioned for blessings of rejuvenation, especially by those feeling older than their years.

**Favored people:** Young brides

**Manifestation:** She allegedly closely resembles her mother, Hera.

**Time:** Spring

**Offerings:** Spring flowers, candles, perfumes, cosmetics, and ornaments befitting a young girl

**See also:** *Aphrodite; Eileithyia; Ganymede; Hera; Heracles; Olympic Spirits*

## Heimdall

**Also known as:** Rig; Rigr

**Origin:** Norse

Odin was walking by the sea when he discovered the Nine Wave Sisters, daughters of Aegir and Ran, sleeping on the sand. They were so beautiful, he fell in love with them all. Somehow, in a miracle of spirit genetics, the Nine Sisters conceived one son, Heimdall, from their joint romantic encounter with Odin. (Another theory suggests that the Nine Sisters managed to conceive their one son entirely independently with no male assistance whatsoever.) They nourished their son with the magic of the sea, the wisdom of the Earth, and the strength of the sun so that he was gifted with second sight, the ability to travel between realms,

and amazingly acute vision and hearing.

- He can see to the ends of the world.
- He can hear the grass grow.
- Heimdall is the epitome of vigilance: he requires no sleep.

Heimdall, son of the Nine Daughters of the Sea, is the Divine Watchman. He guards the Rainbow Bridge that connects and divides the realms of people and spirits. He guards against hostile Frost Giants. Heimdall's own daughters are waves, too. Heimdall is destined to be the last to fall at Ragnarok, where he and Loki will destroy each other.

**Manifestations:** Heimdall is a shape-shifter and can take many forms, most famously a man, ram, and bull seal. Heimdall has shining gold teeth.

**Attributes:** Horn (to blow a warning, raise an alarm, and announce Ragnarok), sword

**Mount:** Horse

**Hall:** Heimdall's hall is called *Himinbjorg*, Sky Mountain.

**Runes:** The runes with which Heimdall is associated include Dagaz, Elhaz, Hagalaz, Manaz, and Kaunaz.

**Sacred animals:** Ram, seal

**See also:** *Aegir; Jotun; Loki; Ran* and the Glossary entry for *Rune*

## Hekate

*The Most Lovely One; Worker from Afar; Three -Headed Hound of the Moon; Influence from Afar; The One Before the Gate; Light Bringer*

**Also known as:** Hecate

**Origin:** Asia Minor

Hekate is Queen of the Night, Goddess of Witchcraft, and among the rulers of Spirit World. She is the Queen of the Crossroads: Hekate patrols

the frontier between life and death. She serves as an intermediary between spirits and humans. She owns the ultimate skeleton key: the key that unlocks the gates to *all* realms.

Although now most associated with Greek mythology, her name, meaning “influence from afar” acknowledges Hekate’s foreign origins. She may have originated in what is now Georgia on the Black Sea, home of Medea, her most famous devotee and priestess. (Hecuba, Queen of Troy, is another well-known devotee.) At one time, Hekate was chief deity of Caria, now in western Turkey. The Greeks knew her as a Titan’s daughter and as the confidante and handmaiden of Persephone, Queen of the Dead.

Hekate is a goddess of life, death, regeneration, and magic. She rules wisdom, choices, expiation, victory, vengeance, and travel. She is the witness to *every* crime.

- She is invoked for justice, especially for sexual crimes against women and girls.
- Hekate is invoked when justice is not forthcoming from other channels.
- Hekate has the power to grant or deny any mortal’s wish.
- She may be invoked for protection for dogs and from dogs.
- Hekate is petitioned for fertility, especially for female children.
- She brings victory in battle.
- Hekate may be invoked for healing, especially if medical solutions have failed.
- She may be petitioned for swift, painless death.
- Hekate can banish ghosts (or produce a ghost infestation).

Hekate is an exceptionally powerful spirit. The Theogony of Hesiod describes Hekate as honored by Zeus above all others. According to myth, Hekate once served as an *Angelas*, a messenger for the other deities. She stole Hera’s beauty salve to give to her rival, Europa. Hera, enraged, pursued Hekate, who fled first to the bed of a woman in childbirth, then to a funeral procession, and finally to Lake Acheron in Hades where she was cleansed by the Cabeiri. Hekate emerged more powerful than ever, a goddess of birth, death, and purification. She rules passages between realms of life and death and is thus invoked by necromancers.



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*Hekate is renowned for her expertise with plants and her knowledge of their magical and healing powers. A famed magical garden was attached to her temple in Colchis on the Black Sea, now in modern Georgia. Some scholars suggest that an ancient Greek women's guild, under the divine matronage of Hekate, once had responsibility for gathering and storing visionary, hallucinatory, and poisonous plants. The same word in Greek indicates "pharmacist", "poisoner", and "witch."*

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Hekate typically responds to petitions via visions and dreams. If lost at a crossroads, literal or metaphoric, invoke her name and then pay attention to signs from her. She can be a shadowy, oblique goddess: her response may be subtle. Look for her animals: snakes, dragons, cats, and especially dogs.

**Favored people:** Midwives, witches, healers, herbalists, dog lovers and rescuers; she is the matron of women in general and protects those who ride horses.

**Manifestations:** Hekate, Queen Witch, is a shape-shifter supreme: usual manifestations are as a black dog or mature woman. She may manifest as a haggard, decrepit crone or a sexy, elegant, seductive woman. She even has an occasional mermaid manifestation. She may wear snakes in her hair. Every once in a while she appears as a black cat, snake, or dragon.

**Iconography:** Hekate is portrayed with three bodies, each facing a different direction. Alternatively, she is depicted with a woman's body but three animal heads: those of a dog, horse, and lion. A statue of Hekate from the eighth century BCE shows her with wings, carrying a snake.

**Attributes:** Key, torch, cauldron, knife, broom

**Emblem:** Star and crescent moon

**Spirit allies:** Hekate may be venerated alongside Artemis, Persephone,

Demeter, and/or Kybele. Hekate dances in the entourage of Dionysus.

**Sacred animals:** Snakes, toads, dragons, cats, but most especially dogs: Hekate has an extremely powerful bond with dogs: even when manifesting in human form, she is usually accompanied by a pair of hounds. If appearing without dogs, Hekate may circle in canine fashion. Somehow there will be a canine reference.

**Bird:** Stork

**Mount:** Dragons pull her chariot.

**Color:** Black

**Number:** 3

**Celestial bodies:** Sirius the Dog Star; the moon, especially the Dark Moon phase

**Plants:** Garlic, lavender, mandrake, henna

**Trees:** Pomegranate; black poplar; date palm; yew

**Sacred site:** Three-way or T-shaped crossroads; Hekate was a goddess with an organized cult. In addition to Caria and Colchis, she had sanctuaries in Aigina and Lagina and a grove on the Aventine hill. She is the matron goddess and guardian of the city of Istanbul (previously called Byzantium and Constantinople). Hekate is credited with saving that city from attack by King Philip II of Macedonia in 304 BCE. His forces attempted to attack secretly during a dark moon but Hekate lit a crescent moon, creating enough light for the Byzantines to apprehend their danger and save themselves. In gratitude, they began using her symbols (star and crescent moon) on their coins. The image still appears on the Turkish flag. The image predates Islam and was the official emblem of Byzantine Greeks.

**Time:** Night time is the right time for Hekate: she only accepts offerings and petitions at night. All festivities, rituals, and ceremonies in her honor are held after dark. The only acceptable illumination is candles or torches.

**Sacred dates:** The last day of each month is dedicated to Hekate.

- In Italy, Hekate shared a festival with Diana on 13 August.
- A Friday the 13<sup>th</sup> in August is especially sacred.
- 16 November is Hekate Night for modern Wiccans and Neo-Pagans.

**Rituals:** Hekate's ancient devotees held dinners in her honor known as Hekate Suppers. Foods associated with her were prepared. The entrée was usually fish, especially red mullet. Devotees feasted and celebrated. Offerings and leftovers were placed outside the door or at a crossroads for Hekate and her hounds. Even way back when, cynics scoffed that food placed outside was actually consumed by feral dogs and homeless people without realizing that this is Hekate's intent: this is one way she accepts offerings. (The Church was still trying to eradicate this ritual as late as the eleventh century.)

Smaller, private offerings may be left at a crossroads, too:

1. Place offerings on a plate or flat stone and leave them at a crossroads after dark.
2. Make your invocation and then walk away without looking back.
3. Do not return for the plate but consider it part of the offering. (In other words, don't use a plate you wish to keep.) Encountering or hearing a dog is an indication that your petition has been heard.

**Offerings:** Eggs, garlic, and honey (especially lavender honey); croissants and crescent shaped breads and pastries; candles; incense; images of dogs, especially black dogs; actions on behalf of dogs

**See also:** *Artemis; Cabeiri; Cbtbonic Spirits; Demeter; Diana; Dionysus; Europa; Hades; Heket; Helios; Hera; Kybele; Medea; Pasiphae; Persephone; Titan; Zeus*

## Heket

*Giver of Life; Spirit of the Primordial Waters; Mother of the Spirits*

**Also known as:** Heqet

**Origin:** Egypt

No, not Hekate: despite the resemblance of their names, these two ancient goddesses are not identical, but they do have much in common. Both are associated with birth, death resurrection, and subterranean realms.

Some consider Heket to be the eldest of all Egyptian spirits. She is a goddess of birth, death, resurrection, and all points in between. She helps place the child in the womb and is a guardian of the dead. Heket prevents miscarriage and stillbirth. She has dominion over contraceptives.

Heket and her husband, Khnum, belong to a band of celestial midwives who assist each dawn with the birthing of the sun. Heket is among the spirits who help Isis temporarily revive Osiris in order to conceive Horus.

**Manifestations:** Heket manifests as a frog or a woman with a frog's head.

**Iconography:** Heket's hieroglyphic is a frog.

**Animal:** Heket is as intensely associated with frogs as Hekate is with dogs.

**Elements:** Water, earth

**Sacred sites:** Among the oldest centers of her veneration was near Elephantine Island where the caverns through which the Nile entered Egypt were situated. She was also venerated at Abydos and Hermopolis.

**Offerings:** She was traditionally offered faience or carved stone frog statuettes, however any sort of frog imagery may be appropriate.

**See also:** *Anuket; Hekate; Horus; Isis; Khnum; Osiris; Satis*

## Hel

**Also known as:** Hella; Hela

## **Origin:** Norse

Once upon a time, being sent to Hel may have been inevitable, but it wasn't perceived as punishment: Hel, daughter of Angerboda and Loki, rules the Norse realm of the dead. She is the keeper of the souls of the departed. Those who die at sea or in battle have other destinations; everyone else goes to Hel, who welcomes them into her home, *Helhaim*, regardless of whether they were good, bad, sinful, or saintly while alive.

Hel's realm is not a sulphurous, fiery torture chamber. Rather it is a kind of inn or way station for the dead, although once checked in, one can *never* check out. Helhaim is a bleak, gray, damp, misty realm: the concept of heat as punishment was imported from hotter, southern climes alongside Christianity. *Lack of warmth with no hope of Spring* was the Norse equivalent of desolation. That said, some regions of Helhaim are more comfortable than others: Hel judges and decides exactly where each individual soul is directed.

Hel's name may derive from the Old German *halja*, meaning "covering." She may or may not be the same spirit as Hulda (Holle). Hel and her brothers, a wolf and a snake, were raised by their mother, the witch Angerboda, in the Iron Wood. Prophecy suggested that the siblings would someday lead a Host of Destruction against the Aesir, and so Odin had them "brought" to Asgard, where each was ultimately entrapped. Odin personally seized Hel and flung her as far as he could: she landed in the Realm of Death and became its Queen. She lives in a great hall, Eliudnir, within Helhaim. She remains destined to lead an uprising of rebellious spirits and ghosts.

Hel manifests in dreams, most famously to Balder, Odin's son. She appeared to him three days before his death, advising him (accurately) that in three days she would clasp him in her arms. Because her father was instrumental in killing Balder, it's unclear how much inside information Hel possessed.

**Manifestations:** Hel is simultaneously half-dead and half-alive. Half of her body (cut vertically) is that of a fair, beautiful woman; the other half is necrotized flesh. She is half living woman, half corpse.

**Attributes:** Rake and broom: the Black Plague was especially

devastating in Scandinavia. Allegedly Hel roamed the land armed with her rake and broom. Villages totally wiped out by the Plague were said to have been swept away; where there were survivors, Hel had raked instead.

**Spirit allies:** Hel's staff includes servants named "Delay" (male) and "Slowness" (female).

**Colors:** Black and white

**Rune:** Hagalaz

**Mount:** Hel rides a black mare.

**Animals:** She has a pack of dogs, the original Hell Hounds, as well as horses and wolves.

**Places:** Mount Hekla, an active volcano in southern Iceland, was allegedly among the entrances to Hel's realm. A nearby town is named Hella. Some have suggested that the mountain shares its name with the goddess, although others protest that *Hekla* means "slab" or "covering," which would still make it cognate with Hel as that is what her name means, too. It's also theorized that the Belgian city of Hal may be named in her honor.

**See also:** *Angerboda; Balder; Black Madonna of Hal; Hulda; Loki; Modgud; Odin*

## Helen of Troy

### *The Face That Launched One Thousand Ships*

**Origin:** Greece

Helen of Troy is described as the most beautiful woman in the world, but she was never entirely mortal. In the most famous version of her origin, Helen is the daughter of Zeus, who transformed into a swan to rape her mother, Leda, a mortal queen. Leda simultaneously conceived two children by Zeus and two by her mortal husband. Two of the resulting four children were mortal; the other two immortal. Helen was the

immortal sister, as opposed to her mortal twin, Clytemnestra.

Helen possessed supernatural beauty and allure, which brought her little if any joy. When she was a little girl, the hero Theseus saw her dancing for Artemis; he abducted and raped the child. Helen's twin brothers, the Dioscuri, rescued and returned her. Helen's beauty later made her the prize in the Judgment of Paris. Trojan prince and shepherd Paris was forced to decide which of three goddesses deserved a golden apple labeled "for the fairest." Not one of the goddesses had supreme confidence in her own merits. Each offered Paris a sizable bribe. Aphrodite promised Paris the world's most beautiful woman. When Paris picked her, she gave him Helen, her devotee.

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*In a more obscure version of Helen's mythic origins, she is fully immortal. Zeus pursued the resisting Nemesis, who transformed into a fish to escape him. He ploughed up Earth's waters to catch her. In a desperate game of hide-and-seek, Nemesis kept changing shapes, finally transforming into a goose. Zeus, in the guise of a swan, raped her. She laid, then abandoned an egg the color of blue hyacinths. The egg ended up with Leda, who hid it until Helen hatched from it.*

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Helen is blamed as the cause of the Trojan War, ostensibly fought to return Helen to her husband, Menelaus, King of Sparta. In one version of her myth, Helen was never in Troy. Growing bored with Paris even as they eloped, she jumped ship in Egypt, where a pharaoh kept her safe and hidden.

Helen is the original sex goddess, the lady of irresistible allure. This isn't meant only metaphorically: she was worshipped as a goddess with various shrines throughout Greece. She had a shrine near Sparta, which may have contained the original egg from which she hatched or a replica. She may have been worshipped in Memphis, Egypt, where she had allegedly entertained the pharaoh.

She was venerated on the island of Rhodes as a tree goddess. Legend

has it that after the death of Menelaus, with whom she reconciled after the Trojan War, Helen's step-son banished her from Sparta. She went to visit an old friend, Polyxo, Queen of Rhodes. Or at least Helen imagined her to be a friend: in truth, Polyxo secretly hated Helen, blaming her for the death of her husband during the Trojan War. Once she had Helen alone, Polyxo dressed servants up as Erinyes. They stripped Helen naked, scourged her, and hung her from a tree, killing her. Some understand this as a lynching; others interpret "hanging from a tree" to mean crucifixion. Perhaps to atone or to appease Helen's ghost, veneration of Helen was then instituted on Rhodes.

Helen is an erotic goddess petitioned for romantic and domestic happiness. She is also invoked for fertility and to assist conception. Themes of sexual violence permeate her myths. Helen may be invoked to protect and avenge those who have been sold into sexual slavery or otherwise exploited and abused. Helen knows the secret formula for *nepenthe*, the potion that banishes grief and suffering and provides healing oblivion.

Jewish folklore identifies Helen of Troy as an avatar of Lilith. Simon Magus allegedly discovered Helen of Troy (either her immortal self or her reincarnation) laboring in a brothel in Tyre, now in modern Lebanon. He rescued her, proclaiming her his Sophia (Shekhina, Ennoia); the two were eventually venerated together. Vestiges of Helen may survive under the mask of Saint Helena who is profoundly associated with romance and love magic in Christian folk traditions.

**Manifestation:** Hers is the face that launched a thousand ships. Helen is allegedly awe-inspiringly beautiful, seductive, and sexy.

**Spirit allies:** Helen was venerated alongside her brothers, the Dioscuri, and Aphrodite.

**Attribute:** Egg

**Element:** Water; Helen is associated with healing springs.

**Offerings:** Painted eggs; china, crystal, or otherwise precious eggs

**See also:** *Achilles; Aphrodite; Artemis; Dioscuri; Erinyes; Eris; Lilith; Shekhina; Sophia; Thetis; Zeus*



## Hekios

*The Watcher; The Untiring Eye;  
The All Seeing, Ever Watching*

**Classification:** Titan

**Origin:** Greece

Helios is the sun as well as the original spirit of the sun worshipped in Greece. He was eventually superseded by Apollo. Very little information now survives regarding his actual veneration, but Helios was not a remote deity. Scholars consider that he was an extremely important pre-Hellenic deity. He was actively venerated and possessed many shrines.

Oaths were taken in Helios' name. Helios sees all and knows all, at least if it occurs during daytime. He is the witness to all crimes committed in daylight hours. Hekate witnesses all crimes committed at night. The relationship between the two deities is mysterious. Helios' wife is named Perse, sometimes a title for Hekate. Hekate may also be his cousin or descendent. When Persephone cannot be found, Hekate leads Demeter to Helios, who ultimately reveals Persephone's fate.

Helios is the illuminator, both literally and metaphorically. According to Greek mythology, when the sun sets at night, Helios is visiting his other realm—either a realm of spirits or the realm where he lives with his mother, wife, and kids. His children with Perse include Circe; Phaeton; Aietes, the father of Medea and Pasiphae, the mother of Ariadne and the Minotaur. He had other children, too, born of mortals and goddesses.

**Favored people:** Helios' children can be detected by the golden glint in their eyes.

**Manifestation:** A radiantly handsome man crowned with the sun drives a flaming chariot drawn by fire-breathing horses (or incendiary oxen) across the sky.

**Animals:** Helios owns cattle, one for every day of the solar year.

**Spirit allies:** His sisters, Eos and Selene

**Sacred sites:** Many of his shrines, located on mountaintops, were rededicated to Saint Elijah, who also drives a fiery chariot. Helios owns Rhodes, given to him by Zeus. He married Rhodos, who may be the indigenous goddess of the island or Poseidon's daughter. Together they have seven sons, the Heliadae.

**Offerings:** Gymnastic competitions were held in his honor.

**See also:** *Apollo; Ariadne; Circe; Demeter; Eos; Hekate; Pasiphae; Persephone; Poseidon; Selene; Zeus*

## Henwen

### *Ancient White One*

**Origin:** Wales

Henwen is a goddess of fertility, abundance, and prosperity venerated in the form of a great white sow, tended by Coll ab Collfrewi, one of Britain's three great swineherds. He pastured her in a valley in Cornwall. All was well until Henwen conceived. A prophecy foretold that Henwen's progeny would harm Britain, and so King Arthur attempted to capture and kill her. (An alternative version suggests that Henwen was specifically a threat to him.)

Arthur assembled a host of knights against this one big pig but she escaped, tunneling through Earth until she reached the sea. An ocean may stop a regular pig but not a goddess. Henwen plunged into the depths with Coll hanging on to her bristles the whole time. (It's unclear if he's just hanging on or if he was instrumental in trying to save her.) Periodically emerging, wherever she touched Earth, Henwen brought forth from her own body incredibly fine wheat and barley, plus bees that produce the best honey in Britain. She gives birth to an eaglet, a wolf, and a ferocious cat. (No domestic cats existed in Britain at this time, only wildcats.) Exactly what happened to Henwen is unclear. She was not captured and so is presumably still free and roaming.

A hidden goddess lurks beneath this legendary pig, possibly similar to that other great white sow, Cerridwen. Henwen was an oracular sow.

Letter sticks formed from rods made of ash and carved with runic symbols were stuck into the ground. Henwen, when asked a question, would point her nose at different sticks in turn, spelling out an answer. Her oracular powers were only invoked in times of emergency. Invoke her for fertility, abundance, and adventure as well as prophetic answers.

**Offerings:** Ale, mead, barley wine

**See also:** *Cerridwen; Oghma*

## Hephaestus

**Origin:** Greece

Hephaestus is the divine smith, Lord of Subterranean Fire. He may be the son of Zeus and Hera or the son of Hera alone. One legend suggests that, following Athena's birth, Hera was so enraged that Zeus had appropriated women's sacred right to give birth that she decided to give birth alone, too. Hephaestus was the result.

Of course, the problem with this myth is that Hephaestus, fully grown and an operational smith, is also the divine midwife who freed Athena from Zeus' head with his moon-shaped axe. Myths of Athena and Hephaestus are intertwined and contradictory. They are alter egos, two halves of a whole. Both were apprenticed to smiths in childhood. Both their myths touch on traditional gender roles:

- Athena spent her girlhood hammering spears for male warriors.
- Hephaestus spent his boyhood crafting women's jewelry.

Once upon a time, Athena and Hephaestus were a matched pair; in early legends they were wed. As Athena evolved and increasing emphasis was placed on her literal virginity, their myths became increasingly contradictory. Her past relationship with Hephaestus is among Athena's deep secrets. However, the two continued to share shrines and may still be venerated together (although one may anticipate some fireworks).

Hephaestus is lame and misshapen, not the stereotypical gorgeous

“Greek god” like Apollo or Adonis. Exactly what happened to Hephaestus, how he became crippled and misshapen, is the subject of various, contradictory myths:

- Zeus or Hera (reports differ) threw him from the Heavens because he was born misshapen.
- He was crippled when Zeus threw him from Olympus for daring to intervene when Zeus abused Hera.

He landed in the ocean, where he was raised by Thetis and mermaids. They gave him an underwater cave and a child-sized forge, where he began crafting exquisite jewelry and ornaments for them. When Hera and the other goddesses saw his handiwork, Hephaestus was invited to rejoin them in Olympus. He spent most of his time in his smithies in volcanoes and on his sacred island of Lemnos.

Hephaestus was such an incredible visionary craftsman that his creations could breathe and move. He is credited with crafting the first woman (Pandora) in his forge from Earth and water. He fashioned living golden female robots to help him walk: the first femme-bots.

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*A little-known myth suggests that Hephaestus never fell from the sky at all. Hera, his mother, fearing that Zeus would harm her son, spirited him away to Lemnos, apprenticing him to her ally, Kedaion the Master Smith. Allegedly the first piece Hephaestus ever crafted was a pair of prosthetic legs for himself.*

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Hephaestus is a shamanic spirit presiding over a Mystery tradition. He is a guardian and healer. He is also a stubborn deity with sensitive emotions who will hold a grudge if offended.

Only Dionysus can propitiate him and lighten his mood (via copious quantities of wine).

**Favored people:** Smiths, metalworkers, jewelers, potters, ceramicists, shamans, diviners

**Manifestations:** Hephaestus is portrayed as a vigorous, powerful bearded man and also as a man whose body is bent and twisted. He moves like a crab, his mother's emblem.

**Attributes:** Hammer; crescent-moon ax; cane

**Consorts:** Athena; Aphrodite; Aglaia the Glorious; Charis; Cabeiro and possibly Aetna

**Color:** Red, black

**Mineral:** Lemnian Earth (*Lemnia sphragis*): clay dug from a cavern in Hephaestia on Lemnos allegedly possessed miraculous healing powers. It was considered an antidote against snakebite and plague.

**Animals:** Crab, snake

**Number:** 9

**Sacred sites:** Lemnos and volcanic islands like Hiera, Imbros, Lipari, and Sicily. He and Athena shared a shrine in Athens, the Hephaesteum, which remains as the most complete surviving example of Doric temple architecture, as befitting the crafts deities it honors.

**Offerings:** Greek and Italian wine; smith's tools; seashells; decorate his altar with snakes and the mermaids he adores.

**See also:** *Achilles; Adonis; Adrano; Aetna; Aphrodite; Apollo; Athena; Cabeiri; Cabeiro; Dionysus; Erichthonios; Hera; Kedalion; Mermaid; Pandora; Prometheus; Thetis; Zeus* and the Glossary entry for *Mystery*

## Hera

### *The Mistress*

**Origin:** Greece

Hera is the Queen of Greece. In classical Greek myth, Hera is Zeus' older sister. He tricked her into marriage by taking the form of her sacred bird, a cuckoo caught in a rainstorm. She pitied the little wet,

bedraggled bird and held it close to her bosom, at which point the bird transformed back into Zeus.

Their marriage was initially very happy. Their honeymoon night lasted three hundred years: sex was *that* good. Hera was assigned the functions of goddess of women and marriage. Sexual fidelity, however, was not in Zeus' vocabulary. He had liaisons with goddesses and mortal women alike. His children with other mothers became deities and heroes. Hera is frequently portrayed as a bitter shrew: she pursues Zeus' lovers, punishing them fiercely and keeping a vigilant eye on Zeus so that he is obliged to be extra-sneaky when conducting his affairs.

Mythologists in tandem with archaeologists suggest that there's more to this story: Hera was one of the most significant pre-Olympian indigenous Greek goddesses. She is Greece's primordial sacred cow and Great Mother Goddess of matriarchal pre-Hellenic culture. Hera was initially worshipped as a Lady of the Beasts, a goddess of abundance and fertility. In approximately 600 BCE, she made a major transformation. Emphasis was placed on her roles as wife and mother rather than her original functions.

Dorian invaders married her to Zeus to confer legitimacy on his rule. Many myths emphasize her subjugation by Zeus. Much of what is portrayed as shrewish may be desperate attempts to retain her autonomy and power and to protect her own children's birthright as Zeus' multitudes of otherchildren by other wives gained power. Hera, together with Poseidon, also an indigenous spirit incorporated into the Olympians, led an unsuccessful rebellion against Zeus. Zeus punished Hera by hanging her from the clouds with anvils tied to her feet. Depressed, Hera wrapped herself in deepest darkness and wanders Earth in the form of a frail, decrepit old woman. She always returns to Zeus.

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*Hera was struck in the right breast by one of Heracles' arrows, inflicting a wound that never heals. She may be the precursor of the image of Our Lady of Sorrows, the beautiful, wounded Madonna.*

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Hera's name may be interpreted as "lady" or as the feminine form of "hero." Alternatively, her name is not Indo-European and has yet to be translated. Hera seems to have first emerged as a primordial snake goddess in the Greek city, Argos. Each spring, she bathes in the sacred spring of Kanathos near Argos, emerging fresh and youthful like a snake with freshly shed skin. Hera is described as "renewing her virginity." This ritual may be in preparation for performing the Great Rite. Hera may be invoked in cleansing rituals intended to heal spousal and sexual abuse as well as any past bad history.

She is an oracular spirit who has the power to fulfill virtually any petition. Hera punishes by striking those who displease her with sudden madness.

**Favored people:** Women in general; people born under the zodiac sign Cancer

**Manifestation:** Hera is a radiantly beautiful woman, shining like the sun; however she is also a shape-shifter with many forms. She notoriously disguises herself as a humble, old beggar woman but still expects to be treated like a queen. Woe to those who fail to treat even the humblest with respect. Hera has a fast temper and is quick to administer justice.

**Iconography:** Hera is depicted wearing a diadem and veil.

**Attribute:** Pomegranate

**Colors:** Yellow, gold

**Birds:** Cuckoo, dove, peacock, carrion-crow

**Animals:** Cow, snake, dragon, crab, snail, and other shelled creatures

**Mount:** Peacocks pull Hera's chariot.

**Plants:** *Vitex agnus-castus*, lilies, poppies

**Sacred site:** Her sanctuary at Argos, a seventh-century BCE temple built over an earlier shrine, is among the oldest Greek temples. Her temple at Olympia was older than Zeus' and always distinct. Ancient Greek altars were originally open to the air: Hera's temples may have been the first to

be roofed.

**Offerings:** Honey, flowers, incense, perfume, pomegranates

**See also:** *Amphitrite; Apollo; Artemis; Asteria; Callisto; Dakini; Dione; Dionysus; Dioscuri; Europa; Ezili Freda Dahomey; Ganymede; Hebe; Hekate; Helen of Troy; Hephaestus; Heracles; Hermes; Hesperides; Horai; Hybla; Hydra; Io; Iris; Kedalion; Ladon; Lady of the Beasts; Leto; Maia; Olympian Spirits; Poseidon; Prometheus; Scylla; Semele; Siren; Themis; Typhon; Zeus*

## Heracles

**Also known as:** Herakles; Hercules (Roman)

**Origin:** Greece

Heracles' origins are mysterious. His name means "Hera's Glory" but until his deification, she is his mortal enemy. Alternative myth suggests she may really have been his mother, but classical Greek mythology identifies him as the son of Zeus and Alkmene, a mortal princess. Hera does all she can to prevent the birth; later sending snakes to assassinate the baby. Heracles, already incomparably strong, even in the cradle, strangles the snakes instead. Hera periodically strikes Heracles with violent madness so that he harms innocent people and those he loves. (Or at least Hera is blamed.) Heracles' saga is a cycle of heroic acts and acts of expiation for the most terrible crimes.

Heracles is a hero, the strongest man on Earth, capable of holding the entire Earth on his shoulders, the subject of numerous legends and entertainments. That's one way of looking at him. He is also a ruthless killer and assassin; champion of the Olympian order; a contract killer whose assorted labors involve eliminating sacred beings of earlier or alternative pantheons. Scholars have interpreted his labors as indicating the victory of terrestrial spirits over an older, more aquatic pantheon.

Heracles is an ancestral spirit. Many royal lineages traced their descent from him. (He once lay with a king's fifty daughters, all in one night, impregnating each one.) Although Heracles was mortal, after his death, Zeus deified him and brought him to Olympus, where he reconciled with Hera and married her daughter, Hebe.



Heracles was venerated differently in different places and by different spiritual traditions:

- In Greece, he was venerated alongside Zeus and the Nymphs, invoked for prosperity, victory, healing, and good health. Heracles was associated with healing springs and thermal spas. During life, he was a fan of hot springs and thermal baths. As a spirit, he presides over them. The Greek term *Herculean baths* indicated naturally hot or artificially heated waters.
- Heracles evolved into Hercules, men's deity in Rome venerated by merchants, traders, travelers, soldiers, and military personnel. He provides protection, success, and good fortune; offering blessings of vigor, good health, stamina, physical strength, and endurance. Hercules was the male counterpart of the Bona Dea, who refused to accept males into her presence. Hercules similarly rejected female devotees.
- The Romans carried his veneration or at least his name throughout Europe. In Celtic regions, Hercules evolved into a spirit of healing. Some theorize that Celtic Hercules is really a Roman name for Celtic deities like the Dagda, Ogmios, and Borvo. Little bronze statues identifiable as Hercules were offered at Borvo's shrine at Aix-les-Bains. It's theorized that heroic Hercules was considered a fighter against disease or disease demons.
- In Phoenician-ruled areas, Hercules is likely to be Melkart, whom the Greeks called Tyrian Heracles.

**Manifestation:** A huge, muscled bearded man draped in a lion's pelt (and usually nothing else)

**Attributes:** Club, lyre. (Chiron taught him how to play; he clunked another music tutor over the head with it, killing him.)

**Consort:** Hebe, Hera's daughter, whom he marries after his death and deification; while alive, he had several wives and countless lovers, male and female.

**Sacred dates:**

- 30 June, dedication day of the Roman temple of Hercules and the Muses in 179 BCE

- 12 August, men offer sacrifices to *Hercules Invictus* (“Invincible Hercules”) at the great altar near the Circus Maximus. (Women are excluded.)

**Sacred sites:** He had shrines along the entire Mediterranean coast. Among the most significant were those in Cadiz (now Spain) and the ancient Phoenician city of Lixus (now Larache,

Morocco), allegedly the site of the Garden of the Hesperides. He also had a mountain shrine atop Mount Oite in Greece, scene of his death and funeral pyre.

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*The Via Herculea, or Herculean Way, is the ancient road that ran from Rome to Cadizhr, now in southwestern Spain.*

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**Offerings:** Heracles likes to drink. (He once lost a drinking contest with Dionysus. As payment, he spent time dancing in Dionysus’ processions.) He prefers wine but will not rebuff anything stronger. He likes extreme drinks such as over-proof liquors, if only because of his excessive machismo, but be careful not to serve him too much. Even as a spirit, he’s not a good drunk: too much liquor and he becomes unreliable.

According to Roman tradition, Hercules accepts *any* food or drink offerings but only from men. True devotees usually tithe or offer him a percentage. Merchants offer percentages of proceeds earned. Soldiers of all ranks offered a percentage of booty won. Money may be spent on public feasts in Hercules’ honor. Animal sacrifices to Hercules *had* to be shared and eaten in their entirety. Lavish dinners were typically held in his honor with food shared by all attendees.

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*The High Priest of his Roman temple used to gamble with Hercules. If the priest won, Hercules granted him favors. If Hercules won, the priest procured courtesans for the deity.*

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Heracles is not quite so exclusively associated with men in the other regions where he was worshipped, although they were his primary devotees.

**See also:** *Acca Larentia; Ares; Bona Dea; Chiron; Dagda, the; Dionysus; Hera; Hesperides; Hydra; Ladon; Melkart; Nymph; Ogma; Zeus*

## Hermes

**Origin:** Greece

Before Hermes was the winged messenger of Mount Olympus, he was a virile, rustic, pastoral spirit, presiding over the fertility of women and livestock. Hermes was among the best-loved of all Olympian spirits. He is the lord of animal husbandry as well as language, communication, trade, travel, and divination.

Hermes' specialty is *cleromancy*, originally divination using small pebbles, which eventually evolved into dice. He is the trickster lord of the crossroads, spirit of luck and patron of gamblers, especially those who play with dice. Hermes protects thieves and also protects against them. He may be invoked for the gift of gab, business success, and true omens. He is the lord of cunning and mother-wit.

Hermes is a shaman: he travels between realms, hence his eventual role as Zeus' messenger. He is a psychopomp who conveys the souls of the dead to Hades. Sacrifices were made to Hermes on the final day of Greek festivals of the dead to ensure that he would escort the dead souls back to Hades. If a ghost refuses to vacate your premises, Hermes may be asked to escort them to a more appropriate place. Just be careful: Hermes is not violent or particularly aggressive, but he does enjoy playing tricks and the periodic practical joke. He will be a troublesome spirit for those lacking humor and humility.

Hermes killed Hera's guardian Argus by boring him to death. After he had put him to sleep, Hermes touched the guard with his staff to kill him. He is sometimes considered the patron of euthanasia: the gentle death.

Hermes prowls around at night, bringing dreams. You can request that

he deliver prophetic dreams or that he provide relief from nightmares.

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*Hermes as Divine Child wears sandals and carries a staff: his image closely resembles that of the Holy Child of Atocha. Post-Christianity, many of Hermes' functions were assigned to Michael Archangel.*

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Hermes was born in a cave to the goddess, Maia. Zeus is his father. He makes his home in Mekone, "Poppy town." Hermes is associated with birth, death, and sex. Although now often portrayed as androgynous, Hermes was originally a very virile phallic deity. His sexual partners include Aphrodite and countless Nymphs. The Greek-born Italian goddess Carmenta may be his official wife. Hermes is credited with many inventions, including the musical scale, the alphabet, boxing, gymnastics, weights, measures, and olive culture. (Athena may have brought the olive tree, but Hermes taught people how to process the fruit and oil.)

**Favored people:** Merchants; gamblers; travelers; thieves (but only if they're not violent: he likes clever, tricky thieves, not thugs or muggers); those who live by their wits; boxers

**Manifestation:** Hermes traditionally wears a traveler's broad-brimmed hat and sandals.

**Iconography:** Hermes has been through many transitions:

- His most ancient images portray him in the form of an erect phallus.
- He is represented by a cairn of stones.
- Statues called "Herms" were used to portray him: tall rectangular pillars displaying his head on top and his erect penis sticking out. Herms were placed at crossroads. Women seeking fertility would petition Hermes at a herm, placing flower garlands around his neck or elsewhere.
- Hermes was then envisioned as a robust man carrying a lamb around

his shoulders.

- Finally he was portrayed in the form most familiar today: a winged, sandaled, androgynous messenger.

**Attribute:** Caduceus: a staff entwined by two snakes, the emblem of the modern medical profession. He can use the staff to induce sleep.

**Spirit allies:** His mother, Maia; Pan; Nymphs

**Sacred sites:** Hermes is an extremely unpretentious spirit. He is among the Greek spirits least often honored with formal temples. Instead he is present at crossroads and in wild nature. Invoke his presence or summon him by erecting a herm or cairn of stones, especially at a four-way crossroads (X-shaped).

**Sacred animals:** Dog, tortoise, snake

**Tree:** Palm

**Number:** 4

**Offerings:** Cakes; honey; olives; goat or sheep's cheese; wine; water; incense

**See also:** *Aphrodite; Asklepios; Athena; Calypso; Carmenta; Circe; Dionysus; Eshu Elegbara; Hades; Hekate; Hera; Maia; Mercury; Nymph; Pan; Psychopomp; Shiva; Zeus*

## Herodias

**Also known as:** Hérodiade

Herodias the witch-goddess leads the Wild Hunt. Popularly venerated during Europe's witch-hunt era, Herodias the goddess may or may not derive from the historical Herodias, granddaughter of Herod the Great and wife of King Herod Antipas of Judea. Herod Antipas was her second husband; her first was Philip, his brother, with whom she had a daughter named Salome. Herodias herself descended from royal Hasmonean (Macabean) lineage. Marriage to her may have helped legitimize her husband's rule.

Herod Antipas and Herodias fell in love while on a trip to Rome. She abandoned his brother. He divorced his wife and they married. Due to technicalities of Jewish law, this could be construed as incest. Herod, Rome's puppet ruler, was already widely unpopular among the masses and so the marriage was a public scandal, earning the vocal condemnation of the prophet, John the Baptist.

Herodias did not take his criticism lying down. According to the New Testament, she instigated John the Baptist's murder, instructing her dancing daughter, Salome, to request the prophet's head served to her on a plate as a reward following her performance of the Dance of the Seven Veils. In 39 CE, Roman Emperor Caligula banished Herod to Gaul. Herodias voluntarily accompanied him and died there, circa 47, in what is now France. (Salome accompanied them, too.)

To early Christians, Herodias epitomized the wicked woman; she emerged as the New Testament's primary female villain and was popularly reputed to be a demon. Herodias is to the New Testament as Jezebel is to the Old. Her name was used to defame Pagan goddesses but at some point she evolved into one herself. It is unclear whether Herodias herself emerged as a witch-goddess or whether her name serves as a mask for another. Herodias may be any of the following:

- The biblical Herodias, reemerged as a spirit
- A Pagan spirit also named Herodias or perhaps renamed after the biblical queen
- The Semitic demon-witch-goddess Lilith, in disguise

Although also venerated elsewhere in Europe, Herodias was especially beloved in Italy. She and Diana are the goddesses most frequently mentioned in Italian witch-trial transcripts and were apparently worshipped together. (The two will share an altar.) Together they lead the Wild Hunt and night parades of witches.

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*Ratherius, Bishop of Verona (circa 887—April 25, 974), complained that Herodias was perceived as a queen, even a goddess, as though, he remarked, this was her reward for killing John the Baptist. In 936 CE, a movement,*

*outlawed by Ratherius, arose claiming that Herodias ruled one-third of the world and was thus due devotion and petitions.*

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**Iconography:** Herodias is usually envisioned as a beautiful and seductive woman. Among the artists inspired to create portraits of her are Aubrey Beardsley, Paul Delaroche and John Reinhard Weguelin. Herodias is frequently portrayed in the company of her daughter Salome and sometimes with John the Baptist's severed head.

**See also:** *Aradia; Diana; Herta; Irodeas; Jezebel; Lilith; Wild Hunt*

## Herta

**Also known as:** Hertha; Erda; Eartha; Nerthus

**Origin:** Teutonic

Herta, mysterious Germanic goddess, was eventually demonized as a Queen of Witches, a leader of the Wild Hunt. Although little information regarding Herta survives, her name remains sacred and familiar, as it is the one given our planet, Earth. Tacitus called Herta *Mater Terra*: "Mother Earth." Archaeological evidence suggests that Denmark was the epicenter of her worship. Herta possessed a sanctuary amid groves on Rügen Island, in the Baltic Sea, now modern Germany, but once ruled by Danes. Rügen's highest point is still called Hertaburg. Ruins of Hertha Castle near Herta Lake on Rügen Island are believed to be remnants of her shrine.

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*Herta has apparently not left home. According to local lore, a beautiful woman emerges from the woods on full-moon nights to bathe in Herta Lake accompanied by female attendants. Once in the water, they may become invisible but are heard splashing. They eventually reappear to disappear back into the woods. These spectral bathers do not welcome company. It is considered dangerous to witness them. Allegedly observers feel magically*

*compelled to enter the deep lake where they drown. Local rumor says that at least one person drowns annually, suggesting that Herta may be collecting human sacrifices.*

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According to Roman reports, the statue of Herta was ritually removed from her shrine and bathed in the lake several times a year. Herta's rites were secret and little else is known. (Whether they were always secret or whether secrecy increased under Roman threat is also unknown.) Allegedly most ritual attendants were drowned following fulfillment of their tasks, although whether as sacrifices to Herta or whether to maintain secrecy (to make sure they'll never reveal her secrets) is also now unknown.

She appears in Norse mythology as Nerthus (Earth), sister-wife of Njord (Sea). The Vanir practice marriage between siblings similar to the ancient Egyptians (Isis and Osiris; Set and Nephthys). Njord and his children, Freya and Freyr, went to live in Asgard as Vanir representatives/hostages. Nerthus is his first wife and their mother, but because the Aesir disapprove of marriage between siblings, she remained behind on her island sanctuary. (Alternatively she just didn't want to go.) Eventually, Odin, that inveterate traveler, came calling: the result was the Valkyries, daughters of Nerthus and Odin, representing the true union of Aesir and Vanir.

**Manifestation:** In her later guise as witch-goddess, Herta rides a deer crowned with hops. She uses a stalk of valerian as a riding crop. (Both plants are profound sedatives and sleep-inducers.)

**Sacred date:** One of her ancient festivals coincided with the vernal equinox.

**Sacred site:** Rügen Island in the Baltic Sea: a deep black lake on the island was once surrounded by beech forests. Herta's sacred grove was allegedly beside this lake.

**See also:** *Aesir; Arsinoe; Freya; Freyr; Gaia; Isis; Nephthys; Njord; Odin; Osiris; Set; Valkyrie; Vanir; Wild Hunt*



## Hesperides

### *The Sunset Ladies; The Western Women*

The Hesperides, beautiful goddesses of the sunset, preside over romance and conjugal pleasures, especially the honeymoon night. They are entrusted to be the keepers of the sacred, priceless treasures belonging to the Olympian spirits.

The Hesperides are most famous as the Nymphs who tend a fragrant paradise garden where they guard Hera's apple tree that bears the golden apples of joy (in contrast to the apple of discord wielded by Greek goddess Eris). Among the hopeless labors assigned to Heracles was to steal apples from this tree, guarded by a hundred-headed dragon as well as the Hesperides. (Allegedly, Hera assigned Ladon the dragon to this task as she does not entirely trust the Hesperides who, rumor has it, sometimes snack on her apples.)

There may be three Hesperides or as many as nine. Depending on the source, the spirits named as Hesperides include Aegle, Arethusa, Asterope, Chrysothemis, Erythea, Hespera, Hesperia, Hesperethusa, and Lipara.

The parentage of these sister spirits is subject to dispute:

- They may be the daughters of Hesperus, Lord of the Evening and an unnamed (or no) mother.
- They may be the daughters of Atlas and the goddess Hesperis, Lady of the West
- Alternatively they are the children of Eos and Astraios
- Nyx may be their sole parent or she may have conceived them with Erebus
- Their parents may be Keto and Phorkys or Themis and Zeus

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*Although the Hesperides are usually described as caretakers, the paradise grove in which they dwell is called the Garden of the Hesperides: they may be its owners and rulers. Depending on his parentage and theirs, Ladon, the*

*garden's resident dragon may be their brother.*

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The name “Hesperides” derives from a root word indicating “west”, the direction of the sun set and the location of their paradise grove. Some perceive the Garden of the Hesperides as a spirit realm. Others, however, identify it as being earthly and located in what is now southern Spain or in Morocco, near the cities of Tangier and Larache, regions that would both be considered extremely westerly by the ancient Greeks.

The Hesperides are snake goddesses of erotic delights. Invoke their help in matters of seduction, true love, and lasting romantic happiness. The sunset that they rule may be understood literally or metaphorically. The Hesperides may be goddesses of people in the “sunset of their lives.” The Garden over which the Hesperides preside may or may not be an afterlife realm of eternal youth comparable to Celtic Avalon, the island of the apples.

**Favored people:** Brides, bridal consultants, gardeners, perfumers, snake charmers

**Manifestation:** The Hesperides are described as being very beautiful. They are said to have enchanting, soothing voices and allegedly take great pleasure in singing.

**Iconography:** The Hesperides are virtually always depicted with a tree and a snake or dragon. They appear on ancient coins and on Greek vase paintings. Among the more recent artists inspired to paint their portraits are Edward Burne-Jones (1833–1898) and Frederic Lord Leighton (1830–1896).

**Animal:** Snakes and dragons

**Constellation:** Seven Hesperides sisters are associated with the constellation now more familiar as Ursa Minor, the Little Bear. (Ursa Major, the Great Bear, was associated with Hera’s apple tree.) The Hesperides are also associated with the wing of the constellation Draco, which is identified with Ladon, the dragon.

**Offerings:** Images of snakes and apples

**See also:** *Astraios; Atlas; Callisto; Eos; Eris; Hera; Heracles; Idun; Keto; Ladon; Nymph; Nyx; Phorkys; Themis; Zeus*

## Hestia

**Origin:** Greece

Hestia is the goddess of hearth fire and the presiding spirit of the home. (Although typically described as a goddess of the hearth, Hestia is technically the goddess of the fire in the hearth: contained, controlled, ritual fire.) She was worshipped at home but every town and city also had its own official sacred hearth where she was tended and venerated.

Hestia is consistently the first of the Olympian spirits invoked. The first part of every sacrifice was offered to her. She bears a reputation as the kindest of all Olympian spirits. She protects the inhabitants of homes, enforces hospitality, and may be invoked for fire safety. She is a benevolent deity, quiet, humble, and modest, but exceptionally powerful. She figures in few myths. Both Apollo and Poseidon sought to marry or at least romance her, but she turned both down, vowing to remain solitary and autonomous. Hestia is so powerful that both these notorious rapists graciously took “no” for an answer.

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*Hestia is considered both the eldest and youngest of Rhea and Kronos' children. As the firstborn, she was the first to be swallowed by Kronos and thus the last to be disgorged or reborn.*

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Hestia is venerated beside the hearth, stove, or other major source of fire. There were only twelve thrones on Olympus, so when Dionysus was incorporated into the pantheon, there was no seat for him. No game of musical chairs, argument, or jockeying was necessary: Hestia automatically rose and sat beside the hearth, where she is happiest,

giving her throne to Dionysus. Hestia's fire is never permitted to go out except in ritual. It must then be ritually relit. Offerings may be respectfully placed directly into her flames.

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*Comic book superheroine Wonder Woman wields a weapon called the Golden Lasso that radiates a magic aura, the Fires of Hestia, which compels those caught within it to be truthful.*

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**Iconography:** A gracious, regal, modestly dressed mature woman wearing a veil

**Attribute:** Kettle

**Element:** Fire

**Plant:** *Vitex agnus-castus*

**See also:** *Agni; Amphitrite; Apollo; Dionysus; Gabija; Kronos; Olympian Spirits; Poseidon; Vesta*

## Hiiaaka

**Origin:** Polynesia

Hi'iaka is best known as volcano goddess Pelé's little sister but she is a powerful goddess in her own right. Hi'iaka is a brilliant magician capable of detecting and deflecting virtually all magical tricks, surprises, and dangers. She is a benevolent spirit who helps people, offering warnings in times of danger. Devotees seek her protection against all forms of harm. Hi'iaka is a healer and botanist with such profound knowledge of plants that she was allegedly able to use them to return the dead to life. She is invoked for miracle cures.

Hi'iaka, daughter of Haumea and Kane, was conceived in Polynesia. Pelé transported her to Hawaii, carrying Hi'iaka carefully in the form of an egg. Her full name is *Hi iaka-i-ka-poli-o-Pele*, "Hi'iaka Cradled in Pelé's

Bosom.” Hi’iaka was Pelé's favorite sister. (An alternative myth suggests that Hi’iaka is really Pelé's secret child.)

Pelé treated Hi’iaka as her most trusted servant, but eventually Hi’iaka asserted her independence. Hi’iaka is the presiding goddess of the Hawaiian Islands and among the spirits presiding over hula.

**Manifestation:** A beautiful, graceful dancer

**Color:** Red

**Sacred plants:** ‘Ohi’a lehua tree (*Metrosideros macropus*); pala’a or lace fern (*Sphenomeria chinensis*)

**See also:** *Haumea; Kane; Kapo; Laka; Pelé*

### **Hidden Company**

*Hidden Company* is the name given the discarnate spirits of witches and occult masters serving as spirit guides. They are not dissimilar in function from the Ascended Masters of Theosophy but their orientation and origins are different. The Hidden Company guides and protects those who pursue visionary and magical paths. They are fonts of spiritual and occult wisdom. Members of the Hidden Company may be channeled by mediums or contacted via divination. They also appear in dreams and visions. Because occultists were persecuted and exterminated for millennia, the membership of the Hidden Company is legion. Masters of their field, many can reveal information regarding suppressed or destroyed spiritual traditions and magical arts.

**See also:** *Ascended Masters; Caboclos; Great White Brotherhood*

### **Hidden Masters of Wisdom**

**See:** *Ascended Masters*

### **Hina**

**Origin:** Polynesia

Hina is the moon. She has countless aspects, but her lunar connection remains consistent. Allegedly when the moon is full and shining, you can see Hina sitting on its surface making tapa cloth from the branches of the lunar banyan tree. Hina rules the procreative powers of women.

Hina is the subject of complex, mythic cycles. There are multiple Hinas or aspects of Hina who may or may not all be one. Hina is the first woman. She is the guardian of the land of the dead. Hina dispenses both life and death.

The different aspects of Hina include:

- *Hina-Hau-One*: “The Earth-Formed Girl,” the very first woman, created by Kane from red beach sand
- *Hina-Titama*: “Dawn Maiden,” first child of Hina-Hau-One and Kane
- *Hina-Nui-Te-Po*: “Great Goddess of Darkness
- *Hina of the Scented Herbs*, who is invoked by firewalkers during fertility rituals
- *Hina Lau Limu Mala*: mermaid Hina, most gorgeous of all mermaids, who lives on the sea floor
- *Hina-the-Canoe-Pilot*: who sailed off around the world with her brother; once, during a full moon, she visited the moon and liked it so much that she stayed, evolving into:
- *Hina the Watchwoman*: guardian of travelers

**Favored people:** Hina is the matron of all artisans, especially those who create crafts traditionally associated with women; she is the matron of women in childbirth and guardian of the dead. Hina is also the matron of traditional healers (*kahuna*) who specialize in medicines derived from the sea.

**Manifestations:** Woman, mermaid, coral reef

**Spirit ally:** Ku

**Trees:** Banyan, breadfruit tree

**Plant:** Sweet potato

**Creature:** Anae (mullet), dogs

**Bird:** Mud hen

**Tree:** ‘Ohi’a lehua (*Metrosideros macropus*)

**Offerings:** Lei made from ‘ohi’a lehua flowers.

**See also:** *Haumea; Kane; Ku*

## Ho Hsien-Ko

### *Ho, the Fairy Lady*

**Also known as:** Ho Sin-Ko; Hosinko

Ho Hsien-Ko, one of the Eight Immortals, was a seventh-century CE shopkeeper’s daughter from Hunan. She was born with six golden hairs marking her as a unique and blessed child. When she was a little girl, she met what is described as “an eccentric” who gave her a magical peach. She ate it and was never hungry again, nor did she require food. Furthermore, she developed clairvoyant powers and was able to reveal people’s fortunes. A shrine was built for her, and Ho Hsien-Ko was worshipped as a living goddess.

When she was about fourteen years old, a Fairy appeared in her dream and showed her how to eat Cloud Mother Powder, made of moonbeams and powdered mother-of-pearl, a diet alleged to produce immortality. The dream was so vivid that Ho Hsien-Ko followed the Fairy’s directions. She discovered that she could fly. She wandered the hills alone, flying up into the mountains to gather fruits, mushrooms, and other treats for her parents. Once she got lost in the woods where she was threatened by a demon, but Lu Tungpin arrived with his magical sword to rescue her. Her parents loathed her wandering ways and strange behavior. A marriage was arranged for her, but on her wedding night, only a poem and her shoes could be found. Ho Hsien-Ko had disappeared.

Eventually a Taoist monk came to her parent’s house requesting her shoes, and her parents learned that she was in residence in a monastery. She had stopped eating entirely and spoke so profoundly no one could

understand her. News of this strange young adept traveled to the royal court. Ho Hsien-Ko was summoned to the court of Empress Wu (625–705 CE). She began the journey with the palace guards sent to escort her (to ensure her arrival), but Ho Hsien-Ko disappeared en route, vanishing from the middle of the road, right before their eyes.

She reemerged as one of the Eight Immortals and has periodically been encountered in different times and places, sometimes in company with the goddess Ma Gu.

- Ho Hsien-Ko is invoked to assist with domestic issues.
- She is the matron of those who sometimes long to disappear.

**Attributes:** Lotus, fly whisk, basket filled with herbs and wild fruits, large bamboo ladle containing peaches and mushrooms of immortality

**See also:** *Bao Gu; Eight Immortals; Lu Tungpin; Ma Gu*

## Hokhma

**Also known as:** Hochma; Chochma

**Origin:** Jewish

Hokhma, which literally means “wisdom,” names a sephira (rung) on the Kabbalistic Tree of Life. It is also the name of a sacred being who may be a goddess or the feminine aspect of the

Creator who encompasses male and female. In some contexts she is regarded as God’s wife, although whether this is meant literally or in an abstract, esoteric sense is subject to debate.

Various biblical references to “wisdom” may be interpreted as the abstract concept of wisdom or may be a feminine name. Thus, “the Lord by Wisdom founded the Earth” (Proverbs 3:19) and especially Proverbs 8, “Wisdom’s Call,” may indicate the existence of a sacred being named Wisdom (*Hokhma* in Hebrew; *Sophia* in Greek). A huge philosophical argument erupted regarding whether Hokhma was an independent being or an aspect of God.

Hokhma, an independent being, plays a significant role in Jewish Gnosticism: she is a partner in Creation. In one version, God and



Hokhma together created the seven archons out of chaos. The Archons formed people who crawled about Earth like worms until Hokhma endowed them with souls and wisdom. When things went badly on Earth, it was Hokhma who sent the flood. In attempts to serve (and save) humanity, Hokhma sent seven prophets beginning with Moses and ending with Ezra.

Hokhma may or may not be the same spirit as the Shekhina, Asherah, or Anat-Yaho. Biblical references to Hokhma are consistently female. However, the Kabbalists identify Hokhma as a male sephira on the Tree of Life. Even though Hebrew has masculine and feminine forms of words and Hokhma is clearly feminine, this sephira is conventionally classified as a male sphere of power. (Conspiracy theorists perceive this as deliberate obfuscation.)

**Favored people:** Adepts, sages, scholars, pursuers of truth and wisdom

**Number:** 7

**See also:** *Anat-Yaho; Asherah of the Sea, Lady; Shekhina; Sophia*

## **Holler**

*Holder of the Oath Ring; The Silent One*

**Also known as:** Oiler; Ull; Uller; Ullr; Vuldor

**Origin:** Norse

Holler is the Lord of Frost and King of Winter. He is a particularly primordial Norse deity, a mysterious, shadowy spirit. It's unclear exactly where he sits on the Aesir/Vanir spectrum. Holler may be the son of Sif, the Golden-Tressed One. His father, if any, is unknown, although some suggest that he is of Frost Giant descent. Holler's name may be related to "glory." He seems to have been venerated throughout Scandinavia, the Germanic lands, and the British Isles. According to some myths, when Odin goes wandering, he leaves Holler in charge of Asgard.

Holler is a master archer and hunter and a brilliant skier. Holler skis through the heavens, leaving stars in his wake. He controls the Aurora

Borealis. Holler is the lord of justice and dueling. Allegedly invoking his name before a duel brings good luck. When he's not zipping over the snow on his skis, Holler travels in a ship made from bone.

Holler the Hunter has associations with death. His sacred tree, the yew, is a funerary tree, found in graveyards, not least because of its poisonous berries. Holler may have hunted with poisoned arrows. He may be married to Hulda, weather goddess of birth and death. Like her, he is now associated with the Wild Hunt. Post-Christianity, many of his functions seem to have been transferred to Saint Hubert.

**Favored people:** Holler likes the ladies. Skiers love Holler, and he seems to love them right back.

**Rune:** Ihwaz

**Tree:** Yew. (Holler's home is Ydalir, Yew Tree Valley.)

**See also:** *Aesir; Hulda; Jotun; Odin; Sif; Vanir; Wild Hunt*

## Hone-Onna

*Bone Woman; Skeleton Woman*

**Classification:** Yokai; Obake; Vampire

**Origin:** Japan

Men see a beautiful, alluringly dressed woman provocatively walking the streets and assume that she is a streetwalker. In fact, she is not averse to a sexual relationship and may even initiate the tryst. She doesn't want money, though. What Hone-Onna seeks are lives. She is, in fact, *not* a prostitute nor is her beauty real. It is an illusion, a magical glamour that she is able to cast in order to veil her true identity. Hone-Onna is really an animated skeleton dressed in sexy clothes. She is a vampire but not the bloodsucking kind. Hone-Onna drains men of their vital life essence during sex, leaving them desperately weakened, ill or even dead.

Maintaining the illusion of herself as a flesh-covered beauty may tire her. Once the man has been entrapped or after sex is over, Hone-Onna

usually abandons the illusion, allowing her true skeletal form to show.

Hone-Onna is a creature of the Yin world, the world of ghosts. She craves yang energy, absorbed via sexual intercourse with men. She is not otherwise aggressive, although she can be scary. Hone-Onna may chase away those who do not serve her purposes such as women or men already in a weakened state by allowing her true form to be seen. Generally, people freak out and flee, allowing Hone-Onna to hunt for more desirable victims.

Once engaged in sex with her, there is little one can do to protect oneself. The best course is avoidance. (Hone-Onna solicits and seduces but she does not rape. Her victims are initially willing.) Stories of Hone-Onna are used as cautionary tales to encourage young men to avoid prostitutes or at least unfamiliar ones.

Hone-Onna is among the Yokai portrayed by 18<sup>th</sup> century artist Toriyama Sekien. She is a major and sympathetic character in the 21<sup>st</sup> century Japanese anime *Hell Girl*, which creates a mythos for her. Originally an abused, exploited, and finally murdered woman, *Hell Girl's* Hone-Onna becomes a vampiric Yokai en route to becoming a sometimes compassionate spirit of justice and vengeance.

**Manifestations:** Hone-Onna may temporarily appear as a beautiful woman but eventually reveals herself as a skeleton instead. Alternatively, parts of her body may retain the guise of living flesh while other parts appear cadaverous with visible bones and rotting flesh.

**See also:** *Aisba Qandisba; Diablesse; Harionna; Hel; Hsi Wang Mu; Huli-Jing; Kuchisuke-Onna; Obake; Vampire; Wanyudo; Yokai; Yuki Onna*

## Horae

### *The Hours*

**Also known as:** Horai

The Horae are the joyous goddesses of the seasons. Daughters of Zeus and Themis, they are spirits of abundance. The Horae organized the seasons and devised the earliest calendar, establishing the length of

months, weeks, days, minutes, and hours. They are the goddesses of the correct moment, spirits of perfect timing.

They are the truthful ones who guard the gates of Olympus. Although described as the daughters of Zeus, legends suggest that they were the ones who raised Hera. (It's been theorized that they were originally only Themis' possibly parthogenic daughters. Later, when paternity became significant, Zeus was incorporated into the myth.)

In their earliest manifestations, there were only two or three Horae. (Some regions recognized two; others three.) Eventually, however, more joined them until there were twelve Horae. They are closely allied with Hera, Aphrodite, and Dionysus:

- The Horae open the gates of the sky for Hera.
- Hera can allegedly be contacted via the Horae. Contact them first and request that they intercede.
- The Horae are among those who greeted and clothed Aphrodite when she rose from the sea.
- They dance in the entourage of Dionysus.
- The Horae are Dionysus' partners in viniculture, responsible for the ripening of grapes.

The blessings of the Horae are invoked on brides, weddings, and children.

**Manifestation:** The Horae are beautiful, flower-bedecked, youthful dancing women.

**See also:** *Aphrodite; Dionysus; Hera; Olympian Spirits; Persephone; Polyboea; Themis; Zeus*

## **Horus**

### *The Enchanted One*

**Also known as:** Haroeris; Haru-Er

**Origin:** Egypt

Horus, son of Isis and Osiris, embodies multiple archetypes:

- He is the prophesied savior.
- He is the Divine Child, whose safety must be ensured at all cost.
- He is the crowned, conquering child hero.
- He is the heroic warrior who battles for his birthright.
- He is the wise, just ruler.

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*By the Fifth Dynasty, if not before, Egyptians were producing white and red wines known as the Left and Right Eyes of Horus, respectively.*

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Horus is a solar spirit from the Nile Delta worshipped in the form of a falcon. The sun and moon are his eyes. His name derives from a root word indicating “shiny-faced”: he is a warrior spirit of light. Horus serves as intermediary between people and spirits. He leads souls into the presence of his father, Osiris, Lord of Death. Although Horus has wives, he rules alongside his mother, Isis. Horus may be invoked to intercede with his mother or vice versa.

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*The image of Horus in his mother’s arms or nursing from her breast may be the prototype for the beloved image of Madonna and Child. Horus is often depicted dominating or killing serpents, crocodiles, and hippopotami, animals sacred to his rival and nemesis, Set. An image of Horus on horseback spearing Set may be the prototype for the image of Saint George and the dragon.*

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That’s the myth. Scholars have other theories. Horus may be a primordial deity who, alongside Hathor, Thoth, and Ammon, ranks among the eldest of Egyptian deities, older than his “parents,” Osiris and Isis. Vestiges of ancient myths suggest that he was self-created. The

name “Horus” has also become a general term for Egypt’s many falcon deities. They have become so intermingled that it’s difficult to disentangle their myths leading to further confusion regarding the “true” Horus.

**Iconography:** Horus is depicted in many forms:

- A falcon
- A child wearing the sidelock of youth
- A baby in Isis’ arms
- A virile, falcon-headed man

**Tree:** Acacia

**Birds:** Falcon, hawk

**Offerings:** Famed Egyptologist Omm Sety is described as leaving raw meat for hawks and falcons as a method of making offerings to Horus.

**See also:** *Ammon; Harpokrates; Hatbor; Isis; Osiris; Set; Thoth*

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*The image of the Eye of Horus is worn, carried, or tattooed as a protective amulet against danger.*

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## **Horus the Elder**

**Also known as:** Haroeris; Haru-Er

**Origin:** Egypt

Horus the Elder may or may not be the same spirit as Horus, son of Isis. He may be the oldest form of Horus. This Horus is described as the brother of Osiris, Set, Nephthys, and Isis, the fifth wheel among those two married couples. Horus the Elder is the husband of Hathor (and sometimes her son, too). He was the patron deity of Upper Egypt (southern Egypt). He is the archetypal king. The sun and moon are his eyes.

**See also:** *Hatbor; Horus; Isis; Nephthys; Osiris; Set*

## **Hosogami**

**Origin:** Japan

**Classification:** Kami

Hosogami are smallpox spirits. (*Hoso* is smallpox in Japanese.) For safe recovery to health, the Hosogami must be soothed, propitiated, and sent on their way. Hosogami are pleased to see the color red. Physicians were glad to see the color red, too:

- Purple smallpox rashes indicate the illness is in a dangerous stage.
- If and when rashes turn red, the patient is expected to recover.

The person suffering from smallpox and those caring for him dressed in red to appease the Hosogami. In addition, “red prints” or *hoso-e* prints, paper wall amulets were posted at the first hint of smallpox to propitiate, avoid, and/or banish the illness. They’re called “red” because that’s the primary color of these prints. If no print is available, red banners may suffice. Following the patient’s recovery, these prints were traditionally ritually burned or floated down rivers to signal the departure of the spirit. Extremely few survive and these are now extremely valuable collector’s items.

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*Daruma and Shoki possess the power to expel Hosogami and are among the spirits portrayed on red smallpox talismans.*

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**Color:** Red

**Offerings:** Rice with red adzuki beans

**See also:** *Daruma; Kami; Shoki*

## Hotei

**Also known as:** Ho Tei; Hoteison

Hotei is one of the Shichi Fukujin, Japan's Seven Spirits of Good Luck. Hotei is the spirit of wealth, joy, and contentment. (Sometimes he is the spirit of being content with what you have; other times he is the distributor of extra luck and wealth.) People love him because he has the reputation of being an exceptionally generous provider, but Hotei represents more than just material wealth: he is the spirit of the joy of life; the many treasures that can't be counted or quantified.

Hotei epitomizes the phrase "fat and happy." His joy is infectious. Hotei is envisioned as a Chinese Buddhist priest and may be based on an actual historic Zen master who lived in China sometime between the sixth and tenth centuries CE. After death, he was venerated as the Lord of Good Fortune. A laughing, fat, bald man, his images are often mistaken for those of Buddha. References to the "Laughing Buddha" may actually indicate Hotei.

**Favored people:** Fortunetellers, diviners, bartenders

**Manifestations:** Hotei is a merry, laughing fat man with a big belly carrying an equally big bag of rice. He has very long ears: the better to hear your petitions with but also indicative of his wealth. Heavy valuable earrings have stretched out his lobes. Hotei is surrounded by lots of happy, laughing children. (He's a fertility deity, too.)

**Iconography:** Rub the fat belly of Hotei's statue for good luck, prosperity, and wealth.

**Attributes:** He holds a fan in one hand and a big, full bag in the other.

**Mount:** Hotei rides in a cart pulled by happy, healthy, rambunctious children. (Pulling his cart is not a chore: they're having fun and so is he.)

**See also:** *Buddha; Buddha, Laughing; Shichi Fukujin*

**Hsi Wang Mu**



*Queen Mother of the West; The Western Mother; Golden Mother of the Shining Lake; The Tiger Lady; The Amah of Tortoise Mountain; Queen of the Western Paradise*

**Also known as:** Xi Wang Mu; Seiobo (Japan)

Hsi Wang Mu, the Western Mother, may be the most ancient surviving Chinese goddess. The reference to her as “Mother” indicates her stature, not necessarily her nature. Hsi Wang Mu is *not* particularly maternal. She is not a “mother goddess,” nor is she a sex or love goddess but a spirit of supreme female authority. Hsi Wang Mu epitomizes Yin. She is Ultimate Yin: the very essence of female power.

Her associations with the West are no coincidence: in China, west, the wild frontier, is the direction of Paradise, mysticism, mystery, and danger. Hsi Wang Mu is a goddess of alchemy, shamanism, magic, and esoteric, hard-won wisdom. The creatures with which she is closely associated (tigers, magpies, crows, foxes) all have profound associations with magic and sorcery.

Like the alchemist that she is, Hsi Wang Mu has experienced numerous permutations. The earliest documented description of her appears in the book *The Classic of the Mountains and the Seas*, variously dated from the fourth to second centuries BCE: she is a fierce tiger-woman with tiger’s teeth, a leopard’s tail, and a woman’s wild, tangled hair, described as presiding over Catastrophes from the Sky and the Five Destructive Forces.

However, veneration of Hsi Wang Mu may date back at least as far as 1400 BCE. She may originally have been the deified tribal ancestress and shamanic leader of a northwestern tribal people perceived by the Chinese as exceedingly ferocious (that tiger). Evolving into an extremely important shamanic goddess and extending her terrain, the Tiger Lady was adopted into the early Taoist pantheon. (An Eastern Mother once existed, too.)

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*Shamanism was once extremely prominent in China. However, in response to Confucianism, deities associated with shamanism either transformed or were*

*marginalized, essentially left out in the cold.*

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Exceedingly prominent during the early stages of Taoism, especially in northeastern China where she was credited with ending a huge drought in the third century BCE, by the third century CE, Hsi Wang Mu underwent a profound transformation at least partially in response to the rise of Confucianism, which actively ridiculed and attacked shamanism. Her tigress characteristics were shed; Hsi Wang Mu emerged as an elegant, regal queen.

Despite her transformation, she was too strongly associated with shamanism to ever be completely accepted by the new order. Hsi Wang Mu presides over her own paradise in the West, where she is the keeper of the peaches of immortality, fruit that ripens only every three thousand years. She throws a huge party in conjunction with the harvest: all the deities are invited. If they wish to renew their immortality, they must attend.

Hsi Wang Mu remained the highest ranking female deity through the Tang Dynasty (618–917 CE), venerated by men as well as women, but she would eventually be completely eclipsed by Kwan Yin. She remains the highest ranking Taoist female spirit, a role model for Taoist adepts and priestesses. Hsi Wang Mu presides over sacred arts: meditation, visualization, Tantric sexual techniques, alchemy, elixirs, and breathing exercises. Her epithet “Mother of the Golden Tortoise” indicates her associations with ancient tortoiseshell divination. She is a goddess of life, death, rebirth, and eternal life.

Hsi Wang Mu’s paradise is on Mount Kunlun, which Taoism perceives as the world axis (*axis mundi*): the crossroads between Earth and the celestial zones. In her wild tigress days, she lived in a cave but now presides over a magical Fairy court in a palace constructed entirely of jade beside a Turquoise Pond. Her Western Paradise is also an afterlife realm where dead souls reside. “To go attend Hsi Wang Mu” was once a euphemism for death. Funeral banners still read “*See you again at Turquoise Pond!*”

No need to wait for those peaches to ripen. Hsi Wang Mu is a supreme

alchemist: she knows the formulas for the elixir of immortality. She maintains a registry of everyone who has attained immortality.

- Hsi Wang Mu controls and bestows immortality.
- Hsi Wang Mu mediates between people, spirits, and ghosts.
- She arranges sacred marriages between Taoist priestesses and adepts.

Hsi Wang Mu appears in visions and dreams. The Jade Maidens may convey messages for her.

**Favored people:** Alchemists and jade carvers; Hsi Wang Mu is also a matron of women, but especially those who live outside standard family boundaries: adepts, priestesses, fortunetellers, nuns, novices, “singing girls,” courtesans, prostitutes, sexual entertainers, and deadwomen. Although Taoist tradition encourages transmission of wisdom between genders (from male to female to male and so forth), Hsi Wang Mu personally instructs female adepts.

**Manifestations:** A regal, beautiful, powerful queen, Hsi Wang Mu wears yellow damask (in China, the color yellow was once reserved for the highest royalty only) and a diamond seal around her waist. She is described as having a strong voice that resounds when she shouts. She also whistles. She may also manifest as a white tiger or ride one. Hsi Wang Mu often appears accompanied by packs of tigers and leopards.

**Attributes:** Peaches and mushrooms of immortality; whip; diamond seal worn around her waist; double-bladed sword

**Mount:** Hsi Wang Mu rides a carriage of purple clouds drawn by nine-colored dappled Chilin, the mythical animal sometimes described as the Chinese unicorn

**Spirit allies:** Her servants include the Jade Maidens and the moon rabbit; her court is home to a host of beautiful Fairies.

**Animal:** White tiger; leopard; fox, especially nine-tailed fox

**Birds:** Red phoenix; white crane; three bluebirds serve as her messengers and servants; crows; magpies

**Colors:** White, yellow

**Direction:** West

**Sacred site:** Hsi Wang Mu has a small temple on Pu To Shan, Kwan Yin's sacred island. (Pu To Shan was sacred Taoist territory before Kwan Yin's arrival.)

- Since 1980, the turquoise pond before the Taoist temple on sacred Mount T'ai has been called the "Queen Mother's Pond."

**See also:** *Abka Hebe; Bau Gu; Chang'O, Lady; Eight Immortals; Fairy; Fox Spirits; Green Jade Mother; Hone-Onna; Huli-Jing; Jade Maidens; Kumiho; Kwan Yin; Ma Gu; Primal Woman of the Nine Heavens; T'ai Shan, Lady; T'ai Shan, Lord; Tzu Ku*

## Huehecoyotl

*Old, Old Coyote*

**Origin:** Aztec

Huehuecoyotl is a trickster spirit, Aztec lord of dance, music, and carnal delight. He can be a generous patron and is invoked for rescue by those who have incurred the wrath of other spirits. He protects his devotees during battle and other dangers. He can reverse or ameliorate a sad destiny or unfavorable horoscope. However, he is a prankster with a low threshold of boredom. Sometimes he stirs up (serious) trouble just to keep himself entertained.

Huehuecoyotl loves a good party and has been known to throw some himself. Throw a party in his honor with lots of music and dancing to get into his good graces. He may be a trickster, but he's a divine one who also possesses tremendous esoteric knowledge. He signals his displeasure by causing wasting ailments, especially of the genitalia. He may be invoked to heal these ailments, too.

**Favored people:** Artisans; artists; feather workers; dancers; musicians; courtesans; harlots; sex workers; story tellers; women who work fine embroidery and needlework; those people who can keep him consistently entertained

**Manifestation:** Huehuecoyotl has a coyote head atop a man's body.

**Emblem:** Drum

**Number:** 4 (He is the guardian spirit of the fourth day of the month in the Aztec calendar.)

Huitzilopochtli

**Origin:** Aztec

Huitzilopochtli, Lord of War, Spirit of the Sun, and supreme deity of the Aztecs, was the divine child conceived when Coatlique, discovering a beautiful ball of feathers, tucked them into her apron. According to legend, her older children—moon goddess, Coyolxauhqui, and the four hundred Star Brothers (*Centzon Huitznahua*)—emblematic of an earlier pantheon, plotted to kill their mother and her forthcoming child. That's the rationale given for why Huitzilopochtli's very first act at the moment of birth was to decapitate Coyolxauhqui and dismember her.

Huitzilopochtli means "*hummingbird from the left,*" the direction of the realm of spirits in Aztec cosmology. Hummingbirds, although small, were perceived as fearless messengers, little warrior birds, who traveled between different realms.

When the Aztecs conquered Tenochtitlan, they inherited many deities from their predecessors in the region. Huitzilopochtli, however, was their own special deity. According to legend, back when they were still ragged nomads, the Aztecs rested beneath a large tree. Suddenly the tree cracked open and Huitzilopochtli emerged with directions for the Aztecs to set out on their own. He bestowed the name *Mexica* on them, derived from *Mexi*, one of Huitzilopochtli's secret titles. (*Aztec* derives from *Aztlan*, their mysterious point of origin.) It is a pivotal moment of national identity: the emergence of a nation. The other tribes with whom they had shared their migrations were left behind with Huitzilopochtli's sister, Malinalxochitl.

Huitzilopochtli vowed to lead the Mexica to a promised land. He led them to Coatepec Mountain near Tula, ancient capital of the Toltecs, where he was miraculously born to Coatlique. The Aztecs celebrated a New Fire Ceremony there in 1163, approximately the time Toltecs mysteriously abandoned the site approximately forty miles northwest of

modern Mexico City. Scholars speculate that the presence of the Mexica may have contributed to that abandonment.

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*Huitzilopochtli is the lord of literal warfare but also metaphork: he is the patron of those who fight personal and emotional battles, too.*

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The Mexica spent the twelfth and thirteenth centuries wandering until, in 1345, Huitzilopochtli led them to Tenochtitlan, now known as Mexico City. The need to provide Huitzilopochtli with human sacrifices fueled the Aztec propensity for warfare. As many as twenty thousand were sacrificed when the Great Temple of Tenochtitlan was dedicated to Huitzilopochtli. Human sacrifices were flung down the steps of his pyramid-temple, each one replicating the fall of his sister, Coyolxauhqui. (An image of her decapitated, dismembered body lay at the base of the pyramid.)

**Manifestation:** Huitzilopochtli wears a helmet shaped like a giant blue-green hummingbird. He wears a belt of golden snakes. There is a black mask dotted with stars around his eyes, and blue and yellow stripes painted onto his face. Huitzilopochtli was born with a lame, withered left leg or possibly with the left leg in the form of a serpent. Aztec warriors were trained to advance with the right foot and retreat with the left, and so Huitzilopochtli is incapable of retreat.

**Iconography:** Images of Huitzilopochtli were traditionally rendered in wood, not stone. Very few survive. His primary votive image was smuggled out of Tenochtitlan and hidden in 1519 by Montezuma's son along with images of Quetzalcoatl and Tezcatlipoca.

Devotees consumed images of Huitzilopochtli formed from ground amaranth and honey. The ritual reminded the Spanish of the Christian sacrament, and so cultivation of amaranth, an extremely nutritious grain, was forbidden for centuries.

**Attributes:** Dart, shield, fire serpent

**Planet:** Sun

**Metal:** Gold

**Realm:** Huitzilopochtli presides over *Tonatiuhcan*, House of the Sun, a realm of light, warmth, and love, home to souls of warriors who died in battle. They accompany the sun across the sky from dawn until noon.

**Sacred day:** The Winter Solstice, his birthday

**Colors:** Turquoise blue, black

**Birds:** Hummingbird, quail

**Animal:** Snake

**Flowers:** Amaranth, nagvioli flowers

**Offerings:** Serpent dances were performed for him.

**See also:** *Cbantico; Coatlique; Coyolxauhqui; Guadalupe; Malinalxochitl; Quetzalcoatl; Tezcatlipoca*

## Hulda

**Also known as:** Mother Holle; Frau Holle; Hulde

**Origin:** Teutonic

Hulda, a great and ancient goddess of birth and death, presides over a transit station for human souls, a crossroads between life and death. Hulda receives the souls of the newly dead into her realm and releases newborns to live new lives on Earth. Hulda bathes at midday in a fountain from which babies emerge, a well of life.

She was no unknown spirit but a prominent Northern European goddess. Holland is her namesake. Her name may be related to “holy.” Hulda lives in mountain caves and among elder trees, portals to her realm. Her realm may also be accessed via wells. She is sometimes witnessed walking alongside rivers or mountain paths, alone or accompanied by an entourage of rabbits and Fairies. She may be the Queen of the Elves.

Hulda is a weather spirit. When she shakes her feather bed, it snows on Earth. Rain falls from her laundry rinse water. Fog hovering over a mountain may be smoke from Hulda's fire. She guards and nurtures all the growing things of the forest. She was a culture-goddess, too, credited with introducing flax to Europe and teaching the art of making linen.

Banished after official conversion to Christianity, people were forbidden to venerate or contact Hulda. (Those maintaining that practice were branded witches.) Hulda was reclassified as a demon witch-goddess who attacked and harmed children.

She retains dominion over Pagan babies. People were urged to baptize their babies lest they end up in Hulda's realm. Mother Holle, once so benevolent, was transformed into a monster. People warned their children that if they weren't obedient, Hulda would "get" them.

Vestiges of rituals invoking Hulda's blessings on baby girls were retained by Ashkenazi Jews (the *Hollekreisch*), whether because Pagan women found discreet safety in that community rather than convert to Christianity or because Jews perceived Hulda's resemblance to Lilith. (Although the rituals survive, many would be shocked and horrified to realize that they invoke a Pagan goddess.)

Like Lilith, Hulda is not always so benevolent these days. She is a proud and resolutely Pagan spirit with little patience for hypocrites. Hulda can bestow fertility but she can take it away, too. She has power over storms, raising them as well as soothing them. She can be ambivalent toward people as demonstrated by *Mother Holle*, the Brothers Grimm fairy tale in which she stars. The theme involves young girls who wander into Hulda's domain, either inadvertently or deliberately in anticipation of a reward. She rewards the girl who respects her and follows her commands with effort and devotion but causes excrement to rain down upon the lazy, disrespectful girl.

**Manifestations:** A radiantly beautiful blond woman or a fierce old crone. In her guise as Queen of Witches, she has disheveled hair and a wild look. She may also manifest as a woman when seen from the front but a tree from behind. She may be accompanied by an entourage of torch-bearing rabbits who light her way.



**Realms:** The sky, underground, mountains, wells

**Constellation:** The Milky Way is the street she travels.

**Spirit ally:** Odin with whom she sometimes leads the Wild Hunt

**Elements:** Earth, air, water

**Plants:** Holly, elder, juniper, mugwort, flax; Sorcerer's Violet (*Vinca major*), sometimes called *Frau Holle*

**Sacred animals:** Wolves, rabbits

**Color:** White, blue

**Time:** The Winter Solstice is Hulda's feast day. The twelve days between 25 December and 6 January are sacred to her.

**Offerings:** She loves music and dancing.

**See also:** *Befana; Berchta; Elf; Freyr; Herta; Holler; Hulden; Lilith; Odin; Waldmichen*

## Hulden

**Origin:** Teutonic

The Hulden are German hill Fairies led by Hulda and serving as her entourage. Their fortunes have risen and fallen with hers. Once upon a time, they were considered beautiful, volatile, but potentially generous dancing spirits. Post-Christianity they were reclassified as malevolent female demons, the proverbial wicked Fairies. This may be propaganda intended to discourage contact and veneration. Hulden should always be addressed respectfully. They can be helpful and friendly but have a tendency to be temperamental. They can be punitive spirits, as well.

**See also:** *Demon; Fairy; Hulda; Vila*

## Huli Jing

**Origin:** China

Huli Jing are Chinese fox Fairies. The term literally means “exquisite fox”: they transform into beautiful, seductive young women and engage in relationships with men. They are sexy spirits and may just be out for some fun, but once upon a time, Huli Jing engaged in sacred marriages with Taoist adepts. Sex and occult knowledge were inseparably intertwined. During China’s shamanic era and the earliest days of Taoism, this was understood as a path to esoteric wisdom; however, as society became more conservative, and especially in response to Confucianism, Fox Fairies received ever-worsening press.

Huli Jing are perceived as vampiric spirits. They’re not bloodsuckers; instead they sap a man’s life-force—his essence and aura—through sex and orgasm. The relationship begins ecstatically but the man eventually wastes away, his energy totally depleted while the energized Fox Fairy seeks more lovers to vampirize. This may be propaganda intended to discourage men from sacred spirit marriages. Alternatively, the Huli Jing resent their bad press and have decided to live up to it.

Fox Fairies are shape-shifting spirits, supreme transformation artists. They can take on the form of a dead person familiar to their target and thus ingratiate themselves or cause severe emotional trauma. They demonstrate anger and displeasure by causing insanity, especially mental illness that manifests over generations in one family.

The Huli Jing are independent spirits, brilliant adepts. Sometimes they serve as karmic avengers. When not wandering Earth looking for fun or mischief, many make their home in Hsi Wang Mu’s Western Paradise. They do not become sorcerer’s servants like their Japanese compatriots. In modern Chinese, occult associations have been shed: *Huli Jing* may be translated as “gold-digger” or “slut.”

**See also:** *Fox Spirits; Hone-Onna; Hsi Wang Mu; Jade Maidens; Kumiho; Lady White; Neko Mata*

## Hutash

**Origin:** Chumash

Hutash, powerful deity, lived alone on Limuw Island, off the coast of California, now Santa Cruz Island. She was lonely; her husband, the Sky

Snake, lived in the sky and so she decided to create people in her own image, forming them from magic seeds. Hutash took good care of her people, the Chumash, teaching them skills and providing for them. They flourished, multiplied, and eventually Limuw became crowded and noisy, so noisy that Hutash couldn't sleep and was irritated. She decided that some of the people must move to the California mainland. Hutash created a very high, very long rainbow bridge on which the Chumash could walk from the tallest point on Limuw to a tall mountain near what is now Carpinteria. Some made the journey with ease, but others, looking down, became disoriented and dizzy and fell. Hutash did not want them to drown. She felt responsible: she had advised the journey and provided the bridge, and so she transformed those who fell into dolphins.

*The Rainbow Bridge by Audrey Wood (Voyager Books, 1995) is a lavishly illustrated retelling of this Chumash creation myth.*

**Sacred time:** An almost week-long annual festival honoring Hutash is scheduled after the autumn harvest.

**Sacred animal:** Dolphin

**Origin:** Tibet

**Classification:** Arhat

Hvashang is one of the two Tibetan additions to the traditional list of sixteen Arhats. He is usually considered the eighteenth Arhat. (Dharmatala is number seventeen.)

Hvashang serves and supports the sixteen Arhats. Unlike them, he was a layperson, not a Buddhist monk. Hvashang is a rotund, cheerful, good-natured spirit often depicted surrounded with children. His image is among those mistaken for the Laughing Buddha.

**See also:** *Arbat; Buddha; Dharmatala; Hotei*

## Hyacinth

**Origin:** Greece

Hyacinth is divine patron of gay lovers. Hyacinth is described as the youngest and most beautiful son of a Spartan king. Both Apollo and Zephyr fell in love with him, but Hyacinth chose Apollo. (The Muse Erato lusted and competed for Hyacinth, too.) Zephyr came upon the two playing a game of discus and in a blindingly jealous rage killed Hyacinth. Grief-stricken Apollo caused a plant to spring from Hyacinth's spilled blood. This plant may or may not be the modern flower known as hyacinth, although it was called "hyacinthos." Hyacinth was arrested at an eternally youthful stage. He is a spirit of joy, vigor, Earth's agricultural abundance, and musical skill.

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*The hyacinthos plant was used to delay male puberty, prolonging adolescence. It was a favorite of Greek slave traders, as adolescent hoys were particularly valuable and brought a high price.*

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In life, Apollo tutored Hyacinth in sports, divination, and music. In death, Hyacinth transmitted this wisdom to people. He is the conduit to Apollo's knowledge. A large statue of Apollo stood before Hyacinth's tomb. The two deities are venerated together. At the annual Hyacinthus festival honoring Hyacinth as a deity, he naturally received the first offerings. The next offerings were made to Apollo. His festival was not exclusively male: girls and women also played significant roles. Hyacinth is also venerated alongside his sister, Polyboea.

**Favored people:** Gay lovers seeking happy romance, musicians

**Attribute:** A musical instrument: lyre or cithara

**Offerings:** Fruits, vegetables, flowers, cooked pork, and fava beans

**See also:** *Apollo; Harpies; Muse; Polyboea; Zephyr*

**Hybla**

**Also known as:** Ibla

**Origin:** Sicily

Hybla is an indigenous Sicilian spirit, a primordial goddess of the Siculi, the people for whom Sicily is named. She is a goddess of abundance and fertility associated with mud volcanoes and mineral springs. Earthquakes and volcanic activity were understood to indicate Earth's fertility: her contractions and labor pains. Hybla's shrines were centers of divination and dream interpretation. Her priests were considered especially skilled dream interpreters. Sicilian women's mourning societies, banned by early Christians, are believed to have derived from Hybla's rites. Greek colonists identified Hybla with Hera. The Sicilian city of Ragusa was once called Hybla Heraia. Lower Ragusa is still known as Ragusa Ibla.

**Iconography:** Hybla's image, often veiled, appears on many Sicilian coins.

**Sacred plant:** Thyme

**Sacred creature:** Bee

**Sacred sites:** Various sites in Sicily were named for Hybla: Hybla Major, Hybla Minor,

Hybla Gereatis on the slopes of Mount Etna, and Hybla Heraia.

- Hybla's temple on Mount Etna reputedly contained a portal to the Underworld.
- The Hyblaeen Mountains of southern Sicily are named in her honor.

**Offerings:** Honey, thermal mud, mineral water

**See also:** *Aetna; Gaia; Hera*

## Hydra

*The Gate Keeper*

**Origin:** Greece

Hydra was the daughter of Echidna and Typhon and Hera's beloved foster child. She lived at the sevenfold source of the River Amymone and haunts the neighboring swamps of Lerna. It was Hydra's job to guard the gates to Hades accessed through the waters of Lerna.

Hydra has the torso of a canine with nine or more heads resembling snakes. One head is immortal. Her blood is poison. Heracles' second labor was to kill Hydra. It's unclear exactly why Hydra was a target, but Hera, perceiving her as vulnerable, had posted a crab to guard the gate guardian.

When Heracles knocked off one of Hydra's heads with his club, two more appeared in its place. The crab attempted to save Hydra by attacking Heracles' foot but Heracles stomped on it, crushing the crab. Heracles needed help to destroy Hydra: he had his assistant—his nephew, Iolaus—burn the necks of each head as Heracles lopped them off. The immortal head was buried far from her body. Heracles dipped his arrows in Hydra's poison blood so that any wounds they caused would be fatal.

Hera placed the crab in the sky as the constellation Cancer. Hydra was placed in the sky as a constellation, too. With her body in the sky and her immortal head secretly hidden in Earth, she survives. Her guardian powers can still be accessed.

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*The Whore of Babylon in the Book of Revelation is envisioned riding a seven-headed beast. Although the number of heads doesn't exactly correspond, Hydra became associated with the Whore and hence the Anti-Christ and the Apocalypse.*

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**Spirit ally:** Hydra may be venerated alongside Hera.

**Offerings:** Once upon a time, lambs intended for Hydra were cast into the waters of Lerna by those seeking to pass through the gates to Hades. Don't bother replicating the sacrifice: the gates at Lerna were not considered metaphoric. There was an actual, literal opening to the

Underworld. The sacred lake was drained and has vanished, as has the portal. However, images of lambs offered on an altar may suffice to contact, propitiate, and reward her.

**See also:** *Amymone; Echidna; Hades; Hera; Heracles*

## Hygeia

Hygeia is the goddess of good health and healing. She protects against all potential dangers to health. The word *hygiene* derives from her name. She is the daughter of divine healer Asklepios and may be venerated alongside her father. A theory exists that Asklepios' family is cobbled together of various independent healing deities, who were then worshipped together as a mini-pantheon. Although Hygeia is worshipped alongside her father, she is not particularly subordinate. (The Orphics claimed she was his wife.) She is a goddess in her own right who works *with* Asklepios. She may also be venerated independently. First venerated at least as early as the seventh century BCE, Hygeia's primary shrines included those at Epidaurus, Cos, Corinth, and Pergamon.

**Iconography:** Her statues were created by the most renowned sculptors of the time. Statues depict her standing alone, with her father or her whole family (mother and siblings, too). Hygeia is traditionally envisioned as a beautiful young woman feeding a large snake entwined around her, often from a vessel held in her hand.

**Sacred animal:** Snake

**Offerings:** People traditionally offered their hair to Hygeia in her shrines, attaching it to her statues. Clothing or fabric was apparently attached, too.

**See also:** *Asklepios; Fauna; Sara la-Kali; Telesforos*

## Hyotoko

*The Fire Man; The Whistler*

**Also known as:** Hiotoko, Usoboki

**Origin:** Japan

**Classification:** Kami

Hyotoko is the name of a spirit and the mask used to represent him. The very recognizable mask depicts a man with a contorted face. His mouth may be pursed as if whistling or permanently grimacing on one side of his face.

Hyotoko is a kami of the hearth and oven. His grimacing face is caught in the act of blowing on coals to start or encourage a fire. Someone in the world always needs a fire and so Hyotoko is always blowing. He is a human bellows. Hyotoko's companion is Okame. Together, they protect homes and domestic happiness. Hang his mask near the stove or hearth for protection, fire safety, and good luck.

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*The ritual dance incorporating Hyotoko's mask has been performed for at least nine hundred years.*

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**Manifestation:** Hyotoko appears as a man of humble, plain appearance with furrowed brow, puffy cheeks, and bulgy eyes. His mouth is pursed or contorted to one side or both. He is often in the company of Okame.

**Attribute:** The bamboo tube through which he blows to ignite or stimulate fire

**See also:** *Kami; Okame*

**Origin:** Greek

Hypnos, Lord of Sleep, is among the children of Nyx, Goddess of Night. He causes sleep by touching someone with his magic wand or fanning them with his wings. Hypnos lives an insomniac's dream: a dark cave where the sun doesn't shine and the light can't waken him. Beautiful opium poppies grow by the cave's entrance. He sleeps in an exceedingly comfortable feather bed surrounded by black curtains to



further block the light. His son/brother/servant, Morpheus, Lord of Dreams, makes sure that no one and no noise disturbs Hypnos' slumber.

Hypnos lives with his twin brother and close companion, Thanatos, Lord of Death. The two often work together. Hypnos is perceived as the more tender-hearted, sympathetic of the brothers. One may appeal to Thanatos through him. Hypnos is served by the Oneiroi, his sons and/or brothers, Spirits of Dreams.

Insomniacs—those who wish to sleep but cannot—can invoke Hypnos' aid.

**Manifestation:** A dark-winged man or a night bird

**Iconography:** He is usually envisioned as a naked, youthful man. Images of Hypnos were once popular cemetery monuments and gravestone motifs.

**Altar:** Anything that disturbs sleep disturbs Hypnos: bright light, noise, and so forth. Keep his altar in a dark, quiet, restful place: a closet, if need be.

**Sacred plant:** Opium poppies (*Papaver somniferum*)

**Offers:** Sleep-inducing incense, flowers, warm milk, anything that evokes sleep

**See also:** *Morpheus; Nyx; Oneiroi; Somnus; Thanatos*

# I

## Iara

*Mother of the Waters; Ruler of the Waters*

**Also known as:** Yara; Vira; Mae d'Agua

**Origin:** Brazil (Tupi)

The Iara are spirits of the Amazon River. Their name may derive from a Tupi word meaning “Ruler of the Waters.” The Iara most typically manifests as a beautiful woman sitting on a big rock by the river, singing and seductively combing her long hair. Her voice is irresistible. Iara are flirtatious. Men are smitten and feel compelled to abandon everything and anyone in order to join the Iara, possibly with fatal results. Iara epitomizes the magnetically irresistible and charismatic and is a popular name for Brazilian women. Iara appears in the influential 1928 novel *Macunaima* by Brazilian author Mario de Andrade.

**See also:** *Jurema; Lorelei; Mermaids; Naddaha, Al; Siren*

## Ibeji

**Origin:** Yoruba

**Classification:** Orishas

The Yoruba people who live in what is now modern Nigeria have the highest rate of multiple births on Earth. The Ibeji are the sacred twins of the Yoruba pantheon. The Ibeji bring joy, vitality, prosperity, good health, and good fortune to their devotees and to homes in which they are honored. They may be invoked to protect *all* children. Parents of twins, triplets, or other multiple births may consider the Ibeji the guardian of their children and invoke them for all issues of health and

protection.

The Ibeji's names are usually given as Kainde and Taino. In Brazil, the Ibeji may be accompanied by a third child, named Doum. He may be the child born after the twins, or the twins may, in fact, be triplets. Depending on the version of the myth, the Ibeji's parents are:

- Oshun and Ochossi
- Oshun and Shango
- Oya and Shango

The Ibeji are rambunctious, childlike spirits, full of fun. If bored, they may pull pranks, but these tend to resemble a small boy's mischief, rather than the sometimes malicious practical jokes of tricksters like Loki, Eshu Elegbara, or Hermes. At worst, it is like having a house full of bored, energetic, and sometimes petulant little boys, potentially annoying, but not terrifying.

*However*, do not underestimate the Ibeji. They are *not* children. They are powerful spirits who appear in the guise of children and have fun playing at being children. The Ibeji's oracles and advice are reputedly consistently reliable. They have a history of healing illness, especially mental disorders, and of rescuing endangered children. (To keep the Ibeji from entertaining themselves, keep the atmosphere in your home lively and interesting. Good food, good conversation, music, and entertainment should keep the Ibeji occupied and happy. Alternatively, if they're giving you a hard time, threaten to tell their parents and do so, if necessary.) The Ibeji are syncretized to Saints Cosmas and Damian.

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*The Ibeji offer special comfort and protection to surviving twins who have lost a sibling.*

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**Favored people:** Twins and their families; people whose families have a history of twins are considered automatic devotees; the Ibeji are also guardians of children in general.

**Iconography:** Twin dolls represent the Ibeji; also images of Saints Cosmas and Damian

**Animal:** Monkeys in general, and especially Colobus monkeys. (Twins, their families, and devotees of the Ibeji are forbidden to eat monkey flesh or harm monkeys.)

**Feast:** 27 September (Feast of Cosmas and Damian)

**Offerings:** They're kids! Give them toys, sweets, and fun stuff. Some construct doll houses for the Ibeji. The Ibeji traditionally enjoy sugarcane, fruit, yellow rice, okra, and black-eyed peas. Puree cooked black-eyed peas; drizzle with red palm oil and serve. Offer the Ibeji fizzy drinks or fruit juices.

**See also:** *Dioscuri; Marassa; Ochossi; Oshun; Oya; Shango*

## Ibur

**Origin:** Jewish

An Ibur is an anti-Dybbuk, the opposite of a Dybbuk. An Ibur is a positive kind of spirit possession. Ibur literally means "impregnation." An esoteric, Kabbalistic concept, the Ibur is the soul of a great sage, now deceased, that attaches itself to a living person with wholly benevolent intent. The Ibur temporarily fuses with the soul of a living person. They become as one. The Ibur is able to bestow some of its own power to its living host, usually with the intent of furthering spiritual progress and wisdom for the benefit of the individual or for society as a whole. The Ibur may or may not identify him-or herself by name.

Unlike a Dybbuk, an Ibur will not randomly attach itself to just anyone, only to those demonstrating spiritual insight, potential, and power. It's an honor to be possessed by an Ibur; a blessing, not a tragedy. Mystics who routinely exorcised dybbuks considered it a great blessing to be possessed by an Ibur. Possession itself isn't necessarily perceived as a problem: the issue is what kind of spirit is doing the possessing and what is its intent.

An Ibur is a highly evolved soul, the equivalent of an Ascended

Master. The Ibur is essentially a spirit guide who doesn't just hover but who operates from within, actually permeating a human being with their own knowledge, insight, superior capacity to learn, and sometimes supernatural power.

**See also:** *Ascended Master; Dybbuk; Spirit Guides*

## **Idun**

*The Renewer; The Rejuvenator*

**Also known as:** Iduna

**Origin:** Norse

Did you ever wish you could retain a youthful body and soul but simultaneously accrue the wisdom of age and experience? The Norse deities possess the ability to mature without aging because of Idun's golden apples. Idun is the goddess of eternal youth, fertility, and abundance. She is the custodian of a grove of magical golden apples. A diet of these apples preserves ideal youthful appearance and vitality. Should the Norse spirits ever feel too ancient or creaky or if signs of age begin to creep up, Idun provides them with apples, which eliminate all negative aspects of aging. Her role is also to guard the apples so that those who are not authorized to eat them never get a taste. (Dwarves and Frost Giants notoriously lust for her fruit.) Idun's home is the Grove of Brunnaker. Request her assistance to stay ever-youthful via petition and visualization.

**Manifestation:** A beautiful, ever-youthful, cheerful woman

**Attribute:** A wooden box in which she carries ripe apples so that she always has some on hand in case of an emergency; no matter how many apples Idun removes, the box magically always contains the same number of apples.

**Consort:** Bragi, Lord of Poetry

**See also:** *Angerboda; Bragi; Hesperides*

## Ielle

**Also known as:** Rusalii

**Origin:** Romania

Ielle literally means “they:” it’s a euphemistic name for extremely beautiful but potentially dangerous Fairies. The Ielle dance in the forest dressed in white. Irodeasa is their leader. The Ielle cause storms, illness, and general mischief. They lead people deep into forests where they become fatally lost. They can also proffer favors, blessings, and valuable gifts, if they choose.

It is unclear whether the Ielle were always malevolent or whether they are now resentful toward people who once worshipped and propitiated them (and danced with them!) but stopped following conversion to Christianity. Allegedly the Ielle and Irodeasa still dance with witches in the forest.

The Ielle are sometimes called Rusalii, the rose Fairies. The same name is also given to similar female nature spirits in Balkan countries: it’s unclear whether they are all the same type of spirit or whether they just share a name.

**Favored people:** Witches, sorceresses, shamans

**Flower:** Rose

**Color:** White

**Altar:** Bring offerings for the Ielle to a forest, lake, well, spring or crossroads after dark. Place offerings atop a clean, white cloth, which serves as a temporary altar.

**Offerings:** Milk and white foods like eggs or white cheese.

**See also:** *Fairy; Irodeasa*

## Iemanja

**See:** *Yemaya*

## Ildiko

**Origin:** Hungary

Ildiko, goddess of love, hunting, fertility, and death, bestows life and takes it. Ildiko controls gateways between realms: she may be petitioned for fertility as well as for easy, painless death. The name *Ildiko* may be a Hungarian variant of the Germanic *Hilda*, meaning “battle” and a name associated with Valkyries. (It may also be related to a word for “moon”.) Ildiko was the name of Attila the Hun’s wife although whether she was named for the goddess is now unknown.

As a hunting goddess, Ildiko governs the balance between the needs of animals and hunters, simultaneously providing for hunters while protecting animals. Ildiko, like Artemis, is a deer hunter *and* the guardian of wild forest animals. A shamanic goddess, post-Christianity, Ildiko was identified with witchcraft.

**Iconography:** Hungarian art nouveau tapestry artist Sandor Nagy (1860–1950) portrayed Ildiko in the guise of a falconer.

**Attribute:** Bow and arrows

**Planet:** Moon

**Animals:** Bear, deer

**See also:** *Artemis; Faunus; Valkyries*

## Inanna-Ishtar

*Queen of Heaven; The One Who Is Joy; The One Who Roams About; The Lady of Battle and Conflict; Lady of Victory; Opener of the Womb*

**Origin:** Mesopotamia (present-day Iraq)

*Inanna* is the original name of this Sumerian spirit. *Ishtar* is the Semitic name for this goddess. Even in ancient times, the names were used interchangeably. They refer to the same spirit although they manifest slightly differently. Ishtar is Inanna taken to a greater extreme: she is

more sexual, more violent, more aggressive; more volatile. They are the same, but Ishtar is just *more so*.

Inanna-Ishtar is the archetype of the Near Eastern fertility/war goddess. (Some scholars believe that other goddesses of this ilk—Astarte, Anat, and Aphrodite—are actually paths of Inanna-Ishtar.) She gives life and she takes it away. Inanna-Ishtar battles all day and loves all night.

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*If we were discussing spirits of modern Haitian Vodou rather than ancient Mesopotamia, Ishtar would be the Petro spirit to Inanna's Rada. Ishtar is essentially the equivalent of "Inanna La-Flambeau."*

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Inanna-Ishtar is the supreme spirit of love, war, fertility, childbirth, and healing. She can cause and cure disease, bestow and withhold children. Her influence extends over humans, plants, and animals. In particular, she provides or withholds the spark of desire that initiates all procreative action and fertility.

- Inanna-Ishtar provides joy
- Inanna-Ishtar controls sexually transmitted diseases. She can heal them but may also bestow them as a mark of her displeasure and punishment.
- Inanna-Ishtar can kill or bless with a glance.

Inanna-Ishtar was no obscure cult spirit but was once worshipped in a major state-sponsored, organized religion. As society became increasingly patriarchal, Inanna-Ishtar fell from favor. The goddess in the guise of a sexy, young, independent warrior-woman was no longer considered an appropriate role model. A theme of disrespect towards her permeates the *Epic of Gilga mesh*, which dates from the third millennium BCE.

**Manifestations:** A beautiful, young woman, lavishly dressed and bejeweled. She may be thousands of years old, but she consistently appears youthful. The Empress card in the Rider-Waite-Smith tarot deck



is based on her image. She is also known to manifest as a fig tree. Inanna-Ishtar sits on a lion throne and holds a double serpent scepter.

**Attributes:** Crown of stars; lapis lazuli necklace; pitcher

**Emblem:** Eight-pointed star

**Sacred animals:** Dolphins, lions, snakes, scorpions, hedgehogs; she owns seven hunting dogs; seven lions draw her chariot; she rides a fire-breathing dragon.

**Numbers:** 7, 15

**Bird:** Dove

**Planet:** Venus

**Stone:** Lapis lazuli

**Tree:** Fig

**Sacred sites:** The center of her veneration was Uruk (the name Iraq may derive from this ancient city); her shrine at Khafajah, Iraq, dates from approximately 4000 BCE.

**Offerings:** Incense; wine, artisanal beer, and sweet baked goods, especially if you bake them by hand and form them in her images (once upon a time, ancient cake molds were manufactured); but most of all absolute, unconditional adoration, devotion, and loyalty. She is a volatile, unpredictable, temperamental spirit, especially in her path as Ishtar. Well-maintained altar or artistic tributes should be pleasing.

**See also:** *Anat; Aphrodite; Astarte; Bau; Ereshkigal; Ezili La Flambeau; Ishhara; Lamashtu; Lilith; Ogun La Flambeau; Petro; Rada Spirits; Tammuz; Tanit* and the Glossary entry for *Path*.

## Inari

**Origin:** Japan

**Classification:** Kami

Inari, spirit of abundance, fertility, growth, and rice, may be Japan's most popular kami. Over one-third of all Shinto shrines are dedicated to Inari, and that's not counting innumerable roadside and domestic shrines plus those set up in rice fields. One count suggests over forty thousand *official* shrines.

Inari is a mysterious, adaptable deity, venerated by Shintos, Buddhists, shamans, and independent practitioners. Inari manifests as female, male, neither, or both. Inari is extremely closely identified with foxes, although whether the fox is merely her messenger, mount, or a form of Inari is subject of bitter, passionate debate.

It is unclear which is the original form of Inari. It's not clear that there is an original form: it's possible that different spirits have been subsumed under that one name. The earliest documentation of Inari worship dates back to 711 CE, but scholars believe veneration began centuries before on Inari Mountain near Kyoto. The earliest form of Inari seems to have been a shamanic rice goddess. Under the influence of Buddhism, more sober male forms became prevalent; however, Inari, like her totem animal, is a shape-shifter: all forms may belong to Inari equally. Buddhists also associate Inari with the Bodhisattva Dakiniten.

Originally a rural spirit, Inari made an easy transition to urbanization. Geishas, samurai, prostitutes, and merchants were among those who promoted and spread her worship. Inari is petitioned for luck, wealth, abundance, good health, babies, and easy childbirth. There is little that Inari cannot provide or for which s/he is not petitioned. Inari is renowned for granting wishes of devotees and was once counted among the Shichi Fukujin, the Seven Spirits of Good Fortune. They will happily share altar space together.

- Merchants and shopkeepers maintain shrines in their place of business.
- Inari traditionally guards and blesses bordellos and pleasure houses.
- Inari may be petitioned to heal any illness, but her specialty is venereal disease.
- Inari provides fire safety and is invoked for protection especially during earthquakes.

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*Inari in her feminine aspect is intensely involved with sex, fertility, reproduction, and the magical arts, not just agricultural abundance. She is also identified with ironworking.*

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Inari has close associations with Japanese fox spirits (Kitsune). Some theorize that she was originally a fox goddess herself. Others are highly offended at the notion and insist that the fox whose image is *ubiquitous* at Inari shrines is merely her mount. Cases of Fox Spirit possession have traditionally been healed and exorcised at Inari shrines, as have cases of tanuki spirit possession. Inari protects people from foxes but is also the guardian of foxes. Devotees cannot wear fox fur without incurring her wrath.

Inari is incredibly benevolent and generous, but s/he does have a temper and expresses zero-tolerance for disrespect. Any being powerful enough to save lives, grant fertility, and fortune is also capable of causing harm if angered. It's crucial to always be polite in her presence or at an Inari shrine and *never* cause harm to foxes. If harm is caused accidentally, apologize profusely and expiate immediately. Any fox may be Inari's messenger.

Author Karen Smyers analyzes the different facets of Inari worship in her book, *The Fox and the Jewel* (University of Hawaii Press, 1999).

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*Inari may or may not be the same spirit as Dakinien. Dakinien is the Japanese path of a fox-riding Dakini, worshipped in Buddhist Inari shrines. Dakinien is envisioned as a beautiful Bodhisattva carrying rice and riding on a flying white fox. Her icons are believed to stimulate personal fertility and provide protection and wealth.*

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**Favored people:** Farmers, merchants, retailers, shopkeepers, courtesans, sex workers, warriors, samurai; artisans, those who treat foxes kindly or

work on their behalf; because of the traditional enmity between foxes and dogs, some suggest that those born in the Year of the Dog are *not* favored, but this is a controversial point and others disagree.

**Iconography:** Inari is depicted in many forms:

- A sexy woman holding sheaves of rice
- An old man carrying bales of rice
- A white fox
- A fox in the garb of a Shinto or Buddhist priest
- A beautiful woman riding a white fox

**Attributes:** Key, wish-granting jewel, rice

**Color:** Red; white

**Animals:** Fox, and to a lesser degree snakes and dragons

**Tree:** *Cryptomeria* (Japanese cedar), pine

**Times:** Offerings to Inari traditionally coincide with the new and full moons; she is celebrated at the Autumnal Equinox in conjunction with the harvest.

**Offerings:** A favorite is *Inarizushi*, fried aburaage (tofu) stuffed with rice, described as “sushi pockets”; lots of sake; rice; rice with red beans; rice cakes stuffed with red bean paste; incense; traditional Inari fox statuettes (always given in pairs: male and female); acts on behalf of foxes; pilgrimage; donation of red Torii gate for an Inari shrine

**See also:** *Bodhisattva; Dakini; Fox Spirits; Kajishin; Shichi Fukujin; Tanuki*

## Indio, El

*El Indio* (“The Indian”) is an ancestral guardian spirit originally venerated in Mexican Santeria and Espiritismo traditions. Although there are archetypal Indio spirits, this is a class of spirits: each medium, devotee, or spiritualist may have their own unique Indio who serves as spiritual advisor and/or guardian. To some extent El Indio corresponds

to Brazilian Caboclo spirits. Mass-produced images of typical Indio figures are available from *botanicas* and spiritual merchants; however, unique personal images can easily be substituted. Although this class of spirit is very popular in the Spanish Caribbean and is perceived as an ancestor, the image does not portray a native Caribbean or Mexican. Instead, images generally depict an idealized North American Plains Indian dressed in buckskin and frequently wearing a feathered war bonnet.

- **El Indio de la Paz**, or the Indian of Peace, serves as a sentinel and guardian. He is commercially portrayed as a man sitting cross-legged, smoking the sacred pipe.
- **El Indio Guerrero**, or the Warrior Indian, is petitioned for protection and to bolster courage. He may be armed and/or wear a war bonnet. (Alternatively, he just looks fierce.) He is identified as a Native American warrior persistently battling for land, rights, autonomy, and dignity and is a valued spiritual advisor.

**Offerings:** Tobacco, beads, cornmeal; individual spirits will advise regarding preferred offerings.

**See also:** *Black Hawk; Caboclos; Janaina; Jurema; Spirit Guides*

## Indra

**Origin:** India

Indra is the Vedic lord of thunderstorms, rain, and fertility. He is a guardian of humanity, a spirit of justice, killer of Ashuras and demons.

Indra was the favorite deity of the Vedic Indians. His role was diminished in later Hinduism with the rise of the Trimurtri (Brahma, Vishnu, Shiva), but he was once India's preeminent deity. About two hundred fifty hymns are dedicated to him in the Rig Veda.

Indra is the lord of intoxicants. He guzzles soma, the divine drink of the devas, which exhilarates and even further empowers him. Indra lives atop Mount Meru, the mythic world axis of Southern Asian cosmology, where he presides over a court attended by other deities, heroes, and

sages. His hall also serves as an afterlife realm for brave, deceased warriors who, blessed with an eternity lacking fear, pain, and sadness, spend their time gambling, gaming, and watching the Apsaras dance to the sublime music of the Gandharvas.

**Manifestation:** Indra is described as red-bearded (although he is usually portrayed as beardless in iconography).

**Attribute:** Thunderbolt (vajra) with which he blesses and fertilizes Earth and smites demons and enemies

**Consort:** Indrani

**Bird:** Owl

**Animal:** Elephants: Indra vows to send abundant but appropriate amounts of rain to regions and countries that treat elephants with kindness and respect.

**Mount:** Airavata, the sacred white elephant

**Plant:** *Cannabis sativa*, also known as *Indrasana*: “the food of Indra”

**Offerings:** Indra will not object to a drink; also incense and images of elephants.

**See also:** *Apsaras; Gandharvas; Shiva; Thagya Min; Thor; Vajra*

## **Inna**

### *Mother*

**Also known as:** Mai-Inna; Doguwa; Ha diza; Bafilatana

**Origin:** Hausa

**Classification:** Bori

According to some versions of Hausa myth, Inna is the mother of all Bori spirits. She is among the most powerful of the Bori, a protective deity who guards her devotees as if they were her children. She may be

invoked to protect the property of those in her favor.

Inna is one of the two wives of Sarkin Aljan Suleimanu. (His other wife is her sister.) She is also involved in a not-so-secret adulterous love affair with Kuturu the Leper, her husband's chief counselor. Inna's brother is the Head of the Bori House of Fulani Spirits, and she is envisioned as a Fulani woman. Her own six sons were given to her husband's younger brother, Sarkin Aljan Biddarene, to raise. In exchange, Biddarene gave Inna his six sons, including Dan Galadima.

Inna punishes thieves and those who persecute her devotees by causing stomachs to fatally swell. Her traditional affliction, however, is paralysis. Paralysis caused by Inna takes very specific forms:

- The victim is unable to stand.
- One hand and foot, usually the left, are twisted.
- One hip and one side of the lower back is rigid.
- The eyes bulge.
- The mouth is paralyzed so that it's open on one side and can't be closed (drooling is also characteristic).

The paralysis that Inna causes must be dealt with shamanically immediately as it progresses very quickly. Without quick shamanic intervention, it can be fatal. (Paralysis caused by Inna will resist conventional medical treatment and diagnosis.)

**Manifestation:** Inna appears in the guise of a tall, dark-skinned beautiful, regal woman.

**Iconography:** Inna may be represented by the image of the snake charmer more commonly associated with Mami Waters.

**Sacred trees:** Baobab, plus trees identified by the Hausa as those growing in Fulani cattle camps, including:

- African ebony (*Diospyros mespiliformis*)
- African mahogany (*Khaya ivorensis*)
- Shea tree (*Butyrospermum parkii*)

**Color:** Black

**Home:** Inna lives in the city and the bush. She's content in both urban and rustic settings.

**See also:** *Bori; Dan Galadima; Kuturu; Mami Waters; Sar kin Aljan Biddarene; Sarkin Aljan Suleimanu*

## Intranquil Spirit

**Origin:** Spain, Latin America

The Intranquil Spirit is the name given to a type of dead soul that wanders restlessly but can find no home or resting place; hence its description as "Intranquil." The Intranquil Spirit cannot rest in peace. Details of the Intranquil Spirit—*why* it's Intranquil—can be vague, but basically, the Intranquil Spirit cannot enter Heaven but is not bad enough to go to Hell, and so is left wandering Earth. This is a class of spirits, not one individual ghost and so the specific transgression that caused this fate may vary from one Intranquil Spirit to another.

In general, Intranquil Spirits are associated with romantic transgressions. Alternatively, it's not that Intranquil Spirits *can't* leave Earth; it's that they *won't*: romantic obsessions they experienced while alive bind them to Earth. Intranquil Spirits typically signal their presence via romantic obsessions.

- Intranquil Spirits may take control of an unwilling human being.
- Intranquil Spirits may be invoked to participate in love spells.

Intranquil Spirits may behave like Dybbuks. In order to find relief from their incessant wandering, they take possession of a living person. The presence of the Intranquil Spirit becomes apparent (at least to those who can recognize such things) because the living host abruptly develops a romantic obsession, falling desperately in love with someone, possibly a stranger and often someone completely inappropriate. The possessed host may feel compelled to perform irresponsible and even dangerous actions that are completely out of character and so this Intranquil Spirit must be exorcised.

The romantic powers associated with the Intranquil Spirit are sometimes invoked by spell casters to force a recalcitrant spouse or lover



to return. Intranquil Spirit spells derive from traditional Spanish verbal love charms intended to dominate an ex-lover, force his return, or make him crazy until he returns. The Intranquil Spirit is invoked to transfer some intransquility to the target of the spell to ensure that he returns submissively to the spell caster.

The Intranquil Spirit is beckoned closer by burning Intranquil Spirit candles or incense (commercially available) and by chanting a traditional invocation. Variations on the invocation exist but this is the gist:

*Oh, Intranquil Spirit, wandering from Heaven to Hell and from Hell to  
Heaven, hear me!  
Nobody calls you,  
I call you!  
Nobody wants you,  
I want you!  
Nobody needs you,  
I need you!  
Oh, Intranquil Spirit, hear me!  
Help me!*

*Capture and control all five senses of (name of the target of the spell)  
Do not let (name of the target of the spell) rest in peace,  
Not even for one second,  
Not sitting, standing, or sleeping  
(Name of target of spell) must run and run and run and run and run until  
(name of target of spell) falls at my feet  
No one helps (name of target)  
No one loves (name of target)  
No one desires (name of target)  
No widow, divorcee, married, or single woman/man loves (name of Target)  
Amen, Amen, Amen, Selah, Selah, Selah.*

Here's the catch. If the Intranquil Spirit helps and your lover comes crawling back, your payment to the Intranquil Spirit is to assume its role. After you die, the Intranquil Spirit is free to travel to an afterlife realm while you are fated to become an Intranquil Spirit forever or until someone invokes *your* help with an unwilling love. (And of course, the

Intranquil Spirit who once helped you is now invested in your death.)

**See also:** *Dybbuk; Ghost; Padilla, Maria de*

## Io

**Origin:** Greece

Io, a priestess of Hera in Argos and daughter of river deity, Inachus, also an acolyte of Hera's, began hearing voices at night advising her to give herself to Zeus. Although this myth is usually given a romantic twist (cheating spouse, Zeus, is described as enamored of beautiful Io), it may actually be the tale of competing deities. Io told her father and he consulted an oracle, which advised him to turn her out of his house and let her roam freely over Earth.

Zeus transformed her into a pretty cow so that he could take her in the form of a bull. Hera, a cow goddess herself, suspected the transformation and placed Io under lock, key, and watchful eyes of her servant, Argos. (Make that one thousand watchful eyes. Argos never slept, closing only half his eyes at any one time.) Zeus sent Hermes to liberate Io. Hera, in turn, sent a gadfly to sting Io. This was no ordinary gadfly, which would have just left a temporary tender spot. Instead, the sting of this gadfly compelled her to run continuously and aimlessly. In *The Land of Remorse*, his study of Tarantism, author Ernesto De Martino compares Io's post-sting behavior to those compelled to dance the tarantella ostensibly because of a spider's bite.

During her compulsive rambling, Io encountered Prometheus, chained and suffering yet still able to comfort her. He prophesied that her journey would end by the Nile River, where Zeus would touch her hand and she would conceive her son, Epaphos, from that touch. Prometheus' prophecy was accurate: Zeus transformed her back to human form. Io eventually married a king in Egypt. She bore children to Zeus and her husband and is considered the ancestress of heroes. Her descendents were among the nobility of Greece, Egypt, and Phoenicia and presumably roam the Earth still.

Io was also venerated as a lunar goddess, identified with Egyptian cow

goddesses Hathor and Isis. The Greeks identified Epaphos with Egypt's sacred Apis bull.

**Iconography:** Io is depicted as a cow or as a cow-horned woman.

**Planet:** Moon

**See also:** *Arachne; Europa; Hathor; Hera; Hermes; Isis; Prometheus; Zeus*

## Iodama

**Origin:** Greece

Iodama, priestess of Athena, entered the goddess' sacred precinct at night and encountered Athena with Medusa's head. Iodama was instantly transformed to stone. She was then venerated in the shrine Athena shared with Hades near Koroneia. Every day, a priestess placed fire before Iodama's altar, crying out three times, "Iodama lives and wants fire!"

It is a mysterious myth, and Iodama is a mysterious goddess. Who is she? Why was her death so significant that she was enshrined alongside the goddess and propitiated daily? Some interpretations suggest that Iodama was no ordinary priestess but Athena's sister who accompanied her from Libya. Did Athena kill her accidentally as she did Pallas, or deliberately as she killed Medusa?

Iodama's fire is not a continuous flame like that of Hestia. Fresh fire is placed before Iodama daily, as if replenishing a coal pan. Coincidentally or not, some scholars theorize that Athena's name derives from the same root word as that for the sacred ritual coal pan or fire vessel.

**See also:** *Athena; Hades; Medusa; Pallas*

## Iphigenia

**Also known as:** Ifigenia

Iphigenia, worshipped as a goddess of death and childbirth, is most famous for the role she plays in the early stages of the Trojan War. The

eldest daughter of Clytemnestra and Agamemnon, her father somehow offended Artemis, who demanded (via an oracle) the sacrifice of Iphigenia as reparations. (Different myths offer different explanations of his offense. An alternative myth suggests that Iphigenia was really the daughter of Helen and Theseus raised by her mother's twin.)

Rather than tell Clytemnestra the truth, Agamemnon informed her that he had arranged a marriage between Iphigenia and the hero Achilles. Clytemnestra was directed to prepare Iphigenia for her wedding. Purification rituals for brides may have been similar to those for victims of human sacrifice.

Iphigenia, approximately twelve years old or just slightly older, dressed in bridal finery, was led to the sacrificial altar, not the nuptial chamber. There are two versions of what happened next:

1. Iphigenia was killed.
2. At the last moment, Artemis whisked Iphigenia away, replacing her with a deer or goat.

Artemis allegedly brought Iphigenia to Tauris (now in modern Crimea) to serve as her chief priestess, presiding over human sacrifices. According to historian Herodotus, the Scythians in this region did sacrifice prisoners, but to a goddess he identified as Iphigenia. Iphigenia was also venerated alongside Artemis in Greece: Iphigenia's cave shrine was part of the sanctuary of Artemis Brauronia.

Clothing of women who died in childbirth was offered to Iphigenia. Some scholars theorize that she was originally an autonomous goddess (whether Greek or Scythian) whose functions overlapped with Artemis, and so she was eventually incorporated into Artemis' cult, at least in Greece. Iphigenia is invoked for safety during childbirth. Her name derives from a root word indicating "strength."

**See also:** *Achilles; Artemis; Helen of Troy*

## **Iris**

*Wondrous One; Wind Swift-Footed*

**Origin:** Greece

Iris, a rainbow goddess, is an *Angelos*—a messenger. She serves the Olympian deities by flying or running over a rainbow bridge carrying messages between realms. Iris can travel to any realm. She traverses various realms of spirits, as well as realms of the dead and living. She serves as a psychopomp, guiding female souls to Hades. In addition to serving as messenger, she is a spirit of justice. Iris is the sister of the Harpies and Hera's devoted servant.

**Manifestation:** Iris is the rainbow; she also manifests as a beautiful golden-winged young woman.

**Iconography:** It was once traditional to plant iris flowers over women's graves or mark their headstones with images of Iris, or her namesake flower.

**Attributes:** Pitcher; caduceus (staff entwined by two serpents)

**Flower:** Iris

**See also:** *Harpies; Hera; Hermes; Psychopomp; Styx*

## **Irodeasa**

*Queen of the Fairies*

**Origin:** Romania

Irodeasa is the beautiful but possibly dangerous Romanian witch-goddess and Queen of the Fairies. Her name is the Romanian form of Herodias.

- She may be a goddess branded with the name of the New Testament's "wickedest woman" and whose original name is now unknown or secret.
- She may be Herodias herself.
- She may be a Romanian path of Diana.

Irodeasa presides over the Romanian men's mystery dance/healing/possession society known as the *Calus* and their annual

rituals. Similar societies once extended through the Balkans, as well. She leads the Fairies known as Ielle. Irodeasa can raise and soothe storms. She is the queen of the forest. She can heal and cause illness. Scholars suggest that she may originally have been a goddess of death.

Gail Kligman's *Calus* (University of Chicago Press, 1981) offers detailed information regarding the history and rituals of the *Calusari*, members of the *Calus*.

**Number:** 9

**Offerings:** Pour libations for her.

**See also:** *Diana; Fairy; Herodias; Ielle*

## Ishhara

**Also known as:** Ishkhara

**Pronounced:** *Ishhara*; the second "h" is hard and guttural.

**Origin:** Mesopotamia

In Western Asia, scorpions are traditional symbols of romance, their sting analogous to Cupid's arrows. Ishhara is Mesopotamia's ancient erotic scorpion goddess of love. There are various theories as to her true identity:

- Ishhara may be a path of Inanna-Ishtar.
- Ishhara may be the original Ishtar before she merged with Inanna.
- Ishhara may be a completely unique, independent spirit whose identity was subsumed by Inanna-Ishtar.

According to the Babylonian version of the zodiac, Ishhara may be viewed in the sky as the constellation Scorpio, zodiac sign of sex and the reproductive organs. Ishhara has dominion over the various issues associated with the zodiac sign, Scorpio, and the astrological Eighth House. Ishhara was invoked for protection, love, romance, and in erotic rites. She was extremely popular in the region that is now modern Syria and Turkey, where she was sometimes considered the wife of the

important deity Dagon.

**Iconography:** Images of scorpions remain very popular among traditional North African and Middle Eastern henna artisans for whom the animal represents fierce protection and erotic love.

**Sacred animals:** Scorpions, snakes

**See also:** *Inanna-Ishtar; Selket*

## Ishtar

**See:** Inanna-Ishtar

## Isis

*The Great Lady; Queen of the Earth;  
Light Giver of Heaven; Mistress of Magic; The Many  
Named; Queen of the Throne; She Who Is Rich in Spells;  
Great of Sorcery; Redemptress; Star of the Sea;  
The One Who is All; Mother of Gods*

**Also known as:** Au Set

**Origin:** Egypt

Isis may be the most venerated goddess on Earth. Venerated in Egypt for thousands of years, her worship eventually spread from East Africa throughout Western Asia and Europe as far as England's Thames River.

Isis is so multifaceted that the Greeks identified her with Aphrodite, Artemis, Demeter, *and* Persephone. The myth of Isis and Osiris, her beloved twin brother/soul mate, is among the most beloved of all romantic tragedies. Isis is the lady of many names and many forms. She is the beautiful young, privileged princess and the grieving, poverty-stricken widow dressed in rags. She is the greatest sorceress on Earth, in possession of the Ineffable Name, the most powerful word in creation and the poverty-stricken single mother in hiding, forced to beg to feed herself and her son. Isis may be the unnamed narrator of the Gnostic

poem, "Thunder, Perfect Mind."

Isis is the most compassionate of deities because she has lived the life of an oppressed woman, and she is the most powerful, because as Mistress of Magic, she knows all and can do all. Isis can resurrect the dead and can bestow the gift of fertility. She heals the ailing and protects travelers at sea. There is no miracle that she cannot perform.

Isis was a relatively late goddess to appear in Egypt, first emerging in the Nile Delta but rapidly became one of the most beloved. Like Hathor, with whom she was identified, Isis is a cow-goddess. Her devotees traditionally refrain from consuming beef.

Veneration of Isis was officially introduced to Rome in 86 BCE, where she became extremely popular because, unlike other religions, her cult was open to all, including women and slaves. Her spiritual tradition developed a bad reputation in conservative Rome, because of its alleged licentiousness, and was legally suppressed at least five times between 59 and 48 BCE.

Even after abolition of Paganism, veneration of Isis was extremely persistent. Her last official temple on the southern Egyptian island of Philae survived until 537 CE, when Narses, Commander of Emperor Justinian's Egyptian troops, ordered it shut. Votive statues of Isis, Osiris, and Min were confiscated and sent to Constantinople. Temple clergy was imprisoned. The walls of the shrine, previously adorned with images, were whitewashed, and the temple was converted to a Christian church.

Although Isis is mainly identified with ancient Egypt, the Romans carried her veneration throughout Europe. She became extremely popular in Gaul and was for a substantial period the preeminent goddess of Paris. Paris was considered her city as Lyon belonged to Kybele. Isis was among the last Pagan deities to be actively venerated, and she was perceived as a primary competitor by early Christians.

In Lucius Apuleius' second-century CE Roman novel, *The Golden Ass*, Isis tells the narrator that only Egyptians and Ethiopians call her by her true name, but that she has countless names to which she answers. This may have been a tacit way of giving devotees permission to venerate her in other forms and under other names. Many believe that Isis assumed the mask of Mary, Mother of Christ. The earliest Christian statues of



Mary were refurbished, renamed statues of Isis. Much Marian iconography is based on that of Isis. Many of Isis' titles were bestowed on Mary as for instance *Stella Maris*; *Theotokos*, and *Mother of God*. Statues of Isis also traveled the Silk Road and may eventually have evolved into Kwan Yin.

**Favored people:** Theoretically everyone, but especially women, single mothers, orphans, occultists, and mariners

**Manifestation:** Isis is an incredible magician and can take any form she chooses. She may manifest as a cow, kite, or swallow. She may appear as a beautiful queen, a pregnant woman, or a woman absolutely devastated by despair and grief.

**Iconography:** Isis is portrayed in many forms:

- Traditional images of Isis are the prototype for the modern Madonna and child. A woman, frequently carved from black stone, which in Egyptian cosmology represents eternal life, holds a nursing baby to her breast.
- She wears a crown topped by a throne (the meaning of her name) or a crown of horns cradling the full moon.
- The Louvre Museum in Paris possesses a rare terra-cotta image of beautiful Isis weeping for her true love, Osiris.

**Spirit allies:** Isis is frequently accompanied by an entourage of spirits, including Anubis, Nephthys, Heket, Min, Bes, Khnum, Selket, and the Scorpion Guardians; she is a friendly, gregarious spirit and will share her altar.

**Emblem:** The *tyet* amulet, also known as the Buckle of Isis or Blood of Isis is a protective amulet usually formed from cornelian or red glass and representing the goddess' menstrual blood-soaked sanitary pad.

**Colors:** Black, blue

**Element:** Water

**Botanicals:** Vervain, myrrh tree, sycamore fig

**Mineral:** Bloodstone

**Metal:** Gold

**Sacred creatures:** Snakes, cows, crocodiles, scorpions, kites (a type of raptor), swallow

**Planet:** Moon

**Constellation:** Virgo

**Star:** An Egyptian name for the star Sirius (in Egyptian Sothis) is “Soul of Isis.” (Sirius’ first appearance in the night sky signaled the annual Nile Flood.)

**Sacred site:** There is a theory that the name *Paris* derives from *Par-Isis*, meaning the barque or grove of Isis. In Roman times, Isis had a temple at the western limits of the city, the marshes on the Left Bank of the Seine. The churches of Saint Sulpice and Saint Germain-des-Prés are built over sites once dedicated to Isis.

**Offerings:** Traditionally Isis accepts offerings of milk, honey, flowers, incense, and candles.

**See also:** *Anubis; Aphrodite; Black Ma donna; Demeter; Harpocrates; Hathor; Heket; Horus; Io; Kwan Yin; Min; Neith; Nephthys; Osiris; Persephone; Serapis; Stella Maris; Zar*

## **Itzamna**

*He of the Writing*

**Origin:** Maya

Itzamna is the preeminent deity of the Mayan Yucatan peninsula. Itzamna is the Lord of Night and Day; the Lord of Healing and Medicine. Itzamna may be a deified first priest, the founder of Maya culture. He invented the Mayan calendar, mathematics, and the arts of calculating and writing. He is a healer and diviner. Among the other gifts he brought the Maya are maize and cacao. He is the patron of scribes. (Make him a book to request his favor.) Itzamna vehemently rejects anything to do with violence or destruction.

**Manifestation:** An old man or a caiman

**Attribute:** An obsidian mirror with which to scry

**Consort:** Ix Chel

**Sacred animals:** Caimans, lizards, fish

**Offerings:** Tamales

**See also:** *Ix Chel*

## Itzpapalotl

*The Obsidian Butterfly; The Clawed Butterfly*

**Origin:** Chichimec; Aztec; Zapotec

Itzpapalotl is a fierce, powerful mother goddess of birth and death. She is a ferocious skeleton warrior who presides over the realm of Tamoanchan, the place where humans were created from blood, and bones stolen from Mictlan, realm of the dead. Itzpapalotl presides over the paradise realm inhabited by women who died in childbirth and stillborn infants. She is a shamanic goddess and a powerful sorceress.

- Itzpapalotl is among the Cihuateteo, mortal women who died in childbirth and transformed into fierce crossroads spirits.
- She is also classified as a Tzitzimime, a star demon.

Although Itzpapalotl was incorporated into the Aztec pantheon, she was inherited from neighboring Chichimeca and Zapotecs. The Zapotec path of Itzpapalotl is particularly closely associated with bats. (The term *clawed butterfly* may refer to bats, not moths or butterflies.) She may be the mother of Mixcoatl.

**Manifestation:** Itzpapalotl has butterfly or moth wings tipped with obsidian blades. Her hands have jaguar claws; her feet have eagle's talons. She may take many forms including a bat, butterfly, moth, gorgeous woman, or skeleton with obsidian or flint-tipped butterfly wings. She has been witnessed dressing up as a lady of the old Aztec

court with thickly caked white face powder. She may dress up in any form she desires. She also has an invisibility cloak so she may not be visible at all.

**Iconography:** Itzpapalotl is usually portrayed as a butterfly or moth. Dr. Carlos Beutelspacher, author of *Butterflies of Ancient Mexico*, identifies her with the species *Rothschildia orizaba*, a Saturnid silk moth.

**Attribute:** Obsidian blade; (obsidian is volcanic glass).

**Sacred bird:** Royal or King Vulture (*Sarcoramphus papa*); eagle

**Sacred animal:** Bat, butterfly, moth, deer

**See also:** *Camazotz*; *Cihuateteo*; *Mixcoatl*; *Tzitzimime*

## **Ix Chel**

*Lady Rainbow; Old Woman with the Jaguar Claws;  
Lady Splotch of Blood; Lady All Embracer*

**Origin:** Maya

Ix Chel presides over sex, childbirth, healing, creativity, and weaving. In her benevolent aspect, she represents the waters of life, whether the ocean or amniotic fluids. In her negative aspect, Ix Chel represents destruction through water. She is the goddess of torrential rains and hurricanes. Most associated with the Yucatan Peninsula, Ix Chel was also venerated throughout southern Mexico, Guatemala, Belize, and El Salvador.

Once upon a time, Ix Chel took the sun as her lover. Her angry grandfather hurled lightning at her and killed her. Dragonflies mourned and sang over Ix Chel for thirteen days, at which time she emerged alive and whole. She followed her lover to the Palace of the Sun, but once they were living together, the sun turned out to be a jealous lover.

Accusing Ix Chel of infidelity with his brother the Morning Star, the Sun threw her out of his house. Ix Chel found sanctuary with the Vulture Spirit. In the nature of abusive husbands, the Sun eventually repented,

missed Ix Chel, and enticed her back to his home, only to fall back into his compulsive, violent jealousy.

Ix Chel had enough. Tired of the Sun's behavior, she left his home and bed for good, preferring to wander as she wished. Ix Chel, the Moon, now makes herself invisible in the Sun's presence. Rather than waste time and energy on his abusive love, Ix Chel prefers to nurture new life and devotes herself to caring for pregnant and laboring women, especially those who visit Cozumel, her beloved island. (According to other myths, Ix Chel may be the consort of Itzamna or a rabbit spirit.)

Ix Chel has dominion over menstrual cycles. She may be invoked to provide personal fertility and to guard pregnancy and childbirth. Ix Chel is also traditionally invoked to protect against venomous spiders and to heal their bites.

**Favored people:** Women in general; also healers, midwives, and weavers

**Manifestations:** She manifests in all phases of womanhood: a young girl, a fertile woman, and an old crone.

- In her fertility aspect, she is often accompanied by her consort, a man-sized rabbit.
- In her destructive aspect, she manifests as an old crone carrying a large water jug, which she empties to raise storms and hurricanes.
- Ix Chel often wears a skirt embroidered with crossbones and a snake as a headband.

**Iconography:** In Mayan script, she is represented by a uterine symbol; she is often depicted with a loom, which she is credited with inventing.

**Planet:** Moon

**Element:** Water

**Sacred creatures:** Rabbit, snake, dragonfly, spider

**Bird:** Swallow

**Sacred sites:** Two sister islands off the coast of Cancun in the Yucatan were once essentially shrines to Ix Chel. They were once pilgrimage

sites: before European conquest, women traveled tremendous distances to these shrines.

- Cozumel
- Isla Mujeres (translated the *Island of Women*)

Shrines on both islands were once filled with statues of Ix Chel. None survive. On the Mexican mainland, prayers and petitions were offered to Ix Chel at Temple 45, north of El Castillo, Tulum.

**See also:** *Astara; Itzamna*

## **Ix Tab**

*Lady of the Rope*

**Origin:** Maya (Yucatan)

According to ancient Mayan cosmology, among those who go straight to Paradise after death are warriors killed in battle, women who die in childbirth, priests, and those who commit suicide. Ix Tab is the matron goddess of those who commit suicide by hanging. If they've led virtuous lives, she welcomes them to her afterlife realm. (Suicide was perceived as honorable, depending on circumstances.) Ix Tab may serve as escort to the afterlife, too.

**Iconography:** Ix Tab is portrayed as a dead woman, her eyes closed, swinging from heaven with a rope around her neck. Black circles ornament her face.

**See also:** *Xtabay*

## **Izanagi**

*August Male; The Male Who Invites*

**Origin:** Japan

Izanagi and Izanami, the celestial pair, formed the universe. (See *Izanami*

for details.) After Izanami's death and Izanagi's narrow escape from the realm of death, he cleansed and purified himself from the taint of death by bathing in a sacred river. As he bathed, Izanagi gave birth to three of the most significant kami without female assistance:

- Amaterasu was born from his left eye.
- Tsukiyomi was born from his right eye.
- Susano'o was born from his nose.

Izanagi handed the reigns of power over to these three children:

- Amaterasu, Lady of the Sun and supreme ruler, was given dominion over day.
- Tsukiyomi, Lord of the Moon, was given dominion over night.
- Susano'o was given dominion over storms and sea.

Then Izanagi retired to northwest Kyushu, where a shrine is dedicated to him and Izanami.

**Sacred site:** Awaji Island, the first island created by Izanami and Izanagi; they are enshrined at Onokorojima Shrine and elsewhere on the island.

**See also:** *Amaterasu; Izanami; Kami; Susano'o; Tsukiyomi*

## Izanami

*August Female; The Female Who Is Invited*

**Also known as:** Izanami-no-mikoto

**Origin:** Japan

According to the creation saga told in the Japanese epics, the *Kojiki* and the *Nihonshoki*, in the beginning there was chaos. The primordial world was formless, fluid, and volatile. Seven generations of invisible kami arose. In the eighth generation, Izanagi and Izanami, August Male and Female, stood on the Floating Bridge of Heaven and dipped a jeweled spear into this watery, chaotic abyss. An island, the very first land, formed, and Izanami and Izanagi descended to Earth. This primal

celestial pair proceeded to create the universe.

When they sought to reproduce, they engaged in sacred marital rites. They built a pillar; then circled it in opposite directions. When they met face-to-face, Izanami spoke first. Their first child was a deformed, boneless “leech baby.” The couple sought counsel from the older kami, who advised them that their misshapen child was punishment for incorrect marital rites. Izanagi, the male, should have spoken first. Rites were repeated according to direction, and Izanami gave birth to the Japanese islands and various kami. Finally she gave birth to the kami of fire but was so badly burned in the process that she died. Buried on Mount Hiba, she traveled to Yomi, Realm of Death.

Izanagi determined to bring her back, but he had no experience of death. He traveled to

Yomi, expecting to find the Izanami he remembered. Instead he discovered an animated but rotting, maggot-infested corpse. He ran for his life. When he reached safety on Earth, he rolled a huge boulder over the entrance, effectively separating the realms of life and death. Izanami now rules over Yomi as its queen.

**Sacred site:** Her mausoleum and shrine on Mount Hiba in the Chugoku Mountains

**See also:** *Ebisu; Izanagi; Kami*



## J

### **Jade Emperor**

**Also known as:** Yu Huang Da Di

**Origin:** China

The Jade Emperor is the spirit at the very pinnacle of the Chinese pantheon, the celestial emperor, ruler of the world. As perhaps befitting someone so high up, he is a distant, remote figure. Taoism envisions Heaven as a bureaucracy; the Jade Emperor its chief official. The Jade Emperor is the boss. He has final say in all matters. He is the organizer of the universe. However, once he had organized order from the prior chaos, he left the mundane matters of everyday life in the charge of lesser spirits.

The Jade Emperor is the divine equivalent of China's Emperor, ruling over lesser deities in the same way that the Emperor rules over local leaders. The Jade Emperor keeps track of each human life on Earth via a broad bureaucratic network of lesser spirits, as for instance, the Kitchen God.

His Chinese name technically translates as "Superior Emperor." The reference to jade is a metaphor: jade is perceived as the most perfect, precious substance. The Jade Emperor is believed to have once been a prince in ancient China, deified after death. Since approximately the eighth century, he has been regarded as the Emperor of all Spirits. Emperors of the Sung Dynasty (960–1279 CE) encouraged this spiritual tradition in order to strengthen and legitimize their own imperial authority.

**Time:** Between the twenty-fourth day of the final month of the Chinese lunar calendar and New Year's Day, all spirits must visit the Jade Emperor in order to present their annual report.

**See also:** *Green Jade Mother; Hsi Wang Mu; Kitchen God; Kwan Kung;*

*Lady Horsehead; Lieu Hanh; T'ai Shan, Lord of; Weaving Maiden*

## **Jade Maidens**

**Origin:** China

The Jade Maidens serve as celestial attendants to Hsi Wang Mu, Queen Mother of the West. Their home is in her Western Paradise. These beautiful musicians are also goddesses in their own right. Among their many functions:

- They are the Western Mother's trusted messengers.
- They serve the peaches of immortality.
- They serve as priestesses and altar maidens during celestial rites.
- They guard sacred texts.
- They witness oaths for spirits and for people.
- They are practitioners and teachers of sacred dance, music, and song.
- They write out charms and amulets for people.
- They teach magical, alchemical, and spiritual arts.

The Jade Maidens interact with both men and women. They enter into sacred marriages, blessing, protecting, and offering esoteric instruction to their human partners. They epitomize the ideal woman: beautiful, charming, brilliant, spiritually powerful. Incredible adepts, they are not somber spirits, but funny, witty, playful, and often irreverent.

**See also:** *Ho Hsien-Ko; Hsi Wang Mu; Huli Jing; Lady White; Ma Gu*

## **Jahi**

*The Harlot; The Whore*

**Origin:** Mesopotamia

Jahi is a primordial spirit who may have begun her incarnation as a Creatrix. Jahi is the first goddess and the first woman. She emerged from the void, then brought forth a serpent from herself. She and the snake

made love, conceiving the whole world. That first sexual encounter with the serpent caused menstruation. (In some parts of the world, the phrase “bitten by a snake” remains a euphemism for menstruation, especially a girl’s first period.) So in addition to the universe in general, Jahi is specifically credited with inventing snakes, sex, and menstruation.

Once upon a time, a really long time ago, she was considered the holiest of the holy. But times change, and Jahi was reappraised. Much of what is documented about her derives from the perspective of Zoroastrian holy texts in whose context she is considered among the worst of the worst. Zoroastrianism describes Jahi as the Demon of Lasciviousness, the cause of menstruation; a “polluting whore” whose temptations must be resisted. She is the consort of Ahriman, the dreaded spirit of destruction. Although she is no longer considered the creator of the universe or a celestial power, Zoroastrianism still assigns Jahi dominion over menstruation and sex (especially illicit sex or sexual acts perceived as polluting).

Jahi is the spirit of flesh and fluids. To comprehend Zoroastrian disapproval of Jahi, one must appreciate that she is a spirit of wet dampness in the context of a spiritual tradition that deifies and venerates fire. Jahi is described as offending fire. Her presence threatens to diminish or extinguish it.

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*The resemblance of Jahi’s name to at least some of the names ascribed to the Jewish god is impossible to ignore. Many also perceive resemblances between Jahi’s myth and the biblical story of the Garden of Eden.*

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Jahi is the primordial mother. Those exploring women’s mysteries or specifically menstrual magic and mysteries may invoke her sponsorship and assistance.

**Manifestation:** Jahi is moist: her vagina is wet and/or bloody; she perspires; her ringlets are described as dripping, whether water or sweat; she may be felt as a damp emanation. She is an intensely yin spirit.

**Planet:** Moon

**Element:** Water

**Color:** Red

**See also:** *Eurynome; Hsi Wang Mu; Jezi baba; Kurukulla; Nyx; Xochiquetzal*

## **Jambhala**

**Also known as:** Dzambala

**Origin:** Tibet

It's very hard to focus on spirituality if you're hungry or worrying about having enough money to pay the rent. Although some ascetics abandon all worldly possessions, they are the exception, not the rule. The average person may find that worldly concerns (food, shelter, medicine, bills, survival) get in the way of pursuing a spiritual path. That's where Jambhala comes to the rescue.

Jambhala, sometimes called the Wealth Giving Buddha, provides for one's physical needs so that you can focus on your soul. Theoretically, at least, Jambhala does not provide wealth for wealth's sake, but so that you can live a better, more elevated, highly spiritual existence. (Orthodox versions of his legend suggest that Jambhala only helps those pursuing a Buddhist path; however, Jambhala is an extremely popular spirit and many non-Buddhists or casual Buddhists testify to his generosity and assistance.)

The name *Jambhala* derives from *jambhara*, the Tibetan name for the citron fruit (*Citrus medica*), symbol of wealth and fertility. Jambhala's origins are subject to debate:

- Jambhala is a pre-Buddhist Tibetan spirit incorporated into the Buddhist pantheon.
- Jambhala is Kubera, India's Lord of Wealth, incorporated into the Buddhist pantheon.
- Jambhala is an emanation of a Bodhisattva, for instance, a wealth-giving path of Avalokiteshvara.

- Jambhala is an emanation of the Buddha who realized that hunger and poverty prevented so many from pursuing the Dharma and sought to remedy the situation.

One legend explains that Buddha Shakyamuni was trying to meditate when he was interrupted by a demon. Jambhala spontaneously appeared to divert the demon. Buddha was so impressed by his bravery and initiative that he asked whether Jambhala would like to serve as a Dharma Protector, and so Jambhala joined the Buddhist pantheon.

Jambhala bestows fertility in addition to wealth and material comforts.

**Attribute:** All aspects of Jambhala are identified with the citron fruit.

**Sacred animal:** The gem-spitting mongoose is associated with all manifestations of Jambhala. Precious gems emanate endlessly from the mongoose's mouth (variously described as vomiting or spitting) in the same manner that Jambhala causes wealth to flow toward you. The mongoose also indicates Jambhala's victory over the Nagas, who are wealth-bestowing spirits, too.

**Offerings:** Offer water daily; also good deeds and donations on behalf of the less fortunate and those no longer living

**Mantra:** The short version is:

*OM JAHM BA LA JA LEN DRA YA SO HA!*

Jambhala became extremely popular and eventually evolved into five distinct manifestations (who may actually be paths of other spirits). All forms of Jambhala bestow wealth but they do so in different fashion. Each also provides other gifts and blessings. Yellow Jambhala is particularly beloved.

- **Black Jambhala**, Chief of the five Jambhalas, is believed to be a path of Kubera, Lord of Wealth. Black Jambhala is recommended for ascetics and those who are really, truly poverty-stricken. He fulfills all wishes, providing they are benevolent and not harmful. (In other words, Black Jambhala will help you find a new home but will not help eliminate your present, evil landlord.) Black Jambhala eliminates illness,

resentment, rage, and criminal inclinations. He is a wrathful form of Jambhala depicted standing, surrounded by a ring of fire. His additional attribute is a cup formed from a skull.

- **Green Jambhala** bring success and victory in all matters. He helps overcome jealousy, envy, and has the power to stop bad omens from coming true. Green Jambhala is depicted in sexual union with his consort, Vasudhara (Yellow Tara). He has vowed to protect anyone who chants his name or mantra.
- **Red Jambhala** sometimes appears with an elephant's head. In addition to the wealth-spitting mongoose, his sacred creature is a mouse. Red Jambhala may be Ganesha incorporated into the Bud dhist pantheon. Red Jambhala is recommended for those already in possession of wealth and status. He helps keep business and finances healthy and assists in making advantageous contacts, contracts, and arrangements; he also helps overcome greed and attachment to the tangible and intangible benefits of wealth.
- **White Jambhala** is considered an emanation of Avalokiteshvara, born from the Bodhisattva's right eye. White Jambhala may also be identified with White Tara. White Jambhala rides a turquoise dragon. His additional attribute is a bar of gold. White Jambhala is a wrathful form of Jambhala, manifested by his flame-like hair. White Jambhala helps accumulate wealth and merit and stimulates generous and charitable impulses. He also helps transcend material and emotional attachments. White Jambhala may be invoked to eliminate illness, impurity, and poverty. He can avert disaster and illness before they occur.
- **Yellow Jambhala**, the most beloved Jambhala, known as the "Wealth Buddha," blesses people with prosperity and abundance so that they are free from material concerns and may focus on spirituality instead. If you chant his name or mantra, he allegedly provides protection as well as financial support.

**See also:** *Avalokitesvara; Bodhisattava; Bon Spirits; Buddha; Eight Dharma Protectors; Ganesha; Hariti; Kubera; Naga; Tara, White; Tara, Yellow* and the Glossary entries for *Mantra* and *Path*.

## **Janaina**

### *Queen of the Sea*

**Also known as:** Dona Janaina (literally Lady Janaina)

**Origin:** Brazil

**Classification:** Mermaid

Janaina is a beautiful Brazilian mermaid. She is not a killer mermaid but a benevolent one who protects people who fish, as well as travelers on the sea. She responds to petitions from the person in need as well as from others on their behalf. (So if you're worried about someone on a boat, you can invoke Janaina's aid from dry land.)

Janaina is often identified with Iemanja, and their names may be used interchangeably but they are not exactly the same. Iemanja manifests in different forms; Janaina is consistently a mermaid. The name *Janaina* may be used to describe Iemanja when she manifests in mermaid form but not necessarily in other forms. Although the two spirits are now deeply intertwined, they were initially two distinct spirits, with Janaina an indigenous Brazilian mermaid. She is often evoked in songs of Capoeira (Afro-Brazilian dance/martial art/spiritual tradition).

**Manifestation:** A beautiful, bejeweled mermaid with long hair and a blue fish tail

**Iconography:** Usually as a mermaid; her name is sometimes attached to the image of the Stella Maris, which depicts a woman rising from the sea.

**Color:** Blue

**Offerings:** Flowers (place them on an altar or on the shore; toss them nicely into the sea); combs; mirrors; gifts evoking the sea

**See also:** *Dandalunda; Mermaid; Stella Maris; Yemaya*

## **Janguli**

Janguli is an ancient snake goddess venerated by shamanic tribes in the region of Northern India and Nepal. Janguli, Mistress of Snakes, protects against snakebite and all poison. Too powerful to ignore and too valuable to demonize, she has since been absorbed into the Hindu and Buddhist pantheons:

- She is sometimes considered a Tantric form of White Tara, thus making her a Bodhisattva or Buddha.
- She is sometimes counted among the Mahavidyas, Hinduism's Wisdom Goddesses.

Janguli's image is believed to provide protection from snakes. Amulets bearing her name or image are believed to help protect against poison, including food poisoning.

**Manifestation:** She may appear as a woman holding a white snake, or she may be a woman from the waist up and a white snake below. She is intensely linked to white snakes; there will be one with her somehow. Alternatively, a white snake may be sufficient to indicate her presence. She may also appear in her iconographic form.

**Iconography:** Janguli is depicted in Buddhist and Hindu images as having three faces and six arms. Buddhist images show her forming the mudra of protection. She wears a snake crown or a snake may wreath her head.

**Attribute:** Lotus, veena (musical instrument)

**Color:** White

**Sacred creatures:** Snakes and peacocks, both of which serve as her mount

**Offerings:** Images of snakes and peacocks, peacock feathers (used in Himalayan traditional medicine to heal snakebite)

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*Janguli bears a close resemblance to Benten and Sarasvati. Some perceive them to be the same spirit operating under different names; others just perceive them as closely related soul-sister-spirits.*



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**See also:** *Benten; Bodhisattva; Buddha; Lady White; Sarasvati; Tara, White*

## **Janus**

*Lord of Beginnings*

**Also known as:** Giano; Dianus

**Origin:** Roman region

**Feast:** 1 January

Janus is the two-faced spirit, but in the most positive sense of that term. Janus literally has two faces, indicating his power to see from all directions and perspectives. He sees the past and future simultaneously. Janus is a guardian and protector.

Janus is among the most ancient and significant deities of the Roman pantheon. He was in the Roman region long before the Romans arrived. Before the arrival of Jupiter, he may have been the preeminent male spirit. Officially superseded by Jupiter within the context of the Roman pantheon, Janus retained his right to be first.

Similar to modern traditions involving Eshu Elegbara, Janus is the first spirit invoked before any invocations, sacrifices, or offerings made to other Roman deities. Jupiter then follows as “king,” followed by whomever else might be invoked.

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*The Roman Temple of Janus had double doors, known as the Gates of War. The temple was a visible symbol of peace or war. When there was peace throughout Rome, the doors of his temple were shut. This was a rare occurrence.*

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In 153 BCE, the Romans changed their calendar, moving the New Year from the spring equinox to 1 January, the feast day of Janus, Spirit of Beginnings. With one face, Janus looks back on the old year; with the other he looks forward to the new. Roman New Year's rituals incorporating the feast of Janus lasted for six days of joyous, raucous celebrating. Festivities included drinking, feasting, and decorating homes and buildings with holly, mistletoe, and lights.

- Invoke Janus when you wish to begin anew, when you need to make a fresh start.
- Invoke him before beginning new projects, ventures, and relationships.
- Invoke him to understand the past.

**Favored people:** Diviners; he seems to like pretty women, too.

**Iconography:** Janus has two faces: one looking forward, the other back. Sometimes one face is young; the other old.

**Consort:** His original consort seems to have been Jana (Diana), but he was eventually paired with Juturna.

**Sacred site:** The Janiculum Hill in Western Rome, center of his veneration

**Tree:** Oak

**Number:** 1

**Time:** The month of January is dedicated to Janus.

**Offerings:** His traditional Roman offering was whole-grain farro wheat mixed with salt; also *Iannual*, a type of *focaccia* (flat, oven-baked Italian bread) made with flour, eggs, oil, and cheese served during rituals thanking Janus for providing a bountiful harvest.

**See also:** *Diana; Eshu Elegbara; Jupiter; Juturna*

## **Jari-Mari**

**Origin:** India

Jari-Mari is a fiery spirit of fever. She is associated with all illnesses that feature elevated temperatures, but especially smallpox, perhaps because it is the most dreaded. Fevers are understood as a sign of visitation from the goddess or even as spirit possession.

Do not react with dismay, anger, or displeasure at her arrival. It makes matters worse. The goal is not to antagonize her but to appease and propitiate her. If she is challenged, the results may be fatal: she is a killer spirit, but she does not lack mercy and can be persuaded to do no harm and go away, especially if her victim is a child.

Jari-Mari's mercy, blessings and favor are invoked when someone burns with fever, especially children. (It is understood that someone else will perform invocations and rituals on behalf of the one suffering Jari-Mari's fiery touch.) Her name is a euphemism for a word translated as "Evil Force." She sometimes resembles sister smallpox spirit, Sitala. Jari-Mari, too, roams the countryside riding a donkey, but their propitiatory offerings are very different. Sitala has transcended the status of disease demon, bestowing gifts and blessings on those she favors. Jari-Mari is almost exclusively identified with illness: her blessing is not killing you or not causing long-lasting harm. If she leaves quickly with no damage done, her victims are understood to have received her blessings and mercy. It is traditional, in this circumstance, to wear or carry talismans honoring her as a sign of respect, gratitude, and acknowledgment.

**Manifestation:** Jari-Mari appears as a woman riding a donkey, its saddlebags laden with illness. She may walk through urban areas on her own feet, carrying a big shoulder bag or backpack. Without a pack animal's help, she may be particularly inclined to dump the contents.

**Iconography:** No need to bring her into your home willingly. Should the need arise, a stone smeared with paste made from powdered vermilion and turmeric serves as her image.

**Altar:** Permanent altars to Jari-Mari are not placed in the home. Erect a temporary one after she has arrived. Altars to keep her away if threat is imminent are placed outside, ideally beneath neem or banyan trees.

**Spirit ally:** Jari-Mari is frequently accompanied by the fever demon, Jvarasura.

**Ritual:** Jari-Mari is a raging hot, wrathful spirit. Sing to her to calm her down. Songs are directed to the afflicted person, as that's where Jari-Mari is to be found. You'll know when she's calmed down because the fever will diminish or break. If the fever spikes, you're singing the wrong song.

**Color:** Red

**Sacred tree:** Neem

**Offerings:** Red flowers, turmeric powder, vermilion powder, candy, and sweets; cinnamon candy like Red Hots; red sari; red silk fabric or other luxurious crimson cloth; bridal finery (Hindu brides traditionally wear red, not white, which is perceived as a color of death and mourning); cinnabar is not traditional but, as it is red, sacred, and used in Chinese and Himalayan folk magic to reduce heat, it may be worth a shot.

**See also:** *Babalu Ayé; Daruma; Mariamman; Sitala*

## Jezebel

*She Who Shows Herself in the Golden Moon*

**Origin:** Mashona (Zimbabwe)

If you see the reflection of the moon shining golden on the surface of a lake, then you've seen Jezebel, Spirit of Abundance and Fertility. She has the power to increase cattle, crops and children (or prevent their increase, as she will.) Her most famous myth recalls her rejection of human sacrifice.

**Planet:** Moon, especially a big golden full moon

**Sacred animal:** Cow

## Jezebel

Jezebel, as recounted in the Old Testament's First and Second Book of Kings, is the Phoenician princess and priestess of Asherah who was

married to Ahab, King of the Northern Kingdom of Israel (circa 872–851 BCE). Her name may be interpreted as meaning “Woman of Ba’al” or “Where is his High ness?” referring to a myth of Ba’al. (It may be interpreted in less flattering ways, too.)

The bible portrays Jezebel as the active and direct opponent of the passionate monotheist, Elijah the Prophet. Jezebel is vilified for persecuting Jewish prophets and for allegedly encouraging Israelite veneration of Asherah. (The possibility that Israelites were already worshipping Asherah without Jezebel’s help is discussed in Raphael Patai’s groundbreaking book, *The Hebrew Goddess*.) Jezebel notoriously persuaded her husband to seize a vineyard he coveted after the vineyard’s owner refused to sell it.

For many, Jezebel epitomizes the archetypal “evil queen.” Conventional Jewish wisdom suggests that she was a powerful witch who led Ahab astray although there are occasional moderating voices (even the Talmud describes Jezebel as sometimes very charitable). The bible describes Jezebel’s death and comeuppance in gruesome detail but like her New Testament compatriot, Herodias, Queen of Judea, Jezebel’s spirit continues to evoke dread, disgust, and also veneration. She is a charismatic spirit of witchcraft and woman’s wiles.

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*As the royal priestess of Asherah and a queen, Jezebel may have perceived herself as an avatar of a goddess (Asherah, Astarte, and/or Anat) in the same manner that Cleopatra identified herself with Aphrodite and Isis.*

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The name Jezebel appears a second time in biblical sources, this time in the Book of Revelation (2:20). Yet another woman named Jezebel is accused of falsely calling herself a prophetess while seducing people toward idolatry and fornication.

Over the centuries, the name “Jezebel” has developed intensely erotic overtones, possibly deriving from this biblical second coming of Jezebel and/or because of associations of Semitic goddess religions with sacred

prostitution. “Jezebel” has transcended its status as a name and evolved into a word indicating a sexually autonomous woman. Although also used to sell cosmetics and lingerie, it is most often used as a pejorative, especially by those who would seek to control women’s sexuality. To describe a woman as a “painted jezebel” is essentially to call her a slut. The Merriam-Webster dictionary defines “jezebel” as “an impudent, shameless, and morally unrestrained woman.” To demonstrate how deeply the word “jezebel” has permeated language, *The New English-Polish and Polish-English Kosciuszko Foundation Dictionary*, published in 2005, translates the Polish word “Rozpustnica” as “jezebel”, “harlot” and “notorious sinner”. (“Rozpustnica” is translated elsewhere as “libertine”.)

Not surprisingly, Jezebel has emerged as a spirit of sex, dominance, and women’s power. Whether this is positive or negative depends upon the eyes of the beholders. Jezebel is venerated by some, used by others and actively opposed by still others.

Amongst Neo-Pagans and Judeo-Pagans, Jezebel is venerated as a powerful and complex spirit: the epitome of one who will not be cowed by opposition or convention. In folk magic traditions like Hoodoo, Jezebel is respected as a spirit who gets things done and who successfully exerts her will. She is not necessarily considered evil but is an amoral spirit.

In Hoodoo tradition, the root of a species of iris flower is known as “Jezebel root” because it is used in magic spells to get one’s way or desire, regardless of obstacles or odds. (The simplest Jezebel root spell involves holding a root in one’s left hand while focusing intensely on one’s desire. Maintain that concentrated focus for a sufficient length of time and then bury the root in Earth, confident that one’s wish will come true. More Jezebel root spells may be found in Judika Illes’ *Encyclopedia of 5000 Spells*.)

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*The notion that an ageless, eternal spirit may assume many human bodies and names is not uncommon. In the 2007 biographical film, Vampira: The Movie, performance artist and horror hostess, Maila “Vampira” Nurmi*

(1921–2008) describes the *Vampira* spirit as a timeless force who has been animated in “many carcasses”.

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In conservative Christian circles, Jezebel remains an active and notorious evil spirit although she has transcended her ties to the biblical queen. A primordial “Jezebel spirit” existed before the queen and survived her death. This spirit is an incorporeal force that works through women’s bodies but is not restricted to them. Thus, the name appears twice in the Bible, attached to different women: the Jezebel spirit is a possessing spirit who takes over women’s bodies and minds.

Author Francis Frangipane in his 1994 book, *The Jezebel Spirit* associates Jezebel with obsessive sensuality, unbridled witchcraft, and hatred for male authority. His Jezebel spirit operates through women who seek dominance and do not behave modestly or humble themselves before male authority. In accordance with Hoodoo sources, this Jezebel spirit is a spirit who craves control.

The Jezebel spirit may simultaneously possess many women: hordes, in fact. According to Christian sources, the Jezebel spirit is sneaky and manipulative. The most dangerous Jezebel spirit is not the one who is openly a harlot or witch but the one who disguises herself as a good Christian in order to infiltrate and undermine. She inevitably reveals her true identity, however, by her need for attention and control and by her sensuous nature. The woman harboring a Jezebel spirit will seek public attention, desire to lead prayer groups, and publicly interpret scripture all for ultimately nefarious purposes. This Jezebel spirit is not obscure but a popular topic and concern. Among the *many* other books she has inspired are Steve Sampson’s 2003 *Confronting Jezebel: Discerning and Defeating the Spirit of Control*; John Paul Jackson’s 2002 *Unmasking the Jezebel Spirit*; Jonas Clark’s 1998 *Jezebel, Seducing Goddess of War*, and Don Richter’s 2005 *Overcoming the Attack of the Jezebel Spirit*. Exorcism rituals are conducted to expel this Jezebel spirit.

**Manifestation:** Regardless of whether she is venerated or opposed, all agree that Jezebel is charismatic and beautiful.

**Iconography:** A Hebrew seal (controversially) identified as having belonged to biblical Queen Jezebel depicts a sphinx with a woman's face, similar to images of Egyptian female pharaoh Hatshepsut. In terms of popular culture, references to Jezebel in books, movies, advertising, and song are literally *countless*.

**Spirit allies:** Jezebel may be venerated alongside Lady Asherah of the Sea, Astarte, Anat, Ba'al, Kadesh, the sphinx, and possibly Lilith and Herodias.

**Plant:** Jezebel root (*Iris fulva*; *I. foliosa*; *I. hexagona*; *I. tectorum*)

**Altar:** Her altar or her images may be placed beside a window, looking out.

**Offerings:** In view of the saying "painted jezebel", it may be presumed that Jezebel enjoys fine cosmetics and perfume; also incense and, in honor of that vineyard, Israeli wine.

**See also:** *Anat; Aphrodite; Arsinoë II; Asherah; Astarte; Ba'al; Herodias; Isis; Kadesh; Lilith; Sphinx* and the Glossary entry for *Avatar* and *Seals and Sigils*

## Jezebaba

Jezebaba literally means "Granny Witch." This witch goddess seems to be Baba Yaga's Czech sister. Like Baba Yaga, Jezebaba lives in a little hut in the forest but hers is on the shores of a lake and may be constructed of regular building materials not human bones. Her personality is somewhat milder than Baba Yaga's too: she's not quite as scary. Although she can be fierce, Jezebaba is generally a helpful witch, if you address her kindly and respectfully. Devotees request her assistance with love and fertility. Jezebaba is an herbal expert. She may be petitioned to oversee magical and/or herbal studies. Request her blessing over love potions to increase their effectiveness and ask for her help finding the best possible herbs for healing purposes.

Jezebaba may be an incarnation of the ancient Semitic deity, Jahi, female ruler of menstrual power, now demoted to a cottage in the



woods. Jezibaba's children are the Jezinky, sometimes hostile cave-dwelling spirits. Some scholars think the Jezinky are really Djinn.

Jezibaba stars in Antonin Dvorak's 1901 opera *Rusalka*.

**Realm:** Forest

**Element:** Water

**See also:** *Baba Yaga; Djinn: Jahi; Rusalka*

## **Jingu, Empress**

**Also known as:** Okinaga-tarashi-hime

**Origin:** Japan

Jingu is a legendary Japanese empress now venerated as a kami. There are varying versions of her life; little documentation exists regarding this era in history. Empress Jingu lived sometime between the second and fourth centuries CE. In all versions of her myth, she is a warrior queen with tremendous shamanic power, described as being divinely possessed.

She may have been the consort of an Emperor of Japan. When she advised him that the kami desired him to invade Korea, he scoffed, telling her he had more crucial affairs to take care of at home. He died shortly after, which Jingu interpreted as a sign from the spirits. She seized the reigns of power and led the invasion herself.

Alternatively, Empress Jingu is identified as Himiko, Japan's Shaman Queen. According to Chinese documents, Empress Himiko ruled over more than thirty states from approximately 180 to 248 CE, unifying a large part of what is now modern Japan. Himiko was a warrior and a shaman in constant communication with the spirits. She never married; her brother helped her rule.

Empress Jingu may be the spirit who inspired beautiful Hina Daruma dolls, which may be used to represent her on an altar. Hina Daruma dolls are constructed similarly to Daruma tumbler dolls and are believed to provide good fortune for all, especially children. Stroking the doll activates it and enables you to receive its blessings. Hina Daruma is

typically accompanied by a handsome prince doll. (They are often but not always sold in pairs.) Depending on the version of her myth, this male doll may be her son, brother or consort.

Empress Jingu has dominion over divination. She is considered a Koyasuga, a spirit who protects pregnancy, childbirth and children. She may be petitioned for fertility. She may be petitioned for virtually anything. Petition Empress Jingu for victory, whether in love, business, war or life in general. She provides abundance and good luck to devotees. She remains an active shaman in the afterlife and will communicate with and sponsor spirit mediums.

**Manifestation:** She is sometimes described as wearing red armor although she presumably has an extensive wardrobe.

**Iconography:** Hina Daruma dolls may represent Empress Jingu. Hina Daruma dolls are beautiful princess tumbler dolls created in the style of traditional Daruma tumblers. Many are extremely ornate; fit for a princess. The ritual of painting in eyes is not done with Hina Daruma.

**Shrines:** Empress Jingu is enshrined throughout Japan especially at Kei no Myojin and Awashima.

**Offerings:** Mirrors; dolls; shiny pretty things; she was a queen and expects luxuries or at least fine quality; replicas of female breasts are traditional when requesting assistance with pregnancy or childbirth; traditional Japanese images are sold in shrines; milagros in the form of breasts may be acceptable, too.

**See also:** *Awashima; Daruma; Hachiman; Sukunahiko* and the Glossary entry for *Milagro*

## **Jizo**

*Earth Treasure; Womb of the Earth*

**Classification:** Bodhisattva; Bosatsu

The Bodhisattva Ksitigarbha arrived in Japan with Buddhism in the eighth century but became exceedingly popular in the tenth. At some

point, the female Ksitigarbha transformed into the male Jizo and began manifesting very differently. Jizo is no remote Bodhisattva but a beloved spirit of folk religion, guardian of the population at large. Although scholars and devout traditional Buddhists consider Jizo just a local name for Ksitigarbha, this is not necessarily a connection recognized by all devotees. Many assume that Jizo is an indigenous Japanese Kami.

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*Jizo is an excellent patron for those who fear spirits: kind and loving and never, ever frightening not even to the most timid children. If someone is described as having a 'Jizo face', it means they're full of smiles.*

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Jizo is the guardian of dead souls and the special protector of children. He may be petitioned for fertility and spiritual, emotional or physical healing. He protects against all forces of evil, regardless of origin. Jizo is a font of mercy and compassion but Jizo lacks fear. Invoke him against your worst nightmare; Jizo will not be cowed in the least.

Jizo's unique sacred function is to save souls of children from the less pleasant aspects of the Afterlife. Jizo patrols the gateways to the Realms of Death, keeping his eye peeled for any babies or children. When he spies them, he quickly slips them into his long sleeves in order to hide them from demons out trawling for souls. Jizo is also invoked to protect living children, guarding against all dangers and healing any illness.

Jizo also protects against fire; locates lost valuables and may be invoked to interpret dreams and omens.

**Favored people:** Everyone, living or dead but especially children and babies; pregnant women; fire fighters; fortune tellers; mediums; travelers and pilgrims

**Manifestation:** Jizo appears in different forms in his quest to alleviate suffering but most frequently as a monk. Jizo is usually but not always male. (At least one path, Koyasu Jizo or Birth-Giving Jizo, appears in female form.) Jizo may also manifest in the form of a cat.

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*Jizo is the protector of anyone who feels pain. Anyone can request and receive his help and blessings. However, his special role is as guardian of babies including those stillborn and those who were never born; whether because of abortion or miscarriage. Jizo does not judge or even distinguish between the two situations. His sacred purpose is to relieve suffering, not increase it. Any mother may request his protection for the child she has lost for any reason.*

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**Iconography:** Jizo's traditional Japanese iconography is unique, easily recognizable and does not resemble that of Ksitigarbha. (Images of Ksitigarbha may be used to represent Jizo but Jizo does not represent Ksitigarbha.) The most basic image is a simple geometric depiction of Jizo as a bald monk; eyes often closed in meditation; his hands may be held in prayer. Some Jizo statues resemble small, round children. Others are extremely phallic in appearance.

Mizuko Jizo is a path of Jizo usually portrayed as a monk holding a baby in his arms and with at least one small child at his feet, clutching his robe. Place this image on a home altar or in a cemetery to serve as a baby's memorial (born or unborn.) *Mizuko* literally translates as 'Water Baby'

**Sacred animals:** Cat, wolf

**Number:** 6 (representing the six realms of incarnation and indicating that Jizo can help anyone trapped anywhere on the Wheel of Life.)

Traditional Buddhist cosmology divides existence into six realms:

1. The Hell Realms (the Afterlife where dead souls are purified)
2. The Hungry Ghost Realm
3. The Animal Realm
4. The Realm of the Spirits (understood as Demi-Gods; Ashuras or similar)
5. The Realm of the Deities (Gods or Devas)

## 6. The Human Realm

**Rituals:** Small pieces of children's clothing are attached to statues of Jizo to help him care for souls of children whose clothes have been taken by Datsueba.

**Feast:** the 24<sup>th</sup> day of the 6<sup>th</sup> month of the Japanese lunar calendar. His feast is associated with many rituals especially those associated with the dead:

- It is an auspicious day for séances or any sort of divination to contact the dead
- Climb Japan's sacred Mount Osore ("Mount Fear"), a dormant volcano, allegedly a gateway to the Realm of Death and the location of many statues of Jizo. Offer each statue special rice dumplings. Women who have lost children heap small stones in the shape of a stupa (a mound-like shape).

**Shrines:** Jizo has many shrines throughout Japan as well as in Hawaii. However, any statue of Jizo is innately a shrine, particularly larger statues. Small stone statues of Jizo placed at crossroads and boundaries serve as roadside shrines

**Altars:** Jizo is usually venerated with one solitary image or in groups of six images (however some shrines contain huge groupings of Jizo statues). His image is frequently placed outside to serve as a guardian but may be maintained on a home altar, too.

**Offerings:** Incense; rice; tea; water; stones; good deeds; charitable acts; red bibs or baby bonnets attached to his image; vows traditionally involve a pilgrimage to his shrine.

**See also:** *Amida Buddha; Datsueba; Enma; Inari; Kings of Hell; Ksitigarbha; Kwan Yin*

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*Jizo is the spirit whose statue is desecrated at the beginning of the Japanese horror movie, The Locker. Although he is not named, images of Jizo are ever present in the Japanese anime series, Hell Girl. His image provides solace and*

*protection in the 1989 Japanese film, Black Rain.*

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## Joan the Wad

### **Classification:** Pixie

Joan the Wad is the Queen of Cornwall's Pixies and the subject of an old rhyme:

*Good fortune will nod  
If you carry upon you Joan the Wad*

Based on that verbal charm, there is now a thriving cottage industry in Joan the Wad lucky charms: pocket pieces, jewelry and small statues. Door knockers in her form invoke Joan as a protective guardian spirit. Carrying Joan's image allegedly brings healing, romantic happiness and good luck. Many credit her with lottery wins.

To modern ears, *Wad* sounds like a physical description and, in fact, Joan is often depicted as small and squat. However, *wad* is also an archaic, colloquial term for torch and so she is Joan the Torch. The King of the Pixies, possibly Joan's consort, is Jack O'Lantern. The two may be considered will o' the wisps as well as Pixies. Joan's light leads the way to happiness, safety, good fortune and good health. Al though other will o' the wisps are described luring the unwary to their doom; Joan is perceived as a benevolent, generous spirit.

**Iconography:** Although Pixies are described as wearing green, Joan is often depicted naked.

**Element:** Fire and water (Joan is associated with sacred wells as are Pixies, in general)

**See also:** *Pixies*

## Jotun

**Also known as:** Giants; Etn

## **Origin:** Norse

The Norse term *Jotun* is traditionally translated as “Giant” as in the giants who lurch through fairy tales, like the one in *Jack and the Beanstalk*. Fairy tale giants are crude, often blood thirsty and usually not too bright. The Jotuns are far more complex, playing significant but contradictory, mysterious parts in Norse mythology.

The very first being in the cosmos was the frost-giant, Ymir. Jotuns emanated from parts of his body. The first deities (Odin and his brothers) destroyed Ymir, grinding his corpse up in a mill and fashioning the universe from it. The Jotuns are enemies of the Aesir but also their parents, teachers, lovers and spouses. Unlike the Aesir spirits, the Jotuns are permanent and eternal: spirits who are destined to survive the apocalyptic battle Ragnarok are at least half Jotun.

Norse mythology was not written down until the 13<sup>th</sup> century; its scribes were mainly Christianscholars who identified and empathized with the Aesir gods and so Norse mythology is re-told from their perspective. The Jotuns were the enemies of the Aesir and so come off badly: other names for them include trolls and ogres. Female Jotuns are called troll-hags and ogresses, both words eventually synonyms for “witch.”

Jotuns are wild, nocturnal beings, identified with ice, stone and hailstones. They hurl boulders and hailstones as weapons.

**Manifestation:** Male Jotuns are stereotypically depicted as ugly, fierce, harsh and haggard; but many giantesses are very beautiful in a huge, wild, powerful kind of way. Female giants manifest as fierce hags but also as beautiful warriors and nurturing mothers. Jotuns generally are master shape-shifters; favored forms include eagles and wolves.

**Realm:** *Jotunheim* (literally *Giant's Home*), a mountainous, freezing, harsh realm. Many, if not all, Jotuns may originally have been mountain spirits.

**See also:** *Aesir; Angerboda; Gerda; Grid; Gunlod; Heimdall; Skadi; Thor; Vanir*

## **Juni-Sama**

*Mrs. Twelve*

**Origin:** Japan

Juni-Sama is a mountain goddess who annually gives birth to twelve children. Those twelve children represent the twelve months in a solar calendar and so Juni-Sama births the year. If she was ever a creation goddess, those myths are forgotten. Instead Juni-Sama is treasured for her ability to conceive and deliver easily. She births those twelve children every year effortlessly; Juni-Sama's blessings are thus sought for human women, too.

Juni-Sama is believed to ensure easy labor and childbirth but she must be asked. If labor was difficult or extended, it was once traditional for the father or other relative to lead a horse towards the direction of a mountain to summon her. (Any mountain; it doesn't have to be a specific mountain. Whether she was once associated with a specific peak, she is now a spirit who dwells in mountains in general.) Juni-Sama would ride back on the horse and hopefully successfully take charge of the delivery.

Few people now have horses. It's unknown whether Juni-Sama will deign to ride in a car or on a bike or scooter. It may be easier to have her image substitute for her.

Allegedly, hanging a scroll depicting the mountain spirit near a laboring woman's bedside offers protection and relief. (The image may also be used in the same way during pregnancy.) Her blessings thus are available to everyone, even those far away from mountains.

**Iconography:** Juni-Sama holds a rice spoon in her right hand. (Phallic symbol? You bet.)

## **Juno**

*Queen of Heaven*

**Also known as:** Uni



**Origin:** Etruscan; Italian; Latin

Juno is the Queen of the Roman region. She is an ancient spirit who preceded the Romans in the area; they may have received her from the Etruscans or one of the Italian tribes. In her earliest incarnation, Juno was the Spirit of Time, in charge of organizing the orderly division of time. In this capacity, she rules the menstrual cycle, the earliest calendar. Matron and protector of women, Juno is involved in every stage of female life, from first breath to the last. Her particular concerns are marriage and fertility. Juno epitomizes womanpower, whatever the female equivalent of virility would be called.

Women were expected to honor Juno each year on the occasion of their birthdays. According to Roman tradition, during the week following a birth, a table laden with offerings honoring Juno was kept in the new child's home.

Juno can heal any illness but is specifically associated with those considered "women's illnesses" or anything to do with the specifically female parts of the body: breasts, reproductive organs. She bestows fertility or can help you not get pregnant, if that's your desire. She oversees romance, marriage and menopause and has the power to fulfill any request made by a devotee.

Juno has become identified with Greek Hera, as if Juno is merely another nation's name for Hera. Myths of Zeus and Hera are recounted with the names of Jupiter and Juno substituted. Hera and Juno do have many similarities and common concerns. However, they are not the same; their natures are quite different. Juno is not an abused, jealous wife. Juno is calm, regal, serene, and usually a very reasonable spirit. She is not as volatile as Hera.

**Favored people:** Women, children; men of military age (whether or not they're in the military); those born or married during her months, June and February or on one of her many feast days; Romans; Italians

**Iconography:** Depicted as a veiled woman bearing a flower in her right hand, holding an infant in her left.

**Animals:** Snakes; goats; wolves; Juno drives a chariot drawn by lions.

**Birds:** Peacocks, crows, and geese

**Tree:** Fig

**Flower:** Iris

**Planet:** The Moon; Juno has an asteroid named in her honor.

**Number:** 1; Juno's name derives from the same roots as the word *one*. (Think *universe*; *unicorn*; *unibrow*.)

**Sacrament:** Marriage

**Date:** The first day of each month is dedicated to her. Juno was celebrated throughout the traditional Roman calendar as the focus of several major festivals: her primary feast, celebrated 1 March, commemorates the founding of her temple on Rome's Esquiline Hill. Women journeyed to her temple, bearing gifts. Additional festivals in Juno's honor were held on 7 March and 7 July. See the list of Juno's paths below for more feast days.

**Sacred site:** Juno is the guardian of Rome and provides for its safety and well being

**Offerings:** (Traditionally made on the first day of each month) flowers; peacock feathers; Italian wine and mineral water; coins; flock of toy geese; cooked lamb or beef

#### **PATHS OF JUNO**

Over the centuries, Juno developed many paths, which may all be understood as the many facets of one great goddess. Alternatively, Juno may have absorbed veneration of what were once distinct, independent goddesses. The different paths were recognized and venerated independently by the Romans. One may celebrate all Juno's feasts and facets or any one in particular which resonates with you. The following are but a few of Juno's many aspects:

#### **JUNO FEBRUATA**

**Also known as:** Juno Februa

Juno the Purifier or Juno of the Fever of Love, presides over the month

of February, last month of the traditional Roman year, dedicated to spiritual cleansing and getting ready for the new year to come. The entire month was dedicated to her. Post-Christianity, Juno's February candle festival was transferred to Mary as the Feast of Candlemas.

**Feast:** 2 February

#### JUNO CAPROTINA

Juno Caprotina is Juno of the Wild Figs. Juno Caprotina dresses in goatskins and drives a chariot pulled by goats. Enslaved women made up a large proportion of her devotees.

**Feast:** 7 July, the Caprotinae, when free and slave women made offerings to her beneath wild fig trees outside Rome's city limits

#### JUNO COVELLA

Juno Covella is Juno of the Vault of the Heavens, spirit of the New Moon. The first day of each lunar month is marked by the appearance of the New Moon. Juno Covella presides over calendars. Lawrence Durdin-Robertson's 1982 publication, *Juno Covella: Perpetual Calendar of the Fellowship of Isis* is named in her honor.

**Sacred time:** Each New Moon

#### JUNO CURITIS

**Also known as:** Juno Quiritus

Juno Curitis is Juno of the Spear, the only spirit venerated by all thirty *curiae*, the military and administrative units introduced by Romulus. Juno Curitis also protects married women and promises them healthy babies. (Curitis may initially have been a Sabine deity eventually overshadowed and absorbed by Juno.)

**Sacred site:** Her temple was on the Field of Mars

**Offerings:** Wine, barley cakes

#### JUNO FLUONIA

Juno Fluonia halts menstrual flow. She is the matron of menopausal women.

## JUNO LUCINA

**Also known as:** Juno the Light-bringer; Juno Who Gives Birth

Juno Lucina is a childbirth spirit invoked by pregnant women. She guides the new baby down the dark birth canal into the light. Veneration of Juno Lucina may have been transferred to Saint Lucy.

**Feast:** 1 March, birthday of Mars, Juno's son

## JUNO LUPA

Juno Lupa, or Juno the Wolf, is partnered with Faunus; she is his match in every way. Juno Lupa presides over the Lupercalia. She may or may not be the wolf who nursed Romulus and Remus.

**Manifestation:** Juno Lupa may manifest as a she-wolf

**Feast:** 14 February, first day of the Lupercalia, Rome's festival of purification and fertility, shared with Faunus. (The festival technically began on the eve of February 14<sup>th</sup>; so at sunset on the 13<sup>th</sup>.) On February 14<sup>th</sup>, Juno and Faunus respond to women's pleas for fertility. The Lupercalia was officially banned in 494 CE but survived in secret for longer. Candlemas and Valentine's Day are among rituals intended to replace it.

## JUNO MATRONA

Juno Matrona is the presiding spirit of marriage, invoked by women and men for marital happiness.

**Feast:** 1 May

## JUNO MONETA

Juno Moneta is Juno the Warner. Moneta sounds financial now but originally derives from *Monere*, "to warn." In 390 BCE, the honking of Juno's temple geese alerted Rome to a surprise attack by the Gauls. Juno was credited with saving the city and the Roman mint was installed next to her temple, hence terms like monetary and money. Rome considered Juno's temple the safest place to store their money; she may be invoked to guard your treasures and finances, too.

**Sacred site:** The Temple of Juno Moneta, located on the highest summit of the Capitoline Hill, was dedicated in 344 BCE. The site is now

occupied by the Church of Santa Maria in Aracoeli.

**Feast:** 1 June

JUNO POPULONIA

Juno Populonia is Juno of the People. She is invoked to help increase protection by stimulating conception.

JUNO PRONUBA

Juno Pronuba helps women find good husbands. Marriage is Juno's sacrament; if you're having trouble fulfilling it, request her assistance

JUNO REGINA

Juno Regina is Juno the Queen

**Feasts:** 1 September, 13 September, and 23 December, anniversary of the dedication of her temple in the Circus Flaminius in 179 BCE.

JUNO SORORIA

Juno Sororia, or Sister Juno, sustains harmony between siblings.

**Feast:** 1 October

JUNO SOSPITA

Juno Sospita is Juno the Savior or Defender, Mother of Rome, and Matron Deity of the Republic. This is Juno in her warrior aspect. Juno Sospita was originally matron of the Latin settlement of Lanivium, incorporated into the Roman pantheon in 338 BCE.

**Iconography:** On Roman coins, dating from 105 BCE, Juno Sospita is depicted clad in goatskins complete with horns.

**Attributes:** Lance and shield

**Bird:** Crow

**Feast:** 1 February when sacrifices were made to her. Blindfolded young girls offered barley cakes to the sacred snakes residing in her grove at Larentum.

JUNO VIRIPLACA

Juno Viriplaca is invoked to settle arguments and heal rifts between

spouses. She is petitioned by women to eliminate or minimize the wrath of their husbands.

**See also:** *Black Madonna; Faunus; For tuna; Hera; Jupiter; Mars;* and the Glossary entry for *Path*

## Jupiter

**Also known as:** Deus Pater (“Sacred Father,” “God, the Father”); Iuppiter; Jove

**Origin:** Rome

Jupiter is the supreme deity of Rome, Lord of Light and ruler of the daytime. Jupiter was considered the head of the Roman pantheon; the divine equivalent of the Pater Familias, the Roman father who ruled his family and household as if he were god.

Jupiter is identified so closely with Greek Zeus that their names are sometimes used interchangeably; however they were initially distinct spirits. Jupiter is a dominating, imposing figure. He may have absorbed other male deities who now manifest as his various paths. (That may eventually have been what would have happened to Zeus had Paganism survived for longer.) Jupiter is the spirit of thunder, lightning and weather, withholding and bestowing rain and thus abundance and fertility. He presides over the Roman pantheon but is a remote figure compared to the beloved Mars and Juno who were actively involved in people’s lives.

**Favored people:** Romans; Italians; Jupiter has a soft spot for ladies.

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*During droughts, Rome’s noble women were sent barefoot up the steep slope of the Capitoline Hill to Jupiter’s temple, weeping (probably very genuinely and sincerely as their feet were undoubtedly bruised and bloody) and with unbound hair, begging him for rain. Allegedly, he always responded favorably.*

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**Manifestation:** Jupiter traditionally manifests as an imposing, virile bearded man.

The word *jovial* technically means Jove-like and indicates someone who is good-humored, convivial, inclined to make merry.

**Consort:** Juno (an earlier consort may have been Diana, Lady of the Night). As part of the Capitoline Triad, Jupiter has two consorts, Juno who sits to his left and Minerva who sits on his right. He had an affair with Juturna.

**Planet:** Jupiter

**Day:** Thursday (traditionally the day Romans refrained from working; their day off)

**Tree:** Walnut; the Latin name for the walnut species, *Juglans*, literally means Jupiter's nuts, double entendre intended

**Sacred days:** Jupiter was traditionally venerated at the ides of each month; the 13<sup>th</sup> day of each month except for March, May, July and October when the ides are celebrated on the 15<sup>th</sup>. He was also honored with festivals throughout the year.

- **1 January**, New Year's Day, day shared with Janus and Juno
- **22 April**, Feast of Jupiter and Juno
- **23 April**, the Vinalia: the first draught of wine stored from the previous autumn is offered as a libation to Jupiter
- **5 July**, the *Poplifugia*, the commemoration of "the day the population fled"
- **4–19 September**, games are celebrated in Jupiter's honor
- **13 November**, day shared with Juno, Minerva and Ferronia

**Sacred site:** Jupiter's Temple stood at the summit of the Capitoline Hill

**Petition:** Jupiter was traditionally addressed similar to this invocation: "*Jupiter, in making this offering to you, I request and sincerely pray that you will watch over me and be gracious to me, my children, my home and my entire household.*" (Wives were considered part of a man's household as were pets.)

**Offerings:** Honey cake; substantial quantities of wine; cooked meals

**See also:** *Diana; Ferronia; Fortuna; Janus; Juno; Juturna; Mars; Minerva; Zeus*

## Jurema

**Origin:** Tupi; Brazil

Jurema names a plant, an herbal potion, a spirit and a spiritual tradition:

The Jurema is a sacred evergreen whose bark and roots are used to create a psychoactive decoction called *Vinho da Jurema* (Jurema Wine); traditionally used similarly to the more internationally famous ayahuasca. There are two subspecies: Black Jurema (*Mimosa hostilis*) and White Jurema (*Mimosa verucosa*).

Shamanic and magical healing are at the root of the spiritual tradition called Jurema, now centered in north-eastern Brazil, near Recife. Jurema is based on indigenous Brazilian traditions, specifically those of the Tupi Indians but is a syncretic tradition also incorporating African and European influences. In recent years, it has become an increasingly urban tradition, as many rural people, especially indigenous people, have been displaced from native villages and move to cities.

Practitioners of Jurema are called Juremians. Jurema is also sometimes called Catimbo but some consider that name derogatory as it may also refer to malevolent sorcery or witchcraft.

Two types of spirits are venerated in Jurema:

- Caboclos (Indigenous spirits; see entry)
- Mestres, literally Masters as in Master Healer but also indicating spirits of African or European derivation; in the context of Jurema, Maria Padilha is classified as a *Mestre*.

Both types of spirits are invoked during rituals and channeled through spirit mediums in the hope of receiving healing, prophecies, blessings or other services.

Jurema is the spirit of the sacred Jurema tree and considered the most important Cabocla. She presides over the Caboclos' mythic paradise,



which is also known as Jurema. Jurema the goddess is the primary presiding spirit of Jurema the paradise but she is also venerated in the Brazilian spiritual tradition Umbanda and by independent practitioners. In Yoruba-based traditions, Jurema belongs to the line of Oxossi. She is the Queen of Hunters; bestower of wisdom and a spirit of beauty and romance.

**Iconography:** Jurema is depicted as a romantic, idealized Indian princess. She may be naked or dressed in feathers including feather headdress

**Offering:** Wine (once upon a time, this would be Jurema wine but in urban areas, she may be given true wine); herbal teas; tropical fruit; arrows; what you would offer Oxossi

**Colors:** Red, white, green

**Animal:** Jaguar

**See also:** *Caboclo; Caboclo of the Seven Crossroads; Iara; Indio, El; Ochossi; Padilha, Maria*

## **Jurojin**

### *Longevity Old Man*

**Origin:** China; Japan

Jurojin is a Taoist Master, Lord of Longevity; adopted into the Japanese pantheon as one of the Seven Spirits of Good Luck, the Shichi Fujukin. Longevity means long life but Jurojin bestows more than that: his blessings include happy, healthy, serene old age. He is also a spirit of general good fortune and is particularly invoked for academic success. Request his blessings of longevity and health if someone is ailing.

**Manifestation:** Jurojin is an elderly man with a long, white beard. He is usually accompanied by a white stag who serves as his messenger.

**Attributes:** Jurojin carries a staff with a scroll attached to it, on which is inscribed the life spans of all living beings; he may also carry a fan

**Sacred animals:** Crane; tortoise; deer

**Tree:** Plum tree

**Offerings:** Sake (and lots of it!); cooked rice; fresh fruit

**See also:** *Fukurokuju; Shichi Fukujin*

## **Juturna**

**Origin:** Roman region

**Feast:** 11 January

Juturna is a spirit of fresh water. Although described as a Roman goddess and now integrated into the Roman pantheon, she actually predates the Romans in the area. Her brother, Turnus, King of the Rutuli, an Italic tribe, was chief rival of Aeneas, progenitor and ancestor of the Romans. Juturna was allied with her brother in his fight against Roman domination. Her brother was killed during the hostilities but Juturna was too important to be banished.

Although a spirit of fresh water in general, Juturna was specifically associated with two sources of fresh water: a sacred well in Lavinium and a spring now in the Roman Forum, probably the primary source of fresh water for the earliest inhabitants of the Palatine Hill. (It remained so until aqueducts were first built in 312 BCE.) Water from Juturna's spring was used by the Vestal Virgins as ritual water. The water is also believed to have healing properties.

Although Juturna is wed to Janus, she also had an affair with Jupiter, conducted secretly until betrayed by the Nymph, Lara. This myth may be interpreted as Jupiter attempting to move in on the ancient deity, Janus' turf and being foiled.

**Consort:** Janus; their son is Fontus, Spirit of Fountains, Wells and Springs

**Spirit allies:** Juturna is closely affiliated with the Dioscuri

**Sacred sites:** The spring of Juturna in the Roman Forum; she also had a

Roman temple

**Sacred day:** The Juturnalia celebrated on 11 January marks the dedication of her temple in the Campus Martius.

**See also:** *Dioscuri; Janus; Jupiter; Lara; Nymph; Vesta*

## K

### **Ka'ahu Pahau**

*Queen Shark of Oahu*

**Also known as:** Ka'ahupahau; Ka-ahu-pa-hau

**Origin:** Hawaii

Ka'ahu Pahau is a shark goddess who protects people from sharks. Her empathy for people may derive from her own human ancestry. Ka'ahu Pahau and her brother, Ka-hi'i-uka were born red-headed humans. In traditional Hawaiian cosmology, their red hair indicates spirit ancestry or connections: Pelé is the most famous red headed Hawaiian spirit. Another shark deity transformed the sister and brother into sharks but they still maintain allegiance and warm feelings toward humans.

Ka'ahu Pahau guards the entrance to Pearl Harbor sending menacing sharks on their way. She is the guardian spirit of Oahu and specifically Ewa Beach. Pearl Harbor's name is no romantic affectation: until the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, it was full of oyster ponds, providing sustenance (and the occasional pearl!) for the local population. The ability to access the oyster beds without undue fear of sharks was crucial.

In 1884, a treaty allowed the United States exclusive rights and access to Pearl Harbor. In 1913, drydocks, then under construction but *almost* done, completely collapsed. No scientific explanation or natural causes were ever found for the accident, despite an extensive one-year investigation. Explanations by local people that the drydocks were blocking Ka'ahu Pahau's access to her undersea cave and that she had caused the collapse were dismissed as superstition however the dry docks were finally completed in April 1919 only after a kahuna (traditional Hawaiian priest or shaman) performed rituals of propitiation to the shark goddess.

Invoke Ka'ahu Pahau's blessings if you're afraid of sharks.

**Manifestations:** Woman with red hair; shark; mermaid

**Home:** She lives in a submerged cave in Pearl Harbor (*Pu'u loa* in Hawaiian).

**Offerings:** Food; flower leis; shark toys

**See also:** *Kanekua'ana; Kihawahine; Pelé*

## Kachina

**Also known as:** Katsina; Katchina

**Origin:** Pueblo Indian

The Kachinas are benevolent spirits of the Pueblo peoples of the southwestern United States. They are mediators, messengers from other realms: they bring rain, clouds, moisture and blessings in a dry habitat where survival is dependent on adequate precipitation. Kachinas ensure plant, animal and human fertility.

In English, *Kachina* is also commonly used to refer to dolls created in the image of Kachina spirits or the masked dancers who channel them. In Indian languages, distinct words may be used to distinguish the dolls from the spirits. Although crafted by human hands, from the traditional Native American perspective, these dolls are gifts from the spirits. Many modern Kachina dolls, however, are crafted specifically for the tourist trade and for collectors who value them for their intricacy, beauty and monetary worth as investment art. Kachinas are among the most commodified of spirits; their images used to market products with a southwestern theme including things like potato chips, soft drinks and snack foods much to the displeasure and despair of those for whom they are holy.

Archaeological evidence links Kachinas to all the Pueblo peoples including Hopis, Zunis and the various Rio Grande Pueblos although each may possess different pantheons of Kachinas. Kachina spirits live among people from approximately the winter solstice to late July when

they return to their own realm. The Kachinas taught people how to make masks depicting them and transmitting their power and how to channel them through rituals including dance. Masked, ritually initiated men are able to transmit the blessings of the Kachinas to people; heal illness; reinforce order; deliver prophecies; bring rain and serve as shamanic bridges between people and the spirits.

There are hundreds of distinct Kachina spirits each with its own distinct identity, function and appearance. There is no single consistent number of Kachinas. This is a living tradition: new Kachinas appear and old ones fade from view, sometimes reappearing decades later.

**Manifestations:** Kachinas appear in an extremely wide variety of forms (including ducks). Many books variously oriented towards spiritual seekers, anthropology students and/or art collectors display their images.

**Rituals:** Kachina rituals occur privately within subterranean kivas at night, (especially from January to March) and also outdoors in Pueblo plazas during the daytime (especially from March to July). Some ceremonies are open to outsiders; others are not. Websites belonging to the various Pueblos will advise.

**See also:** *Koko*

## **Kadesh**

*Lady of Heaven; The Holy One*

**Also known as:** Qadesh

**Origin:** Levantine

Kadesh is the holy whore; the Scarlet Woman; the Lady of Pleasure. Her name literally means holy or sanctified. She is a spirit of power, beauty, joy, ecstasy and sexual pleasure. She is from the Levantine: the Semitic coast of West Asia encompassing Syrians, Phoenicians, Jews and Canaanites. It is unknown from which of these groups she originates; she was venerated by all of them as well as by the ancient Egyptians who

recognized her as a foreign, Semitic spirit and adored her anyway. (The Egyptians did not adopt many spirits; generally preferring their own.)

Terra cotta figurines and plaques identified as Kadesh have been dated as far back as the Middle Bronze Age (2000–1500 BCE). Little is now known of her veneration other than that sacred prostitution was among her temple rites.

**Iconography:** Kadesh was depicted as a naked woman, sometimes pregnant; sometimes not.

**Attributes:** Stalks of wheat; lilies; snakes; she may stand atop a lion and wear the crescent moon in her hair

**Consort:** Resheph

**Sacred animals:** Lions; snakes

**Plants:** Lotus; papyrus plants; lilies; wheat

**Planet:** Crescent moon

**Offerings:** Lilies; stalks of wheat; aphrodisiacs especially erotic perfumes and incense; spring water; candles in the form of genitals; images of snakes and lions

**See also:** *Aisha Qandisha; Aphrodite; Astarte; Resheph*

## Kadru

**Origin:** India

Kadru is the mother of the Nagas. She has over one-thousand powerful snake-spirit offspring. Her primary myth involves her competition with her co-wife, Garuda's mother. Kadru may be venerated with her children or alone. She is invoked for fertility and wealth, as well as protection from snakes. Do *not* venerate together with Garuda.

**See also:** *Garuda; Manasa; Nagas*

## Kahlo, Frida

**Origin:** Mexico

Frida Kahlo (6 July 1907–13 July 1954) has transcended her status as beloved painter, mythic figure and political activist, she is now literally an icon, too. Her ubiquitous image is instantly recognizable. Even those who don't really know who she is, recognize her images, which appear everywhere from t-shirts, jewelry and Mexican restaurant menus to sacred items.

Kahlo created icons. She was her own favorite subject. She created images of herself depicting her stark reality: the pain, grief and humiliation of her everyday existence. (Childhood polio permanently damaged one leg. A horrific traffic accident shattered her body, necessitating over thirty operations and hampering her fertility. Her love life was traumatic. One leg was eventually amputated.) She also created images of herself as a goddess; the primordial Lady of Beasts; a woman of bravery, defiance and endless creativity.

Although this seems almost laughable now, not that long ago, Frida was an obscure historic figure, overshadowed by her then more famous husband, artist Diego Rivera. Her popularity and renown exploded in the 1970s theoretically because she was reappraised in the context of feminist and Mexican-pride political movements but possibly just because her time had come: Frida's own art, her self-created image, served as a portal for her powerful spirit. A March 2, 2008 *New York Times* review of her retrospective show at the Philadelphia Museum of Art used the word "saint" to describe her and described the crowds who flock to her home, now a museum, as pilgrims.

Frida is the subject of books, films, web tributes and museum shows. She has become symbolic of her beloved Mexico; female empowerment; and bold, transcendent creativity. Once known in only small circles, she is now familiar worldwide. The centennial of her birth was celebrated internationally.

From icon to folk saint or goddess is but one small step. Her image now appears in spiritual context as well as in creative and commercial: images of Frida are incorporated into retablos; nichos; votive candles



and statues suitable for home altars. Many images incorporate powerful spiritual overtones:

- Frida appears in the company of Guadalupe
- Frida's face superimposed onto Guadalupe's body, merging their identities, has become so popular the image has its own name: Fridalupe
- Skeletal Frida appears frequently among Day of the Dead sculptures and toys.
- I have in my possession images of Frida Kahlo in the forms of a mermaid, a devilish Salomé brandishing Diego's head on her pitchfork and a love goddess.

Frida is petitioned to intercede with healing, love and fertility: all issues that caused her tremendous grief and pain during her lifetime. Petition her protection while traveling, especially on public buses, trolley and trains. Request her help to step out from the shadows if you feel that your creative light is blocked by more dominating people. Frida was an ardent Communist and briefly Leon Trotsky's lover: invoke her assistance with issues of social justice and political activism.

**Altar:** Find images of Frida that resonate with you. Decorate with reproductions of her artwork and traditional Mexican folk art. Add figures of the animals she loved so much (dogs; deer; monkeys; parrots and others).

**Shrine:** The *Casa Azul* (Blue House) in Mexico City where Frida was born, lived and died. Following her death, Diego donated the house and contents to the Mexican people. It remains as it was during Frida's life; her ashes are contained in an urn within the house.

**Offerings:** Cigarettes; tequila; sugar skulls with her name written across the forehead; works of art; cook her meals from *Frida's Fiestas*, the 1994 cookbook compiled by her step-daughter, Guadalupe Rivera and Marie Pierre Colle.

**See also:** *Guadalupe; Herodias; Lady of the Beasts; Mermaid; Santissima Muerte; Xochitl*

## Kahoupokane

**Origin:** Hawaii

Kahoupokane is a snow goddess; presiding spirit of Hawaii's Mount Hualalai. She is the sister of fellow snow spirits, Poliahu, Lilinoe and Waiau. All are Pelé's enemies but Kahoupokane has a particularly interesting, competitive relationship with Pelé as Kahoupokane is simultaneously a snow goddess and a fiery volcano spirit. Kahoupo kane controls the snows on Mount Hualalai, westernmost volcano on the Big Island of Hawaii. Although it has not erupted since 1801, it is *not* dormant. Should Kahoupo kane ever feel like rekindling her rivalry with Pelé, her volcano will erupt.

Kahoupokane is reputedly an expert tapa (bark) cloth maker. Thunder is the sound of her beating the cloth. She is venerated alongside her sisters but *not* alongside Pelé.

**Sacred site:** Kona Airport is built over her 1801 lava flow

**See also:** *Lilinoe; Pelé; Poliahu; Waiau*

## Kajishin

**Origin:** Japan

**Classification:** Kami

Kajishin is the kami of ironworking and smithcraft. In Japan, as elsewhere, ironworkers doubled as shamans (or at least were perceived as such). This is especially true of nomadic, itinerant smiths. Kajishin thus is more than just an artisanal spirit: he also has dominion over shamanism, magic and secret, mystical rites known only to the initiated. Kajishin forges powerful, magical swords.

Kajishin is venerated as a teacher who transmits secrets of shamanism and smithcraft but also as an ancestral spirit. Ironworkers tend to form inter-related clans: Kajishin may be understood as the root ancestral founder of these clans.

Kajishin literally means blacksmith spirit. The name may refer to one

specific kami or to the family of spirits associated with smithcraft including Amatsumara and Kanayago.

**Manifestation:** Kajishin may have one eye

**Sacred day:** The Bellows Festival on the eighth day of the eleventh lunar month

**Offerings:** Rice wine (sake); oranges

**See also:** *Amatsumara; Inari; Kami; Kanayago; Ogun*

## Kali

**Also known as:** Kali Ma (Mother Kali)

**Origin:** India

Kali is India's Great Mother: goddess of time; creation; destruction and contradictions. Kali was a tribal goddess prior to the Aryan invasions, which brought Vedic traditions and Hinduism to India. Her veneration was so persistent, enduring and significant that she was eventually incorporated into the Hindu pantheon as one of its most powerful deities. According to myth, when all the other deities were stymied by a demon, Kali emerged as an independent emanation of the goddess Durga. Kali is an unstoppable force: she handily defeated that demon but was then unable to stop her whirling dance of destruction. The entire world would have been destroyed had not Shiva, her beloved, thrown himself at her feet, risking his own death but snapping her out of her rampage.

Kali births and destroys her children. She is the Corn Mother who simultaneously grinds out life and death. Her name may be interpreted as having to do with time but it literally means *black* as in Earth's fertile black soil or as in black holes, those regions of space whose gravitational pull is so intense that *nothing* can escape. Reputedly the most difficult of all spirits to understand, Kali's devotees claim that attempts to comprehend her will free you of all fear. Her stereotype depicts her as a scary, bloodthirsty, out-of-control demon. She was notorious as the spirit

venerated by the now infamous *Thuggees*, secret fraternities of thieves who may have strangled victims in her honor. However, Thuggees were always but a tiny minority of her following. Sensationalized descriptions of Kali tend to overlook the tremendous blessings she brings: bestowing protection; good health; abundance and fertility on her devotees.

Kali is among the most widely venerated spirits on Earth; worshipped by millions of Hindus as well as by many others including (unofficially) many Indian Muslims. She is also venerated by independent practitioners and goddess-devotees worldwide. The Indian Diaspora brought Kali to the Caribbean, where she is now also incorporated into various Obeah traditions.

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*Kali's association with time may indicate her primordial nature. She may have existed since the beginning of time and is possibly a form of the primeval Earth woman or Dirt Woman.*

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Fiercest of the fierce, Kali backs away from nothing. To fully appreciate joy and life, suffering and death must be faced. Kali is responsible for life from conception to the grave. She maintains world order. Kali protects the helpless, particularly women and children. She is the Matron of Witches. Her attendant spirits are the Dakinis. Kali is the chief Dakini and is sometimes called Dakini.

Kali is not a remote deity but has intense personal relationships with individual devotees. Kali appears frequently in dreams and visualizations and is also channeled by spirit mediums. She may offer instruction in yoga or various mystic, esoteric arts.

**Favored people:** Folk tradition suggests that people with pointy tongues have been touched or called by Kali and may consider themselves under her sponsorship and protection.

**Manifestation:** Sometimes her appearance is consistent to her iconography: she has jet black or midnight blue skin and a fierce or loving expression. Her hair may form one-hundred locks. She may dance

or twirl. Kali is described as appearing in the form of brilliant light or a deep black void. She may manifest in the form of cholera or a jackal-headed woman.

**Iconography:** Her images are frequently but not always intended to terrify. A standard votive image shows Kali's smiling or grimacing face with fanglike teeth. Her tongue sticks out. She has three eyes and wild, disheveled hair. She wears a necklace of severed human heads, still dripping blood and a girdle of severed human hands. Her earrings are children's corpses. She wears cobras as garlands and bracelets. Her mouth is smeared with blood. She is adorned with gems possessing the celestial brilliance of the sun and moon and usually depicted with four hands, demonstrating her contradictions: two are involved with destruction; the other two confer blessings and protection:

- The left hands hold a severed head and a bloody scimitar.
- The right hands bless her viewer and form symbolic gestures (*mudras*) indicating fearlessness

Kali is frequently depicted together with her beloved Shiva. Typically she stands upon his prone body or they are shown in sexual union. One famous image shows Kali squatting over Shiva's prone body devouring his entrails while simultaneously offering him her breast.

**Attributes:** Mirror; black cauldron; a chalice containing blood from a head she has severed; she may drink from a skull.

**Consort:** Shiva

**Colors:** Black, red, midnight blue; purple

**Sacred creatures:** Crow; jackal

**Flowers:** Red hibiscus; red rhododendron; poinsettia

**Planet:** Moon (especially dark and waning phases)

**Home:** Kali lives in cemeteries and cremation grounds.

**Offerings:** Red hibiscus flowers; jaggery (a form of unrefined sugar)

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*Kali promised to bless anyone who offered her red hibiscus flowers.*

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**See also:** *Anat; Baba Yaga; Dakini; Dirt Woman; Durga; Sara la Kali; Parvati; Shiva*

## **Kallikantzari**

**Also known as:** Kalikàtzari; Kallikant zaroi

**Origin:** Greece

Greek Christmas is an extended holiday. The Twelve Nights of Christmas, from Christmas Eve to the Feast of Epiphany, are called the *Dodecameron* and it is a time for feasting and celebrating. It is also the time of the goat spirits called Kallikantzari.

Their name is believed to derive from *Kalos Kentauros* or “Beautiful Centaur” and like centaurs of old, the Kallikantzari are wild and rambunctious. They’re hairy horned man-goat spirits with cloven hooves, sharp fangs and claw-like talons. The Kallikantzari spend almost the entire year captive underground trying to chew through the World Tree but at Christmas, they are released into our realm to run wild.

The Kallikantzari ascend to Earth only during this twelve-day period. They are nocturnal creatures, used to the dark and so hide during the day in dank, dark places like caves. (In urbanized areas, they may sneak into basements or warehouses.) At night, they run amok. The Kallikantzari are vandals; hoodlums. They loot, steal and rampage. They break into mills. They break into stores (especially liquor stores). They break into homes and eat people’s Christmas dinner. Sometimes they eat people, too. They take pleasure in tormenting people: they think it’s fun. Kallikantzari tie up people or torture them. Sometimes they force women to dance with them; kidnap or assault them.

Despite this reprehensible behavior, offerings are made to the Kallikantzari, whether to honor or propitiate them is subject to interpretation. Put food outside for them and they may leave you alone.

The Kallikantzari are afraid of fire. Carry lit flaming torches and you may be able to fend them off. If you would like to avoid them, stay inside during these twelve nights; keep doors and windows sealed and maintain a massive fire in the hearth. Should you run into them outside at night, the Kallikantzari have a code word. They will ask you: hemp or lead?

- Answer hemp and go free
- Answer lead and anticipate attack

Who are these rampaging Kallikantzari?

- In some regions, they're considered pure spirits
- They may be vestiges of the satyrs and silens who attend Dionysus
- In some regions, the Kallikantzari are believed to be transformed humans: Babies born with a caul or on Christmas Day or during the Twelve Nights may be destined to transform into Kallikantzari, similar to the transformation of men into werewolves
- In some regions, Kallikantzari *are* humans.

They may be unable to help themselves. These men may be transformed into Kallikantzari in the same manner that werewolf transformation is activated by the full moon. Allegedly, Christmas Eve evokes the transformation but pre-Christian versions of the Kallikantzari were likely affected by the winter solstice.

Alternatively, the Kallikantzari are masked men who consciously know what they're doing (at least before they get too caught up in liquor and frenzy). The Kallikantzari may be vestiges of old Dionysian winter masked possession rituals.

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*The leader of the Kallikantzari is called the Great Kallikantzaro, also known as the Lame Demon. (He limps.) He's considered a bit smarter than the average Kallikantzari, no doubt why he received his position. The Great Kallikantzaro attempts to organize the Kallikantzari although rarely completely successfully, as the rambunctious, chaotic spirits resist. He rides a rooster.*

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**Manifestation:** The Kallikantzari are goat-men. They have goat's horns, ears and legs. Sometimes they wear iron or wooden boots or shoes. Whether men or spirits, they are generally considered bellicose and stupid and, if you stay calm, can often be outwitted. (Their leader is a bit sharper.)

**Time:** They roam Earth during the twelve days of Christmas and then they must leave. Offerings may be made anytime during the Twelve Nights but especially on the last night to bid them farewell for the year.

**Offerings:** Their very favorite food is roast pork. They *love* wine. They will not refuse other liquor, either. Some may be tempted to get them drunk so that they'll fall asleep and be pacified but drinking just makes them more rambunctious and their capacity for alcohol is tremendous. The Kallikantzari fear fire and can't cook their own food. Their usual fare is raw flesh but they adore cooked food, when they can get it.

Offerings are traditionally placed outside on the chimney ledge. Some hang a rib or other pork bone inside the chimney. Standard offerings include mainly pork products: sausages, bones, ribs accompanied by waffles although they lust after and will make great attempts to capture an entire roast pig. (Coincidentally perhaps the sacrifice made to Dionysus during the Anthesteria festival was a sow.)

**See also:** *Dionysus; Exotika; Silen*

## Kalma

**Origin:** Finland

Kalma is a death goddess who lives in Tuonela, the Finnish realm of death. Her name can be variously translated as "corpse", "grave" and "stench of rotting corpses." (A modern Finnish word for "cemetery" is *kalmisto*.) She is not the presiding spirit of Tuonela; that's her father, Tuoni but Kalma serves as one of his assistants. Kalma presides over graves and so she haunts the cemetery. She may be responsible for deaths caused by illness.

**Manifestation:** Kalma is recognized by the way she smells.



**Spirit ally:** Kalma is often accompanied by Surma, the creature who guards Tuonela. Surma is usually described as a huge canine with a serpent for a tail.

**See also:** *Hel; Louhi; Persephone; Tuo netar*

## Kaltes

**Origin:** Siberia

The moon exerts its pull on Earthly tides and women's menstrual cycles. Kaltes is the beautiful spirit who mediates this relationship between Earth, the moon and women. Kaltes first manifested to the Ugric tribes of Western Siberia such as the Mansi, formerly called the Voguls, who traditionally inhabited the forests and swamplands near the Ob River and who are linguistically related to the Finns, Saami and Hungarians.

Once upon a time, Kaltes lived in the sky with her husband, Numi-Tarem the Sky Master who may be a bear spirit. (She may also be his sister or daughter.) Kaltes had a secret love affair with Xul-Ater, Prince of the Underworld but her husband found out. He drew his sword to stab Kaltes but their eldest son stopped him. Later, when he had the opportunity, the enraged Numi-Tarem threw Kaltes to the ground three times; then dropped her to Earth through a hole in the sky. While falling, she gave birth to the spirit-child who would become World Surveyor Man, the Gander Prince.

Kaltes (the very same spirit or her double) serves as World Surveyor Man's foster mother. Yes, she is also his real mother. When he comes of age, depending on the version of the myth, World Surveyor Man may or may not marry Kaltes or her avatar.

Kaltes resembles those Russian dolls, which appear identical except for size and which fit one inside the other. There are seemingly a dizzyingly endless number of Kaltes who may be one and the same or reflections of each other, sort of the way rabbits legendarily multiply. Fittingly, Kaltes is the Lady of the Rabbits, her sacred creature and messenger. She is a goddess of fertility, childbirth, and women's reproductive health.

**Manifestation:** Kaltes appears as a beautiful woman, a rabbit or a goose.

She is intensely associated with rabbits; even when she appears in another form, some reference to rabbits may still exist, giving the clue to her true identity.

**Planet:** Moon

**Sacred tree:** Birch

**Animal:** Rabbit

**Bird:** Goose; swan

**See also:** *Swan Goddesses; World Surveyor Man*

## **Kalu Kumara**

*The Black Prince*

**Also known as:** Kalu Yaka

**Origin:** Sinhalese (Sri Lanka)

Kalu Kumara is a demonic Eros; a disease demon whose favorite target is young girls on the threshold of womanhood although he will also strike older women and sometimes infants and children. He attacks through dreams so pleasurable that his victims may not appreciate that they are being attacked or may not care.

Kalu Kumara manifests to women via ecstatic erotic dreams. His target may wish never to wake from this beautiful rapture, wherein is the problem. Kalu Kumara is a vampire: he doesn't suck blood nor is he frightening (unless he wishes to be) but he is draining his victim's life essence. His attacks are accompanied by malaise, wasting, anorexia (not because she's worried about weight or appearance but because the victim can't be bothered to eat; she lacks appetite) and the desire to sleep all the time, in hopes of once again receiving a visit. Without shamanic intervention, Kalu Kumara's dreams may ultimately lead to serious illness and death. Various protective measures are used to control and repel Kalu Kumara. If dream attacks occur, a specially trained shaman can drive him out and prevent his return.

Kalu Kumara may be an embittered spirit. His name literally means “Black Prince”; he is royalty and was a significant deity prior to Sinhalese conversion to Buddhism. Once upon a time, he didn’t have to invade dreams: devotees came to him. Offerings are sometimes made to propitiate him and prevent him from manifesting dangerously. He can sometimes manifest benevolently and has the power to heal illness as well cause it. If he desires, he can bestow fertility rather than death.

**Spirit allies:** Kalu Kumara’s assistants are the spirits known as the Seven Barren Queens who transmit infertility to women. Kalu Kumara may be especially dreaded because where he goes; the Seven Barren Queens tend to follow. They may target women other than Kalu Kumara’s own specific victim.

**See also:** *Eros; Sanni Yakka*

## Kalvis

**Also known as:** Kalvaitis; Kelvelis

**Origin:** Baltic (Lithuania; Latvia)

Kalvaitis, the celestial smith, lives by the water’s edge at the end of the world where he hammers out a new sun every morning. In 1431, the missionary Jerome of Prague complained that the Lithuanians not only worshipped the sun but also an exceptionally large iron hammer, which helped rescue the sun from imprisonment. Among the sacred treasures forged by Kalvelis is Ausriné’s crown.

**Attribute:** Humongous hammer

**See also:** *Ausriné; Dwarves; Gabija*

## Kama

*Lord of Love; Churner of Hearts; Stalk of Passion; Lord of All Seasons*

**Also known as:** Kama Deva; Manmatha

**Origin:** India

Kama Deva is India's Lord of Desire and Love; the Hindu equivalent of Eros. Kama, too, has a bow and arrows but his bow is formed from sugar cane, strung with a line of honey bees and his arrows are flowers. Kama's parents are Lakshmi and Vishnu. He is honored by those seeking love, happiness and sensual pleasure.

**Manifestation:** He's *very* handsome. Kama Deva may signal his presence with a gentle breeze.

**Consort:** Rati

**Spirit allies:** Kama is served and attended by the Apsaras

**Birds:** Parrots; parakeets; love birds

**Sacred creature:** Honeybees

**Mount:** Parrot

**Time:** Kama Deva is at the peak of his power in spring

**Tree:** Mango (*Mangifera spp.*); Ashoka (*Saraca indica*): ashoka means *without grief*

**See also:** *Apsaras; Eros; Lakshmi; Rati*

## Kamakhya

**Origin:** India

Kamakhya is a Tantric goddess who presides over a famous shrine in Assam, northeastern India. The Kamakhya shrine is among the fifty-one *Shakti Peethas*: holy shrines located where the different parts of Sati's body fell. (See also: *Sati*.) The Kamakhya Shrine is special as it is located on the spot where:

- While still alive, Sati engaged in erotic delights with Shiva
- Her vulva fell to Earth

Kamakhya may be another name for Sati. She may also be a pre-Hindu

Assamese goddess who has been absorbed into Hinduism as an avatar of Sati. (Kamakhya is also occasionally identified with Tantric Hindu Tara.) Although there are different facets and interpretations of her myth, one way or another, Kamakhya is a spirit of women's generative power and death.

She is the menstruating goddess who radiates supreme female generative, reproductive power, which means she may be petitioned for personal fertility but also that she has the power to banish evil spirits, especially malevolent ghosts and the walking dead. The meaning of her name is unknown. It is sometimes translated as *one who is worshipped by Kama*; because according to myth, Kama regained his body at her shrine (following a curse cast by Shiva, which rendered him formless). Other etymologists suggest that the name is not Sanskrit and may relate to words for "corpse" or "ghost." Kamakhya presides over ghosts and spirits and prior to the construction of her temple may have been worshipped in cremation grounds. (The present temple structure dates from the 16<sup>th</sup> century and is formed in the shape of a bee hive.)

The Kamakhya Temple is considered the highest seat of Tantricism. Devotees come to venerate the goddess but also to seek out the many mystics and holy people who congregate here in order to request their assistance with healing, romance, fertility and changes in fortune.

**Iconography:** Kamakhya is not personified. She is venerated in the form of a vulva-like stone over which a spring of water flows

**Color:** Red

**Sacred site:** Kamakhya Temple, Nilachal Hill in Assam, India

**Sacred times:** Festivals honoring Kama khya are held throughout the year; this is an exceptionally popular temple; the center of Tantric India; a particularly popular festival occurs on the 7<sup>th</sup> day of the Hindu month of Ashaad, corresponding in time to the astrological sign Cancer. This festival honors the goddess' menstrual cycle: the water in the springs turns red, possibly with the help of some vermilion powder.

**Offerings:** Flowers, incense, pilgrimage

**See also:** *Kama; Sati; Shiva; Tara* (1)

## Kamapua'a

**Origin:** Hawaii

Kamapua'a is Lord of Pigs, a sensual hog spirit, half-pig/half-man who lives in swampy parts of Hawaii. Although now most famous for his epic battle and romance with volcano goddess, Pelé, he is also a spirit of sex, abundance, fertility, well-being and precipitation.

The son of Hina and her illicit lover, he is passionate, charismatic, a renowned warrior, brawler and lady's man. Pelé isn't the only goddess he romanced. He also had a steamy affair with snow goddess, Poliahu, perhaps one more reason the two goddesses can't stand each other's sight.

Kamapua'a is Pelé's rival, ally, lover and enemy. A myth recounts their battle to control the island of Hawaii and their ultimate truce. Kamapua'a engaged her in a battle over land-rights (and a rough seduction). She attacked him with flames, almost defeating him but he retaliated by dousing her with fog, dampness and rain; then sent an army of hogs to root and rampage through her territory.

Finally, to prevent complete devastation of the island, other spirits intervened and a truce was brokered. Pelé decided she liked the big lug and consented to his attentions. They divided Hawaii with Kamapua'a maintaining dominion over Hilo and the wet, rainy region and Pelé asserting dominion over the lava districts of Kona, Puna and Ka'u. He promised never to flood her side of the Wailua River and she promised never to cross the river and ravage his green fields.

**Manifestation:** Kamapua'a is a real shape-shifter: he manifests as a man, hog, fish or plant. When he appears in human form, he traditionally wears a long cloak to camouflage the hog bristles running down his spine that betray his true porcine identity. (His tattoos may also indicate his pig nature.)

**Attribute:** Kamapua'a owns a magic *leho* shell (red cowrie), which he uses as a boat to travel between islands.

**See also:** *Hina; Pelé; Poliahu*

## Kami

**Origin:** Japan

Kami are the indigenous spirits of Japan and the basis of the Shinto religion. The word kami encompasses a very wide variety of spirit beings as well as host of mysterious, mystical powers, energies and forces.

There is an infinite number of kami. The sacred text, the *Kojiki* says that there are eight million kami but this may be a symbolic number, interpreted as truly meaning innumerable. (Eight is a sacred number in Shinto cosmology.)

Kami animate *everything* in the universe: every object; thing; formation has a kami. There are kami of places, cities, villages, neighborhoods. Look around you: if you can see something, it probably has a kami. There are elemental kami and kami of the crossroads. Because of the kami, everything in the entire universe is sacred and animated with profound potentially benevolent, mystical energy. After death, human souls may re-emerge as kami. Ancestral kami are venerated at household shrines.

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*The name Shinto, translated as Way of the Spirits, derives from two Chinese words: Shen (spirit) and Tao (way). Shinto has no one individual founder. Features recognizable as Shinto religion can be documented as far back as the late pre-historic era, circa 300 BCE to 300 CE. In 1871, Shinto was established as Japan's state religion and the word Shinto as a name for this spiritual system derives from this period.*

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Kami are divided into two branches:

- Earthly kami (Kunitsukami)
- Celestial kami (Amatsukami)

Kami may be used as an honorific title or classification for any sacred being and so some Taoist and Buddhist spirits, now so well integrated into Japanese spirituality, are the equivalent of honorary kami, as for

example Jizo or Hotei.

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*Only six kami are honored with the title Okami (“Great Kami”). Five are celestial kami: Amaterasu; Izanagi; Izanami; Michikaeshi and Sashikuni. Only one is an Earthly kami: Sarutahiko.*

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Kami are traditionally petitioned for health, fertility, success, prosperity, academic achievement, abundance and protection. In general, domestic offerings are made to the kami early in the day, usually in the morning (although clearly this ultimately depends on individual kami and devotee).

**See also:** *Amaterasu; Amatsumara; Ebisu; Hosogami; Inari; Izanagi; Izanami; Jizo; Kajishin; Kamui; Kanayago; Kannon; Okame; Sarutahiko; Susano’o; Uzume*

## **Kamohoali’i**

**Also known as:** Moho

**Origin:** Hawaii

Kamohoali’i is the most famous of Hawaii’s many shark spirits. He is Pelé’s devoted big brother; the shark brother who led and escorted her from Tahiti to Hawaii.

Kamohoali’i is more than just a shark with good navigational skills. He is an important deity and among the most important Aumakua. Kamohoali’i communicates via ritual possession of his spirit mediums. Devotees are expected not to eat, harm, harass or otherwise annoy sharks (although this may be good advice for all). In myth, he is a fun-loving spirit, credited as being the one who taught his sister, Hi’iaka to surf.

**Manifestation:** Kamohoali’i manifests in the form of a shark, a man or



any kind of fish or sea creature.

**Sacred sites:** Kamohoali'i is considered chief of the shark spirits of Oahu but he's a shark: he travels where he wants.

- Kamohoali'i lives in an underwater cave near Pearl Harbor.
- Pelé named a cliff to the west of the Kilauea crater in his honor in gratitude for his protection during her long journey from Tahiti: Ka-Pali-Kapu-U-Kamohoali'i
- Many heiaus (stone shrines) are dedicated to him on the island of Molokai

**Offerings:** Flower garlands; kava; good deeds on behalf of sharks, oceans and Hawaiian waters

**See also:** *Aumakua; Hi'iaka; Ka'ahu Pahau; Pelé*

## **Kamui**

**Origin:** Ainu (Japan)

The Kamui are the spirits of the Ainu people, an indigenous ethnic group of Japan. The word Kamui is very similar to Kami and the spirits are alike in nature. Kamui are innumerable. Some have distinct personalities and names and maintain relationships with people. Others are localized spirits identified with specific land formations such as trees and rocks.

**See also:** *Fuji; Kami*

## **Kanaloa**

**Also known as:** Tangaroa

**Origin:** Polynesia

**Classification:** Akua

Kanaloa is the spirit of the sea. Kings of the sea are important in all pantheons but especially so in Polynesia, which means "Many Islands"

and consists of groupings of islands, many quite isolated, spread over vast expanses of the southern and central Pacific Ocean. Kanaloa is his Hawaiian name; Tanga roa is the Maori pronunciation. Kanaloa is venerated throughout Polynesia and is always associated with the sea but may otherwise manifest differently in different locations.

In Tahiti, he is the supreme creator and deity. Kanaloa and Kane traveled together from Tahiti to Hawaii bringing food plants so that the Hawaiians would survive. As Lord of the Sea, Kanaloa is a spirit of abundance, fertility and procreation. He is a master healer and magician who can transmit sacred and secret knowledge.

**Favored people:** Those who fish; those who make their living from the sea (presumably without harming his domain); carpenters; house builders

**Iconography:** Tiki carvings representing Kanaloa are available

**Spirit ally:** In Hawaii, Kane and Kanaloa are perceived as partners; in Fiji, Tane and Tangaroa may have a contentious, competitive relationship

**Sacred animal:** Specifically octopus and squid but also sea creatures in general.

**Direction:** West

**Sacred site:** The Iao Needle, the sacred mountain peak, now in Iao Valley State Park, Maui, Hawaii embodies Kanaloa's generative, procreative energy

**See also:** *Aukua; Kane*

## **Kanayago**

*The Iron Worker's Child*

**Origin:** Japan

**Classification:** Kami

Kanayago, a celestial kami, stepped off the moon tree intending to deliver a treatise, “A Secret Writing about Iron Mountain” but her foot got caught and she tripped. Falling to Earth, Kanayago died. She started a vigil over her own corpse. Kanayago’s vigil is eternal. This watchful soul atop a mountain of iron emerged as the presiding spirit of metalworkers. She taught people how to work iron. (Their first project was an iron kettle.) Kanayago protects metalworkers; guards their safety; prevents accidents and increases yield.

Kanayago’s earliest manifestation seems to have been as a female but she eventually began to appear in both male and female form. Kanayago is now envisioned as the male half of a pair of ironworking spirits. The polite way to address him is Kanayago-sama and his female counterpart as Kanayama-hime (i.e., Lord Kanayago and Princess Kanayama).

Ironworking is intimately tied to primordial women’s blood mysteries. Many cultures perceive iron ore to be Earth’s own menstrual blood. Kanayago has stringent taboos against menstruating women: they cannot come into her presence. Active devotees who are male must also avoid menstruating women; not only not having sex with them but also not even looking them in the face. Complete avoidance is preferred until the menstrual cycle has *completely* concluded.

**Manifestation:** Kanayago wears rags and his or her teeth are blackened.

**Sacred animal:** Kanayago’s relationship with dogs is subject to controversy. Some say she travels with a dog; others that she hates them because it was a dog’s unexpected barking that caused her to trip.

**Mount:** Snowy heron

**Plant:** Wisteria

**Sacred day:** Kanayago is honored at the Bellows Festival on the eighth day of the eleventh lunar month

**See also:** *Gorgon; Inari; Kajishin; Kami; Ogun*

**Kane**

**Pronounced:** *Kah-nay*

**Also known as:** Tane (pronounced *Tah-nay*)

**Origin:** Polynesia

**Classification:** Akua

Kane is among the most foremost deities of Polynesia. In parts of this far-flung region, he is considered the supreme Creator, sometimes in conjunction with Kanaloa. Kane was lonely and longed for female companionship but there was one problem: women hadn't yet been invented. Finally, Kane literally took matters into his own hands, forming a woman from moist red beach sand. He breathed life into her and named her Hine-hau-one, "Earth Formed Maiden." They made love and became the ancestors of humanity.

Kane is considered the Lord of the Akua. He is a spirit of procreation. As Kana loa is the spirit of the sea, so Kane is spirit of land and in particular lord of the forests and its creatures. Birds serve as his messengers.

**Manifestation:** Kane can manifest any way he wishes; however, typical forms include a handsome man, lightning, hailstones, and rainbows.

**Direction:** East (Kane rests in the west and moves towards the east)

**Birds:** Crows; owls

**See also:** *Akua; Hina; Kahoupokane; Kanaloa; Lilinoe; Poliahu; Waiiau*

## **Kanekua'ana**

**Origin:** Hawaii

**Classification:** Mo'o

Kanekua'ana is the lizard goddess of Pearl Harbor. This Mo'o spirit and divine ancestress brought pearl oysters from Tahiti to Oahu but then later brought them back again. Kanekua'ana was angered when in the 1850s, after traditional Hawaiian religion was abolished, harvest taboos

were broken. Human greed and disrespect offended her, too: the oyster beds were ceded to the control of human landlords. An old woman, a descendent of Kanekua'ana who served as her spirit medium, was caught harvesting oysters without permission from the landlord. She was punished. Kane kua'ana, outraged at the treatment of her medium (and by extension the disrespect shown to the goddess), took the pearl oysters back to Tahiti.

Kanekua'ana is invoked and propitiated when fish are scarce. Heiau (traditional Hawaiian stone shrines) are erected in her honor; cooked offerings are given and blessings requested from Kanekua'ana. Kane kua'ana communicates via spirit mediums and will ritually possess her female descendents. Kanekua'ana still guards freshwater ponds in the vicinity and blesses and protects those she loves.

**Sacred site:** Pearl Harbor where she once had a shrine

**Sacred creatures:** Pearl oysters (In Hawaiian: *pipi*); oysters in general

**Colors:** Saffron; turmeric

**See also:** *Aumakua; Ka'ahu Pahau; Kihawahine; Mo'o*

## Kangi Ten

**Also known as:** Kangi

Two elephants locked in erotic embrace: that's the magical image of Kangi Ten. Kangi Ten names a pair of elephant spirits and the specific iconographic image used to represent them. Kangi Ten is known elsewhere but is particularly popular in Japan. Veneration of the image unlock Kangi Ten's many blessings:

- Kangi Ten bestows happiness, health and good fortune
- Kangi Ten bestows material wealth as well as supernatural and erotic prowess
- Kangi Ten is also petitioned to avert and eliminate crises and disasters

Kangi Ten's identity is unclear and subject to debate. The male elephant may be an East Asian manifestation of Ganesha or a completely

different elephant deity. The female may be a distinct, independent elephant deity or an emanation of the Bodhisattva Avalokiteshvara. Earliest documented veneration of Kangi Ten dates from the early 17<sup>th</sup> century when Osaka merchants credited Kangi Ten for their wealth, success and good fortune. In response, the merchants offered lavish, generous gifts and Kangi Ten's reputation spread.

A Japanese Buddhist legend describes Kangi as an obstreperous elephant king who caused obstructions for people. (Although he is not named, this likely refers to Ganesha, famed for removing obstructions for his own devotees but who has a long history of hostility towards Buddhism.) Avalokiteshvara heard peoples' cries of despair and took pity. He assumed the form of a sexy female elephant with whom Kangi Ten immediately fell in love. However the lady elephant rejected his embrace until he vowed to stop causing obstructions and start protecting the Dharma.

**Favored people:** Kangi Ten is especially venerated by those in food and alcohol service industries such as bars and restaurants as well as by Tantric practitioners

**Iconography:** The standard image of Kangi Ten depicts two figures, male and female, each with a human body and an elephant's head. Their bodies face each other; tightly, closely entwined; heads resting on their partners' right shoulders, so that they gaze in different directions. They may or may not be engaged in sexual union. The female elephant is usually crowned and bejeweled. She places her feet on those of her mate.

- An alternative pose depicts the pair facing in the same direction, cheek-to-cheek, tails entwined
- A rare version depicting the female partner with the head of a wild sow (female boar) is traditionally kept hidden. When venerated in the context of secret Tantric rituals, Kangi Ten also provides marital bliss and lots of happy, healthy children.

**See also:** *Avalokiteshvara; Chinnamasta; Ganesha; Tanuki*

## Kannon

Kannon is the manifestation of Kwan Yin in Japan and Korea. Although technically considered the same spirit, they do not manifest in exactly the same way nor are they always petitioned in exactly the same manner.

- Kannon protects pregnant and laboring women, children and dead souls
- She bestows the gift of fertility
- She can heal incurable illnesses
- Appeal to her if you seek mercy or forgiveness
- Kannon wards off *all* forms of danger: appeal to her if you are afraid

In Japan, Kannon presides over dream incubation. Devotees journey to her shrines, vowing to spend a specified time there, sleeping in the spaces allotted for pilgrims. Kannon appears in dreams (typically not until the last night of the stay) to respond to petitions, reveal information or perform healings and miracles. She may manifest in any of her thirty-three forms, as one of her servants or as an old Buddhist priest.

**Manifestation:** There are thirty-three forms of Kannon including female, male, nun, horse, horse-headed woman, bird, snake, dragon and others.

**Number:** 33. Kannon has thirty-three paths or manifestations. A Japanese pilgrimage routededicated to Kannon includes thirty-three shrines. The numbers three and eleven are also sacred to her. (Three times eleven is thirty-three.)

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*When Christianity was suppressed in Japan, secret Christians continued to venerate Mary by substituting images of Kannon. These images, now called Maria Kannon, often contained a hidden cross, but were otherwise indistinguishable from other images of Kannon.*

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**See also:** *Avalokiteshvara; Black Madonna; Kwan Yin;* and the Glossary entry for *Path*

## **Kapo**

### *Red Eel Woman*

**Origin:** Polynesia

Powerful and unpredictable, Kapo has dominion over fertility, childbirth, miscarriage, abortion and death. She is a spirit of witchcraft, and prophesy, famed for being able to reverse *any* curse or malevolent spell. Kapo is admired and respected but also feared. She is among the preeminent spirits of hula dancing, which originally derives from sacred ritual. Some legends credit her with the invention of hula although others suggest that the primary sacred matron of hula is Laka, Hawaiian Spirit of Beauty.

The exact relationship between Kapo and Laka is unclear. They may be sisters or Kapo may be Laka's mother but the most widely accepted theory is that they are aspects of one being, two sides of one coin with Laka as the consistently benevolent life affirming aspect and Kapo as the volatile, shadow side.

Kapo's mother is the lunar spirit Haumea; her more famous younger sister and sometime traveling companion is volcano spirit, Pelé. Kapo was born in Tahiti but was already in Hawaii when Pelé arrived. Upon her own arrival, Kapo is rumored to have established a hula school on each Hawaiian island.

Invoke Kapo to help further and inspire your magical skill and power. Kapo possesses the power to break *any* hex or curse. She can help control your fertility, as you desire; encouraging conception or protecting from pregnancy.

**Favored people:** Sorcerers; shamans; magical practitioners; hula dancers; midwives and abortionists

**Manifestation:** Like the other Hawaiian deities, Kapo manifests in any form she chooses, human, animal, botanical or mineral. She can be



stormy and fearsome or alluringly beautiful. In addition to beauty, Kapo possesses a magical detachable flying vagina that she flings and retrieves at will.

**Sacred plant:** Pandanus (*hala*)

**Creature:** Eel

**Sacred sites:** Kapo was widely adored throughout Hawaii, especially in Molokai, once renowned for its powerful sorcerers. The imprint of her flying vagina is still seen on the eastern side of the hill Kohelepelepe (literally *detached vagina*) at Koko Head, Oahu.

**See also:** *Haumea; Laka; Pelé*

## Kappa

**Also known as:** Kawako (River Child)

**Origin:** Japan

**Classification:** Suijin

Kappa are Japanese water spirits who live in family groups near sources of fresh water. Given the choice, Kappa prefer quiet, remote locations and have a special fondness for swamps but can theoretically inhabit any stream, lake, river, spring or even well. Kappa are powerful trickster spirits who are potentially very dangerous but who can also assist people and bestow tremendous blessings.

Kappa can be extremely malevolent. They lure children into the water to drown and/or eat them. Sometimes they sneak beneath swimming children, grab them and hold them underwater, drowning them, just for fun. They rape women and may drown them, too. Sometimes they steal.

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*As with Fairies, myths and legends regarding Kappa have been softened and sanitized in recent years. Kappa were once invoked as a threat to keep children from wandering near water; now Kappa are portrayed as cute, sweet*

*and impish. Hello Kitty!(tm) plush toys appear dressed as Kappa.*

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Once you are in the water with them, it can be hard to escape from a Kappa however Kappa behave very consistently and so trouble can be averted. The defining physical quality of a Kappa is a hollow on top of its head filled with a mysterious liquid. Spilling this fluid will temporarily disarm the Kappa, rendering it harmless.

Here's the trick: Kappa may be killers but they are very polite. If you bow to them in the Japanese manner, they *will* bow back. Keep bowing. Bow lower. Every time you bow, the Kappa will match you. Eventually if it bows low enough, the liquid will spill. This is your moment to run and escape.

Avoid encounters: Kappa dislike metal, especially iron and steel. Wear or carry iron implements or amulets. (Perhaps the reason Kappa traditionally pick on children and women is that, back in the day, they were the people least likely to be carrying swords or other metal weapons.)

Alternatively, when in Kappa territory or anticipating trouble, carry cucumbers. They are the Kappas' very favorite food and they much prefer them to human livers, their other favorite food. Throw the Kappa a cucumber and run away.

Some negotiate with the Kappa: carving names onto cucumbers (one name per cuke) and throwing these into Kappa ponds on a regular schedule in the understanding that the Kappa will refrain from harming the persons named on the substitute offerings. This technique may also be used to petition or otherwise communicate with Kappa. Carve your message onto a cucumber and throw it into the water.

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*Kappa enjoy the art of sumo wrestling and are potentially competitive spirits, however this is one sport they can't win, if only because the formal bow at the beginning of the match causes them to lose their precious head fluid and become temporarily weak. Do not, however, under any circumstances, accept*

*a Kappa's thumb-wrestling challenge. It's just a ploy to pull you into the water. The Kappa always wins.*

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Why would you wish to petition the Kappa? Because they are not entirely evil and because they are the source of significant blessings:

- Kappa are skilled healers and can teach and transmit these skills to humans
- Kappa have access to underwater treasure, which they may be persuaded to bestow
- If Kappa like you, they are exceptionally loyal and helpful allies
- Kappa certainly have their faults but they are polite and honorable; their word is good, once they have given it. If a Kappa makes a promise, it will fulfill it.

**Favored people:** Kappa are quirky and may mysteriously take a fancy to someone however they passionately love sumo wrestling and hence sumo wrestlers.

**Manifestation:** Resembling a cross between a turtle, frog and monkey, Kappa are approximately the size of a human child with a long beak and webbed hands and feet. Their bodies are covered with scales and there is a tortoise shell on their back. They smell fishy and may be greenish. Although they are child-sized, Kappa possess tremendous physical strength: they are strong enough to drag horses and cattle underwater with their bare hands. Remember: their Achilles heel is the water-filled indentation atop their heads.

**Offerings:** Cucumbers; Kappamaki (cucumber roll sushi named for Kappas' love of cucumbers); melons; eggplants

**See also:** *Suijin*; *Yokai*

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*Kappa serve as literary inspiration, for example, Ryunosuke Akutagawa's 1927 novel Kappa and Hiromi Goto's 2002 novel, The Kappa Child. A*

*character identified as half-kappa is among the main protagonists of the very popular manga/anime, Saiyuki.*

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## **Karina**

The first documented mention of the Karina is amongst a list of spirits summoned by King Solomon to reveal their powers to him and how they can be controlled. The Karina appeared to Solomon in the guise of a beautiful young woman. She is a renowned shape-shifter and has many forms but the most common are canine, owl, serpentine and the aforementioned alluring girl. Although her forms change, she is consistently female. In other words, she may appear as a snake or an owl but it will be a female snake or owl.

The Karina may look appealing but she's a spirit of miscarriage and illness who demonstrates particular jealousy and hostility towards pregnant women. She curses by displaying her genitals, infecting those who witness this action with illness, miscarriage or stillbirth. In conversation with King Solomon, the Karina revealed that the archangel Gabriel controls and counteracts her. (So, if a strange woman or female dog exposes their genitals to you in an ominous way and now you're feeling nervous, it's time to request help from Gabriel.)

**See also:** *Gabriel; Solomon, King; Qarin; Umm Es Subyan*

## **Karni Mata**

*Lady of the Rats*

**Also known as:** Karni Ma; Mother Karni

**Origin:** India

Karni Mata, Rat Goddess and Great Mother, is a protective deity, venerated in India and worldwide although her principle shrine is in Deshnok, Rajasthan, northern India, famous for the thousands of sacred rats it houses. Karni Mata is a tribal ancestress goddess who has been

incorporated into the Hindu pantheon as an avatar of Durga. Her identification with Durga is now central to her modern myth.

She was allegedly born a human girl named Ridhu Bai on 2 October 1387 and quickly demonstrated healing and supernatural powers, especially the ability to miraculously cure or antidote venomous snake bites. She became known as Karni, interpreted as “She Will Do Something Miraculous on Earth.” (The affectionate honorific *Mata* means *Mother, Ma* or *Mom*.)

Karni was married to a prince but before the marriage was consummated, she revealed herself to him as a goddess sent to Earth to serve people. She could never be just a wife. She advised her husband to marry her sister and have children, which he did. Karni Mata treated those children as her own; their descendants were the first to venerate Karni Mata. They form a distinct caste and serve in Karni’s temple. (Karni Mata’s sisters are also enshrined in her temple.)

When her nephew/step-son drowned in a lake, Karni brought him to a cave and enclosed herself in with him. She wrangled with Yama, Lord of Death and successfully restored the young man to life. Karni Mata then vowed that none of her people would ever again fall into Yama’s clutches. Instead their souls would temporarily inhabit the bodies of rats and then they would reincarnate right back into her own tribe.

Karni Mata never died but on 21 March 1438, she is said to have vanished in a flash of light. A disembodied voice later told her grieving followers that if they installed her image in her cave, she would stay with them forever. She vowed to help anyone who came to pray at her Rajasthani shrine with true faith and a good heart. Karni Mata performs miracles of healing, provides victory and success and protects from all harm.

Karni Mata’s once small cave shrine has expanded into a beautiful, lavish marble temple with silver gates described as among the wonders of the world. It has earned something of an air of notoriety, especially among those unfamiliar with her spiritual tradition. Some are offended that, in the midst of a nation marked by intense poverty, rats are fed generously and regularly. The temple feeds people, too and devotees explain that the rats residing in Karni Mata’s temple only resemble rats

but are not truly rats. Instead they are human souls awaiting rebirth.

The rats allegedly do not leave the temple precinct. They are very tame and will approach and sit on visitors, perceived as transmitting the blessings of the goddess. Food offerings are first given to the rats and then distributed to human devotees. Rather than spread illness, Karni Mata's sacred rats may possess the power to counteract it. Food and beverages that the rats have tasted are perceived as having sacred medicinal properties. During a recent epidemic, people visited the temple to partake of the rats' milk and water.

There are only a handful of white rats among Karni's thousands of temple rats. A sighting of one of these rare rats is considered a special blessing from the goddess and an indication that your petition or vow has been heard.

**Iconography:** The traditional votive image of Karni Mata shows her standing with an upward pointing trident in her right hand, a demon's severed head impaled from the lower butt end. She holds another severed head in her left hand.

**Sacred site:** The Karni Mata Temple in Deshnok, India. She is also closely associated with caves and trees. Karni Mata specifically requested that people stop cutting trees.

**Sacred animals:** The rats in her temple. Karni Mata is *not* the goddess of rats in general. Offerings on behalf of rodents in general are not appropriate. Her sacred rats are specifically those that dwell in her temple.

**Spirit ally:** Because of his association with rodents, Ganesha may be venerated alongside Karni Mata.

**Sacred times:** Two fairs/pilgrimages are held in Deshnok: in the spring and in the fall

**Offerings:** On behalf of trees; incense; flower garlands; pilgrimage to her shrine; offerings on behalf of shrine maintenance or the rats may be made by mail or possibly on-line

**See also:** *Durga; Ganesha; Yama*

## Karttikeya

**Origin:** India

Karttikeya is a complex, mysterious, powerful spirit. Under the name Skanda or Murugan, he is the most beloved deity in modern southern India.

Karttikeya is lord of war and patron of thieves but also a great yogi, brilliant philosopher and masterful spiritual adept. Karttikeya is usually described as the son of Shiva and Parvati but variations of his myth exist. Ganesha is his brother.

Karttikeya means “related to the Krittikas” and refers to the six Krittikas, the goddesses who raised him. In one version, they find and raise the baby. In another version, Karttikeya is the result when six of the wives of the Cosmic Seers unknowingly conceive when they bathe in a river in which Shiva’s sperm has fallen.

Subramanian, one of Karttikeya’s names, means “dear to the Brahmins” and yet in southern India and Sri Lanka, Karttikeya is associated with intensely shamanic rites. Fire-walking is practiced in his major Sri Lankan shrine.

Request Karttikeya’s blessings and assistance:

- Before traveling, especially abroad
- Before academic or entrance exams
- For protection
- For enhanced business
- To avert or eliminate personal or family troubles and disasters

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*Karttikeya goes by a number of names including Murugan, Subramanian, Skanda, Kataragama and Kumara. All the names may refer to the same spirit. Alternatively, various local spirits have been absorbed into the Hindu pantheon by identifying them as the son of Shiva and Parvati. This may also account for Karttikeya’s very different behavior in different parts of India and Sri Lanka.*

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**Favored people:** Karttikeya often demonstrates interest in people by bestowing locks: their hair suddenly, abruptly forms locks.

**Manifestation:** Karttikeya takes many forms. He may have six heads. His hair may form six locks (one lock per face). He is usually depicted with four arms. In his wrathful form, Karttikeya is a lion-man.

**Iconography:** Frequently depicted in the company of his two wives and/or mounted on his peacock

**Attribute:** Spear; lance

**Consorts:** Devasena and Valli

**Bird:** Peacock

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*Karttikeya has two wives in South India but is eternally celibate in the north.*

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**Number:** 6

**Planet:** Mars

**Color:** Red

**Offerings:** Many of his devotees adopt a vegetarian diet and abstain from alcohol; traditional offerings to Karttikeya include milk, fruit; cooked rice, boiled black lentils

**See also:** *Ganesh; Hanuman; Korravai; Parvati; Shiva*

### **K'daai Maqsin**

**Origin:** Yakut (Siberia)

K'daai Maqsin is the primordial blacksmith; the very first smith



according to Yakut cosmology. He is the father of ironworking and responsible for training future smiths. A Yakut proverb says that blacksmiths and shamans were born in the same nest. According to Yakut myth, the first blacksmith, shaman and potter were brothers but the blacksmith is the eldest brother and hence the most powerful.

K'daai Maqsin initiates shamans. He tempers their souls on his forge in the manner that he tempers iron. He is a divine physician and heals and revives the broken bodies of heroes. He mends amputated limbs. Post-Christianity, K'daai Maqsin was reclassified as a fire demon. He lives in an iron house surrounded by flames.

**See also:** *Demon*

## **Kebechet**

**See:** *Qebhut*

## **Kedalion**

*The Purifier; The Old Crab; Phallic One*

**Also known as:** Cedalion

**Origin:** Greece

Instead of throwing baby Hephaestus into the sea, another version of this Greek myth suggests that Hera brought her son to the island of Naxos to be reared by her ally, the crab spirit Kedalion. Kedalion is a primeval forge master, master smith and shaman. He is a phallic spirit who bestows fertility and protection and wards off the Evil Eye. Hephaestus was apprenticed to Kedalion so that he too could learn smithcraft. Kedalion served and advised Hephaestus and was venerated beside him in his shrines. He is sometimes classified among the Cabeiri.

Kedalion also features in the myth of Orion. After Orion was blinded, he made his way to Hephaestus' forge (he could hear the metal clanging even if he couldn't see); Hephaestus took pity on him and lent him Kedalion who, riding on his shoulders, guided him towards Helios who

restored Orion's vision.

Kedalion is traditionally venerated alongside Hera, Hephaestus or in the company of shaman/smith spirits

**Favored people:** Smiths; shamans; those born under the sign Cancer

**Manifestation:** Kedalion is sometimes envisioned as a small man or dwarf but he may manifest as a crab. Once upon a time, smiths were often deliberately lamed so that they could not easily take their prized skills away; Kedalion may not literally be a crab but he may move like one because his legs have been damaged; hence he cannot walk beside Orion but must be carried. Hephaestus, too, is lame.

**See also:** *Cabeiri; Helios; Hephaestus; Hera*

## Kel Asuf

### *The People of Solitude*

**Also known as:** Kel Esuf; Goumaten

**Origin:** Tuareg

The Tuareg are a traditionally nomadic African people who, until the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century and the advent of airplanes and automobiles, controlled the Sahara's salt roads and caravan routes. The Tuareg began to be converted to Islam in the 16<sup>th</sup> century; however strong traditional spiritual elements survive and remain vital.

In recent years, many of the Tuareg have been forced into sedentary existence but previously they roamed the vast Sahara and Sahel: no one knew the mysteries of the desert better. The Kel Asuf, Spirits of Solitude are among those mysteries.

“Solitude” may be understood to mean remote; distant from human habitation; a synonym for *desolation*. Kel Asuf are spirits of the bush; spirits who dwell beyond human thresholds. They linger near people but remain independent. They will not adjust for civilization. They will not submit to Islam or otherwise be co-opted. They are pre-Islamic spirits who refuse to be abandoned or forgotten. Propitiate them; make them

into allies or get sick and die.

*Solitude* is also the Tuareg euphemism for spirit possession. The Kel Asuf are the spirits who possess but through ritual these spirits are transformed from debilitating illness into helpers and guardians. Kel Asuf possession doesn't resemble *The Exorcist*; there's no spinning heads or vomiting pea soup. Instead, it manifests as illness: Western society might not recognize symptoms of Kel Asuf possession. The afflicted person might just be sent for endless medical testing: no physical cause for their ailment is ever found. (See the Glossary entry for *Possession*.)

Signs indicating possession or a Kel Asuf spirit's interest in a human being include depression, malaise, loss of appetite, red eyes with no apparent physical cause and loss of the faculty of speech. It is also characterized by intense cravings for beautiful aromas like perfume or incense. Kel Asuf, like Zar spirits, generally, though not always, manifest in gradual, wasting illnesses as opposed to the sudden severe strikes that are characteristic of many Djinn and Sidhe.

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*There is very little written about the Kel Asuf, especially in English. As the Tuareg have been forced into sedentary communities amongst more orthodox conventional Muslim neighbors, they have lost much autonomy and Tande N Goumaten, which are public ceremonies, are discouraged, if not outright forbidden. Susan J. Rasmussen's Spirit Possession and Personhood Among the Kel Ewey Tuareg (Cambridge University Press, 1995) describes her experiences among the Tuareg.*

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Rituals to summon, celebrate, and propitiate the Kel Asuf are called *Tande N Gou maten*.

- *Goumaten*, the plural of *Gouma*, is the word for Kel Asuf in Tamacheq, the Tuareg language, related to Berber
- Tande has three meanings: mortar (as in mortar and pestle); a type of drum constructed by stretching goat skin across a mortar and also a generic term for musical events

Rituals feature drumming, dancing, and singing. Carefully selected ritual music activates and summons the Kel Asuf similar to songs played for Lwa and Orishas. Women play prominent roles in Tande N Goumaten. Social conventions are broken. During rituals women hold swords, traditionally men's weapons, even if menstruating.

It is usually considered best to remove Koranic amulets during Tande N Goumaten. (Whether because the amulets are so powerful, the spirits *cannot* approach or because the spirits are offended by the amulets and thus *will not* is subject to interpretation.)

Kel Asuf may attack out of anger, if disturbed or annoyed but may also cause symptoms of possession because they are interested in starting or maintaining a relationship with someone. Spirits are often passed from mother to daughter and thus one or more Kel Asuf spirits may be venerated by a family over many generations.

Tande N Goumaten is not the only way to cure illness caused by Kel Asuf. Illness may also respond to healing via Koranic verses especially when men are afflicted, possibly because Kel Asuf tend to strike men out of anger but infect women to form alliances. Kel Asuf, both male and female, tend to prefer human women. The Kel Asuf spirits most closely associated with Tande N Goumaten rituals afflict women almost exclusively.

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*Kel Asuf resemble Djinn and are sometimes classified as a type or subset of Djinn.*

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Illness caused by Kel Asuf does not respond to conventional treatment. Once infected, ritual healing is required if someone wishes to get well. However, it is possible to ward off Kel Asuf and avoid them via the use of amulets and metal:

- Silver, the metal of purity, may keep you safe (in Tuareg cosmology, silver is considered the purest of metals; gold the least pure and thus offers the least protection)

- The Tuareg amulets known as the 21 Crosses including the Cross of Agadez are traditionally crafted from silver and intended to protect against Kel Asuf
- Iron may frighten and repel them
  - Individual Kel Asuf have names, distinct personalities and preferences although Kel Asuf as a group also display certain predilections:
- They detest dirt. In order to maintain a personal relationship with Kel Asuf, you must keep your body clean and fragrant.
- They like blood and thus may be found lingering near slaughterhouses. They have no problem being served by menstruating women.
- They insist on becoming active participants in your life. They are nosy and bossy when it comes to devotees' sex lives. You must request their permission before getting married. (They will likely give it but are highly offended if not asked.)
- They are nocturnal but like things that glow in the dark. Anthropologist Susan J. Rasmussen describes a ritual held after midnight outside in the dark. The patient wore a white festival blouse described as "glowing white." Kel Asuf respond favorably to this glowing white contrasted against darkness.
- They are very sensitive to smell: maintain the aroma of perfume and fragrant incense

**Favored people:** Kel Asuf generally prefer to maintain relationships with women

**Time:** Night

**Day:** They're at the peak of their power on Fridays (and believed especially active on important Muslim holidays).

**Sacred sites:** They prefer wild, desolate, untamed places. They can live within people either as debilitating parasites or as guardian advisors who bring blessings of health and good fortune.

**See also:** *Bori; Djinn; Lwa; Mami Waters; Orisha; Sidhe; Zar* and the Glossary entry for *Menstruation*

## Kelpie

**Origin:** Scotland

Kelpies are shape-shifting Scottish water spirits usually found near running, moving water like rivers or streams. Kelpies are notorious for abducting people either just to drown them or to carry them back to their own realm to live among them, marry and have Kelpie children. They may abduct human women to be midwives or wet-nurses.

The Kelpie assumes the form of an attractive horse or pony walking alone on the shore. It looks docile and may make overtures inviting a person onto its back. It's typically saddled and ready to ride and just looks like a friendly pony who has somehow gotten separated from its people. It's a trick. If you get on the Kelpie's back, it may walk nicely for a little bit, offering a pleasant pony ride but ultimately it plunges deep into the water. Kelpies are spirits: they don't have to come up for air.

One would imagine that the simplest solution would be to just avoid strange, lone horses on the shore *but* many actively seek Kelpies because theoretically they can be commanded and controlled. The Kelpie's Achilles heel is its bridle. Capture the bridle: control the Kelpie. Kelpies are not horses; they are spirits and thus can perform many magical functions. According to legend, Scotland's Clan MacGregor is in possession of such a Kelpie bridle.

Kelpies may be oracular horse spirits to whom human sacrifices were once made.

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*Whether Kelpies also haunt lochs (including Loch Ness) or whether these are the exclusive stomping grounds of the Each Uisge, Scotland's dangerous salt water horse spirit is subject for cantankerous debate. However, this is a fine detail that is probably irrelevant to either horse spirits' victims.*

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**Manifestation:** The standard form taken by a Kelpie is equine. The clue to its true identity may be a mane and tail that won't stop dripping even

on a dry day. Kelpies are not restricted to equine form and may be full of surprises. Female Kelpies are described as manifesting in the form of beautiful women dressed in green.

**See also:** *Achilles; Each Uisge; Fuath; Green Lady*

## Keres

**Also known as:** Ceres

The Keres are a band of fierce, frightening female justice spirits. They are the entourage and servants of the goddess Car. The Keres administer punishment and justice but not gently. They are vampiric spirits who leave death in their wake. They cause plagues and epidemics and drag bodies from battlefields. Greek myth describes the Keres as Car's sisters. She is the eldest. They are also described as the daughters of Nyx.

**Manifestation:** The Keres are described as dressed in red: whether this is red fabric or whether their clothes are stained red with blood is subject to interpretation. Homer called them the hounds of Hades. Whether this was meant literally—whether like Hekate, they actually manifest as dogs is unknown but possible.

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*Although their names are similar, the Keres are not identical to the Italian grain goddess whose entry is found under Ceres.*

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**See also:** *Car; Erinyes; Hades; Hecate*

## Keshalyi

**Origin:** Romani (Gypsy)

Keshalyi are usually described as “Fairies.” Their name is believed to derive from a word for “spindle” and so they may be associated with

those deities who spin the threads of fate. *Keshalyi* resembles an ancient Akkadian word meaning *wizard* or *magician* and a Hebrew word meaning *magic* itself. Indeed the Keshalyi are magic-working spirits.

They live in the remote forests and mountain glades of Transylvania and possibly elsewhere but many Keshalyi are in hiding. They are gentle, beautiful, generous and benevolent but theirs is a tragic saga. Once they lived in a magical palace atop a sacred mountain until one day the King of the evil Loçolico spirits fell in love with Ana, the magnificent, magnanimous Queen of the Keshalyi. She spurned his hand in marriage and so he decided to force her hand by sending his minions to devour her Keshalyi entourage. The Keshalyi are gentle and kind and very good at granting people's wishes but they're no match in a tussle with evil spirits. To save the Keshalyi from extinction, Ana agreed to marry the king leading to her degradation and tragic consequences for people. She eventually persuaded her husband to grant her a divorce but the price of her freedom was steep: any Keshalyi who reaches the age of 999 must marry one of the Loçolico.

The Keshalyi possess so much fertility, it overflows. Petition them to heal infertility, especially if no physical cause can be determined:

#### **KESHALYI INVOCATION**

1. The following phrase invokes them: *Keshal yi lisperesn* (literally: *Keshalyi spin*)
2. Write the words with glue on cardboard
3. Sprinkle gold or red glitter over the glue so that the words become visible (Make it sparkly and pretty: decorate the cardboard if you choose.)
4. While it dries, prepare an offering table for the Keshalyi.
5. When you're ready, begin to chant the words aloud like a mantra
6. When you feel the presence of the Keshalyi, make your request
7. Promise them a larger offering table when your request is fulfilled or perhaps an annual one on an appropriate date (and an offering table after a healthy birth)



**Manifestation:** Keshalyi are classic romantic Fairies, the stuff of fantasy: pretty and sparkly and shimmery

**Offerings:** Milk; Palinka or other fruit brandy; cakes; cookies

**See also:** *Ana; Fairy; Loçolico*

## Keto

**Also known as:** Ceto

**Origin:** Greece

The sea isn't all fun, games and splashing about. Dangers lurk in the deep, too, and sometimes approach the shore. Keto is the goddess of the dangers of the sea; the treacherous aspects of the ocean. Her name is the feminine form of the Greek word for sea monster. Keto presides over the ocean's living dangers: carnivores; really big, potentially dangerous creatures; mysterious sea monsters. Her parents are Pontus and Gaia: the primordial Earth and Sea. With her brother/ lover Phorkys, she has many children including Echidna, Scylla, Ladon, the Graeae, the Gorgons including Medusa and sometimes, depending on myth, the Sirens. They may be venerated together on an altar: they may once have formed an independent pantheon who were eventually demonized. They are closely related to Hekate.

Keto is a primordial goddess who is now frequently dismissed as nothing more than a sea monster. It is perhaps more appropriate to describe her as the goddess of the mysteries of the deep or of awe of the ocean. She is feared and dreaded but also may once have been the subject of intense veneration: several of her children are targeted for destruction by the Olympian spirits.

**Iconography:** Keto is usually depicted as a beautiful woman in the company of fish-tailed mermen like Phorkys or Triton.

**Sacred creatures:** Sharks, whales, giant squids or octopi, mysterious monsters of the deep

**Altar:** Decorate her altar with shells, fossils and motifs of the sea. Add

merpeople and images of her children and the fierce creatures she loves. Offer glasses of salted water; sea salt and treasure.

**See also:** *Echidna; Gaia; Gorgons; Graeae; Hekate; Heracles; Ladon; Medusa; Olympian Spirits; Phorkys; Pontos; Scylla; Siren; Triton* and the Glossary entry for *Pantheon*.

## **Ketta**

**Origin:** Norse

Ketta are cat spirits. *Ketta* literally means shecat or female cat but the word is also used to identify certain fierce female spirits. The most famous Ketta is the being that Grendel, the monster in *Beowulf*, calls Mom. Some perceive a resemblance between Grendel's Mother and Black Annis (Cat Annis)

**Manifestation:** As a large cat, a woman or something in between. The defining characteristic seems to be extremely long sharp cat's claws (even if the rest of the body appears human).

**See also:** *Black Annis; Neko Mata*

## **Khadiravani**

**Also known as:** Tara of the Forest

Khadiravani, Lady of the Acacia Forest, protects from all danger. She removes obstacles from the paths of devotees. She is fearless and is invoked to banish any evil. Khadiravani breaks malicious spells and faces down any malignant spirit or ghost.

Who is she? Khadiravani is now mainly identified with Tara and sometimes called the 22<sup>nd</sup> Tara; the one who comes after the twenty-one official manifestations. She may be a manifestation of Green Tara and is sometimes called the Emerald Tara, referring both to the precious gem and the green leaves of the forest in which Khadiravani dwells. There is no documentation of this form of Tara before the 9<sup>th</sup> century; no image

crafted before the 10<sup>th</sup> century has been found. Previously she was a completely independent, unaffiliated spirit.

*Khadira* literally means *acacia*, among the most popular of Himalayan shamanic plants. It also refers to a widely diffused Tantric manual. There are two theories regarding Khadiravani's identity; they are not mutually exclusive:

- Khadiravani may be an indigenous Bon spirit eventually identified with Tara
- Khadiravani may be a path of Green Tara who, according to legend, appeared to Buddhist scholar and teacher, Nagarjuna in a Khadira forest in southern India

**Spirit allies:** Khadiravani is frequently accompanied by Marici and Ekajata (Blue Tara)

**Realm:** Khadiravani is associated with actual forests but also presides over a mystical forest paradise, filled with glorious trees (acacia, sandalwood, fig, nutmeg, clove, banyan) and an abundance of creatures, specifically peacocks, parrots, tigers, leopards, bear, deer, jackals and monkeys.

**Attribute:** Blue lotus

**See also:** *Bon Spirits; Ekajata; Lady of the Beasts; Marichi; Tara (1); Tara (2); Tara, Green*

## Khephri

*Father of the Spirits*

**Also known as:** Kephra; Kefri

**Origin:** Egypt

Deities come in all forms. Khephri is a deity in the form of a dung beetle. (Species: *Scarabaeus sacer* or *Ateuchus aegyptiorum*.) Khephri is the spirit of life, resurrection and the sun. He is invoked for spiritual protection; resurrection into the Afterlife and to keep the sun shining in the sky.

Dung beetles, also known as scarab beetles, lay their eggs in dung, which they then roll into a ball and move so as to hide them in a safe place. The ancient Egyptians interpreted this action to be akin to the ball of the sun moving across the sky daily. Dung beetles fly during the hottest part of the day, furthering their associations with the sun.

Khephri's name derives from an Egyptian word meaning "to come into being." Because baby dung beetles were witnessed emerging from this ball of dung, rather than from a mother or directly from eggs and because dung beetles were believed to be exclusively male, they were perceived as self-generated just like the solar deity Ra. Khephri is a spirit of creation; a progenitor of life.

Veneration of Khephri was eventually grafted onto the state cult of Ra. Khephri is described as being an aspect of Ra; specifically the morning sun. However veneration of a deity in the form of a scarab beetle predates veneration of Ra. Some Egyptologists believe that Khephri was among the most ancient deities of Egypt and that, at one time, a giant stone scarab on a plinth, appeared in most, if not all, Egyptian temples.

Khephri's power and blessings are transmitted in the form of scarab amulets, formed in his image. Scarabs were among the most popular amulets serving both the living and the dead. Scarabs were considered protectors of the heart, thus a scarab amulet was placed within a mummy's heart cavity.

- Placing scarabs within a tomb invoked the blessings and protection of Khephri.
- If scarabs were placed beneath the coffin, it was believed that nothing, no spiritual or magical force, could harm the deceased.
- Scarab amulets allegedly provide longevity to the living.
- Scarab amulets are worn or carried to protect the heart: whether physically (heart disease), spiritually or romantically.

**Iconography:** Khephri is depicted as a man with a scarab beetle on his head; as a man with a scarab beetle head or as a scarab beetle. Sometimes he is depicted wearing a crown more usually associated with Osiris.

**See also:** *Osiris*

## Khidr, Al

### *The Verdant One; The Green Man*

**Also known as:** El Khidr; El Khizr; Al Khidri

**Feast:** 23 April

His true name, if he has one, is unknown. It is unclear exactly when he lived. *Al Khidr* literally means “The Green One” or “The Verdant One” in Arabic. He is a mysterious sage, prophet and holy man, possibly an angel, definitely an Ascended Master. He may be a spirit or he may be a man who, having drunk the Water of Life is now immortal.

Al Khidr is the Green Man. He is the patron of fertility, spring, youth, good health and life everlasting. In a dry region where the desert and drought are never far, Al Khidr is a spirit of water, allegedly responsible for several magical, therapeutic and restorative springs found in the desert. He may know, control and/or produce the Fountain of Youth, also known as the Water of Life. Al Khidr drank from the Water of Life and so is eternally youthful, healthy, energetic and *alive*.

Al Khidr is the patron of travelers; serving as both physical and mystic guide. He mysteriously and miraculously appears to rescue or guide travelers in need and then just as mysteriously disappears. There have historically been many reported sightings and encounters with Al Khidr.

Al Khidr has been venerated since before Islam although how much before is unclear. He may predate Christianity and Judaism, too. He is identified as a contemporary of Moses with whom he is said to have traveled. He is venerated among such diverse spiritual traditions as the Bektashi, Druse, Kizilbash, Nosairi and Yezidi.

Highly unusually, he is a pre-Islamic spirit who is perceived as benevolent by Islam. Devotion to Al Khidr is considered compatible with Islam because he is considered to support and serve the Prophet, not be a competitor or rival. Al Khidr is revered amongst some branches of Islam, especially Sufis. Depending on tradition, Al Khidr may be considered an angel, prophet or saint. Although now venerated all over the Islamic world, the heartland of Al Khidr’s veneration is Turkey, Syria, Lebanon, Israel and the Balkans.

Al Khidr epitomizes the goodness and generosity inherent in the world. Al Khidr guides spiritual seekers and those who seek the mysteries of the divine. He initiates those who walk mystical paths. The hallmark of many Sufisaints is a meeting with Al Khidr who bestows a cloak representing their initiation.

Al Khidr is the subject of *many*, often contradictory, legends. The prophets and saints with whom he is sometimes identified include Elijah, John the Baptist and especially Saint George whose feast day he shares. (In other words, some believe Saint George and Al Khidr to be one and the same; two names for the same being. In Syria, Turkey, Lebanon and Palestine, images of Saint George may be identified as Al Khidr.) In some places, his feast day is considered the first true day of spring. Stories of Al Khidr were extremely popular in Moorish Spain; it's possible that after the Christian Reconquest, these legends were transferred to Saint George. Alternatively, Al Khidr and Saint George (or at least some of his paths) may initially have been a Pagan spirit who transitioned to Islam and Christianity under two different names.

**Manifestation:** Historical sightings of Al Khidr describe him as a traveler riding a greyhorse; although these days, it may be a grey car or perhaps even a Greyhound bus. He leaves telltale signs of his identity: his footsteps allegedly leave a green imprint. Places where he sits or that he touches may also turn greenish. Some describe him as having a greenish hue, a lingering effect of drinking the Waters of Immortality. You can allegedly recognize him because one of his thumbs lacks a bone.

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*Myths from India suggest that Al Khidr's true home is beneath the sea and that he travels to land sitting on a green carpet that skims the surface of the waters.*

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**Iconography:** Al Khidr appears amongst Persian miniatures but images of Saint George or the Green Man may also be used to represent him

**Plants:** All green plants but especially hemp; marijuana

**Color:** Green

**Time:** Spring

**Sacred sites:** Al Khidr is a traveler; a man always on the move and so, not surprisingly he has close associations with many places:

- *Khidrlik* (literally Khidr's Place), a popular Turkish place-name, usually refers to high places
- There is a hot spring named in his honor near Elbassan, Albania.
- Sanctuaries or sites associated with Al Khidr are also often linked to the Crusaders including sites in Damascus and Jerusalem and a spring in Nablus (*'Ayn al-Khidr*)
- The shrine of Beit Jala, near Bethlehem, is associated with Al Khidr by Muslims, Saint George by Christians and Elijah by Jews. The shrine has historically been associated with miraculous cures of mental illness • Abadan Island, Iran is dedicated to him

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*If a shrine specifically associated with Al Khidr is inaccessible, never fear. Vows to Al Khidr have traditionally been fulfilled at shrines dedicated to Saint George.*

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**See also:** *Ascended Master; Green Man*

## **Khnum**

*The Sculptor Who Gives Life; Lord of Destiny; Father of Fathers, Mother of Mothers; Lord of the Cool Water*

**Also known as:** Khnoum

**Origin:** Egypt

Khnum presides over the Nile cataracts. It was at his command that the river rose during the annual inundation. When the correct time for

the Nile floods arrived, Khnum opened the flood gates and released the waters.

Khnum is a particularly ancient deity, as is his original consort, Frog Lady Heket. Their myths explain that they were here from the beginning: they precede creation; they transcend time. In parts of southern Egypt, Khnum was believed to be the Supreme Creator who first fashioned humans from Nile River clay on his potter's wheel, while Heket assisted with the breath of life.

Khnum fashions the bodies of children on his potter's wheel and places them into their mother's womb. In one Egyptian creation legend, Khnum creates all the deities of Egypt in this fashion. The spirit of pottery, Khnum shaped the Earth and all its inhabitants out of clay.

Khnum is the Lord of barley and wheat, flowers, fruit, birds, fish and animals. In one creation legend, Khnum wearies of the labors of creating and maintaining all life. Eventually he created a device to relieve him of his burden: by placing a replica of his potter's wheel into the womb of female creatures, he was able to transmit his creative power.

Heket and Khnum were well known throughout Egypt. At some point, Khnum acquired another family as well, a Nubian wife (Anuket) and their daughter (Satis). The exact relationship between the two female deities is unclear; variations upon this legend abound. Arguments are also made for Satis as wife and Anuket the daughter. A third theory suggests the goddesses are sisters. Jewish angelology identifies Khnum with the angel Anmael.

**Manifestations:** Khnum manifests as a ram, (the literal meaning of his name), or as a man with a ram's head. A two thousand year old inscription describes Khnum sitting upon his throne at Elephantine Island with his sandals resting on the Nile and his crown touching the sky.

**Element:** Water, Earth

**Places:** Khnum's main sanctuary was on Elephantine Island. An inscription from Pharaoh Zoser states that Elephantine belongs to Khnum forever. One tenth of Upper Egypt's production was to be offered to Khnum at his temple. Zoser promised that Khnum's temple, named



Joy of Life, would forever be kept in perfect repair. The ruins may be visited today. Another temple dedicated to Khnum in Esna, formerly Latopolis, south of Luxor, may also be visited.

**Offerings:** Khnum traditionally accepts offerings of fish. His devotees refrained from using any aspect of a sheep or lamb, whether for food, leather, wool or otherwise.

**See also:** *Anuket; Heket; Satis*

## Khonsu

**Also known as:** Khensu, Khons

**Origin:** Egypt

Khonsu is described as Bastet's son or as the son of Ammon and Mut or Sobek and Hathor. Spirit of the moon, when he causes the crescent moon to shine, women conceive. Moon-bathing helps the process (young women were once warned not to lie in the moonlight; apparently Khonsu may not need human male assistance). He possessed many sanctuaries throughout ancient Egypt but his principle shrine was in Thebes, where he had a temple within the precinct of the Temple of Ammon at Karnak.

Khonsu is also a master healer with dominion over time. He has some control over the length of the human life span. He is an ally, friend and companion of Thoth who also has association with the moon and time. Khonsu has a youthful, charming nature: he likes games and is portrayed playing the Egyptian board game senet with Thoth. Khonsu, like Thoth, likes to wager and may be persuaded to play with a devotee. You set the wager: before you start playing, tell him what you will give if you lose and what he must give if you win. If you can't play senet, learn or teach him a new board game.

Khonsu is most frequently petitioned for fertility especially if no physical cause for infertility can be determined or when the woman is fertile but the male component needs some assistance. He also provides safe childbirth. The most ancient aspect of Khonsu was as a fierce

warrior who inspires rage and serves Egypt's pharaoh.

**Iconography:** A young man wearing the royal sidelock and bearing the moon on his shoulders

**Attribute:** Knife

**Bird:** Hawk

**Planet:** Moon

**See also:** *Ammon; Bastet; Chandra; Hathor; Mut; Sobek; Thoth*

## Khronos

**Origin:** Orphic

Khronos is the Time Lord, Gnostic spirit of time. He turns the wheel of the zodiac. In various esoteric traditions, Khronos emerges from the primeval void to birth the world together with his consort, Ananke. He may or may not be identified with the Titan Kronos of Greek myth.

**Iconography:** Khronos is depicted with a serpentine body and three heads: bull, lion, man.

**See also:** *Ananke; Kronos*

## Khun Paen

**Also known as:** Khun Phan

**Origin:** Thailand

Khun Paen (c. 1491–1529) was a legendary Thai magician and warrior. (*Khun* is a military rank similar to General. English translation literary sources tend to spell his name *Phan* but modern Thai amulet vendors generally prefer *Paen*.) He was a disciple of the renowned monk and magician, Arjarn Kong from whom he learned many magical secrets and rituals including the esoteric use of *yantras* (magical diagrams incorporating sacred geometry and astrology).

Khun Paen developed incredible magic powers: he could make himself invulnerable or invisible. He transformed tree leaves into angry wasps in order to foil enemies. Perhaps most significantly to many modern devotees, Khun Paen, who was allegedly *very* handsome, was able to make himself absolutely irresistible to women. (The alleged proof is in the harem he is reputed to have amassed.)

Modern Khun Paen amulets are believed to magically attract and entrance women and thus are among the most sought-after Thai amulets. Allegedly wives sometimes forbid their husbands from wearing them. In addition to being love magnets, Khun Paen amulets also allegedly provide protection and prosperity. Khun Paen's other claim to fame derives from allegedly being the first to transform a baby into a Guman Thong spirit helper, in this case his own infant son.

**See also:** *Golden Boy; Nang Kwak*

## **Kihawahine**

*Lizard Woman; Red Torch*

**Classification:** Mo'o; Aumakua

The Hawaiian island of Maui is ornamented with the ubiquitous image of a lizard understood as the island's mascot. It's hard to avoid this image: it appears *everywhere*; on t-shirts, shot glasses, key chains, bumper stickers and other tourist trinkets. For those who are unfamiliar with Kihawahine and Mo'o spirits, this lizard may be understood as a cute little island gecko but in fact this is not so. Kihawahine is a grand, tremendous, potentially dangerous Mo'o lizard goddess, once Maui's most revered spirit.

Kihawahine was not always a spirit. Originally human, she is believed to have been born with something, some mark or sign, indicating her affiliation with the spirits. (This may have been a physical mark or a demonstration of psychic powers.) (See also: *E'epa.*)

Maui's royal family, the Pi'ilani, had long, close associations with Mo'o spirits. That's the family into which Kihawahine was born at the

royal residence of Moku'ula. Her birth name was Kihawahine Mokuhinia Kala'aiheana. She lived in the latter part of the 16<sup>th</sup> century and was the daughter of High Chief Pi'ilani. Her brother became King of Maui.

After she died, Kihawahine was transformed into a goddess. Following death, esoteric rites of deification were performed so that the woman was transformed into the Mo'o Akua known as Kihawahine, guardian of the royal family, the sacred Mokuhinia ponds and Moku'ula Island. It is unclear how old she was when she died but she is believed to have borne at least three daughters and possibly other children and so she also serves as an Aumakua, a family guardian spirit, to their descendants.

When King Kamehameha sought to unify the Hawaiian Islands, he married into the Pi'ilani royal family as part of his consolidation plan. His wife, Keopuolani, among the highest ranking women in Hawaii, was considered a living goddess. (She outranked her husband.) Kamehameha inherited and adopted veneration of Kihawahine from his wife, carrying her image with him during his conquest of the Hawaiian Islands.

Kihawahine is an unusual Mo'o spirit. She is not localized but traveled widely (with or without Kamehameha). Surviving legends describe her travels through the Hawaiian Islands. She was venerated by royalty, nobility and commoners alike. Kihawahine was venerated on the Hawaiian islands of Hawaii, Kauai, Lanai, Molokai and Nihau as well as Maui. She lives in ponds and rivers and mediates between realms of Earth and water.

Kihawahine's primary home is Mokuhinia, a pond in Lahaina. Moku'ula, an island in this freshwater, spring-fed pond whose elevation was only about one meter above sea level, was considered capital of the Hawaiian kingdom.

As an Aumakua spirit, veneration of Kihawahine remained active, if secret, after the 1819 abolition of traditional Hawaiian religion. Numerous sightings of Kihawahine were reported. (When manifesting as a large aquatic lizard, she's hard to miss.) Dowager Queen Keka'ulohi, a devout Christian and supporter of Protestant missionaries, encouraged suppression of traditional Hawaiian religion. In 1837, Kihawahine almost overturned her canoe as she was heading for church. Whether or

not this was a factor, in 1845, the royal court moved to Oahu and in 1914, island and fish pond were filled in and converted to recreational use. The sacred precinct now lies beneath a baseball park. In 1993, archaeologists rediscovered Moku'ula and plans for an environmental restoration are in the works. More information may be found in P. Christiaan Klieger's book, *Moku'ula: Maui's Sacred Island* or at [www.mokuula.com](http://www.mokuula.com)

**Manifestation:** Kihawahine manifests as a woman; a giant black monitor lizard or a dragon. She may be missing an eye, lost in a battle with Haumea. She is described as having red or auburn hair.

**Iconography:** Carved wooden statues of Kihawahine depict her as a woman whose hair is bleached with lime.

**Sacred plants:** Coconut; noni; turmeric

**Sacred site:** Moku'ula is her primary residence but she had others on other islands, too.

**Rituals:** Her veneration incorporated many taboos. She must be approached with caution.

**Offerings:** Yellow tapa cloth dyed with turmeric or noni root; lots of kava; restoration of her sacred precinct

**See also:** *Akua; Aumakua; Haumea; Ka'ahu Pahau; Mo'o*

## Kikimora

**Also known as:** Shishimora

**Origin:** Slavic

The Kikimora is a female house spirit with dominion over spinning, weaving and needlework. There is not one Kikimora but many. Theoretically, every household may have one. She may or may not be married to the Domovoi, the Russian male house spirit. If she's happy with the family with whom she lives, then she'll serve as their guardian; tending family chickens and helping with housework and needlework.

But beware if she's unhappy! The Kiki mora will create havoc. She demonstrates displeasure by moving objects around and causing significant items to go missing. She also throws things; sometimes aiming at people. Her aim is allegedly quite good. Al though she is reputedly very small, based on the weight of the items she is describing as throwing, the Kikimora is very powerful.

The Kikimora is not an innately malicious spirit. She can be helpful. She possesses powerful psychic talents and will warn her family of impending disaster and the arrival of enemies. However, she can be a difficult and challenging spirit to work with and keep happy.

The Kikimora is a chicken goddess but not necessarily a chicken guardian. She has affinities with poultry, either caring for them or tormenting them. She may pluck their feathers or scare them so they won't lay eggs unless the chicken yard is magically protected. (For example, a fieldstone containing a natural hole placed in the chicken yard is a traditional magical remedy to protect chickens from her.) The Kikimora is sometimes associated with Baba Yaga who also has affinities with chickens. Both spirits reward and favor women who perform traditional women's work skillfully and graciously.

The Kikimora sleeps in dark corners of the home such as behind the stove or in the cellar. Although the Kikimora is a house spirit, she is capable of travel and apparently enjoys visits to the bathhouse where she is frequently encountered. The Kikimora is an oracular spirit but she tends to deliver warnings of misfortune rather than happy news. She does not explicitly deliver her information but her appearances, actions and behavior may be interpreted for clues. To witness her seated by the home's entrance was interpreted as an ominous sign. To witness the Kikimora spinning was believed to be a harbinger of impending death.

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*In his tone poem "Kikimora", Russian composer Anatol Liadov (1855–1914) describes this house spirit as a tiny brown witch with a thimble-sized head and a body no wider than a straw. She spends her first seven years living in a magician's mountain cave where she sleeps in a crystal cradle and is regaled with fairy tales by the magician's cat. Only after seven years, does she leave*

*the cave to go live among people.*

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**Manifestation:** The Kikimora is usually described as a small woman with long flowing hair wearing traditional Russian folk costume. She may have chicken feet. She is most frequently witnessed combing her hair.

**Bird:** Chicken

**Time:** The Kikimora is particularly active during the Yuletide season

**See also:** *Baba Yaga; Domovoi*

### **King of Terrors**

The King of Terrors is among those spirits classified as Holy Death. He is closely related to the Grim Reaper. The King of Terrors is a skeleton bearing weapons. He may be crowned. He is a psychopomp but a fierce, scary one. His name says it all: he does not arrive bearing comfort or platitudes.

The name, King of Terrors, derives from the Book of Job 18: 14: *He is torn from the security of his tent and marched before the King of Terrors.* Thus the King of Terrors is traditionally depicted driving dead souls before him. His image is carved onto tombstones and as ornamental motifs on medieval churches, most famously at Scotland's Rosslyn Chapel.

**Attributes:** Arrows; darts; scythe; spear

**See also:** *Ankou; Psychopomps; Santissima Muerte*

### **Kings of Hell**

**Also known as:** The Ten Kings; Ten Judges of Hell

**Origin:** Japan

The Ten Kings of Hell are afterlife judges. They derive from Chinese Taoist tradition, filtered through Japanese Buddhism:

- Those who've clearly lived exemplary lives travel to Paradise when they die
- Those who have been clearly wicked travel to a punishment realm

But what of those whose actions are more ambiguous? Those who may have performed both good and bad deeds while alive? Where do they go? That's for the Kings of Hell to decide. The Kings of Hell preside over a series of afterlife trials intended to determine the fate of the dead soul. The person's actions while alive, both positive and negative, are weighed, analyzed and discussed. Jizo serves as the defense attorney for dead souls and always attempts to present human actions in the best possible light. Final outcome however is up to the Kings of Hell. Although few look forward to meeting the Ten Kings in person, they are a popular subject of Japanese art.

**See also:** *Amida Buddha; Datsueba; Enma; Jizo; Ksitigarbha*

## **Kishijoten**

**Origin:** Japan

Kishijoten is a spirit of love, beauty and good luck. She is considered to be Bishamon's sister and so has close connections with the Shichi Fujukin, Japan's Seven Spirits of Good Luck. Kishijoten is now most famous as the matron goddess of geishas. Those who consider themselves modern geishas may seek Kishijoten's protection.

**Favored people:** Singers; dancers; courtesans; children: Kishijoten is invoked by mothers to provide protection for infants and older children.

**See also:** *Bishamon; Shichi Fukujin*

## **Kitchen God**

*The Stove Master*



**Also known as:** Zao Shen; Tsao Chun

**Origin:** China

The Kitchen God traditionally lives by the hearth. His role is to protect family harmony by guarding the kitchen and dining areas, once considered the soul of the house. His presence in the kitchen is not abstract but entirely visible: his image once hung in virtually every Chinese household. Because he lives in the house as one of the family, he is privy to intimate knowledge. The Kitchen God sees, hears and knows all.

Although officially a guardian spirit, the Kitchen God is really a spy. He is the witness to what a family might prefer to keep private. With the Kitchen God around, what happens in the home does not stay in the home. His true function arrives at year end when each family's Kitchen God is summoned to the Jade Emperor's court to offer an annual report regarding what he has witnessed all year. The family's fortunes in the New Year are dependent on his giving them a favorable review.

The Kitchen God has been popularly venerated since at least the second century BCE. He may derive from an old hearth spirit. Alternatively various myths describe how a man was deified, inheriting this position. (See *Kitchen God's Wife*.)

**Iconography:** There are different versions of the Kitchen God's identity and thus different images used for him. Many are sold just before Chinese New Year. Some show him as a dignified official. He may be depicted alone or with one or two wives and possibly as many as six daughters.

**Feast:** On the 23rd day of the final lunar month of the Chinese calendar, an offering table is prepared for the Kitchen God featuring only sweet dishes so that his tongue and words are equally sweet, not sharp, spicy, bitter or sour. Traditional foods include sweet oranges or tangerines; chicken; roast pork; cakes; candy; big bowls of cooked rice studded with candied fruits and *lots* of rice wine.

After he's had time to eat, his image, which has hung in the kitchen all year is taken down. His mouth is smeared with something sweet and

sticky like honey or molasses. (Either to further sweeten his words or to glue his gossiping mouth shut.) He is petitioned to be kind and only report good things about the family. His image is then burned, simply or with elaborate rituals; enabling his spirit to rise with the ascending smoke to the Jade Emperor's Celestial Court. A new image, posted at the New Year, signals his return.

**Offerings:** The Kitchen God is quite open to bribery, which may be offered on a regular basis or just before he leaves for Heaven. Lavish offering tables; sweet liqueurs or spirit money may be given however the Kitchen God only accepts offerings from men, traditionally from the "head" of the family.

**See also:** *Jade Emperor; Kitchen God's Wife*

## Kitchen God's Wife

**Origin:** China

Although variations do exist, the most popular version of the Kitchen God's myth suggests that he was once a mortal man married to an exceptionally kind, patient, virtuous woman. The same, unfortunately, could not be said of him. In some versions, he's a truly dissolute, irresponsible gambler; in others he merely has a roving eye. In all versions, he willfully abandons a good wife:

- He abandons her for a younger, prettier woman
- He sells her to pay off gambling debts or gain more money with which to gamble
- He wagers her during her a game and loses

When he abandoned his wife, good fortune abandoned him. Again there are different versions, but in all of them, his life takes a downward turn: he loses all his money; the girlfriend leaves him; he may or may not go blind but in any case is reduced to begging.

Eventually, years later, he unknowingly ends up at his former wife's door. He doesn't recognize her but she knows him instantly, admits him and treats him with great kindness although she does not identify

herself. In all versions of the story, her virtue has been rewarded. She is happy and prosperous. Sometimes she's happily remarried; in one version, the man who won her gambling fell in love with her and reformed, open to her good influence.

She feeds her ex-husband but it's his last meal. At some point he recognizes her (sometimes because in her presence, his vision is miraculously restored) and is so humiliated, humbled and ashamed that he knowingly walks into the big, blazing kitchen fire. Little was left of him other than a leg but the Jade Emperor took pity on his soul, maybe because his last emotions were shame and remorse and so he was transformed into the Kitchen God.

Even in death, however, he is not a nice god. He serves as the Jade Emperor's spy revealing a family's secrets so that they can be judged. He is open to bribery or is that blackmail? Lack of bribes and propitiation are reflected in his annual report.

The true heroine of the Kitchen God's myth is the loving, patient, kind woman who demonstrates the powers of a goddess of healing and wealth; a spirit of generosity and virtue. The Kitchen God's Wife is never quick to point out flaws or misbehavior and perhaps should really be the one presiding over the home. Amy Tan explores this theme in her 1991 novel, *The Kitchen God's Wife*.

**Iconography:** No traditional images depicting only the Kitchen God's nameless wife exist however she often appears together with her husband and may be an ameliorating presence. Kitchen God and wife may once have been joint spirits of the hearth.

**See also:** *Green Jade Mother; Jade Emperor; Kitchen God*

## Kitsune

**See:** *Fox Spirits*

## Klu

**Origin:** Tibet

Klu are ancient water snake spirits who may or may not be identical to Nagas. Bon is the Tibetan spiritual tradition that predates Buddhism: according to some Bon creation myths, Klu created the world. (See *Kluyalmo Sripé Tanla Phapa.*)

Klu are profoundly associated with snowfall, precipitation and water. Every single Tibetan source of living water whether lake, pond, river or stream is inhabited by at least one Klu. Because water seeps beneath Earth and is subterranean, Klu also rule the regions beneath the surface of Earth: they have dominion over Earth's hidden treasures.

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*Myths and legends of the Klu are collected in a Bon sacred text, the Klu-'bum or "One-hundred thousand Subterranean Water Spirits."*

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Because of their associations with water, Klu affect agricultural fertility but they also exert influence over human personal fertility, bestowing or withholding it, however an individual Klu spirit is inclined. Klu manifest their displeasure by causing various ailments, especially skin disorders or illnesses associated with excessive or otherwise troubled bodily fluids.

Klu are angered when water is polluted; treated disrespectfully; diverted (for irrigation or other purposes) or even just taken without asking for their permission. Frankly, Klu get aggravated easily. They're emotional, sensitive, easily wounded; very much like human beings born under astrological water signs.

In some cases, behavior they dislike is reasonably easy to anticipate: the Klu perceive breaking the soil, as for instance when ploughing, to be disrespectful. Thus to avoid trouble, their permission is first ritually sought and gestures of appeasement made.

The Klu dislike certain types of human behavior: they don't like thievery, adultery and lying. They're extremely sensitive to certain smells or foods. Monks and shamans subsist on grains and dairy products for weeks prior to addressing the Klu, foregoing alcohol, spices, onions,

garlic and meat, all of which offend the Klu.

Sometimes it can be more difficult to avoid offending the Klu. The Klu live in beautiful subterranean palaces. Subterranean means underground: they're not readily visible (and may be invisible to all but shamans or those permitted to see them). Sometimes the locations of these palaces are well known but not always. Here are some things that aggravate the Klu:

- Tombs or shrines built over their subterranean palaces
- Cremation of corpses in the vicinity of their palaces
- People having sex near their palaces

Should the Klu be offended, professional help may be required: trained Bon shamans are consulted to determine appeasement offerings.

**Time:** Klu hibernate through the winter or try to anyway. They are very grouchy if disturbed or awakened. Klu awaken on the twenty-fifth day of the 1<sup>st</sup> Tibetan month.

**Offerings:** Klu accept juniper incense (*real* juniper; they recognize synthetics); libations; dairy products including butter; grains including beer and cakes in the form of animals, birds or fish plus wool, silk, gold or turquoise ornaments

**See also:** *Bon Spirits; Klugyalmo Sripé Tanla Phapa; Naga*

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*Klu spirits bestow, heal and remove fertility and various skin ailments including acne.*

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## **Klugyalmo Sripé Tanla Phapa**

*The Klu Queen Who Set the Universe in Water*

**Origin:** Tibet

In the beginning, Klugyalmo Sripé Tanla Phapa the water snake emerged

from the primeval void. Her body became and is the universe:

- Her flesh is Earth
- Oceans are her blood
- Rivers are her veins
- Mountains are her bones
- The top of her head is the sky
- Clouds are her breath
- Her left eye is the sun
- Her right eye is the moon
- Four of her teeth became Venus, Mars, Jupiter and Saturn
- The rest of her teeth form the Mansions of the Moon

When you step on the ground, you're standing on a gigantic snake. If you take a dip in the sea, you're swimming in her blood. Look outside: daytime means Klugyalmo Sripé is awake. When she sleeps, it's night.

**See also:** *Ayida-Wedo; Damballah; Eurynome; Jahi; Klu; Nyx*

## Knockers

**Origin:** Cornwall

The Knockers are spirits of Cornwall's tin mines. They live in the mines but they work them, too: they are divine miners. Their name derives from the sound they make as they work. Their location can be identified by the sounds.

Knockers may be mischievous, playing tricks on human miners. They are temperamental and can be dangerous but are sometimes very friendly and helpful. Knockers have been known to rescue miners in trouble.

The Knockers are understood to be the ghosts of pre-Christian people who once inhabited Cornwall and worked the mines:

- They may be the ghosts of a long-lost pre-Celtic tribe. They were kind, generous, ethical people and so when they died, they were too good to

be sent to Hell. However, as Pagans, there was no room for them in Heaven and so they were left to haunt tin mines.

- They may be the ghosts of Jews who may or may not have once formed small communities in Cornwall, serving in the international tin trade, possibly in the company of Joseph of Arimathea who is credited with bringing the Grail to Britain.
- They may be the ghosts of Jews sent to labor as slaves in Cornwall's tin mines by the Romans following the destruction of Judea.

Knockers are nocturnal, working the mines all night long although they will appear during the day, too. They are associated with rich lodes and so human miners pay close attention to noises indicating the Knockers' location.

Knockers are highly opinionated. Whether they manifest helpfully or harmfully depends largely on whether miners humor their whims:

- The Knockers do not like whistling. It really gets on their nerves. Miners take care not to whistle in or even near mines.
- Knockers never work on Christian or Jewish holidays, especially not on Easter, Christmas Day and All Saints Day. Many miners traditionally avoided working at these times, too, so as not to offend them.
- Knockers loathe the sign of the cross; miners avoid marking anything with a + or x.
- It is considered an antagonistic sign of poor manners to enter a tin mine for the first time without asking permission from the Knockers.

**Favored people:** Knockers dwell in the mines; the only people they have contact with are those who join them there. Knockers are only reported leaving mines to visit miners.

**Manifestation:** Knockers are described as little men about the size of toddlers; they dress in miner's clothes.

**Offerings:** Knockers expect food offerings, especially from those who have benefited from them. A portion of whatever you're eating is sufficient. Offerings are left in mines. Traditionally, they were also left tallow with which to craft candles. Modern Knockers might appreciate flash lights or similar light sources.

**See also:** *Dwarves; Kobold; Tommy knockers*

## **Kobolds**

**Origin:** Teutonic

Kobolds are mysterious spirits with an affinity for people. Mobile, master shape-shifters, they can make themselves invisible at will. In their earliest manifestations, they seem to have been subterranean and tree spirits. When people entered their subterranean homes, the kobolds followed the people home, too. Kobolds traditionally live in mines but also in human habitations and onships. These must be inhabited homes and ships: kobolds like the company of people.

Kobolds attach themselves to specific people. Alternatively, people use magic spells to capture them. People seek kobolds because in some ways they are ideal magical servants. Kobolds are potentially very helpful. If they feel affection for the person or family to whom they are bound, they will work tirelessly on their behalf. Kobolds perform housework like house spirits; they locate wealth and missing objects. They have magical skills and serve as household guardians.

*However*, kobolds seem to have an extremely difficult time severing links with people. If they feel slighted or dislike the people, they won't just leave or sulk; instead they'll put all their copious energy into playing tricks, raising havoc and being a general nuisance. They don't really cause aggressive harm but they won't allow you peace either. Kobolds rarely attack directly or violently but their constant pranks and annoyances quickly become very tedious.

It is difficult to make them leave; there are tales of exorcists being consulted with mixed results. Therefore if one has a Kobold one should seek peaceful, harmonious relations. Alternatively, one should not seek a Kobold unless truly committed to making the relationship work: the Kobold must be treated with respect, consideration and good manners. Commanding and compelling techniques backfire: the result is not obedience but practical jokes and a spirit who will spend all its time harassing you.

The term *kobold* has become something of a catch-all for any sort of



potentially helpful spirit that manifests in the form of a small human. Thus kobolds, knockers and dwarves, all of whom dwell in mines, are often lumped together.

- Knockers rarely leave mines. They are attached to the mine itself; not people.
- Kobolds are gregarious shape-shifters who seem to make themselves at home anywhere
- Dwarves possess associations with metalworking and magical craftsmanship not shared by either kobolds or knockers.

The tendency to use the term *kobold* to describe various types of spirits leads to confusion and vagueness about the true identities of these spirits. This was originally done deliberately: during the European witch-hunt era, any traces of Pagan ritual and worship attracted incredibly severe punishment. Although there is evidence that Kobolds were worshipped, the term itself was considered reasonably innocuous and so may have been applied to other spirits, too, for safety's sake.

**Manifestation:** Kobolds can make themselves invisible (a problem when they're feeling prankish). Kobolds are shape-shifters and can take many forms. Favorites include bats, cats, roosters, snakes and worms. They can manifest in human form, too although they are always small, rarely bigger than a four year old. Kobolds travel in the form of light.

**Iconography:** There is evidence of carved images of Kobolds being kept in German homes in the 13<sup>th</sup> century and later. These images were one way of obtaining the services of a kobold. Once a kobold is in residence, it doesn't like to leave however they are highly mobile and will flit from home to home. Some kobolds live in trees. The essence and power of these kobolds is retained in carved pieces of wood taken from these trees.

1. A tree housing a kobold must be located.
2. The wood must be obtained without annoying the kobold. It will come with you one way or the other but do you want a friend or a foe?
3. The ideal method is to bring gifts to the tree (water; honey); explain

your purpose and ask the kobold to willingly accompany you.

4. Branches that fall at your feet are the affirmative reply. (Repeat visits and offerings may be in order.)
5. Offerings must be made regularly to the carving, too, in order to activate it.

**Date:** Midsummer's Eve is the night for rituals intended to locate and capture kobolds

**Color:** Red

**Mineral:** Cobalt

**Offerings:** A small portion of whatever you eat and drink; unlike other household helper spirits, kobolds do *not* shun gifts. They like clothing especially hats and uniforms.

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*A sinister kobold plays a pivotal role in Neil Gaiman's novel, American Gods.*

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**See also:** *Dwarves; Kikimora; Knockers; Lantukh; Lutin*

## **Koko**

**Also known as:** Kokko

**Origin:** Zuni

*Koko* is sometimes interpreted as a synonym for *Kachina* but may be translated literally as "Rain People." This Zuni word is used to name a class of spirit beings; dancers who may channel them and the masks representing the spirits and sometimes worn by the dancers. The *Koko* bring literal precipitation but also rain down all kinds of blessings and prosperity.

**See also:** *Kachina; Kokopelli*

## **Kokopelli**

You may not know his name but if you have ever been to the southwestern United States, then you know Kokopelli's image. He is ubiquitous throughout the southwest region called the Four Corners, encompassing parts of Arizona, Colorado, New Mexico and Utah. Kokopelli may be among the most commodified of all spirits: his image has become a virtual emblem of the southwest. It appears in advertising; on food packages; as trail markers for hikers. Wrought-iron Kokopellis replace garden gnomes or lawn jockeys in the southwest. It can be easy to forget that his origins lie in sacred mysteries.

Kokopelli's image scratched, pecked, painted and carved on canyon rocks and walls appears with greater frequency than any other identifiable figure amidst the pictographs and petroglyphs near sites inhabited by the Anasazi, the mysterious ancestors of the Pueblo Indians. Kokopelli appears in modern Hopi ceremonies, too. There is scholarly speculation that he may be among the most primeval of all southwestern deities.

Who is Kokopelli? Good question. Either no one is entirely sure or there are a lot of opposing theories. Kokopelli is a trickster spirit and he may take pleasure in sowing confusion among those who attempt to interpret his image. He is a sacred mystery.

The standard Kokopelli image is a hunchbacked stick figure blowing a vertical flute. Old images frequently depict him with a big, erect penis; newer images tend to be neutered. There are variations amongst the images:

- Sometimes he has a clubfoot as well as a hump
- He may have antennae or feathers on his head
- He may lead a flock of mountain sheep

As best as can be made out, the name used to describe this image is a compound derived from two unrelated languages:

- Koko, a Zuni word, indicates a kind of spirit (See *Koko* above)

- *Peli* is Hopi for “hump”

Kokopelli’s image tends to revolve around his capacity to bring or to enhance: he brings gifts, rain, babies, prey animals, especially those mountain sheep. He is interpreted as a fertility spirit, a musician, hunter, warrior or trader. He may not actually be hunchbacked; the hump on his back may be a big bag, so heavy he must bend over. Kokopelli’s image may resemble ancient traders who wandered between Mexico and the Anasazi carrying their packs on their backs. Some feel very strongly that he’s an insect; very likely a locust although other identifications are made, too. (Hopi mythology features flute-playing sacred locust spirits although the Hopi do not identify them as Kokopelli.)

Look around. You may already have an image of Kokopelli. If not, he’s easy to find; not an endangered spirit at all. (The first time I ever encountered Kokopelli was in a catalog selling southwestern-style furnishings.) Ask him to do more than just be a souvenir. Kokopelli can bring fun, magic, fertility, conception, abundance and joy

**Attributes:** Flute; staff; (the flute might sometimes be a blow gun)

**See also:** *Ganaskidi; Gobbo; Kachina; Koko; Tanuki*

## Kokuzo

### *The Boundless Vessel*

**Also known as:** Akasagarbha (Sanskrit); Kokuyo

**Classification:** Bodhisattva; Bosatsu

Kokuzo is among the great Bodhisattvas, venerated for his endless store of knowledge. He was among the first of the Bodhisattvas to reach Japan. Technically speaking, Kokuzo Bosatsu is invoked for wisdom leading to enlightenment. However, in Japanese folk religion, Kokuzo is beloved and renowned for granting wishes.

Kokuzo grants wishes and bestows intelligence. He is invoked to improve artisanal and technical skills. Meditating on his image is believed to improve the memory. (He may also be directly petitioned for

improved memory.) Kokuzo is a road-opener, removing obstacles from one's path. He helps people recognize their own faults and self-generated obstacles and also helps to correct and remove these. Kokuzo is not widely venerated except in folk religion and in Shingon Buddhism where he is a highly significant spirit. Children aged thirteen traditionally honor Kokuzo in hopes of enhancing intelligence and academic success.

**Favored people:** Artisans; Kokuzo is patron of those born in the years of the ox and tiger

**Attributes:** Wish-granting jewel; sword with which to slice through ignorance

**Direction:** Northeast

**See also:** *Bodhisattva; Bosatsu*

### **Kola Sanni Yakka**

**Also known as:** Kola Sanniya

**Origin:** Sri Lanka

Kola Sanni Yakka is the chief of the eighteen disease-causing Sanni Yakka spirits. He contains and controls them. As he theoretically can heal or remove any illness, a quick fix remedy involves addressing him by name three times and specifying the affliction you would like him to cure. If it works, lay out an offering table for him. If it doesn't, you owe nothing. Find another remedy.

**See also:** *Sanni Yakka*

### **Kolowisi**

**Origin:** Zuni

Kolowisi, the Great Horned Serpent, is a plumed water serpent. Kolowisi inhabits every drop of fresh water. Kolowisi is the guardian spirit of all sources of fresh water including springs, rivers, streams and rain; hence

he is the guardian of the source of all life. Kolowisi lives in underground springs but sometimes emerges to swim in surface waters, especially ponds and lakes. (There are periodic reports of sightings.)

At his finest, he is a guardian spirit who brings abundance, fertility, prosperity and good health. If offended or not treated respectfully, Kolowisi causes floods, the destructive power of water. Kolowisi is also sometimes credited with saving people from floods; restraining flood waters until people can reach high ground.

Once upon a time, according to a Zuni myth, a young girl found a baby by a spring and brought it home, neglecting to mention it to her parents. She put the baby to bed beside her. Unbeknownst to her, that baby was really Kolowisi in disguise; at night, while she slept, he transformed back into his true form; picked the girl up in his coils as easily as she had picked up the baby and returned to his spring with her, keeping her as his wife.

Stone fetishes in the form of Kolowisi transmit the power and blessings of water. They may be used to spark and ease transformation. They are also ritually used to protect and bless sources of water and to bring rain. Kolowisi is considered among the most potent fetish animals.

**Manifestation:** Kolowisi is a huge horned, feathered water snake. He also manifests as lightning.

**See also:** *Ahuizotl; Kukulcan; Quetzal coatl*

## **Komokwa**

### *The Wealthy One*

**Also known as:** Komokoa

**Origin:** Kwakiutl

Komokwa is King of the Sea, Lord of all undersea creatures, master and special protector of seals. Komokwa distributes and guards wealth. Komokwa rules an underwater realm inhabited by fish and sea creatures but also by magical sea bears and sea eagles. He lives in an underwater

palace formed entirely of copper and filled with blankets, copper, carvings: basically everything that the Kwakiutl people traditionally perceived as luxuries. Komokwa is a hospitable, generous host. If you can reach his palace, whether by literal or shamanic means, he will make sure that you leave carrying boxes filled with magical treasures.

**Manifestation:** He may appear as a man; a giant octopus or something in between

**Iconography:** The Kwakiutl, an indigenous people of Vancouver Island and the adjacent mainland, are acclaimed for their carved, painted wooden masks. Traditionally carved for shamanic use, they are now also crafted for art collectors. Komokwa is a popular subject of masks.

**Consort:** Talio (Copper Maker Woman)

**Spirit ally:** Komokwa's servant is an octopus, also a spirit of wealth and prosperity; if Komokwa wants to see you, he may send an octopus to pull you into the water and deliver you to his realm (and hopefully escort you safely back home, too).

**Sacred animals:** Seals; killer whales (*Orcinus orca*); sculpin fish; octopus

## Konohana Sakkuya Hime

**Also known as:** Konohanasakuya; Sengensama

**Origin:** *Japan*

**Classification:** Kami

Konohana Sakkuya Hime is the presiding spirit of Japan's Mount Fuji and the kami of blossoming cherry trees. The younger daughter of mountain spirit, Oyama Tsumi; she was given in marriage to Amaterasu's grandson, Ninigi. She conceived on their wedding night, leading him to suspect infidelity.

Konohana was so aggravated and affronted by his suspicions that she entered a cavern on Mount Fuji, sealed it shut and lit a fire within, announcing that if she and her child emerged unscathed, that was proof

of her innocence. She successfully gave birth to her son while her home was consumed by flames. She reconciled with her husband with whom she had two more children. Konohana Sakkuya Hime is invoked for safe, easy childbirth and abundant milk as well as by those who seek fertility. Various shamanic rites were associated with her shrines; amulets associated with her are prized for stimulating pregnancy and safeguarding birth.

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*Konohana Sakkuya Hime replaced the Ainu goddess of Mount Fuji. In turn, she has since been sublimated or somewhat merged with Buddhist deities, Jizo and Kan non. However, she is still venerated at over one-hundred shrines throughout Japan.*

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Konohana Hime is a benevolent but formidable goddess who must always be approached with respect. This is meant literally: when approaching Mount Fuji, one approaches Konohana. She slew followers of the 12<sup>th</sup> century hero Nitta Tadatsune when they trespassed in a sacred cave. Tadatsune was an exceptionally brave man but when Konohana warned him to retreat or meet his fate, he took the escape route. People honor Konohana by walking the pilgrimage route up Mount Fuji. She is also venerated at home altars.

**Iconography:** She stands on clouds upon or beside Mount Fuji

**Flower:** Sakura (cherry) blossoms

**Color:** White

**Creature:** Snake, dragon; snakes made from braided rice straw are placed near her altar

**Mount:** Konohana rides a dragon or a giant snake

**Sacred site:** Konohana emerged as the primary goddess of Mount Fuji between the 14<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> centuries; her primary shrines are at the top and bottom of Mount Fuji



**Offering:** Rice; flowers; incense; pilgrimage

**See also:** *Fuji; Koyasu; Sita*

## Konsei Myojin

*Root of Life; Great Shining One*

**Origin:** Japan

Among the most ancient forms of religion is worship of human genitalia. This primeval form of spirituality occurs around the world. Sacred images of the reproductive organs or the spirits associated with them were identified as possessing the spark of life, sacred procreative power but also capable of bestowing wealth and abundance, healing illness, encouraging good health, banishing malicious spirits, breaking the influence of the Evil Eye and providing safe, easy childbirth.

Konsei Myojin is an ancient Japanese phallic deity. He is unusual as he is not venerated as part of a pair as is typical with sacred genitalia. He seems to have no consort. He is venerated alone in the form of a phallus.

Konsei Myojin bestows wealth, power and good health. He has the power to heal all illness and afflictions that occurs below the belt. Konsei Myojin is invoked for fertility, virility and safe, easy childbirth.

Initially venerated throughout Japan, he became the favored deity of bordellos. His image was believed to magnetically attract wealth, business and safety to the establishment. The customers liked him, too, as Konsei can reputedly stimulate sexual prowess.

After Japan ended its long isolation and began to take its place as a world power, ancient folkloric symbols were reassessed. A deity in the form of a sexually aroused phallus was considered neither polite nor civilized. The primeval image of Konsei Myojin was banned during the Meiji era (1868–1912). He was largely replaced by the image of Maneki Neko although substitutions also include Daruma dolls, images of Daikoku, Ebisu and mushrooms.

Some treasured images of Konsei Myojin were hidden away. One survives in a small museum devoted to sex attached to Japan's Izu

Paradise Park where his ritual may be reenacted in order to receive Konsei Myojin's blessings of wealth, good fortune and sexual prowess:

- Invoke Konsei's blessings
- Touch the image's exposed penis three times
- Ring the bells on the altar
- If he fulfills your request, carry his amulet or build a private home altar for him

**Iconography:** A big erect phallus or as a man whose erect phallus pokes through his garments

**Sacred site:** Once upon a time, Konsei Myojin had many temples; his image appeared on the kamidana (spirit shelf) of *every* brothel. A particularly ancient shrine was located at Konsei Pass above Lake Yumoto, near Nikko.

**Altar:** Traditional Japanese images of Konsei Myojin are virtually impossible to find but any sort of phallic imagery can substitute

**Offerings:** Penis-shaped candles; milagros in the form of male reproductive organs; (if you can't find mass-produced images, they are easily cut from tin or made from wax or bread dough); all kinds of phallic imagery: Roman images; Thai penis amulets; Shiva lingam

**See also:** *Daikoku; Daruma; Dionysus; Ebisu; Hermes; Maneki Neko; Priapus; Shiva* and the Glossary entries for *Altar* and *Milagro*

## Kore

### *The Maiden*

**Also known as:** Core

**Origin:** Greece

Kore is not a name but a title, usually indicating Persephone, especially in her aspect as the eternally youthful Goddess of Spring. Kore was venerated amongst Mystery Traditions and thus little is really known or

understood. It is possible that some paths of Kore do not refer to Persephone but to the primordial goddess, Car. (Or perhaps Persephone's roots lie in the mysterious and ancient Car.)

Kore is a spirit of birth and resurrection. Veneration of Kore was integral to the Eleusinian Mysteries. She was venerated amongst Gnostic Mysteries too, sometimes independently of her mother, Demeter. In the early centuries of the Common Era, Kore was venerated in Alexandria as the self-generating virginal mother. Her festival, the Koreion, celebrated by both Christian and non-Christian Gnostics, honored the annual birth of Aeon, the Divine Child. Images of virginal Kore with her Divine Child may survive amongst some Black Madonnas.

**Color:** Black

**Feast:** The Koreion, 6 January, eventually assimilated to the Feast of the Epiphany

**See also:** *Black Madonna; Car; Demeter; Persephone* and the Glossary entry for *Mystery*

## **Korravai**

*Victory in War; The Victorious One*

**Also known as:** Kuravai

**Origin:** Tamil

Korravai is an extremely ancient deity from southern India. She is the powerful and ravenous spirit of the battlefield. Korravai leads devotees to victory. When battle is complete, she feasts on the entrails of the dead. She must be appeased and propitiated before corpses can be removed for funerary rites. Korravai remains associated with *tunankai* dances, which are also called *kuravai* dances: war and victory ring dances. Korravai may be identified with Durga. In ancient Tamil lore, she is the mother of the war lord Murugan (apparently conceived independently; no father is mentioned). He joins her on the battlefield.

**Manifestation:** She has twelve arms with which she carries twelve

blood-stained weapons. She bears burning coals on her head and wears bells around her ankles. She can make herself as small or as tall as she desires. (Legends have her growing so tall, her head touches the sky.) When she wishes, her voice is as loud as thunder.

**Creatures:** Carrion crows, dogs, vultures

**See also:** *Durga; Kartikkeya; Murugan*

## **Kothar Wa-Khasis**

*Deft; Skillful*

**Origin:** Semitic

Kothar may be interpreted as “skill” or “skilful”; Kothar wa-Khasis is the divine craftsman of the Ugaritic pantheon. Kothar was venerated in what is now Turkey, Syria, Lebanon and Israel by Phoenicians, Canaanites and Jews.

Kothar is a smith and metalworker; shaman and magician; soothsayer; craftsman; architect, inventor and artisan. He designed and built beautiful furniture for Asherah; weapons for Ba'al and Anat and built Ba'al's palace from cedarwood, silver, gold and lapis lazuli. He is Ba'al's ally. Kothar is identified with the Egyptian craftsman deity, Ptah: they may be the same spirit operating under two names. Kothar is sometimes described as living in Ptah's city of Memphis, Egypt.

**See also:** *Anat; Asherah, Lady of the Sea; Ba'al; KTRT; Ptah*

## **Koumyoumin**

*Lord of the Nine Towns*

**Origin:** Shan

**Classification:** Nat

Koumyoumin is a regional Nat whose territory encompasses a large part of the area around Kyankse, Burma. Because the number nine is sacred

to him, it is tabooed and off-limits to people. Koumyoumin dislikes and will potentially harm anything that consists of nine units. For example, when driving through his domain, a vehicle cannot contain nine people as it is feared that Koumyoumin will cause an accident. There must be either more or less but never nine. If the number absolutely cannot be avoided, then subterfuge must be used to avoid Koumyoumin's wrath. For instance, a large stone will be placed in the vehicle to symbolically represent a tenth passenger.

**See also:** *Nat*

## **Koyasu**

**Also known as:** Koyasu-sama; Koyasu-gami; Koyasu Kannon

**Origin:** Japan

**Classification:** Kami; Bosatsu

Koyasu protects children and facilitates safe, easy, successful childbirth. Koyasu-sama is another name for Konohana Sak kuya Hime, Goddess of Mount Fuji, renowned for her powers over childbirth. With the advent of Buddhism, the name Koyasu became attached to Bodhisattvas or spirits who also facilitate childbirth. Eventually identities were merged and it can be hard to disentangle the various female deities addressed by this name. Among these spirits are:

- Koyasu Kannon, one of Kannon's thirty-three paths or manifestations, venerated in Shinto shrines dedicated to Konohana Sakkuya Hime.
- A theory suggests that Koyasu Kannon is really a Japanese version of Hariti, the reformed child-gobbling demon whose image has been softened so much that she passes for Kannon
- The bodhisattava Ksitigarbha is sometimes venerated as Koyasu Jizo

**See also:** *Bodhisattva; Hariti; Kannon; Konohana Sakkuya Hime; Ksitigarbha*

## **Krishna**

## *The Charmer*

**Also known as:** Krsna

**Origin:** India

Krishna is among the most beloved Hindu deities, worshipped throughout the subcontinent and around the world. He is also a great favorite of independent practitioners. He is among the most widely venerated of all spirits, bar none.

Technically, Krishna is an avatar of Vish nu however, if so, he is the favorite form. Krishna himself is worshipped in several forms:

- Krishna is the Divine Child, eternally delightful, mischievous, fun-loving and charming
- Krishna is the intoxicatingly beautiful, irresistible lover
- Krishna is the young cowherd who lives in an idyllic forest
- Krishna is the spiritual teacher, guide and advisor

Krishna is free, spontaneous and fearless. He is a prankster although never evil intentioned. Despite his sweet, loving nature, he is a powerful spirit who vanquishes the fiercest, deadliest, most toxic demons. Krishna is a pivotal figure in the epic, the *Mahabharata*. He remains a particularly energetic, active spirit; manifesting to people and appearing in dreams and visions. He is all-powerful and may be petitioned for anything.

**Manifestation:** Krishna is physically beautiful; charming and charismatic. He has a sharp sense of humor but he is an incredible spiritual adept. Those who have witnessed him recently comment on his very recognizable blue skin.

**Iconography:** Krishna's skin is blue; he wears a peacock feather crown

**Attribute:** Flute whose sound is compelling and enchanting

**Color:** Blue

**Sacred site:** Krishnajanmabhoomi Temple in Mathura, India, said to be Krishna's birthplace

**Offerings:** Butter; sweets

**See also:** *Kunti*; *Vishnu*; and the Glossary entry for *Avatar*

## **Kronos**

*Father Time*

**Also known as:** Cronos; Kronos

**Origin:** Greece

Kronos was among the Titan children of Gaia and Uranus. He married his sister Rhea. Uranus adored the Titans who were beautiful and powerful but he imprisoned their less aesthetically pleasing siblings the Hecatoncheires and Cyclopes. Gaia sought for a hero among the Titans: one who would overthrow their father and liberate their siblings. All the Titans refused except for Kronos, the youngest male.

Gaia gave Kronos a sickle that he used to castrate his father. He assumed his father's place as head of the pantheon but Kronos did not fully accomplish what he had promised his mother. He did *not* liberate his imprisoned siblings. Instead, convinced that one of his own children would treat him as he had treated his father, Kronos proceeded to swallow all of his offspring. (An alternative myth suggests that he only swallowed the male children.) Rhea, devastated at the loss of her babies, consulted with her mother, still aggrieved at the captivity of her other children and with Metis, Goddess of Wisdom. A plot was hatched: Rhea secretly rescued her youngest son Zeus and sent him into hiding.

Years later, Zeus emerged to confront his father. Kronos was secretly served an emetic that caused him to disgorge the children he had swallowed. They emerged full grown and in total command of their godly powers. Zeus and his siblings formed a new pantheon, the Olympians, who squared off in combat against their elders, the Titans, led by Kronos. This war between pantheons lasted ten years until Zeus finally liberated the Cyclopes and Hecatoncheires who helped propel the Olympians to victory.

There are different versions of what happened to Kronos, leader of the

Titans:

- He escaped to Italy where he assumed a new name, Saturn
- He was imprisoned alongside other defeated Titans in the pit of Tartarus. Zeus eventually took pity on his father. He released him, giving Kronos the position of king of the Elysian Fields, the paradise awaiting the blessed dead.

Although children's mythology books consistently portray Kronos as a baby-swallowing monster, the era he presided over before he was overthrown is known as the Golden Age. Kronos is the lord of time. He is consistently benevolent and generous toward people, if not toward his own offspring. He remains a powerful deity with potent connections who may be invoked for any sort of assistance. Kronos and Khronos may or may not be the same spirit.

**Manifestation:** A powerful man or a magnificent stallion

**Attribute:** Sickle

**Planet:** Saturn

**See also:** *Ananke; Aphrodite; Atlas; Erinyes; Gaia; Khronos; Metis; Nike; Olympian Spirits; Poseidon; Prometheus; Rhea; Saturn; Styx; Thetis; Titans; Zeus*

## Kshumai

**Origin:** Nooristan (Afghanistan)

Nooristan is a province located in the Hindu Kush mountain range and populated by descendents of Alexander the Greek's troops. Previously called Kafiristan, (*Land of the Nonbelievers* or *Land of the Infidels*), the province was renamed Nooristan, meaning *Land of Light* or *Land of the Enlightened* following its forced conversion to Islam in 1895. Previously a traditional Pagan religion was practiced.

Kshumai is among the primary pre-Islamic Nooristani goddesses. She rules rain and precipitation and hence the harvest. Kshumai, a goat goddess, introduced goats to people, which provides them with wool and



milk, survival needs in a harsh, remote climate.

Kshumai is a goddess of wild nature. She lives on Tirich Mir, the highest peak in the Hindu Kush, now in northern Pakistan. She manifests to people near lakes by the mountain. Kshumai has her own flock of goats. Tossing her long breasts over her shoulder, she sits down to milk them: to witness Kshumai milking her goats is to receive the blessings of the goddess.

**Manifestation:** Kshumai may manifest as a woman or a wild mountain goat

**Offerings:** Kshumai traditionally receives gifts of the first harvest, especially grapes

## **Ksitigarbha**

### *Earth Matrix*

**Pronounced:** *Kshee-tee-garb-ah*

**Also known as:** Dizang (China); Jizo (Japan); Sai Nyingpo (Tibet)

**Origin:** India

**Classification:** Bodhisattva

Bodhisattvas vow to remain on Earth until all suffering on Earth is relieved. Ksitigarbha took this one step further, vowing not to become a Buddha until all beings are saved *and* all hells are emptied. Ksitigarbha is the Bodhisattva of the Hell Beings. Ksitigarbha's myth appears in the *Sutra of the Great Vow of Ksitigarbha Bodhisattva*, a Sanskrit text in the form of a dialogue between Buddha Shakyamuni and Ksitigarbha.

Centuries before the time of Buddha Shakyamuni, Ksitigarbha was a young and devout Brahmin girl named "Sacred Girl" or "Holy Girl." Distraught by the death of her irreverent mother, whom she feared was destined for Hell; Sacred Girl sold all her possessions to make offerings to the Buddha and spent all her time petitioning for mercy for her mother's soul. (Although Sacred Girl is identified as a Brahmin, the

story, philosophy, rituals and her fears are not consonant with Hinduism but are very Buddhist. She is essentially identified as a precursor to historical Buddhism.) While praying in a temple, she heard the disembodied voice of Buddha advise her to go home and chant repetitions of his name if she wished to save her mother. She did so; eventually experiencing a vision journey to Hell whose guardian informed her that because of her piety and good deeds, she had accrued enough merit to liberate her mother. Although happy, Ksitigarbha was shocked at the suffering she witnessed in Hell and so made her famous VOW.

Ksitigarbha heals the sick, comforts the grieving and the depressed and provides spiritual protection. She provides safety in the face of evil. Ksitigarbha trounces demons. Ksitigarbha traveled east through Asia with Buddhism where she also resonated with the non-Buddhist population and was incorporated into Taoist and Shinto practices, too. Ksitigarbha is now almost universally envisioned and depicted as male.

**Iconography:** Ksitigarbha is typically envisioned as a monk

**Attribute:** The wish-granting jewel; pilgrim's staff

**Sacred site:** Mount Jiuhua, one of China's four sacred Buddhist Mountains. The entire mountain is sacred to Ksitigarbha and contains many shrines and temples dedicated to her (or him, as the case may be).

**Mantra:** Chant her mantra for safety, protection and relief if menaced by nightmares, night paralysis, malevolent spirits or any kind of danger:

*OM KSHITIGHARBHA BODHISATTVA YAH*

**See also:** *Bodhisattva; Buddha; Jizo; Koyasu* and the Glossary entry for *Mantra*

**KTRT**

*The Swallow-Like Daughters of the Crescent Moon*

**Origin:** West Semitic: Canaan; Phoenicia

Semitic languages traditionally have no written vowels and so only the consonants of these sister goddesses survive: KTRT. Among the suggested pronunciations of their names are Katirat; Kotarot and Kotharat; however these are all guesses. Their name derives from a root word indicating skill or wisdom.

The KTRT are goddesses of sexual delight, conception and childbirth. They are seven in number. In the Ugaritic myth, the Epic of Aqhat, when a child is desired, the KTRT are feasted for seven days. By the time they depart on the seventh day, pregnancy has been achieved. In the mythic epic poem, "Nikkal and the Kathirat", the seven sisters are summoned to provide what is necessary for the wedding and are requested for their blessings. The KTRT are reminiscent of the Seven Hathors.

**Planet:** Moon, especially crescent

**Sacred bird:** Swallow (associated with fertility in Egypt and Semitic West Asia)

**See also:** *Asherah, Lady; Hathor; Kadesh; Kothar wa-Khasis*

## Ku

**Also known as:** Tu

**Origin:** Polynesia

Ku is a warrior spirit; Lord of War as well as a spirit of the abundance of the sea. The essence of male generative power; he is a spirit of testosterone. In Hawaiian cosmology, Ku is the essence of masculinity, as Hina epitomizes feminine energy. Ku is among the four major Hawaiian deities alongside Kane, Kanaloa and Lono but was mainly venerated, at least in his warrior form, by the elite. Formal ceremonies were reserved for the nobility and priesthood and were performed under severe taboos. The practice of human sacrifice seems to have been introduced to Hawaii largely by Ku's priesthood. King Kamehameha worshipped Ku as Lord of War in his eventually successful efforts to unite the Hawaiian Islands under his rule.

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*Ku has many paths and aspects ranging from brutal and bloodthirsty to nurturing and kind. He is the patron of war, fishing, forests and certain types of agriculture and sorcery.*

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Ku's name means "to strike" or "to stand." He is a versatile, many faceted spirit with concerns other than war. He was also the patron of Hawaii's master canoe builders and woodworkers, considered a sacred occupation. Ku dwells in deep places: the depths of the forest and the sea.

**Manifestations:** Ku can manifest in any form he likes; he is a master shape-shifter. However, common forms include man, caterpillar and cucumber

**Iconography:** Fierce carved wood tiki statues

**Botanicals:** Breadfruit; coconut; cucumber; 'Ohi'a lehua tree (*Metrosideros collina*; *M. macropus*): images of Ku were traditionally carved from this wood

**Color:** Red

**Direction:** East

**Sacred animal:** Pig; eel

**Bird:** Hawk

**Planet:** The rising sun

**Time:** The first, second and third days of each month

**See also:** *Akua; Haumea; Hina; Kanaloa; Kane; Kihawahine; Kukauakahi; Ku'ulakai; Lono*

**Kua**

**Classification:** Aumakua

Kua, King of Kona's shark spirits is an important Aumakua, an ancestral spirit. A gigantic red shark, Kua led a posse of sharks from Tahiti to their new home in Hawaiian waters. He had sex with a woman on the beach at Ka'u on the big island of Hawaii (believed to be where Polynesians first landed on Hawaii). She gave birth to twins: a boy shark and a human girl just like Daddy and Mommy. She placed her shark son in the water. To this day, many descendents of her daughter have rough patches of skin resembling shark skin on their lower legs. Those possessing that physical attribute, even if not of Hawaiian descent, may possess an affinity with shark spirits.

**See also:** *Aumakua; Ka'ahu Pahau; Kamohoali'i; Merrow*

## **Kubera**

*Lord of Wealth*

**Also known as:** Kuber; Kuvera

**Origin:** India

Kubera, Golden Lord of Wealth, is considered the richest of all Hindu deities. Kubera is the King of the Yakshas and elder half-brother of Ravana, the primary antagonist of the epic, the Ramayana. The brothers have a contentious relationship. Although Kubera, too, was once classified as a demon, he made the transition to Hinduism by practicing austerities for one-thousand years. He is the banker who lent Vishnu money.

Kubera lives in a palace in the Himalayas where he is served by Yakshas. He is invoked for protection and especially wealth. Kubera is guardian of all Earth's treasures; his sacred function is to distribute them. Allegedly Brahman charged Kubera to distribute them based on an individual's destiny however devotees hope that Kubera will be generous and make exceptions. He is also petitioned to help regain lost wealth.

**Manifestation:** Kubera is described as a fair-skinned dwarf with a pot belly, symbolic of his wealth and comfort.

**Attribute:** Mace

**Consort:** Vasudhara (Yellow Tara)

**Day:** Thursday

**Sacred animals:** Mongoose, horse

**Direction:** North

**Numbers:** 72, 9

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*Kubera is associated with a magic square in which all lines add up to 72:*

*27 20 25*

*22 24 26*

*23 28 21*

*This magic square is used as a yantra (mystic diagram), which allegedly provides wealth and business success if incorporated in 72 day long rituals for Kubera.*

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**See also:** *Jambhala; Tara, Yellow*

## **Kuchisake-Onna**

*Slit Mouth Woman*

**Origin:** Japan

**Classification:** Yokai

It's unclear how long the ghost of Kuchisake-Onna has been wandering the streets of Japan. (Lately, she's been appearing in Korea, too.) Her legend may date back as early as the Heian era (794–1185) but exact details are lost and subject to debate. In life, this very beautiful woman was a jealous samurai's wife, consort or concubine. Doubting her

fidelity, whether or not with any justification, he reacted violently, slitting her mouth from ear to ear and taunting her with the words, “Who will think you’re beautiful now?”

His words went to her heart; Kuchisake-Onna cannot rest in peace. Her ghost roams about on foggy, misty evenings. In her traditional manifestation, Kuchisake-Onna wears long, white, flowing clothes; her face, especially the lower half, is veiled by the draped white cloth. (In modern manifestations, Kuchisake-Onna may wear a surgical mask.) At first glance, Kuchisake-Onna appears very beautiful, sensuous and alluring. Eventually, however, Kuchisake-Onna will flag a passing car or someone on the street. When they stop, she asks something like “*Do you think I’m beautiful?*” simultaneously whipping off her mask or veil and exposing her horribly disfigured face

Most people react badly. The sight is unexpected: they panic and run. It’s the wrong thing to do: the ghost pursues and if she catches her victim, attacks them with some sort of metal implement: knife, sword or scissors. She may kill them or inflict injuries similar to her own.

Should Kuchisake-Onna be encountered, the best way to disarm her is to give her something to think about. Kuchisake-Onna is a low-level spirit: the process of thinking is beyond her and frustrates her. Straight-forward answers to her query activate her violence, regardless of whether the answer is yes or no. Those who answer her question vaguely or ambiguously survive without injury. Thus respond along the lines of “That depends upon perspective” and Kuchisake-Onna will not attack or follow. Instead she stands musing and you can walk away (rapidly).

For safety’s sake, keep small candies in your pocket. If unable to control yourself—you just panic and run—toss the candy on the ground behind you. One piece is insufficient; throw at least a handful or empty the container. Kuchisake-Onna, like so many ghosts, is afflicted with Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder. She will be compelled to stop, count and pick up each piece while you get away.

Like La Llorona, Kuchisake-Onna is more than just a ghost story. Reports of encounters are frequent. In 1979, rumors spread throughout Japan regarding children who were terrorized by Kuchisake-Onna. Compared to other night wanderers like Hone-Onna, La Llorona or Aisha

Qandisha and considering her history, Kuchisake Onna is unusual: her targets tend to be children or younger people, rather than men.

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*Real-life encounters with Kuchisake-Onna may be dreaded but she's beloved in popular entertainment, making appearances in various manga and anime as well as her namesake 1996 film, Kuchisake-Onna.*

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**See also:** *Aisha Qandisha; Bloody Mary; Diabliesse, La; Harionna; Hone-Onna; Llorona, La; Xtabay; Yokai*

## **Kukauakahi**

**Origin:** Hawaii

Kukauakahi is King of Hawaiian owls and a powerful, aggressive guardian spirit. He may be a manifestation of Ku; his name is interpreted "Ku the Single Battle."

Owls are considered the most primeval Aumakua, family guardian spirits and Kukauakahi is their leader. Owls remain the most frequently encountered of all Aumakua.

In many places, owls are considered harbingers of death and greeted with dismay. Not in Hawaii, where Kukauakahi is a savior who performs feats of resurrection. Kukauakahi's appearance on the battlefield was greeted by joy, at least by those for whom he was a protector. He led armies to victory or, if things weren't going well, found escape routes for fleeing warriors.

A man once found and stole a nest of seven owl eggs but before he could abscond with them, the owl father appeared and pled for mercy. Eventually the man relented and the owl revealed himself as Kukauakahi and ordered the man to build him a heiau (sacred stone shrine). The man did as told, enraging the island's chieftain who had commanded that no heiaus be constructed without his permission. He sent men to destroy it before it could be consecrated but they were attacked by dive-



bombing owls. Kukauakahi's power was acknowledged; the heiau remained.

In the most famous Hawaiian owl story, an owl Aumakua resurrected Kahala O'Puna, a beautiful young woman from the Manoa Valley beaten to death by her fiancé. He killed her three times and her owl guardian dug her up and revived her three times.

Once upon a time, some corpses were exposed to owls so that they could ritually transform the dead souls into Aumakua, too. Modern stories describe owl Aumakua saving a man from falling off a steep cliff by beating its wings before the man's face to restore his equilibrium or keeping a drowning swimmer alert at night and leading him to shore in the morning.

**Offerings:** If the owls are your guardian spirits or if one performs a feat of rescue for you, offerings on behalf of owls, many of which are critically endangered, are appropriate. The native Hawaiian owl species is the Pueo.

**See also:** *Aumakua; Kane; Ku*

## Kukulcan

**Origin:** Maya

Kukulcan is the Mayan plumed or feathered serpent. Is he the same spirit as Quetzalcoatl? That's subject to debate.

- Kukulcan may be the Mayan name for Quetzalcoatl; *Kuk* means *quetzal*
- Kukulcan may be a distinct spirit; one of several feathered snake spirits like Quetzalcoatl and Kolowisi
- Kukulcan and Quetzalcoatl may initially have been distinct spirits but eventually influenced each other to the extent that they are now impossible to disentwine

**Iconography:** Rattlesnakes were sometimes used to represent Kukulcan

**Sacred site:** The step Pyramid of Kukulcan, also known as El Castillo (The Castle) in Chichen Itza, Yucatan, Mexico

**Sacred time:** Vernal Equinox

**See also:** *Kolowisi; Quetzalcoatl*

## **Kumiho**

**Origin:** Korea

A Kumiho is a type of fox spirit. Like her compatriots, the Japanese Kitsune and Chinese Huli Jing, the Kumiho is associated with rampant, unbridled female sexuality. Unlike other types of fox spirits, however, there is nothing ambiguous about the Kumiho. Korean lore paints her as a wholly negative spirit.

“Kumiho” literally means “nine-tail”. The true form of this spirit is believed to be a nine-tailed fox spirit. Unlike other types of fox spirits, the Kumiho rarely, if ever, engages in spirit possession. Instead she murders her victims. Sometimes she even eats them. Although young virile men are her favorite prey, stories sometimes describe Kumiho snacking on children.

The Kumiho transforms into the guise of a sexy, seductive woman in order to capture her prey and then vampirically drains male life essence (yang energy) during sex. She may vampirically drink blood, too. Encounters with the Kumiho tend to be fatal. Some Kumiho are stealth operators as in the legend of the Kumiho who disguised herself as a beautiful woman and married a Chinese emperor’s son. She successfully maintained her disguise with her husband and his family but meanwhile young male members of the court began to mysteriously disappear.

Legends suggest that the Kumiho will desist and flee if her true identity is exposed. Apparently, in the dark, the Kumiho is indistinguishable from human women. A good, long look at her in the hard light of day will reveal her foxy characteristics. Dogs can see through the Kumiho’s disguise and will be hostile toward her. Once the Kumiho suspects that her cover is blown, she will usually run away. Appeals to Inari may serve to protect against the Kumiho.

**See also:** *Fox Spirits; Hone-Onna; Huli Jing; Inari; Lamiae; Vampire*

## Kunti

**Also known as:** Raja Mata (Royal Mother)

**Origin:** India

Kunti is an ancient goddess of fertility and wisdom, sister of Krishna's father and hence his aunt. She is now most famous as an important character in the epic, the Mahabharata but her veneration may predate the Vedic texts. In her most primordial manifestation, she epitomizes female generative power in the way that Shiva represents corresponding male power. Kunti's powers are so intense that her very presence stimulates conception and painless childbirth. In the Mahabharata, her powers are gifts of the devas, the deities but once upon a time, Kunti was the self-generating mother. She bears children parthogenically, not because virginity is spiritually superior but because her fertility power is so strong, no partner is needed. In her earliest manifestations, Kunti may have been a wanton virgin, similar to Anat: notably even in the Mahabharata, her children are born of many fathers.

According to the Mahabharata, her birth name was Pritha but she was given as a daughter to childless King Kuntibhoja, whose name she bears. Miraculously, shortly after her arrival in his home, the king was blessed with children. He credited Kunti's presence; considered her his lucky charm; treated her as his daughter and was very devoted to her. She lived in his home until she married.

While still a girl, she served the sage (*rishi*) Durvasa when he visited her father's home. She impressed him and he taught her a mantra enabling her to call any deva and have a son by him. (There are two different versions: either the deva would make love to her and she would miraculously, instantly, painlessly give birth or the deva would just give her the child: no sex, no pregnancy, just a baby.)

It sounds too good to be true and Kunti wasn't sure she believed it so one day she tried the formula out, calling Surya the Sun. He stepped down from the sky and made love with her. (That is, unless you prefer the version where he just gives her the kid.) A son was miraculously born wearing golden earrings and a breastplate. Afraid of the scandal, the young unmarried Kunti put the baby in a basket and floated him

down the river, once again bringing children to the childless: a childless charioteer found and raised the boy (who would eventually be reunited with his mother).

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*In one version, after the mantra summons Surya, Kunti respectfully explains that she was just experimenting and asks him to leave. Surya replies that he is compelled to fulfill the mantra and a baby miraculously appears.*

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Kunti was given in marriage to Prince Pandu who was suffering a paradox. He had been cursed: if he had sex with his wives, he'd die and yet he wanted sons. Kunti provided the solution. Just as she had brought children to the childless home of her adoptive father, so, once again, she brought sons to the childless. She chanted her mantra; called down three devas and bore three sons (and may not even have committed adultery. Depending on the version of the myth, sex may or may not have been involved.) After giving birth to her sons, she taught the mantra to her co-wife, enabling her to have children, too. Kunti's three sons are:

- Yudishtara (Yama's son)
- Bhima (Vayu's son)
- Arjuna (Indra's son)

When her husband died, the co-wife joined him on the funeral pyre, but not Kunti, spirit of irrepressible life. She is the widow who does not commit sati but stays alive and takes responsibility for the children.

- Kunti's presence brings children to the childless. Incorporate her images into fertility rituals and magic or let her preside over an altar.
- Kunti is invoked to heal and protect women's reproductive health and organs
- Kunti protects and sponsors women who bear and care for children independently, with no male partner

**Iconography:** Many traditional images are available; she is a popular subject of Indian spiritual imagery but she is usually depicted

subservient to her sons or their deva-fathers. Vulva shaped stones or amulets may also be used to represent her.

**Offerings:** Flowers; spring water; vulva-shaped candles

**See also:** *Hanuman; Indra; Krishna; Sati; Shiva; Yama* and the Glossary entry for *Mantra*

## Kura

**Also known as:** Kurana; Kurene; Kyrene; Cyrene; Qrennah

**Origin:** Berber (Amazigh)

Kura is a Berber water spirit, guardian of a spring in Cyrene, now in modern Libya. Cyrene may sound like a backwater now but once upon a time, it was a wealthy and significant place. The nation now known as Libya was once called Cyrenaica. The spring, the city, and the nation all derive their name from Kura. Cyrene is the Greek version of her name.

Cyrene was famous as the sole home of the now extinct plant, silphium, famed as an extremely effective herbal contraceptive (and allegedly an aphrodisiac, too). The powers of that plant and the fortune that it engendered attracted outside attention. Legend says that Apollo sent Greeks to colonize Cyrene. The city expanded and became one of Greece's Hellenized outposts in North Africa although not without some tension between the Greeks and the native Berbers, as history records.

Greece took over the silphium trade. (In 74 BCE, Cyrene came under Roman rule. Silphium disappeared in late antiquity, having been overharvested into extinction. More information about silphium may be found in John Riddle's 1997 book, *Eve's Herbs: A History of Contraception and Abortion in the West.*)

Apollo was considered patron and founder of the Greek city of Cyrene. A temple of Apollo was constructed as early as the seventh century BCE. The neighboring port on the Mediterranean was named Apollonia but the city itself remained named after its presiding indigenous spirit. Apollo's sanctuary was built beside her spring, which was renamed the Fountain of Apollo.

Cyrene's Berber roots were hidden. A legend emerged that Apollo had transported a Greek Nymph named Cyrene to Libya, naming the city in *her* honor. (Apollo may indeed have transported other Nymphs to North Africa, however the name Kura/Cyrene predates his arrival in the region.) Greek myth identifies Cyrene and Apollo as the parents of the major deity, Aristaeus. Kura's waters emerge from a cavern. She is a hidden goddess of love, fertility, and contraception.

**Iconography:** Depending on perspective, Cyrene is depicted strangling or hugging a lion. This image officially derives from Pindar's Ninth Pythian Ode, which recounts how Apollo fell in love with Cyrene, a Thessalian Nymph in the entourage of Artemis, after witnessing her battle a lion. Whether or not the image of the goddess with a lion in this region predates Apollo is now unknown. In addition to ancient images, the Strength tarot card, which traditionally depicts a woman with a lion, may be used to represent Kura.

**Sacred site:** The ruins of the ancient city of Cyrene may be visited as can Kura's spring, now known as Apollo's spring.

**Offerings:** Spring water; Berber jewelry; honey; old coins from Cyrene, which virtually all feature images of the silphium plant; pilgrimage to her spring

**See also:** *Apollo; Aristaeus; Artemis; Nymph*

## **Kure**

### *The Hyena*

**Origin:** Hausa

**Classification:** Bori

Kure, son of the Head of the Seventh House of Bori spirits, was adopted by Sarkin Zurkalene whose sister, Hawa'u he then married. Kure also married Amina and Maimuna, two daughters of the Chief of Butchers. When the Butcher Chief retired, Kure inherited his position.

His association with hyenas is not considered complimentary. Hyenas

are very much feared in Hausa folklore not only as fierce animals but because of associations with witchcraft. (Hyenas are often believed to be witches in disguise or vice versa.) Kure's association with hyenas indicates his importance in pre-Islamic shamanic traditions as well as modern associations with blood.

Kure is a lurker and a watcher. His favored spot is lingering outside royal palace gates. He witnesses *a lot* and is a font of information although not necessarily inclined to share. Kure is a nocturnal spirit and most likely to be encountered at night.

**Favored people:** Butchers

**Manifestations:** Kure may manifest as a man but at night he often wanders in the form of a hyena. He lingers by thresholds and gates. Should you desire to meet him, soul journey to the gates of the palace of Jangare at night. He will, eventually, appear.

**Affliction:** Kure inflicts headaches, nose bleeds and inexplicable choking (no physical cause).

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*The key magical ingredient to healing Kure's afflictions is dust gathered from outside the gates of any royal palace. That's where Kure lurks; the dust contains his essence.*

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**Sacred tree:** Doka (*Isobertinia doka*)

**Color:** Red

**See also:** *Bori; Sarkin Zurkalene*

## **Kurukulla**

**Also known as:** Red Tara; Kurukulle

**Origin:** Himalayas

**Classification:** Dakini; Bodhisattva

Kurukulla is a spirit of love, beauty, wealth and desire, now most famous for her sponsorship of spells and rituals of domination and control. Kurukulla began her incarnation as a popular tribal goddess, later incorporated into the Tibetan Buddhist pantheon as Red Tara. Kurukulla is the Spirit of Subjugation. Kurukulla is invoked when building monasteries or when beginning any new enterprise in order to subjugate any malevolent force, spirit, demonic or human, which might pose obstacles.

- Kuru kulla tames and controls the spirit world.
- She provides protection against malicious spirits and all harm
- Kurukulla helps devotees achieve their desires
- Kurukulla delivers cash, power and lovers
- Kurukulla is petitioned for wisdom and academic success
- She is invoked by Tantric practitioners

At her most primal, Kurukulla presides over menstrual power. Kurukulla is the Scarlet Woman. Menstrual blood is considered the single most powerful magical ingredient, able to enforce a woman's will (perhaps one reason why menstruating women are traditionally kept under lock and key). Menstrual blood banishes evil spirits and provides spiritual protection. One drop of a woman's menstrual blood allegedly causes others to love her forever. Kurukulla epitomizes and transmits this power. She may be invoked to bless and further menstrual magic spells and rituals.

**Manifestation:** Kurukulla is a blissfully joyous scarlet woman with disheveled hair.

**Iconography:** Kurukulla is depicted dancing naked amidst flames. Her red body radiates light. She has one face, three eyes and four arms. She sometimes wears a long red scarf, a crown of five skulls and a necklace of fifty freshly severed heads. A tiger-skin skirt emphasizes her fearlessness and wild nature. Luxurious Tibetan images of Kurukulla are crafted from gold on red vermillion.

**Attributes:** Flower bow and arrow; noose of flowers; hook (The hook



symbolizes her power to attract, obtain and influence; the noose demonstrates her ability to bind all to her will and desire)

**Spirit allies:** Kurukulla is attended by two Dakinis

**Color:** Red

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*Kurukulla is intensely identified with the color red. Written petitions should be written in red: red ink, vermillion, menstrual blood or blood pricked from one's right ring finger.*

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**Flowers:** Red utpala flowers (red lotus)

**Mantra** (short form):

*OM KURU KULEE KRIY SO HA!*

**See also:** *Bodhisattva; Bon Spirits; Dakini; Jahi; Gorgon; Tara (2)* and the Glossary entry for *Mantra*

## **Kuturu**

*The Leper*

**Origin:** Hausa

**Classification:** Bori

Kuturu is the head of the fourth house of the Bori pantheon, the House of Lepers. Kuturu is an extremely important Bori spirit who exerts tremendous influence in the Bori court and palace. He is the senior counselor to Sarkin Aljan Suleimanu. However, Kuturu has an intimate relationship with Inna, Sarkin Aljan Suleimanu's wife. The relationship between the two male spirits is tense and they should be kept apart. Kuturu, potentially a kind and very generous spirit, is likely to be found near the main gate of Suleimanu's palace.

**Favored people:** Lepers; (Allegedly his priesthood successfully treats leprosy, especially in early stages. The cure may involve becoming a devotee of Kuturu.)

**Manifestation:** Kuturu can't walk; he crawls (and manifests like this during ritual possession). He moves like a snake. Kuturu has a nasal voice. During ritual possession, the person embodying him tends to sweat profusely.

**Attributes:** A woven grass bag and a small gourd (to beg for alms); a horsehair switch (symbol of authority plus to shoo flies); a Dum Palm nut string serves as his weapon

**Consort:** Almajira is Kuturu's only wife (but he has a long-running affair with Inna)

**Affliction:** Kuturu inflicts leprosy. His victims' eyes turn red.

**Animal:** Snake

**Sacred tree:** Dundu (*Dichrostachys nutans*) a thorny acacia-like shrub and the Dum Palm (*Hyphoene thebaica*)

**Offering:** Kuturu will accept any offering given with sincerity and a good heart

**See also:** *Bori; Inna; Kure; Sarkin Aljan Suleimanu*

## **Kwakiya**

### *The Black Hooded Cobra*

**Origin:** Hausa

**Classification:** Bori

Kwakiya, daughter of Sarkin Aljan Zurkalene, is married to Danko Dan Musa, Chief of the Bori Snake Spirits. Her characteristic affliction is blindness. Like a snake, she blinds by spitting venom into her victim's eyes, a technique she has taught her husband.

**See also:** *Bori; Sarkin Aljan Zurkalene; Danko Dan Muso*

## **Kwan Kung**

**Also known as:** Kuan Kung; Guan Gong; Guan Di; Quan Cong (Vietnamese)

**Origin:** China

Kwan Kung is the Lord of War, a spirit of protection and defense. He protects people from demons, scoundrels, thieves and malefactors in general. The very essence of righteousness, integrity and loyalty, in Chinese cosmology, Kwan Kung is often ranked just below the Jade Emperor. Rumors persist that he has, in fact, quietly and modestly assumed that office.

Kwan Kung was an historic person. In life, he was a Chinese warrior, leader of an army possibly during the Warring Kingdoms Era. He was unvanquished, brave and fierce in battle but also very beloved because he helped and protected the weak. A chieftain's son kidnapped a local girl, an everyday occurrence in much of the world, then as now but not something Kwan Kung could tolerate. He killed the kidnapper, rescued the girl and brought her safely home to her family. Kwan Kung who wished no further violence fled but was pursued by the vengeful chieftain's men. He sought refuge in a temple but his pursuers set it on fire. Kwan Kung, his face aflame, escaped the burning building and killed his attackers.

Kwan Kung was eventually unjustly executed for refusing to betray his king. In death, he continued to serve the people. Temples were erected to him throughout China and now around the world. Venerate him at home, too: allegedly an image of Kwan Kung kept in the home prevents trouble and domestic disturbances.

Kwan Kung is a master martial artist. He is generous, very frank and truthful but emotional and easily-angered. *He cannot be bribed.* Kwan Kung is also considered a great scholar; able to recite Chinese texts by heart.

**Favored people:** Soldiers; those who work in law enforcement; scholars;

Kwan Kung is the spiritual patron of the Hong Kong police department.

**Iconography:** Kwan Kung is depicted with a red face and long black beard.

**Attribute:** A weapon named in his honor (a long staff with a blade); book; spear; pen; pike

**Mount:** Red horse

**Color:** Red

**See also:** *Jade Emperor*

## Kwan Yin

*The Goddess of Mercy;  
She Who Hears the Cries of the World*

**Also known as:** Guan Yin; Kuan Yin; Phat Ba Quan Am (Vietnamese)

Kwan Yin is the very essence of mercy and compassion; among the most beloved and well known of all spirits. Technically, Kwan Yin is considered a Bodhisattva, venerated as such throughout the Buddhist world but she also possesses the stature of a goddess and many consider her to be one, not just modern Western goddess devotees but also in East Asian folk religion. Kwan Yin is a spiritual phenomenon: she transcends religious boundaries and is also found in Taoist and Shinto shrines, even in the shrine of her main rival, the Lady of T'ai Shan. Kwan Yin is a great favorite of independent practitioners and goddess devotees everywhere.

- Kwan Yin protects the helpless, particularly women, children and animals
- She bestows good health and fertility
- She guides and protects travelers especially seafarers and sky travelers
- In recent years, Kwan Yin has emerged as the guardian of air travel
- She protects against attack from either animals or humans

- She breaks cycles of rebirth, punishment and retribution
- Kwan Yin provides protection in the realms of the living, the dead and anywhere else

Kwan Yin's true identity is subject to debate. Officially she is an aspect of the Bodhisattva Avalokiteshvara. The Lotus Sutra, which describes Avalokiteshvara, was among the first Buddhist texts translated into Chinese. Avalokiteshvara translated into Chinese is Kwan Shih Yin. The first Chinese statues of Kwan Shih Yin, a.k.a. Avalokiteshvara, appeared in the 5<sup>th</sup> century CE and depict him as a slight, graceful, androgynous man.

Kwan Yin as we know her today first emerged from China's wild northwest frontier, by the Silk Road, sometime between the 7<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> centuries CE and began to move into the Chinese heartland during the 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> centuries along with detailed legends of her life, which do *not* correspond to Avalokiteshvara but to the Taoist goddess, Miao Shan. Kwan Yin may really be Miao Shan assuming the official guise of Avalokiteshvara as Buddhism was then socially dominant while Taoism was disparagingly considered folk religion. Her strong identification with horses may also indicate her origins on the western frontier.

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*Kwan Yin epitomizes goodness: no one is kinder, more compassionate or more benevolent. Kwan Yin doesn't possess a single malevolent or malicious impulse. She is also exceptionally responsive, as evidenced by her world-wide veneration. If you are new to spirits or are generally afraid of them, Kwan Yin may be the right spirit for you.*

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Alternatively many believe Isis, Mary Magdalen and/or Mary, Mother of Christ traveled the length of the Silk Road, finally emerging as Kwan Yin or that their images may have served as a portal for a frontier spirit. Whoever she is, she is entirely good. The desire of so many individuals and traditions to claim Kwan Yin testifies to her appeal and power.

**Favored people:** Women, children, exiles and travelers but Kwan Yin vows to respond to anyone who calls out her name in his or her moment of fear or suffering. She offers aid, mercy and compassion to anyone who suffers. She helps not because of who you are, but because of who she is.

**Iconography:** Kwan Yin has many forms: she is typically depicted as a kind, beautiful woman dressed in white. In her fertility-goddess path, she carries at least one child. These statues closely resemble images of Isis or the Madonna. Kwan Yin is depicted with one-thousand eyes and one thousand arms indicating her ability to see all and help all. Kwan Yin may be accompanied by her acolytes, a small girl and boy.

*However,* Kwan Yin is a goddess of the masses. Not everyone can afford a statue: Kwan Yin's name or even her title, the Goddess of Mercy, written on a piece of paper and posted where it is visible is considered just as powerful and effective as an image.

**Attribute:** Rosary, lotus, a sutra vase from which pours compassion, a willow branch symbolizing her powers of exorcism (according to Chinese shamanism, demons flee from the presence of willow); fish basket

**Color:** White

**Animal:** All are sacred to Kwan Yin but especially horses

**Bird:** Peacock

**Gem:** Pearl

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*Among her crucial roles, Kwan Yin is a Goddess of Divination. She may be petitioned to provide information in dreams but Kwan Yin also presides over a specific system of divination: one-hundred poems attributed to Kwan Yin serve as a divination device. Mass-produced versions of Kwan Yin's oracle are available.*

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**Metal:** Iron

**Mount:** Lion or hou, a mythic lion-like creature; dragon; giant carp; dolphin

**Number:** 19

**Tree:** Willow

**Sacred site:** Kwan Yin has shrines on all nine Chinese sacred mountains (4 Buddhist; 5 Taoist) as well as throughout the world. Her primary shrine is Pu To Shan, actually a small mountainous island in the East China Sea. The entire island is dedicated to her. The central site is the Cave of the Tidal Sound where Kwan Yin frequently appears. There are countless stories of sightings and miracles; the earliest dating from the 11<sup>th</sup> century.

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*A massive statue of Kwan Yin in the forecourt of the maternity hospital of Southern Canton was among the first new statues of a deity erected near the end of China's Cultural Revolution.*

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At the time of the establishment of the Communist state of China in 1949, there were 218 temples on Pu To Shan. Over two-thousand monks and nuns lived on the island. Most survived until the Cultural Revolution (1966–1975) when the island was sacked and most temples destroyed. Some temples have since been reopened.

**Sacred days:** The first and fifteenth of each lunar month: the New Moon and the Full Moon

- the 19<sup>th</sup> day of the second Chinese month is Kwan Yin's birthday
- the 19<sup>th</sup> day of the sixth Chinese month commemorates when Kwan Yin became a Buddha
- the 19<sup>th</sup> day of the ninth Chinese month, the day she first wore her sacred pearls

**Rituals:** Kwan Yin is a vegetarian. Her image on restaurant menus often indicates that vegetarian fare is served. Give appropriate offerings (i.e., don't give her steak). Many devotees adopt a vegetarian diet in her honor but even those who do not, traditionally eat vegetarian on her sacred days.

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*A poor farmer walked past an abandoned temple of Kwan Yin twice daily. He regretted its condition so he began to sweep it daily; lighting incense before the iron statue of Kwan Yin. She eventually appeared to him in a dream, advising that there was treasure in a cave behind the temple, which he should take but share with others. He searched, finding only a single tea plant shoot, which he cultivated. It sprouted into a giant bush. The farmer marketed the tea, became prosperous and used the proceeds to repair and expand the temple. Iron Goddess of Mercy Tea, also known as Iron Buddha or Iron Bodhisattva, grown in Taiwan and Fujian, is still considered the finest oolong tea.*

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**Offerings:** Oranges, pomegranates, spices, incense; Iron Goddess Oolong tea; offerings on behalf of needy women, children and wildlife. At one time, Pu To Shan was a de facto nature preserve. The island, whose religious activities were curtailed during much of the last century, is now a major tourism site and so humans encroach upon the habitat of Kwan Yin's beloved wild creatures. Any gesture on behalf of preserving Pu To Shan should gain favor.

**See also:** *Avalokiteshvara; Bodhisattava; Buddha; Isis; Kannon; Lady of the Beasts; Lieu Hanh; Ma Zu; Mary Magdalen; Miao Shan*

**Kyane**

*Dark Blue*

**Also known as:** Cyane



**Origin:** Greek; Sicilian

**Classification:** Nymph; naiad

Persephone wasn't the only victim of Hades. Her childhood friend, the water Nymph Kyane was also utterly transformed by Persephone's abduction. Abbreviated versions of Persephone's myth usually indicate that no one came to her aid but that's not exactly true. In some variations, the kidnapping of Persephone was witnessed by her friend Kyane who loudly protested but to no avail. Hades opened a path to his realm right at the freshwater spring over which Kyane presided and disappeared with Persephone. (Alternatively, the gateway to Hades may have already existed; Kyane may be a threshold spirit, a dweller between realms, hence her proper placement to witness the crime.)

Kyane was either so grief-stricken that she literally dissolved into tears becoming one with the water or Hades struck her mute so that she was unable to reveal what she had seen. She may also have been rendered unable to leave her sacred Sicilian spring, ever after dedicated to Persephone as well as to its resident Nymph.

Kyane is closely associated with the color blue. Her hair may be blue. She may manifest as a mermaid and if so, her tail may be blue. Kyane is a melancholy spirit; she is the forgotten victim of Hades' attack and has never entirely recovered. She is the goddess of the blues and bluemoods as well as the literal color. She may or may not be among the Sirens. (There is a Siren bearing her name but it's not clear if they're the same spirit. If so, then the loss of her voice is even more poignant.)

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*In Ovid's version of the myth, Kyane, attempting to wrest Persephone from Hades' arms, is only able to catch hold of her scarf, which she preserves. When Demeter comes seeking Persephone, Kyane, rendered mute by Hades, is unable to speak but she allows the scarf to float in the spring and Demeter instantly knew all.*

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**Manifestation:** As a beautiful girl; as a mermaid or as water. Kyane does not speak but can be very expressive.

**Spirit allies:** Kyane may be venerated alongside Demeter and/or Persephone.

**Color:** Blue; cyan refers to the watery colors between blue and green

**Element:** Water

**Time:** *L'heure bleu* or “the blue hour”: the hour between daytime and darkness, just before nightfall and dawn, often characterized by vividly blue skies.

**Messengers:** Blue birds

**Offerings:** Spring water; blue flowers (delphiniums or hydrangeas, for example); Guerlain’s *L’Heure Bleu* perfume; Blue Curaçao liqueur or other blue drink.

**See also:** *Demeter; Hades; Naiad; Nymph; Persephone; Sirens*

## Kybele

*The Magna Mater; The Mountain Mother*

**Also known as:** Cybele, Cuba, Kubaba

Earth’s oldest surviving goddess was once a forest witch. Kybele’s cult is considered Earth’s most ancient religion. A clay statue, excavated at Catal Hayuk, now in modern Turkey, dated from between six to eight thousand years old, depicts a woman flanked by leopards. Although no name plate was attached, it is recognizably an image of Kybele.

Ancient Anatolians called her the Mountain Mother; the Romans called her *Magna Mater* or *Great Mother*. She seems to have originated in what is now Turkey and then traveled to the Middle East. The Hittites called her Kubaba, which evolved into the Phrygian Kybele and eventually the Roman Cybele. Some associate Siduri, the sacred harlot who tends the bar located at the world’s end with Kybele. (See also:

*Siduri.)*

Kybele is usually translated as *Cave, Place of Caves, or Cave Dweller*. Kybele and the Sibyls are both associated with caves and prophecy and it's believed that the original sibyls were Kybele's priestesses although at least some eventually became independent practitioners.

Legend has it that Kybele was an unwanted child, left exposed in the wilderness. Instead of consuming her, the leopards and lions who discovered her raised and nurtured her, a leopard serving as her wet-nurse. Living alone with animals in the woods, Kubaba became a witch so powerful she evolved into an immortal goddess.

In her oldest manifestations, Kybele is a deity of healing, witchcraft, fertility, women and children. Rites were held in forests and caves and included ritual possession, ecstatic dancing, intoxication, music and sacred sex. She is closely identified with Dionysus and with Hekate who hails from her neck of the woods. Before her arrival in Rome, Kybele was associated with women, slaves and the poor, not with the elite and already bore a somewhat dangerous reputation.

In 204 BCE, the Romans fetched Kybele in the form of a meteor from her shrine at Pessinus in central Turkey. The Oracle of Delphi had forecast that Rome would never defeat Hannibal unless Kybele was brought to Rome. (The Romans traced their descent from refugees from Troy in Anatolia, now modern Turkey, and so basically the Oracle was instructing them to go fetch Mom to get them out of trouble.) Kybele was brought to Rome in triumphant procession and in 202 BCE, as the Oracle predicted, Rome defeated Hannibal. The black fist-sized meteorite became the face of a silver statue and must have resembled some Black Madonna statues. The Romans combined Kybele's mythology with that of the Greek Earth goddess Rhea so that now it can be sometimes difficult to distinguish between the two spirits.

In Rome, Kybele's rites evolved. Secret rituals once performed in hidden caves and forests now occurred in public streets during processions attended by thousands. By Roman law, women could not be chief officiators of official state cults and so men assumed positions of authority in Kybele's Roman cult that had been previously assumed by women.

Kybele was served by priestesses and by transgendered clergy known in Rome as *galli*. (Singular: *galla* or *gallus*, literally “hen” or “rooster”.) To join the *galli*, self-castration was required. The *galli* dressed and lived as women. Kybele’s clergy were also skilled medical practitioners: through surgery, replica vaginas (caves) were crafted through which the *galli* could engage in sacred sexual rituals.

Kybele’s festivals became notorious: men would suddenly be seized by the spirit and feel compelled to castrate themselves on the spot using potsherds (*terra cotta*, Earth, so that Kybele who may be understood as Earth personified, is the knife herself). The detached organ was flung aside; the house that it hit was considered blessed. Its owner was expected to purchase the ritual wardrobe for the new *galla*. Kybele’s primary myths (or at least those that survive) also involve castration, death and resurrection. It became a scandalous faith and was periodically suppressed.

With the advent of Christianity, serious efforts were made to eradicate her religion. Among other reasons, the early Church despised Kybele for the prominence of women, homosexuals, lesbians and the transgendered in positions of authority. In urban areas, her devotees included a high percentage of men, intellectuals and the elite but she was also extremely popular among the poorer classes and so was perceived as strong competition for Christianity.

Her religion was brutally suppressed. In 397 CE, Saint John Chrysostom (c. 347–September 14, 407) led what would today be described as a “death squad” through Phrygia (located in the mountains of what is now Western Turkey) targeting devotees of Kybele. Emperor Justinian (c. 483–565) despised Kybele and ordered her remaining temples torn down and her priestesses and *galli* murdered. Her sacred texts were burned. Although her veneration was widespread, *none* of Kybele’s temples remain. Various ruins may be visited in Turkey. Saint Peter’s Basilica in the Vatican was built directly over her temple; parts may survive under the foundation. Some believe that her sacred meteorite is buried there, too.

Kybele was clearly more than just a scandalous, bloodthirsty goddess. She was *beloved* for millennia and continues to be. In one form or another, her veneration may have lasted longer than any other deity on

Earth. She remains a favorite of independent practitioners and serves as a protective guardian spirit. Kybele is revered for her power to provide miraculous healing and fertility. She provides spiritual and mystical enlightenment. Her temples served as hospitals: Women came to sleep in her Roman temple to beg favor. Her priestesses and priests underwent intensive training in herbal medicines. Many priestesses were skilled midwives.

**Favored people:** Midwives, healers, diviners, fortune tellers, crystal gazers, those who work with or on behalf of big cats; she is especially devoted to women and children. Historically, the bulk of her devotees were women and her most exclusive mysteries were reserved for women only.

**Manifestation:** Kybele manifests in various ways:

- Her typical human manifestation is as a crowned mature beautiful woman
- She also frequently manifests in the form of rocks and as Earth herself
- To enter a cave is to enter Kybele
- Her most sacred manifestation was as a meteorite

**Iconography:** Ancient Hittite and Anatolian images depict her with lion cubs. Some times she hugs them in her arms. Roman Kybele is depicted seated on her throne surrounded by lions, sometimes with a lion cub in her lap. Kybele wears a crown in the form of crenellated towers or a city gate. She holds a pan of water intended as a divination device representing her prophetic ability and her willingness to bestow this skill to others.

**Attributes:** Keys; cymbals; frame drum; Kybele is credited with inventing drums, flutes and percussion instruments

**Creatures:** Bees, bulls, big cats especially leopards and lions; her chariot is pulled by lions

**Bird:** Vulture, chicken

**Tree:** Pine, pomegranate

**Flower:** Rose

**Element:** Earth

**Day:** The Vernal Equinox; Kybele's Roman festival, the *Megalensia*, was held from April 4<sup>th</sup> through April 10<sup>th</sup>, her birthday; another festival, beginning March 25<sup>th</sup>, honored Kybele's lover Attis: The first day commemorated Attis' self-castration and death, followed by three days of public mourning. The last day of the festival was the Hilaria, the Day of Joy, as devotees celebrated Attis' resurrection from the dead and the return of fertility to the Earth, all courtesy of Kybele. This last day is considered especially auspicious for requesting Kybele's assistance with fertility.

**Sacred sites:** Caves and mountains are sacred to Kybele and were the site of her earliest ceremonies. It is the easiest place to contact her. As she is the deified Earth, she may be contacted directly through Earth. Many of her myths emphasize that Kybele is ever present. The city of Lyon, now in France, was once dedicated to her and an important center of her veneration.

**Rituals:** Kybele enjoys a celebratory atmosphere. She feeds on energy generated by the human response to incense and ecstatic dance and music. Call her with loud, percussive, rhythmic music. She loves cymbals and drums. Kybele most frequently responds through dreams and visions.

**Offerings:** Honey, fruit and flowers are traditional. The Romans decorated her statues with roses. She drinks water, wine and arak and enjoys feta cheese dressed with garlic, oil, vinegar and fresh herbs. Kybele likes devotees to share meals in her honor. She is an unpretentious, earthy spirit who is not easily bribed: gourmet dishes and expensive offerings do not sway her. She prefers things that are closest to their earthly source. Kybele likes offerings made from clay, particularly if you have fashioned them with your own hands.

**See also:** *Artemis of Ephesus; Ba Den; Black Madonna; Car; Daphne; Dionysus; Hekate; Kura; Lady of the Beasts; Lugh; Maries de la Mer; Rhea; Siduri; Sybil*

## **Kyeryong**

**Also known as:** Gyeryong

**Origin:** Korea

**Classification:** Dragon

Kyeryong may be translated as “rooster-dragon” or “chicken-dragon” depending on the gender of the dragon. They have dragon bodies but their heads resemble that of poultry. (Don’t laugh; once upon a time, chickens and roosters were considered extremely sacred.) Kyeryong feature in various Korean myths and fairy tales. They are associated with Rooster-Dragon Mountain (Kyeryong-san) and the Male and Female Dragon sacred pools, among Korea’s most sacred sites, long beloved by shamans and Buddhist monks. Part of the area is now an extremely popular national park however, the government of South Korea moved its official military headquarters base from Seoul to the southern slopes of Dragon Mountain in the late 1970s, in the process allegedly removing 15,000 shamans and monks and destroying shrines and temples.

**See also:** *Aryong-Jong; Kikimora; Kybele*

## L

### Labartu

**Origin:** Mesopotamia

Labartu, an ancient demon and disease spirit, is described as the “hag demon.”

Assurbanipal, King of Assyria (died 626 BCE) had a vast library of magical texts collected from all over Babylonia. Labartu is the subject of one such book.

Labartu lives in marshes or in the mountain wilderness. She attacks children and induces miscarriage. Labartu may manifest as a fever demon. Texts describe protective measures: images of Labartu were formed and accompanying incantations chanted. Mothers and babies were guarded via engraved stone amulets. Labartu’s power is at its peak for the first nine days after a birth and so mother and child were never left alone until this period of danger ended. Information is now scarce: Labartu was somehow associated with Ishtar and is sometimes identified with Lamashtu.

**See also:** *Al Karisi; Inanna-Ishtar; La mash tu; Lilith*

### Lada

**Origin:** Slavic

Spirit of love, beauty and spring, Lada was widely venerated throughout Slavic Europe as well as Baltic Lithuania. She was and remains an extremely popular and beloved goddess. Lada lives inside Earth like a hibernating bear but emerges with the Vernal Equinox. (Archaic myths of Persephone, prior to the advent of the Olympians, may have been similar.) Migratingbirds signal her imminent arrival. Lada is the spirit of the awakening Earth. She is the spirit of awakening desire, too. Lada



inspires people and animals to seek companionship and sex. She inspires happiness, harmony and bliss.

**Iconography:** Lada is depicted in the company of birds and is often shown pregnant.

**Consort:** Lada's husband and male counterpart is Lado. Their children are Lel and Lelya.

**Birds:** All birds serve as her messengers but especially larks

**Tree:** Linden

**Sacred time:** Spring equinox

**See also:** *Lado; Persephone*

## Lado

**Origin:** Slavic

Lado is the sacred partner and consort of Lada, Goddess of Spring. He is her male counterpart and is invoked for romantic happiness and domestic bliss. Lado may be interpreted as "spouse"; it may be a title or epithet rather than a name. He is the essence of springtime; the urge to find a partner and make merry. Lado may or may not be the male spirit venerated under the guise of John the Baptist during the Russian Midsummer's Eve feast known as *Ivan Kupalo*.

**See also:** *Lada*

## Ladon

**Origin:** Greece

Gaia gave Hera a tree with magical golden apples as a wedding gift. The tree was planted in the Garden of the Hesperides. Ladon is a giant snake or dragon appointed by Hera to serve as the tree's guardian. There are different versions of his origins. His father may be Typhon or Phorkys.

His mother may be Gaia, Keto or Echidna. If Keto is his mother, then Echidna is his sister. Depending on his and their parentage, the Hesperides, the Nymphs who tend the Garden of the Hesperides may be Ladon's sisters.

In the most famous version of his myth, Heracles kills Ladon in order to steal some golden apples. In other versions, Heracles or Atlas acting on his behalf, obtain the apples in a friendly manner from either Ladon or the Hesperides.

**Manifestation:** Ladon is huge and powerful. He may have two, three or even one-hundred heads. He is a mimic who can speak with different voices and is fluent in many languages. Nothing indicates that he is hostile or violent as long as you're not trying to steal what he's sworn to guard. He is lovable enough that the Hesperides are described weeping at his death.

**Iconography:** A *big* snake wrapped around an apple tree or a one-hundred headed dragon.

**Constellation:** Draco the dragon

**See also:** *Atlas; Echidna; Gaia; Hera; Heracles; Hesperides; Keto*

## Lady Banana Ghost

**Also known as:** Phit Nang Tani

**Origin:** Thailand

Lady Banana Ghost names a species of tree spirit who live within certain types of small Thai banana trees. Each tree has its own ghost. Lady Banana Ghost rarely emerges from her home without provocation. She will emerge upon the death of the tree (she does not die with the tree but will be unhappy at being displaced) and is at the peak of her powers when the tree flowers, when she maybe particularly active. Should the tree die while flowering, she may be *really* active.

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*Association between tree and ghost is no accident: this particular species of Thai banana is traditionally associated with death and funeral rites. Tree trunks are used in funeral rituals. Because the tree is useful (leaves are also used to wrap food), it's not avoided but they are maintained at a distance from residences, not placed too close to home.*

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Lady Banana Ghost has fun terrorizing solitary men. She'll emerge and do something scary (her sudden emergence may be sufficient) just to see them run or scream. She doesn't really do any harm: she's a prankster out for some fun, not a vicious spirit. If you entertain her by showing panic or fear, she'll leave you alone. Lady Banana Ghost can also be magnanimous and benevolent and is known to offer alms to itinerant monks.

Lady Banana Ghost is an oracular spirit and is the subject of magic spells intended to force her to reveal information in dreams, usually the identity of someone's true love or future spouse. She is not a willing participant and must be magically forced. However, once coerced to serve in this manner, it's her turn to exert coercion. She may not go away but insist on regular offerings and a role as a spiritual matron; haunting dreams and causing misfortune (usually of the romantic, domestic kind) until properly propitiated and a working relationship established.

**See also:** *Ghost*

### **Lady of the Beasts**

A sacred image, documented as far back as the Neolithic era, depicts a woman surrounded by animals. This is often a stylized image: the animals tend to be those which would not normally congregate peacefully together. In the company of the Lady of the Beasts, as she has been dubbed, lions lie down with lambs; predators play nicely with each other; birds perch safely on cats. The Lady of the Beasts is a spirit of

peace and prosperity. She is often, although not always, depicted pregnant. She may be a spirit of nature's bounty.

There may be one primeval Lady of the Beasts or many. Various goddesses fit the archetype. *Lady of the Beasts* is an anthropological term coined to describe images and the concept it evoked. However, the term has since entered the lexicon of modern goddess devotees. Votive images, both traditional and modern, of the Lady of the Beasts are readily available as, for instance, one painted by artist Hrana Janto and included in Amy Sophia Marashinsky's *Goddess Oracle*. Ladies of the Beasts include Aphrodite, Artemis, Baba Yaga, Khadiravani, Kwan Yin, Kybele and Miao Shan. (See their individual entries for more information.)

The Lady of the Beasts is the beast master. She commands, controls and protects them. Those who work closely with animals may seek her protection and matronage. The Lady of the Beasts may also be a priestess or shaman. Those who work closely with animal spirits may assume the role in visualizations. (Just always be aware that flesh-and-blood beasts may not behave like spirit animals; always use common sense and safety precautions to avoid injury to yourself and the animals.)

**Manifestation:** You will know the Lady of the Beasts by the animals that surround her.

**Altar:** Find an image that corresponds to your vision of the Lady of the Beasts and surround her with images of living creatures.

## Lady Blue

**Also known as:** Madame Blue

**Origin:** China

Lady Blue is the companion and servant of snake goddess, Lady White. Her name may be Ching Ching or Siu Ching or at least that's what she's called when manifesting as a woman. Her title, Lady Blue, refers to her true form as a bluish-green snake. She's often described as a small snake but that may be only in comparison with Lady White who is pretty

substantial.

*Green Snake*, a 1993 Hong Kong film starring Maggie Cheung, retells the legend of Lady White from the perspective of Lady Blue.

**See also:** *Lady White*

## Lady Horsehead

**Origin:** China

Before she was Lady Horsehead, this goddess was a young girl whose wealthy father was kidnapped by pirates. In response, she mourned intensely and stopped eating. Her mother feared that she would lose her daughter, too and so she offered the girl's hand in marriage to anyone who could bring her father back.

A horse in their stables, secretly in love with the girl, ran off, rescued the father and carried him home. When the horse demanded his bride, the outraged father killed the stallion, flayed him and hung the skin up. The horse skin "saw" the girl passing by, jumped off the wall onto her and proceeded to carry her off. The Jade Emperor heard her cries and rescued her, bringing her to his celestial palace where she is now his second wife and forever known as Lady Horsehead.

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*The strange myth of Lady Horsehead is reminiscent of the tale of Susano'o's attack on his sister Amaterasu's weaving maidens. Beneath the superficial narrative lie all kinds of spiritual implications. The flayed horse's skin may refer to shamanic rites.*

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Lady Horsehead is the goddess of silkworms and silk production. Until 20<sup>th</sup> century Communist sanctions on traditional Chinese folk religion, she was actively venerated by women in silk-producing regions of China. Her blessings may be requested by anyone who works with silk in any aspect.

**Tree:** Mulberry

**See also:** *Amaterasu; Demeter; Jade Emperor; Susano'o*

## Lady of the Lake

**Origin:** Arthurian

The Lady of the Lake is the spirit who gave the magical sword Excalibur to Arthur and then reclaimed it after the Battle of Camlann. (The sword in the stone broke; Excalibur was the replacement.) She is his spiritual matron. *Lady of the Lake* is a title; her identity is unclear. Among the spirits described as being the Lady of the Lake are Argante, Morgan le Fay, Nimue and Vivian. Her association with swords evokes the Scottish spirit, Scatach.

Compounding the confusion is that in Celtic cosmology, as in so many others, *every* body of water has an in-dwelling, presiding spirit. There are also water spirits who are not tied to anyone location but may manifest in virtually any source of living water. Thus a very wide variety of now little-known, mysterious Celtic goddesses may fit the description of the Lady of the Lake. The title may also refer to her priestess; hence more than one may be addressed as Lady of the Lake, spirit and mortal.

King Arthur may or may not have died following the Battle of Camlann. Legends describe boats mysteriously appearing to ferry him to the Isle of Avalon, either to heal and recover or because it is an afterlife realm. The Lady of the Lake may or may not be among the gracious women who come to collect Arthur; however the island is described as belonging to her.

The Lady of the Lake is invoked for protection and by those who love precious, magical swords. She may be petitioned for entrance to Avalon. The Lady of the Lake is the guardian of esoteric secrets and may be invoked for wisdom and guidance.

**Manifestation:** The Lady of the Lake appears as a beautiful, mysterious, dignified woman.

**Iconography:** The Lady of the Lake inspires artists; many images are

available. Alternatively, substitute a Queen of Swords playing card or the Ace of Swords tarot card, which depicts a disembodied hand, albeit a celestial one, proffering a sword.

**Realm:** The Lady of the Lake rules the Isle of Avalon but also manifests in lakes. When giving or reclaiming Excalibur, a mysterious hand emerges from the center of the lake and then withdraws within.

**See also:** *Argante; Morgan le Fay; Scatach*

## **Lady of Lightning**

*Golden Light; Saint Mother*

**Origin:** China

The Lady of Lightning, now also known as the Mother of Electricity presides over lightning, electricity, flashes of light and electromagnetism. She causes and controls them. The Lady of Lightning also presides over the esoteric use of mirrors for divination, protection and feng shui. She holds mirrors in her hands, moving them about; their flashes are lightning.

## **Lady Tung**

**Origin:** Giarai

The Giarai are an ethnic minority living in Vietnam and Cambodia, much beloved by anthropologists for their elaborate funeral traditions. Lady Tung is the Giarai weaving goddess of life and death.

Giarai tradition suggests that souls of the dead travel to an afterlife village in the west where they live a parallel existence. Lady Tung and her compatriot Lady Tai preside over a large, deep cave that is a threshold between the realms of the living and the dead. Once upon a time, long ago, the living could enter this cave and visit with ancestors, friends and relatives but it got too crowded. Spirits blocked the entrance to the cave with a huge tree trunk, thus separating the realms of the living and the dead.

Lady Tung presides over birth and death.

- When she weaves a new weft, a child is born
- When her thread breaks, someone dies

The Giarai believe in reincarnation; souls transition between different realms over life times. As weavers, Lady Tung and Lady Tai preside over these transitions. They are fate goddesses. Humans are believed to have two incarnations in the realm of the living and two in the realm of the dead. Having completed those four life/ death cycles, Lady Tung and Lady Tai transforms souls into spiders, which wander Earth until transforming again into a dewdrop, they enter a newborn soul.

**See also:** *Fates (1)*

## Lady of the Waterside

**Origin:** China

The Lady of the Waterside presides over a celestial realm filled with flowers. Each flower is linked to a living woman. Alternately, one might say that, according to this southern Chinese spiritual tradition, each woman has a flower alter-ego, which contains her female power; the essence of her fertility. Flowers and women are psychically, spiritually, magically linked. This realm and the flowers are mystically connected to the birth process. The baby's body forms in the human realm but their soul-double is cultivated in flower pots in the Flower World. When it's time to be born, each must cross the treacherous Hundred Flower Bridge so that soul and body are united but luckily they are protected and guided by the Lady of the Waterside. The Lady of the Waterside is the flower goddess who guards this realm of flowers and hence women's fertility and their unborn children.

**See also:** *Flora*

## Lady White

**Also known as:** Madame White



## **Origin: China**

Lady White, a powerful thousand-year old snake goddess, decided to explore the human realm, in some versions because she seeks veneration. She assumed the form of an elegant, beautiful, wealthy woman as did her companion/servant, Lady Blue. Lady White's true form is a big white snake while Lady Blue is a smaller teal one.

Lady White meets a young man and they fall in love. Of course, he has no idea she's a snake. Lady White is a master healer; she teaches him her skills and they live happily ever after until a sharp-eyed monk recognizes that she's no ordinary woman. He resolves to inform and rescue the husband. Whether or not he seeks or needs rescuing is irrelevant: the monk is offended by the relationship itself, which he perceives as unnatural. (Hidden with this tale is a rebuke to the esoteric Taoist practice of human-spirit marriages.) Seeking to banish them, he magically trapped Ladies White and Blue in an alms bowl, which he buried near the West Lake in Hang Zhou. The seven-story Lei Feng Pagoda was built over the bowl in order to further imprison the snake spirits.

*Lady White* is the name and subject of a beloved story and perhaps the most popular Chinese opera. Her legend is retold in *countless* renditions and in different media: opera but also novels, films, folktales; plays, television series, wood block prints, comics, anime and cartoons. No source is considered canonical. Depending on the version, Lady White may be a heroine, a villainess or something in between.

The first literary versions date from the 13<sup>th</sup> century but the story dates back at least to the 7<sup>th</sup> century CE. The first dramatization was in the 14<sup>th</sup> century.

In the earliest versions, Lady White was depicted as a vicious, man-eating spirit. The priests and monks who intervened were heroic. By the Ming era (1368–1644), she was portrayed as an ambiguous “good demon.” She steals the elixir of immortality from Hsi Wang Mu in order to save her husband. The monks who oppose her gradually evolved into villains. Although identified as a snake spirit, Lady White resembles the Jade Maidens and Chinese Fairies who form sacred marriages with Taoist adepts, teaching them mystical secrets of healing and alchemy.

**Manifestation:** Lady White transforms back and forth from white python to beautiful woman. She sometimes appears with a woman's head atop a large serpentine body.

**Sacred site:** The Lei Feng Pagoda was allegedly built to permanently imprison Lady White. A legend circulated that if the tower collapsed, Lady White would be free. However, even trapped underground, Lady White exerted her benevolent power: the tower bricks are reputed to attract wealth and prevent illness and miscarriage. They were eagerly collected, perhaps contributing to the tower's collapse in 1924, liberating Lady White and Lady Blue, now free to roam where they will. Lei Feng Pagoda was rebuilt in 2002 and is a pilgrimage spot for those who love Lady White.

**See also:** *Benten; Fairy; Hsi Wang Mu; Jade Maidens; Janguli; Lady Blue*

## Laima

**Origin:** Baltic

Laima is the Goddess of Fate and Destiny. She dispenses quality *and* quantity:

- Laima bestows good luck and bad; happiness and misfortune
- Laima determines the length of one's life
- She is a goddess of birth and death

Her name is sometimes interpreted as meaning "happiness" but it may derive from an Old Lithuanian word indicating wisdom. Her name is also related to words for luck and fate. She is a particularly powerful goddess; the spirit above other spirits. Laima is the daughter of Zemyna, the Earth Mother. Alternatively, Zemyna and Laima are sisters; daughters of the primordial Mother Zemyna of the Marshes.

Laima supervises the birth process. She decides whether the baby will be born, what sort of mental capacity the child will possess as well as physical attributes. She determines fate and how and when someone will die.

Laima was not worshipped as part of the official state cult; eventually

many of her powers were assigned or appropriated by the male spirit, Dievas. Myths sometimes depict the two deities in conflict with Laima generally winning arguments. Perhaps because she was not favored by rulers but by farmers and peasants, active veneration of Laima survived long after official conversion to Christianity. Seventeenth century Jesuits complained that offerings to Laima were still brought to her pillar stones.

Rituals honoring Laima were also done in the bathhouse: women joined together to sing to Laima and recite ritual poetry. Bathhouse rituals dedicated to Laima were held prior to giving birth with a ritual feast in the bathhouse immediately afterwards. (Bathhouses also traditionally doubled as birthing houses.) Only women took part. The birthing woman made fabric offerings (embroidered towels; vest; sash) to the keeper of the sauna who, once upon a time, may have been Laima's priestess but post-Christianity still served as her mediator. Rituals involved sacrificing a chicken which had to be killed with a ladle.

**Manifestation:** Laima may appear alone or in the company of the Laimos. Her throne is a golden stool. She may manifest as a woman or as any of her sacred creatures. She commonly appears as a bear or cuckoo. In her guise as messenger of death, Laima takes the form of a titmouse.

**Tree:** Linden

**Sacred creatures:** Bear, elk, cuckoo, duck, lamb, owl, swan, titmouse

**Offerings:** Traditionally flowers, flax, hand woven cloth and belts; offerings were traditionally made following successful happy births

**Sacred sites:** Laima was associated with sacred stones, which marked locations of subterranean wells containing the water of life. Laima sits near these stones on her golden stool spinning the thread of life. There are descriptions of Laima's stones in the Vilnius region dating to 1836. She was also venerated within traditional bathhouses (similar to Russian bania or Finnish sauna).

**See also:** *Fates (1); Kikimora; Laimos; Lalla Rekyà; Laumès; Zemyna*

## Laimos

**Origin:** Baltic

The Laimos are Baltic destiny spirits and birth Fairies. Their leader is Laima. The Laimos are spinners and weavers: their thread is human lives. There are apparently seven Laimos but in their capacity as birth Fairies, only three appear at a time. They may be distinct, individual spirits or they may be multiples of Laima. She may be able to manifest as one spirit, three or seven. The Laimos appear at the moment of the birth:

- One decides if the child will live at all
- One decides when the child will die
- One determines the quality of life during this allotted time

**Manifestation:** Laimos manifest as women, cuckoos or swans. Allegedly, if you can capture one in swan form, she'll transform into a woman, engage in sacred marriage and bring you wealth and success.

**See also:** *Fairies, Birth; Laima; Swan Goddesses*

## Laka

**Origin:** Hawaii

Laka, Hawaiian spirit of fertility, romance and women's power, is most famous as the presiding spirit of hula dancing which some legends credit her with inventing. Laka is still actively venerated and honored by hula dancers. The remains of her shrine at Ke'e Beach, Kauai are rarely without offerings. Laka is also the spirit of wild nature and the woodlands. She controls rain. Laka is considered a reasonably benevolent spirit and is one of Hawaii's most beloved goddesses. Laka has an alter ego named Kapo who may be her sister or mother. Alternatively the two names refer to different paths of one spirit with Laka as the consistent life-affirming aspect and Kapo as the unpredictable, potentially dangerous aspect. Kapo has associations with death and negative sorcery, which Laka lacks. Some legends credit Kapo with the invention of hula. The two spirits are frequently invoked and

venerated together.

**Favored people:** Hula dancers: if you already dance, consider yourself under her protection. To establish a connection, learn hula. No need to be a professional dancer; it's sufficient to love hula and make a sincere attempt to learn to the best of your abilities.

**Manifestations:** Like Hawaiian spirits in general, Laka has many forms. In womanly form, Laka is a beautiful, graceful dancer. She also manifests in the forms of her sacred plants.

**Color:** Yellow: Laka's color was traditionally obtained by dyeing with turmeric, known in Hawaiian as olena.

**Tree:** Lama tree "Hawaiian ebony" (*Dios pyros sandwichensis*)

**Plants:** 'Ilima plant (*Sida fallax*); ti plant; maile; lehua blossoms

**Sacred sites:** Ka'ana located on the slopes of Maunaloa in western Molokai claims to be where Laka first danced the hula

- Laka's remains are rumored to be secretly buried somewhere beneath the hill Pu'u Nana in Molokai.
- The ruins of Laka's halau (temple and school) are at Ke'e Beach, Kauai: walk up the hill to the shrine to place offerings on her rock altar.

**Festival:** Molokai's annual Ka Hula Piko festival celebrates Laka and the birth of hula each May.

**Altar:** Traditionally temporary structures formed from entwined branches and decorated with ferns, flowers and plants. A block of Lama wood placed on the altar and covered with yellow tapa cloth represents Laka.

**Offerings:** Traditionally Laka was offered a daily drink of 'awa, also known as kava; also maile vines and leis

**See also:** *Hi'iaka; Kapo*

**Lakshmi**

**Also known as:** Laxmi; Mahalakshmi; Shri Devi; Kamala (“Lotus”)

**Origin:** India

Lakshmi, Lady of Wealth, Good Fortune and Beauty bestows abundance. Lakshmi is the spirit of luxury and happiness. She brings vitality to all living things. She is one of the most beloved spirits of modern India. Lakshmi is actively venerated by some one billion Hindus as well as Buddhists, Jains, goddess devotees and independent practitioners around the world. Almost by definition, she is lovable. She is everything that is good, sweet, pleasurable and joyful.

Lakshmi bestows fertility, health and wealth. Her lucky white elephants shower Earth with rain and abundance. She is the very personification of good luck and fortune. The only negative thing one might possibly say about Lakshmi is that, in the manner of fortune, she is fickle. She won't do anything *bad* but she gets bored easily. If not properly venerated or enticed to stay, she'll just leave, taking her gifts (joy, wealth, luck) with her.

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*Henna contains Lakshmi's essence. Ornament yourself with henna to feel Lakshmi's presence and invoke her blessings. This must be done in a sacred, respectful, manner, however, or consequences may be negative rather than positive. Disrespect the henna, disrespect Lakshmi!*

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Lakshmi is venerated on home altars in attempts to keep her near. Lakshmi expects devotees to expend some effort: simply posting her image and leaving it there is insufficient. Light candles, incense and/or lamps (butter or oil are traditional) and place before her image; on a daily basis, if possible. Shop keepers place her image near the cash register to stimulate sales; also lighting lamps in her honor.

**Manifestation:** Lakshmi is characterized by opulence. Her skin may be golden. Light radiates in her wake. The tremendous quantity of her jewelry causes her to become a vision of flashing, glowing light.

**Iconography:** Her very recognizable iconic form first appeared in approximately the third century BCE. Lakshmi may have two or four hands. She carries a coffer: golden coins shower from her hands. Lakshmi is *always* depicted with a lotus flower. She may hold one or sit or stand on one. She is frequently depicted with a pair of elephants who pour water over her or in the company of Ganesha. Milk may flow from her ample breasts.

**Attributes:** Conch shell; wheel; mace; box; lotus

**Element:** Water

**Flower:** Lotus

**Tree:** Bel Tree (*Aegle marmelos*)

**Plant:** Tulsi or Holy Basil. Tulsi may be Lakshmi incarnate. A legend says that in a fit of anger, the goddess Sarasvati, her rival, transformed Lakshmi into the herb.

**Animals:** Cow, Elephant

**Bird:** An owl serves as her mount.

**Day:** Friday

**Metal:** Gold

**Consort:** In her earliest manifestations, Lakshmi was an independent deity who was worshipped without a male partner. However, she is now considered Vishnu's wife.

**Symbol:** 6 pointed star (hexagram; satkona) signifying the union of female and male principles resulting in creativity and abundance

**Sacred time:** During Diwali, the Hindu festival of lights, Lakshmi roams Earth searching for places to spend the night and distribute her gifts. People greet Lakshmi by illuminating their homes, roofs, gates and gardens with tiny earthenware oil lamps.

**Sacred sites:** Lakshmi Narain Temple in Jaipur and the Lakshmi Narayan Temple in New Delhi, built in 1938, popularly known as the

Birla Mandir.

**Offerings:** Fruit, flowers, candy, incense, milk, beads, coins

**See also:** *Alakshmi; Ganesh; Lalla Malika; Mami Waters; Sarasvati; Vishnu*

## **Lalinn, Madame**

**Also known as:** Madame La Lune

**Origin:** Haiti

Madame Lalinn is the Kreyol moon goddess: she is the moon herself, the woman in the moon and the spirit essence of the moon. She is a very visible goddess: you'll find her in the sky at night. Madame Lalinn is invoked to oversee and bless lunar magic. She presides over dream spells and may be petitioned for luck, beauty and fertility. Madame Lalinn will help open the third eye. She is an oracular spirit who presides over scrying: the art of prophesy via gazing into smooth surfaces, usually glass or liquids but moon-gazing may be very effective, too. Madame Lalinn is the matron of magic mirrors and crystal balls.

**Color:** White

**Time:** Night

**Metal:** Silver

**Mineral:** Mica

**Offerings:** White candles; lunar imagery; silver charms and beads, white cakes, crescent rolls, white rice, bowls of water, mirrors, pearls, mother of pearl, abalone shells

### MOON WATER

Make moon water by exposing a bowl of fresh spring water to moonlight. Moonlight infused water has myriad magical uses:

- Place the bowl under your bed to enhance conception
- Bathe in it to enhance beauty



- Bathe magical tools to enhance their powers
- Place a small hand mirror inside the bowl of water face up so as to absorb the moonlight: voila! You have a lunar enhanced magic mirror for scrying
- Add quartz crystals or crystal wands to the water to cleanse and intensify their power

**See also:** *Chang'O, Lady; Kybele; Luna; Selene*

## **Lalita**

**Origin:** India

Lalita is a dawn goddess from southern India. She is the epitome of feminine beauty and has dominion over abundance, success, happiness and love. She is the embodiment of erotic energy, whether used for sexuality, procreation or metaphysical purposes. She is the spirit of the rising sun, hope and fresh beginnings. Lalita is incorporated into the Hindu pantheon as a path of Parvati and/or Durga. (See Glossary entry for *Path*.)

**Manifestation:** Lalita appears as a ravishingly beautiful sixteen-year old. She may be vividly, blindingly bright: Lalita emanates the light of the sun but her heat is that of the early morning, not the potentially destructive burning noon rays.

**Iconography:** In addition to statues, Lalita is venerated in the form of a yantra, a geometrical image containing and transmitting the essence of the divine being. Lalita's yantra is particularly complex consisting of nine intersecting triangles, four facing up, five facing down.

**Planet:** Sun

**Color:** Red

**Flower:** Red lotus

**See also:** *Aurora; Durga; Eos; Parvati*

## **Lalla**

*Lalla* is a Berber word, which literally means Lady. It is an honorific, a term of respect, for women in Morocco. It is used for human women but is also the most widespread term of address for female spirits, common to both Muslims and Jews. The same term is used to address female Muslim saints, female Jewish saints, female Djinn or other female spirits. These spirits are virtually *always* addressed with the honorific and so *Lalla* has become part of their names.

## **Lalla Haoua**

*Madame Love*

**Also known as:** Lady Eve

Haoua is the Arabic version of the name Eve. Lalla Haoua is the Eve of Garden of Eden fame. Perhaps because she tempted Adam with that apple, in North African folk traditions, Lalla Haoua is venerated as a spirit of love, invoked for romantic happiness and to find one's true love. Perhaps because she is considered the mother of all people, she is the primordial ancestress and thus protective of her descendents.

**Manifestation:** A beautiful woman or a snake

**See also:** *Lalla*

## **Lalla Malika**

**Origin:** Morocco

**Classification:** Djinn

Lalla Malika, daughter of a King of Djinn, is beautiful, elegant, flirtatious and coquettish. She likes men, especially married men. Lalla Malika engages in sacred marriages. (See the Glossary entry for *Marriage*.) As her favorite partners are already wed, it's crucial to negotiate terms with her. Men engaged in marriage with Lalla Malika must receive her

permission to continue relations with their wives or other women. Lalla Malika is a good-natured spirit but keep boundaries clear to avoid any unpleasantness.

Lalla Malika expects devotees to be elegant and stylish, too. Male devotees are expected to be well-groomed and clean shaven. She expects them to wear clean clothes and cologne. Is fine cologne beyond the budget? Not a problem: Lalla Malika provides economically and otherwise for her devotees. Lalla Malika is particularly renowned for keeping devotees out of prison.

Although she's powerful enough to do so, Lalla Malika doesn't generally engage in harmful attacks on people. What she does is withdraw her presence, leaving a void where once there was joy. Lalla Malika is ritually summoned by the Gnawa and Jilala brotherhoods.

**Favored people:** Lalla Malika has a soft spot for men, especially charming, handsome, fun, suave, well-groomed men. If they're married, she likes them even more.

**Manifestation:** Lalla Malika consistently manifests as a happy, laughing, positive spirit. She brings a sense of merriment in her wake. Lalla Malika likes to tickle people. She signals her presence by making people giggle. Lalla Malika speaks French and wears clothing embroidered in gold thread.

**Color:** Purple, violet; pink, mauve

**Incense:** Oud (agarwood); sandalwood

**Homes:** Lalla Malika lives in armoires and clothes closets. Place altars and offerings there. Fill her closet with beautiful clothing and luxuries.

**Offerings:** Lalla Malika loves perfume! Luxurious, multi-colored garments

**See also:** *' Aisha Qandisha; Djinn; Genie; Lakshmi; Lalla; Lalla Mira*

## **Lalla Mimouna**

**See:** *Mimouna, Lalla*

## Lalla Mira

**Also known as:** Lalla Mira al-Mtiriyya; Lalla Mira bent Hartya

**Classification:** Djinn

Lalla Mira is among the most powerful and famous Djinn, beloved and feared. Her origins are unknown but she is believed to be a native Moroccan, possibly first emerging amongst Berber tribes. Lalla Mira is an oracular spirit invoked for healing, fertility, protection, abundance but her major concern is love.

A very independent spirit, Lalla Mira comes and goes where she likes. She's assertive, not shy and may aggressively select her own devotees. Lalla Mira is not married but is flirtatious with a reputation for seducing (and sometimes preying upon) married men. Lalla Mira is a jealous, demanding spirit. Female devotees are expected to consistently wear her colors.

It is easy to sensationalize Lalla Mira but it must be emphasized that she has been loved and venerated for centuries. People credit her with their good health, happiness and the very existence of their families. Yet she is a volatile spirit who engages in very different kinds of relationships with different devotees.

Lalla Mira is a complex spirit: providing some devotees with romantic and sexual happiness but denying these gifts to others. Lalla Mira has three types of devotees: women; men and those specific men with whom Lalla Mira engages in ritual marriage. (See Glossary entry for *Marriage*.) She expects these men to be honored by her attention and possibly to find complete fulfillment with her. Unfortunately many of the men she prefers are already married. Lalla Mira is a coquettish spirit: the fact that they are married may increase their appeal.

In general, Lalla Mira finds lovers and spouses for her devotees (sometimes aggressively so!). She prevents illness and heals infertility. She can cause men to be irresistible to women. If Lalla Mira seeks a relationship with a man herself, she signals her interest via erotic dreams. These dreams are not mere fantasies but actual visitations. Lalla Mira may appear in her own form and identify herself but she often appears to a man in the form of a woman he already knows and loves.

If she loses interest, the dreams will cease but if she genuinely seeks a relationship, they will continue, possibly increasing in frequency. Initially pleasurable, they can become debilitating unless a relationship is negotiated and established and the man becomes her active devotee in waking hours as well as when asleep. If this is problematic, the renowned Moroccan saint Sidi Ahmed may be invoked to help negotiate the relationship.

Lalla Mira may object to male devotees having relationships with other women, even their wives. Objections are made manifest via illness or by the increasingly obsessive behavior of the dreamer who may become so all-consumed he is no longer able to function.

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*Lalla Mira is invoked to foretell the future through a spirit medium via ritual possession. She is summoned via taridja drums and the fragrance of her favorite perfume mixture burned in an incense burner: coriander: black and white benzoin resin; oud (agarwood); salabane resin (also known as Boswellia or frankincense), turpentine and lots of sugar so that her words will be sweet.*

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Men who are married when Lalla Mira makes overtures must establish that they wish to continue relationships with their wives (presuming that they do); some sort of schedule is worked out. Unmarried devotees are expected to request Lalla Mira's permission and blessings before marrying. Should she allow a man to marry, then wife, children and possibly future descendents are expected to serve Lalla Mira, too. (The woman may already be her devotee: Lalla Mira likes match-making and is more inclined to permit devotees to marry.)

If Lalla Mira is angry, vengeful or in a bad mood, she will lash out. Her attack usually manifests as sudden paralysis. Those who are hysterical, whether laughing or crying, are particular vulnerable to her attack.

To counteract an attack or placate Lalla Mira:

- The victim should dress in Lalla Mira's colors
- Place henna in the victim's hands and nose (this can be a ball of henna or a bit of henna paste; it doesn't necessarily have to be painted)
- Sponsor a henna party in Lalla Mira's honor: hire belly or tribal dancers as well as henna artists: for women only!
- Dancing the hadra for Lalla Mira may help but only if it's done well. Lalla Mira attacks those who dance the hadra incorrectly. (Hadra is an ecstatic trance dance.)

**Colors:** Orange, bright yellow

**Plant:** Henna (*Lawsonia inermis*)

**Element:** Water

**Time:** Lalla Mira is most likely to be encountered in the late afternoon, when she likes to take a stroll.

**Sacred site:** Lalla Mira lives within the houses of devotees but is also associated with healingwells, springs and bath houses. Hammam Lalla Mira is the oldest hammam (bath house) in Essaouira, Morocco. Originally named for a sultan's daughter, it was used mostly by the Gnawa community who renamed it for Lalla Mira. Offerings were brought to her here and her blessings invoked. It is now incorporated into the first eco-hotel in Morocco, the Hotel Lalla Mira Essaouira.

**Offerings:** Lalla Mira expects devotees (especially women) to wear her colors; candles, eggs (raw; unbroken); sponsor dances in her honor from the Gnawa and Jilali brotherhoods.

**See also:** *Aisha Qandisha; Djinn; Genie; Kalu Kumara; Lalla Malika; Lalla Rehya Bint El Khamar*

## **Lalla Mkouna Bent Mkoun**

**Origin:** Morocco

**Classification:** Djinn

Lalla Mkouna is the benevolent Djinn who serves as the guardian of the hearth and by extension, guardian of the home. Lalla Mkouna keeps malevolent Djinn out of the home. She is propitiated and activated with offerings of incense when a family is ready to move into a new home. Her protection is particularly crucial if the home is literally new, as in new construction, not merely a family's new residence: Djinn are attracted to brand new buildings. They may move in, even during construction, and then become territorial, attempting to force humans out.

**Manifestation:** Lalla Mkouna is manifest in three stones placed on the hearth.

**Altar:** Place offerings on the stones of the hearth or in the hearth

**Offerings:** Incense on a regular basis; when a girl first menstruates, she should touch the three stones of the hearth with a bloody finger.

**See also:** *Djinn; Lalla; Mazzik*

### **Lalla Rekyia Bint El Khamar**

**Also known as:** Lalla Reqya; Lalla Raqya; Lalla Rkia

**Origin:** Morocco

**Classification:** Djinn

Lalla Rekyia Bint El Khamar (literally *Lady Rekyia Daughter of the Red One*), is a Queen of Djinn who presides over bathhouses and fresh water springs. Lalla Rekyia may be Lalla Mira's sister. Lalla Rekyia rules the Djinn who live in or frequent the hammam (bathhouse; among the Djinn's favorite haunts). She is a diplomatic, mediating Djinn who maintains spiritual peace. (The hammam is integral to Islam but also to non-Islamic spirits.)

She is a benevolent Djinn who serves as a guardian of women in the hammam. She is invoked for protection by women against any malevolent Djinn lurking in the bathhouse. Lalla Rekyia is greeted upon entering the hammam and her protection requested. She is thanked

when leaving and bid goodbye. Babies are traditionally brought to the hammam on or near their first birthday and formally introduced to Lalla Rekyia amidst celebrating and feasting. An oil lamp with twelve floating wicks is lit in her honor. (Indicating that this is a special occasion; usually she's given seven wicks.)

Lalla Rekyia also heals menstrual and reproductive disorders and is petitioned for fertility.

**Color:** Red

**Sacred sites:** Lalla Rekyia lives in the bathhouse. All of them. She also presides over a miraculous healing spring named in her honor in Sefrou in the Middle Atlas Mountains of Morocco. Her spring allegedly cures madness and mental illness. An annual festival is held in her honor.

**Offerings:** Lalla Rekyia receives offerings at night. Traditional offerings include *menara* (small clay vessels used as oil lamps) with seven wicks; incense and perfume.

**See also:** *Djinn; Lalla; Lalla Mira*

## Lamashtu

*The One Who Roams About; Daughter of Heaven; The Kidnapper; The Eraser*

**Origin:** Sumeria

Although Lamashtu is typically described as a demon, she's really a goddess, albeit potentially a very dangerous one. Lamashtu is the daughter of Anu, Sumerian Lord of the Sky. Lamashtu may show different faces to different people similar to her compatriot and contemporary, Lilith. Like Lilith, Lamashtu is associated with witchcraft, infertility, miscarriage and the death of babies. Like Lilith, Lamashtu is connected with Inanna-Ishtar although exactly how is no longer understood.

Sumerians and Assyrians apparently viewed Lamashtu as a completely evil spirit: worse than most because Lamashtu is not a justice spirit. She doesn't cause suffering as retribution or as commanded by high



authorities. Lamashtu's hostility towards people is unexplained but basically she causes suffering because she feels like it.

Lamashtu prevents conception, causes miscarriage and kills newborns (crib death). She causes illness, specifically fevers and inflammation and if that's not sufficient, she notoriously taunts those she persecutes. Lamashtu is counteracted by her rival, the demon Pazuzu. He has his own bad reputation as a plague bringer however he protects against Lamashtu, although whether because he feels sorry for people or because the two spirits hate each other so much is subject for conjecture. Wear or post images of Pazuzu to provide safety from Lamashtu.

On the other hand, among various ancient Semitic cultures, Lamashtu was considered a fierce but protective guardian. She is the deity who protects those lacking protective deities. Amulets bearing her name were hung on all doors of a house although whether this is to protect against her or to invoke her protection is now unknown. Perhaps like Lilith, Lamashtu will not cause harm where she sees her name.

**Manifestation:** Lamashtu may appear as a woman or a lion-headed woman. She may have feet like a bird. She is characterized by loose, disheveled hair, long nails, dirty hands and a restless nature. She howls like a dog.

**Iconography:** She is depicted suckling pigs and dogs or carrying double-headed snakes.

**Animal:** Those pigs and snakes, plus lions

**Number:** 7

**See also:** *Demon; Lamia; Lilith; Pazuzu*

## Lamia

**Origin:** Greek or Berber (Amazigh)

In Greek mythology, Lamia was a Libyan queen loved by Zeus. Their relationship lasted long enough to bear at least two children. Hera, Zeus' jealous wife, discovered the affair and retaliated by either stealing or

killing Lamia's children. Lamia was so distraught that she ripped her own eyes right out of her head. In grief, rage and desolation, she moved into an undersea cavern and transformed into a vengeful, evil spirit who steals other women's children. (An alternative version says that Zeus pitied her after Hera's attack and so he hid her in a cave, transformed her into a monster and gave her permission to attack other women's children.)

- Lamia may be an indigenous Berber spirit, demonized by Greeks
- She may be Poseidon's daughter
- She may be a shark goddess
- She may be all of the above

Lamia's name is related to a word meaning "gullet". *Lamia* may be interpreted as "single shark" or "lone shark". Lamia's son is definitely a shark spirit. She is among the goddesses named as Scylla's mother.

Lamia has two distinct manifestations: one corresponds to classical Greek myth and the other to her origins as a dangerous marine spirit. It's not entirely clear that they are the same spirit despite the fact that they share the same name. (See below *Lamia of the Sea*.)

The Lamia that corresponds to the Greek myth is not associated with underwater attacks or any sort of water mythology. She's a child-stealer, plain and simple. *This* Lamia is accused of stealing children (she's blamed for children who literally disappear); miscarriage, stillbirth, crib death or the deaths of young children. It is possible that this Lamia is actually derived from the Sumerian goddess Lamashtu. This Lamia is a shape-shifter who can take the eyes out of her head to keep watch even when she's sleeping. She can send her eyes on scouting missions so that she can stay in one place but see another.

**See also:** *Hera; Lamashtu; Lamia of the Sea; Lamiae; Poseidon; Scylla; Zeus*

## Lamia of the Sea

**Also known as:** Lamia of the Shore

**Origin:** Greek

Lamia of the Sea is an ominous sea spirit who roams the modern Greek coasts. It is not entirely clear whether she is the same as child-killing Lamia. She more closely resembles the Sirens. This Lamia is dangerous, too, but in different ways.

Lamia may be a mermaid or a woman who emerges from the sea. Sometimes she dances on the shore or on the waves. Sometimes she stands waist deep in water and sings beautiful, passionate love songs in a seductive voice. Men are drawn to her; they may not realize that she isn't a mortal woman but if they yield to her allure, they'll end up at the bottom of the sea. Antidote: stick a black-handled knife into the water to disarm her.

Lamia sometimes emerges from the water, usually in mermaid form, to inquire whether Alexander the Great yet lives. Tell her yes and you'll be fine. Confirming his death enrages her and she'll drown you.

**Manifestations:** A mermaid; a beautiful woman; a waterspout or whirlwind

**See also:** *Exotika; Gorgon; Lamia; Mer maid*

## Lamiae

**Also known as:** Lamias

**Origin:** Greek

The name *Lamia* may be interpreted as meaning "single shark" but the plural, *Lamiae* are ominous spirits associated with snakes. (Each individual *Lamiae* is a *Lamia*.) These *Lamias* are perceived as threatening to men as well as children. They are succubus-like spirits who creep up on sleeping men, hold them spellbound with sexual fantasy while consuming their flesh and draining their blood.

Sometimes *Lamiae* manifest as women of easy virtue who solicit young men, especially those who are robust and well fed. Once alone however, the men are consumed, literally; their bones picked clean. In the Middle Ages, the term *Lamia* became a synonym for *witch*; it is now sometimes used to indicate a female vampire. They thirst for blood. Like

baby-killing Lamia, these Lamiae can remove and replace their eye balls at will; magically directing their movements to facilitate sight. (Their eyeballs can gaze behind their back; out the window; across the hall and so forth.)

Lamiae still haunt modern Greek folklore. They live with dragons in caverns and deserts but sometimes try to insinuate themselves into households possibly so that they can eventually attack. Their sneak attacks are more effective, however, than these long range plots. Lamiae tend to be inept, gluttonous, stupid, and not very clean. Well-fed Lamiae become lazy and corpulent.

The tip-off to their true identity is their absolute inability to do any sort of housework, especially cook. They literally cannot boil water and never seem to learn. They sometimes display gratitude towards those who help them out of their inevitable kitchen troubles.

They may be bloodthirsty vampires but the Lamiae bear a reputation for honesty (if only because they're not smart enough to lie) and for keeping promises.

**Manifestation:** Lamiae many manifest as women or as beautiful women from the waist up but snakes below. John Keats in his poem, *Lamia* describes her as a snake disguised as a woman. Modern Greek folklore suggests that the clue to identifying the Lamiae lie in their feet. They may be mismatched or there may be more than two. One may be of bronze or there may be an animal foot: a donkey, goat or ox foot.

**See also:** *Aisha Qandisha; Baba Yaga; Diablesse; Exotika; Kumiho; Lamia; Lamia of the Sea; Vampire*

## Lampades

**Origin:** Greece

**Classification:** Nymphs; Chthonic spirits

The Lampades, infernal Nymphs, inhabit Hades. Their origins are murky: they may or may not be daughters of Nyx and/or the various river deities of Hades. The Lampades serve in Hekate's entourage: they are her

lamp-bearers, servants, and companions. Their torches serve to illuminate the night. The Lampades are spirits of prophesy and justice.

Whether or not it is safe for humans to encounter or witness them is up to the Lampades to decide or subject to their whim. If the Lampades so desire, then the sight of their lit torches will drive a viewer mad. Alternatively, their torch light can reveal lost, hidden or necessary information. They may be invoked for assistance.

Should one find oneself in trouble with the Lampades who, like many Nymphs, have a teasing nature, appeal to Hekate to make them behave. They will obey her and may be venerated alongside her. They may also be venerated alongside Nyx, Artemis, Demeter and/or Persephone.

**Attribute:** torch

**See also:** *Artemis; Chthonic Spirit; Demeter; Hades; Hekate; Nymph; Nyx; Persephone; Styx*

## Lan Ts'ai Ho

**Also known as:** Lan Caihe

**Origin:** China

Lan Ts'ai Ho is one of the Eight Immortals, the Taoist adepts who never died but attained immortality. Lan Ts'ai Ho is sometimes described as a "strolling singer" which makes her sound like a modern busker but once upon a time in East Asia, traveling female priestesses and shamans incorporated songs into their rituals. Lan Ts'ai Ho wandered the streets chanting until one day, allegedly after becoming intoxicated at an inn, she ascended to the sky on a cloud.

Some people feel very strongly that there can only be one woman amongst the Eight Immortals and since Ho Hsien-Ko is undeniably female, Lan Ts'ai Ho is sometimes described as a hermaphrodite or transvestite. (And that is the argument: there can only be one woman so she must be something else even though the earliest portrayals depict her as female. There were *many* female Taoist adepts; they were not a rare breed. It is not unreasonable for one-quarter of the Eight Immortals

to be female.)

**Favored people:** Lan Ts'ai Ho is the matron saint of florists.

**Manifestation:** Lan Ts'ai Ho wears a blue gown with one shoe on and one shoe off.

**Attribute:** Magic wand; basket of flowers

**See also:** *Amida Buddha; Bao Gu; Eight Immortals; Ho Hsien-Ko; Hsi Wang Mu*

## Langsuir

**Also known as:** Langsuyar

**Origin:** Malay

Langsuir are Malaysian vampires; the wrathful spirits of women who died giving birth. The trauma of delivering a still-born child may also allegedly transform women into Langsuir. There are different versions of the Langsuir's origins and how she manifests. According to one myth, Langsuir rise from the grave forty days following death, hungry for blood. The Langsuir roams about, searching for victims, her first choice is infants; however she is a threat to all. The Langsuir has a hole in the back of her neck with which she feeds on blood. (Unlike Hollywood vampires, she doesn't sprout huge teeth and suck with her mouth.) The Langsuir can be rehabilitated and allegedly, despite forty days in the grave, many are very beautiful: if you cut off her hair and stuff it into the hole in her neck, the Langsuir is allegedly transformed into a docile, obedient creature. Legends tell of tamed Langsuir who have married and gone on to live normal lives. However, they must be kept very serene and sedate, virtually tranquilized. Dancing, high spirits, any kind of enhanced emotion may cause her to revert to her vampiric Langsuir nature.

**Manifestation:** The Langsuir has long hair with which she hides the hole in her neck. She may manifest or travel in the form of an owl. Modern descriptions of sightings of the Langsuir often correspond to

standard East Asian ghost women who wander in filmy white shroud-like garments.

**See also:** *Aswang; Vampire*

## Lantukh

The lantukh is a kind of Jewish house spirit, sometimes described as an imp, hobgoblin, sprite or little demon. There are male and female lantukhs. They live in corners of homes: behind the stove, in the basement, sometimes in wood sheds, usually one per home. The Lantukh is usually emotionally attached to the house: it may love, actively dislike or be neutral towards the people with whom it lives.

The lantukh can be a prankster. It may amuse itself by frightening people but it rarely causes harm. The lantukh may become very attached to the people with whom it lives and may consider him or herself as part of the family. If so, then the lantukh will work diligently to help and protect them. Author Isaac Bashevis Singer tells the story of a lantukh who cared for a bed-ridden widow and her blind daughter. Every night, the lantukh went out to find food and chop wood for the household.

If the lantukh doesn't like the family, it will just play tricks. If it really can't stand them, it may attempt to force them from the home by ever-escalating tricks. They are generally not malicious or harmful, though. *Lantukh* may derive from *Lutin*. A lantukh appears in S. Ansky's 1904 epic, *Ashmeday*.

**Manifestation:** The lantukh resembles a little imp or goblin; they're about the size of toddlers but can make themselves invisible at will

**Animal:** Lantukh adore crickets: they bring them food and protect them.

**See also:** *Ashmodai; Demon; Kikimora; Kobold; Lutin*

## Lara

**Also known as:** Larunda; Muta; possibly Mana

Lara was a beautiful Italian Naiad who talked too much. She revealed Jupiter's secret affair with Juturna to his wife, Juno who put an end to the liaison. Jupiter punished Lara by cutting out her tongue, rendering her mute, hence her secondary name, Muta. Muta is a fierce, frightening spirit who sometimes visits in dreams. She doesn't speak and she doesn't actually cause harm but her presence is so menacing and wrathful, that she is the stuff of nightmares.

Lara and Mercury are the parents of the guardian spirits, the Lares who may have been conceived and born prior to Lara's run-in with Jupiter. An alternative version, suggests that rendering this talkative spirit speechless wasn't deemed sufficient punishment: Jupiter transformed her from a water spirit to a spirit of the dead. Jupiter ordered Mercury to conduct Lara to the Underworld. Mercury, too, is known for his loquacious nature: perhaps Lara's plight touched his heart. He took his time transporting Lara and *that's* when the Lares were conceived and born.

**See also:** *Juno; Jupiter; Juturna; Lares; Manes; Mania; Mercury; Naiad*

## Lares

### *The Night Watchmen*

**Also known as:** Lases (Etruscan); Lassi

**Origin:** Italy

**Feast:** 23 December, the Larentalia

Lares are guardian spirits. *Lares* is plural but that's fitting because they virtually always manifest in pairs. (The singular is *Lar*.) They are household spirits who protect family, home, land and the family's property. (Once upon a time, Lares protected family slaves.) The meaning of their name is unknown and their exact nature is also mysterious. Are they protective land spirits who, by extension, became family guardians as more and more houses were built on land or are they protective, benevolent ancestor spirits who, by extension, guarded a family's entire property including land?



Lares may be the children of Lara and Mercury. They may be paternal ancestors, too. Lares are completely benevolent and never harmful, at least not towards those they protect. Lares are found inside the home, on the property they protect and also at crossroads. They make their home with the family they protect, usually dwelling by the hearth or beside the chimney. Family kept altars to them in their home, usually featuring statues of the Lares. Shrines were also erected at crossroads. These shrines were usually open in all directions so that the Lares could travel as needed.

The Lares and the Manes, spirits of the dead, are entwined: whether or not they are the same or different types of spirits is subject to heated debate. Lara is the mother of the Lares while Mania leads the Manes. However, many believe Mania and Lara to be two names for one spirit, hence the confusion regarding the spirits they rule.

**Manifestation:** Lares usually come in pairs, either in human form or as snakes.

**Iconography:** Lares are usually depicted as two young men with a watch dog; if depicted in serpentine form, then they may be crowned.

**Sacred animal:** Dog; snake

**Altar:** Lares are venerated and propitiated inside at the hearth and outside at crossroads.

**See also:** *Ancestor; Lara; Manes; Mania*

## Larva

**Plural:** Larvae

**Origin:** Rome

Larvae are ghosts; Roman spirits of the dead. The Romans had various categories of ghosts and ancestral spirits: although there is plenty of speculation, the distinctions between them are now not always clear. The Larvae may or may not be identical with Lemures. Larvae are generally assumed to be malevolent ghosts who take pleasure in scaring

or harming humans.

*Larva* literally means “*mask*” and they may have been celebrated, dispersed or invoked via masking rituals. During the Middle Ages, the Latin term *Larvatus* was used to indicate anyone wearing a mask and/or possessed by spirits.

A spirit named Larva appears in the manga/ anime *Vampire Princess Miyu* but he is identified as a *shinma*, translated as “god-demon”.

**See also:** *Ghost; Lemures; Manes*

### **Latona**

This is the Roman name for Leto. See *Leto*.

### **Laughing Buddha**

**See:** *Buddha; Hotei; Jambhala*

### **Laumès**

**Origin:** Baltic

The Laumès are beautiful Baltic Fairies. They have power over wealth, abundance and fertility, which they bestow or remove as they desire. Although they are forest-dwelling Fairies, they are friendly and mingle with people. (And with less available forest, the Laumès may have little choice but to mingle.)

Laumès protect children and orphans. They are also sometimes accused of kidnapping children although not to harm them. Laumès steal children in order to love, mother and keep them. Laumès can be a bit volatile and hot-tempered but they can be very generous, compassionate, good-hearted spirits. They are skilled at traditional “women’s work” (spinning, cooking, laundry) and have been known to help out in times of need.

Traditionally, Laumès lived in forests, beside sources of water and

stones. The Laumès may serve Laima and/or Ragana.

**Manifestation:** Laumès fit the stereotype of the beautiful, long-haired, alluring Fairies. They are usually described as naked although presumably wear clothes if they want.

**See also:** *Fairy; Laima; Ragana*

## **Laveau, Marie**

*The Queen of Conjure; The Pope of Voodoo*

**Also known as:** Mamzelle Marie Laveau; the Widow Paris; Marie Glapion

Marie Laveau proclaimed herself Pope of Voodoo and few would argue. Voodoo priestess, spirit medium, diviner, philanthropist, community leader and spellcaster, she is credited with formalizing and establishing the tradition of New Orleans Voodoo.

Marie's own personal spiritual blend of Hoodoo, Haitian Vodou and Roman Catholicism profoundly influenced New Orleans Voodoo and eventually the entire world of magic and mysticism. Her influence cannot be overstated. She is sometimes credited as the inspiration for the Spiritual Churches of New Orleans, however others greatly resent any association with magical traditions like Voodoo and Hoodoo.

Marie's life and death are cloaked in mystery. She was born a free woman of color in New Orleans of mixed African, European and Native American ancestry. Her date of birth is variously given as 1783, 1794 and 1801. By approximately 1850, Marie Laveau was recognized as the leader of the New Orleans Voodoo community. She worked from her home, at 152 Saint Ann Street, offering personal consultations and leading rituals. Her cottage was demolished in 1903. The site is now 1020–1022 Saint Ann Street.

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*The spelling "Voodoo" is used to delineate the New Orleans-style branch of*

*the spiritual tradition other wise spelled “Vodou” or “Vodoun”.*

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Marie (or at least her name) pops up constantly in popular media. She is the subject of countless novels and several biographies: some thoughtful; others sensational. In life, she was a courageous, sharp, intelligent, compassionate woman who ministered to the poor and ailing and actively worked to rescue slaves.

Marie was magically long-lived in the nature of an alchemist or Taoist adept. According to legend, when Marie got old, she entered the waters of a lake, submerged and reemerged as if she were decades younger. She essentially shed her skin in the manner of the snakes with which she is so closely associated. Devotees considered this proof of her power.

Skeptics, however, believe this was how she surreptitiously retired and passed power to her daughter, also named Marie who continued her mother's practice. Some believe Marie Laveau died on June 15, 1881. Others believe she never died but kept regenerating herself and her power. Thus there may be one eternal Marie Laveau or a secret multi-generational dynasty of powerful priestesses. Some consider that Marie has now ascended to the status of a lwa. She is sometimes counted among the Ezili family of spirits.

Marie continues to protect devotees She is traditionally invoked for practical matters especially healing and legal assistance but she can also be requested to serve as a spiritual guide, especially for those seeking to learn and practice Vodou (whether Haitian or New Orleans.)

**Manifestations:** Many claim to have seen apparitions of Marie in New Orleans, either in the form of a woman, a snake or a large dog.

**Iconography:** Altar images are available; she is usually envisioned as a tall, regal woman wearing a turban or Creole-style head wrap.

**Colors:** Blue, white, pink

**Numbers:** 3, 7

**Sacred site:** Her grave in New Orleans' oldest cemetery, St Louis

Cemetery Number One; there is some controversy as to exactly which Marie is buried here, mother or daughter. The tomb is inscribed Marie Glapion, which may be the married name of the mother or the maiden name of the daughter. Traditionally people knock on the tomb three times to request Mamzelle's attention or draw three Xs in red brick or chalk on the tomb. (Marking the tombstone is sometimes vehemently discouraged by cemetery authorities.) Offerings are left at her grave. Some believe that another tomb nearby, also marked with Xs, is Marie's true grave.

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*Long-standing rumors suggest that the Marie buried in the grave commonly attributed to her is really High Priestess Marie Comtesse, the late 19<sup>th</sup> century Voodoo Queen known as La Comtesse. If so, then La Comtesse seems willing to perform miracles even under another spirit's name.*

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**Offerings:** Pilgrimage to her grave, seven dimes; seven sterling silver charms or beads; red anisette; absinthe; flowers; candles; salt water; hair ornaments and hair dresser's supplies and tools; Creole food; gifts inspired by Voodoo and/or Roman Catholicism

**See also:** *Agoussou; Black Hawk; Blavatsky, Helena; Eight Immortals; Ezili; Fairy, Green; Hidden Company; Ma Gu; Ma Zu; Pleasant, Mary Ellen*

## Laverna

**Origin:** Etruscan

Laverna is the matron of charlatans, con artists, card sharps; plagiarists; counterfeiters; thieves and bamboozlers of all kinds. She is the goddess of illegally gotten funds and goods. She is invoked by the light-fingered for blessings and protection. Author Charles Godfrey Leland, an authority on Italian witchcraft, describes Laverna as the "patroness of pilfering."

Laverna may also be petitioned for protection from crime and for the return of stolen articles; however, be forewarned: Laverna's sympathies tend to be with the thieves. She is invoked to avenge theft. She may be sympathetic towards you if you know who committed the crime: Laverna gets annoyed with shoddy crime and bungling.

In her earliest incarnation, Laverna seems to have been a goddess of darkness, night and the underworld. Thieves traditionally operate under cover of the night and so Laverna became their matron. She became identified with the criminal underworld rather than the underworld realm of death.

Laverna is also identified with illicit pregnancy. Both men and women may request her assistance when pregnancy is inconvenient, embarrassing or worse. She's not a moralist: Laverna will help dead-beat dads escape obligations and assist women whose pregnancies threaten to wreck their lives.

Laverna continues to adapt: in recent years she has become associated with media piracy; bootlegging and illicit downloading. Laverna is traditionally worshipped in silence. Her name may derive from the verb *Levare* meaning "to lift" as in literally to lift a load but also to lift your wallet.

**Favored people:** Thieves (especially clever thieves and shysters; as opposed to thugs)

**Manifestation:** Laverna is a great shape-shifter. She has a clever, sardonic wit. Allegedly those who first invoke her see only her head.

Those who prove to be bunglers will see only her body. Clever thieves who find favor in her eyes witness Laverna with head and body intact.

**Sacred site:** Rome's Lavernal Gate (*Porta Lavernalis*) on the Aventine Hill was named in her honor. She had a sanctuary there as well as a sacred grove on the Via Salaria, the ancient highway that cut across the Apennine Chain from Rome to the Adriatic Sea. Highway robbers invoked Laverna's aid. Thieves traditionally rendezvoused at Laverna's shrine to divvy up their plunder.

**Offerings:** Tools of the trade

**See also:** *Furina; Hermes; Levana; Mer cury*

## **Lazdona**

**Origin:** Lithuania

Lazdona is the guardian goddess of nuts, nut bearing trees and nut groves. Very little information about her survives but she is cut from the same cloth as Austeja, Baltic bee goddess. Bees and nuts have a sympathetic, symbiotic relationship. Lazdona may be venerated alongside Austeja about whom more information is preserved.

**Favored people:** She extends her matronage to those who tend nut trees or those for whom nuts bear particular significance. She may be invoked to protect those who suffer from nut allergies.

**Sacred creatures:** Squirrels; birds who bury nuts and thus cause the trees to proliferate

**Offerings:** Nuts; products of nuts such as hazelnut liqueurs or nut bread; cultivate nut trees in her honor; those who suffer from nut allergies may honor her by making financial contributions toward the proliferation of nut trees from afar; images of nuts crafted from wood, crystal, metal or other materials may also be offered.

**See also:** *Austeja*

## **Leanan Sidhe**

*The Fairy Lover*

**Also known as:** Leanhaun shee

**Origin:** Ireland; Isle of Man

**Classification:** Sidhe

The Leanan Sidhe, translated as “Fairy lover”, are beautiful Fairies who haunt wells and springs in search of human lovers. Should they accept

her love, they are hers forever. Unfortunately, that's usually not very long, at least not among the living.

The Leanan Sidhe's lovers aren't long-lived but there is compensation: the Leanan Sidhe magically infuses them with poetry and literary skills. The Leanan Sidhe is blamed for the brief lives of many of Ireland's greatest poets but credited with bestowing or enhancing talent.

It is not entirely clear whether the Leanan Sidhe consciously, vampirically saps the life essence from her lovers; whether contact with her simply proves too life-draining for mortals or whether the Leanan Sidhe brings her lovers to live with her in an Afterlife.

**Manifestation:** Leanan Sidhe manifest as women; white does or fawns

**See also:** *Aisha Qandisha; Fairy; Fairy, Green; Gunlod; Sidhe; Vampire*

## Lechusa, La

**Also known as:** La Lechuza

La Lechusa, an owl spirit, haunts the Mexico-United States borderlands. *Lechusa* literally means *owl*. There may be one Lechusa or many. Traditional Lechusa myths describe nocturnal attacks on men. Attacks are not random: La Lechusa punishes the unfaithful. Her usual targets are men out drinking, carousing or canoodling instead of being home with those to whom they've sworn their troth. In some ways, La Lechusa resembles Lilith whose name also refers to owls.

La Lechusa may be a primordial owl spirit. However other theories suggest that La Lechusa names ghosts of women who died brokenhearted due to a cheating lover or husband. Alternatively, she is a resentful, jealous ghost; angry that her spouse has remarried or found new love and seeking revenge.

La Lechusa is not obscure but is the subject of many alleged sightings and experiences. The story has degenerated in recent years into a horror tale: La Lechusa is now a shape shifting witch out to cause indiscriminate harm, similar to ancient *striges*, shape-shifting malefic witches. If these witches exist, they are not the same as the supernatural



Lechusa. Horror-story Lechusa resembles Bloody Mary: people summon her, allegedly to cast spells on their behalf, but perhaps just to see whether she exists. If they summon her wrong, she attacks them.

Owls are silent hunters. Lechusa is the master of the surprise attack. However, she usually signals her presence via scratching noises on the roof or by particularly eerie hooting sounds. The spell that protects against La Lechusa is extremely similar to the notorious aiguillette, the binding spell intended to ensure a man's fidelity:

1. Form seven knots in a ribbon, cord or rope (basically whatever you have at hand.)
2. Say a prayer as you form each knot, similar to praying over rosary beads
3. Do not stop until all seven knots are complete and seven heartfelt prayers have been said: it is *crucial* to maintain total focus for this protection spell to work.

**Manifestation:** La Lechusa is a great white owl. How great? Some descriptions say she's the size of a woman. Sometimes La Lechusa is completely owl. Sometimes she's half-owl and half-woman and sometimes she's described as an owl with a woman's face.

**See also:** *Bloody Mary; Ghost; Lilith; Vila*

## Legba

**Origin:** Dahomey

Legba is the affectionate name by which the West African spirit Eshu Elegbara is often called. Eshu Elegbara appears in the mythologies of various West African people under very similar names (basically all variations on the same name). In Dahomey, he is specifically called Legba.

In Fon cosmology, Legba is the youngest of the Creator Mawu-Lisa's twelve children. The original intent was to divide the universe between these twelve but it was apportioned in order of birth and so by the time

it was Legba's turn, nothing was left. Mawu-Lisa compensated him by appointing him messenger and mediator between spirits and humans. Legba sees all; hears all and knows all. It is crucial to keep him happy and propitiated because otherwise he will not relay messages to the spirit world or may even deliberately mess them up.

**Iconography:** Legba is depicted as a giant, thrusting phallus

**See also:** *Eshu Elegbara*

## **Lei Shen**

*Lord of Thunder*

**Also known as:** Lei Gong

**Origin:** China

Lei Shen creates thunder but he has more than weather on his mind. Lei Shen passionately despises wasting food. He aims his thunder bolts at food-wasters. He is an impatient, bad-tempered spirit who does not negotiate.

**Manifestations:** Lei Shen has a blue face, a bird's beak, bats' wings, and clawed feet.

**Attributes:** Hammer and drum

## **Leken Marpo**

*The Red Master of Life*

**Also known as:** Laihansorogdog

**Origin:** Mongolia

Leken Marpo is a pre-Buddhist Mongolian war deity who now rides alongside Begtse and protects the Dharma. In iconography, Leken Marpo is usually depicted at Begtse's left.

**Attributes:** A spear, a noose and a banner

**Mount:** A wild, fierce blue wolf

**See also:** *Begtse; Bon Spirits; Eight Dharma Protectors*

## Lemures

**Origin:** Rome

The Lemuria, oldest Roman commemoration of the dead, was held on three odd days in May—May 9<sup>th</sup>, 11<sup>th</sup>, and 13<sup>th</sup>. During these days, the dead walk the Earth and must be propitiated. The Romans called these walking revenants *Lemures*, hence the name of the festival in their honor. *Lemures* literally means *ghosts* or *spirits of the night*. They were understood as the angry, volatile, dangerous dead and so appeasement and protection was crucial. The Lemures and their festival are the reason why marrying in May is considered unlucky and dangerous: too much joy and celebration invites unwelcome attention from these resentful and powerful ghosts.

According to Roman poet Ovid (43 BCE–circa 18 CE), the holiday derives from the death of Remus, whose death at the hands of his brother Romulus is reminiscent of the biblical Cain and Abel. Remus' blood-stained ghost appeared to Romulus and demanded a festival in his honor. *Remuria* eventually became *Lemuria*. (Some scholars suggest that the festival predates the arrival of the Romans in the region and has its origins in an Etruscan holy day.)

There is a description of the festival in Book 5 of Ovid's *Fasti*. The paterfamilias, the male head of the household, arose at midnight. He made the life-affirming gesture of the fig-hand (thumb between first and second fingers mimicking the sexual act) and then cleansed his hands in pure water. He walked barefoot through his home, spitting beans while saying “*With these beans I redeem me and mine.*” This ritual was repeated nine times. At the conclusion, the paterfamilias ritually bathed, then banged on metal pots and pans proclaiming “*Begone, ancestral spirits!*” nine times. Lemures who did not go away but haunted the living were exorcised via rituals including drumming and percussion.

Lemures are the souls of the dangerous dead: drowning and murder victims and executed criminals. The Romans believed that those who died childless were among those cursed to become Lemures. Alternatively, those whose families no longer survived to placate ancestors were also so doomed. They could be prevented from rising by burning black beans around the grave during funeral rituals.

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*Lemurs, the primate species and the lost continent of Lemuria take their inspiration from the Lemures.*

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**See also:** *Ancestors; Ghost; Larva; Mania*

## **Leprechaun**

**Origin:** Ireland

The stereotype of the leprechaun involves lucky charms and pots of gold at the end of the rainbow. True leprechauns are members of the Fairy folk, a type of sidhe. They are unusual because, in a realm dominated by females, leprechauns are virtually exclusively male spirits.

The name *leprechaun* derives from the Gaelic *leith brog* “one shoemaker.” He is a cobbler, the only professional sidhe. While the other sidhe are out dancing and reveling, the leprechaun is hard at work. He is, however, always seen working on only *one* shoe rather than a pair, which may be a shamanic reference. (References to shoes, especially only one shoe, are often oblique references to shamanism. Ancient shamanic dances were often performed with one shoe on and one shoe off or featured dance steps that mimicked limping.) He works on shoes continually, with time off only for an occasional spree. The leprechaun is fabulously wealthy: he buries his treasure in pots and is reputedly a skillful but not always nice practical joker. He may be invoked for financial aid.

Leprechauns may or may not be the same type of spirit as clurichauns.

If not, they are closely related. Like leprechauns, clurichauns are virtually exclusively male. The clurichaun may be the nocturnal form of the leprechaun, out on a bender after a hard day's work.

Alternatively, some perceive clurichauns to be leprechauns lacking a work ethic. Unlike hardworking, wealth-accumulating leprechauns, clurichauns spend all their time drinking. They are virtually always soused although they allegedly retain their good manners, unlike the reputedly sometimes surly leprechaun. Clurichauns come out at night to drink, party and play pranks on people. (In olden days, many were butter thieves. They still like to raid the pantry.)

The only occupation for which the clurichaun displays enthusiasm is as guardian of wine and liquor cellars. The clurichaun will protect your cellar from thieves and can allegedly prevent wine from spoiling and bottles from breaking or leaking. Simply request his presence and explicitly leave him a sample of whatever you have in stock. Leave him offerings on a regular basis lest he decide to begin serving himself. (He may, anyway.)

Leprechaunism is another name for Donohoe Syndrome, a rare genetic disorder characterized by delayed or diminished growth and facial features perceived as elfin.

**Manifestation:** Leprechauns are described as small, wizened men wearing a shoemaker's leather apron.

**Iconography:** Leprechauns are highly commodified spirits; their image used to sell breakfast cereal, beer, and anything even remotely Irish. In recent years, leprechauns, reenvisioned as "evil Fairies" have evolved into villains of horror movies; however this distorted image has *no* relation whatsoever to true leprechauns who may be grouchy but are by no means vicious killers.

**See also:** *Sidhe*

## Leshii

*The Forest Lord*

## **Origin:** Russia

The Leshii, male Russian forest guardians, weep when trees are cut down. *Leshii* is both singular and plural: they comprise a distinct category of spirits. There is more than one Leshii under the dominion of Musail, the Forest Tsar. Different Leshii have dominion over different parts of the forest; each has his own territory so to speak.

This explains the migrations of forest animals, especially unexpected ones: Leshii gamble at cards with each other, wagering with animals as their stake. When one Leshii loses to another, animals are transferred from one part of the forest to another.

The Leshii are mischievous, sometimes dangerous trickster spirits. Woodcutters, in particular, are targets: the Leshii hide their axes or cause *accidents*. The Leshii gets people lost in the woods by using ventriloquism or mimicking familiar voices or sounds to lure ‘intruders’ deeper into his forest.

Leshii are usually found in the company of bears and wolves. Wolves are their very favorite animals. In Slavic areas, wolves were once considered rulers of the forest, the true local kings of beasts. The Leshii, like Faunus, mediates between wolves and domestic herds. Like Faunus, the Leshii doesn’t *speak* or at least not like a human. He makes forest noises instead, echoing the sounds of animals, birds or the rustling of trees. Sometimes the Leshii is described as *singing* although never with human words. Many people describe encountering the Leshii or witnessing them in the forest. Those with actual encounters with the Leshii were often struck at least temporarily mute.

The Leshii sometimes leaves the forest looking for people. He is among those spirits accused of replacing children with changelings. The Leshii also allegedly carries off (and marries) women, although notably he prefers unattached women or those trapped in unhappy unions. Sometimes women are stolen to serve as midwives, wet-nurses, or nannies for his other women.

Legends suggest that if those kidnapped by the Leshii refrain from eating his food, they can escape his domain. Those who escape are described as looking wild and distraught; some have lost powers of speech (others allegedly have lost their minds) however still others

exhibit new magical powers and knowledge, becoming exceptionally skilled shamans and magical practitioners, gifts bestowed by the Leshii.

Not all encounters with the Leshii are unhappy. Allegedly if you encounter him but get him to laugh, you'll be safe. Sometimes the Leshii befriends people; allegedly they must then make a pact to never wear a cross or take communion. Whether this is because the Leshii is the devil or whether this is because he is an exclusively Pagan spirit who reserves his favors for fellow-travelers is subject to interpretation. The Leshii, a beast master, sometimes offers spirit-familiars (animal allies) to people he loves.

The Leshii may preside over a realm of death. Ancient Pagan Slavs once buried their dead in groves. Until the 19<sup>th</sup> century, Russians often buried suicides and unbaptized babies in the forest. According to legend, souls of those who die without last rites wander in the forest under the care and supervision of the Leshii. (See also: *Berchta*.)

**Favored people:** The Leshii insists on allegiance to Paganism. Unlike other spirits who may don the masks of saints in order to accommodate devotees, the Leshii brooks no compromise. Allegedly hunters seeking his protection and gifts must remove their crosses, swear allegiance to the Leshii and no longer swallow the host but bring it to the Leshii as proof it wasn't consumed.

**Manifestation:** Allegedly, the Leshii casts no shadow and leaves no footprints. He commonly manifests in various forms:

- The Leshii manifests as a man. The clue to his true identity is that something is wrong with his appearance for instance, his clothes are on backwards or his shoes are on the wrong feet.
- Sometimes he appears as a man whose size dizzyingly shifts from tiny to large.
- He manifests with goat's horns and hooves, sometimes with black fur and wings.
- Other frequent manifestations include pigs, rabbits, ravens, roosters, wolves, burning fir trees and mushrooms, especially *amanita muscaria*

However, the Leshii is a master shape-shifter who can assume the guise of specific people. This is one way he lures people into the forest:

You think you're following someone you know who eventually disappears; morphs into another form or is revealed as really the Leshii.

**Attribute:** Club

**Mount:** Leshii ride storm winds.

**Plant/fungus:** *Amanita muscaria* (fly agaric; toadstool)

**Animals:** All of them, but each Leshii is allegedly accompanied by a huge white wolf.

**Altar:** Tree stumps and fallen logs serve as altars; leave offerings there or wrap food in a clean cloth, tie it up with a red ribbon and leave at a forest crossroads.

**Offerings:** He likes simple, traditional Russian food offerings like blinis or kasha plus salted bread; cookies; candy; hard boiled eggs with shells dyed red (onion peel in the boiling water may turn the trick as will other natural dyes). He is propitiated with really good jokes. (He decides if they're good.) The Leshii is a passionate cardplayer and gambler. In Northern Siberia, hunters allegedly earned the Leshii's alliance with gifts of playing cards with the suit of clubs removed.

**See also:** *Faunus; Gran Bois; Leshovikha; Persephone*

## Leshovikha

**Origin:** Russia

Female Leshii are called Leshovikha. Descriptions of the Leshii apply to the Leshovikha too except where gender-specific. Leshii and Leshovikha inhabit a parallel universe within the forest. They are romantic spirits who dance within whirlwinds together.

Wanderers in the forest sometimes witness the Leshovikha giving birth. Wait respectfully until she's finished, then, at an appropriate moment, cover the baby. If you happen to have a shawl or blanket, that's perfect; if not, use a piece of your own clothing. Do *not* offer Christian prayers or make the sign of the cross over the baby as this enrages the



mother. If these actions are performed graciously, the Leshovikha will offer you a gift:

- If you tell her that the opportunity to be of service is its own reward, your future will be filled with good fortune.
- If you request payment, she will give it to you: it will magically materialize in your hands but once you leave the forest, whatever was given will evaporate into ashes and dust.

**Manifestation:** Like their male counterparts, the Leshovikha are skilled shape-shifters who take many forms, most typically as an old hag with long pendulous breasts. When they get in her way, she flings them over her shoulders. She also manifests as a beautiful naked woman or as a thin, spectral woman dressed in a white sarafan, the traditional Russian folk dress.

**See also:** *Leshii; Vila*

## Lethe

**Origin:** Greece

Lethe names a river that runs through Hades. Drinking its waters causes amnesia. Dead souls entering Hades were required to sip Lethe's waters in order to forget and wholly abandon their previous lives. The waters may also have sedative properties. According to one myth, Medea used Lethe River water to sedate the dragon that guarded the Golden Fleece, thus enabling Jason to steal it.

Lethe is also the name of the presiding spirit of the Lethe River. She is the goddess of oblivion. She may be invoked to forget that which is too painful to bear. She also has the power to sever bonds lingering from past lives. Spirits usually have control over the antidotes to their domain, too. Lethe may be able to reawaken memories or reverse loss of memory. Lethe is sometimes used as a name for the realm of death; a synonym for the realm of Hades (but not the deity: they are clearly two distinct, very different spirits.) Lethe may have ruled an afterlife realm before the ascension of Hades and the Olympian spirits.

Lethe is the sister of Thanatos. She may be the mother of the Charites and the daughter of Eris.

**Sacred tree:** White cypress

**Element:** Water

**Time:** Night

**See also:** *Charites; Charon; Eris; Hades; Medea; Olympian Spirits; Thanatos*

## **Leto**

*The Obscure One; The Hidden One; The Forgotten One*

**Also known as:** Latona (Rome)

Mythology books are often dismissive of Leto: she's portrayed as just one of Zeus' many girlfriends. Her sole significance is giving birth to Apollo and Artemis. However, Leto is a significant goddess in her own right and was the primary deity worshipped in the Anatolian kingdom of Lykia.

There are various versions of her myth; what they all have in common are wolves, Leto's sacred creatures. Leto is a wolf goddess. Leto is the granddaughter of Gaia and Uranus and hence Zeus and Hera's cousin. Her mother is Titan Phoebe and her father is Polos, the pole star. She traveled to Delos, the island where she gave birth, in the form of a wolf.

Another version recalls that Zeus arrived in Greece with Northern invaders. Leto may have been his original wife who followed once the Olympian pantheon was established. Her ancestral home is described as Lykis, "Wolf Land" possibly Anatolian Lykia, which according to legend adopted its name from Leto's wolf escort.

Another myth suggests that Leto traveled to Greece from Hyperborea in the shape of a wolf or in the company of wolves. She may already have been pregnant with Apollo or she may have carried him in the form of a wolf pup.

Hera allegedly cursed Leto so that she would only be able to give birth in a place where the *sun doesn't shine*. The actual phrase may be "wolf

light”: Leto must give birth where only wolves see. Hera is made out to be the villainess of the myth; portrayed as violently jealous and shrewish however what she may be doing is protecting her position as primary goddess. Leto is doing more than sleeping with Hera’s lawfully wedded husband: Leto is invading her turf. It is Leto’s son, not Hera’s, who is Zeus’ favorite. Notably, Leto and her children survive the birth intact; the only fatality is Hera’s ally, a dragon who Apollo searches out to destroy.

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*In some myths, Leto is the mother of twins, Apollo and Artemis. In others, only Apollo is her child. Artemis, a kindred spirit, is her ally. Archaeological evidence suggests that Artemis was worshipped in Greece long before Zeus or Apollo. Describing this ancient goddess as Leto’s daughter may have been a way to incorporate both into the Olympian pantheon. All three spirits (Leto, Artemis, and Apollo) have profound associations with wolves.*

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Myths make Leto sound helpless: she seems dependent on the protection of others including her newborn son. Yet she is a powerful witch; quite capable of taking care of herself. When cowherds annoy her, she simply turns them into frogs.

Leto was worshipped along coastal Anatolia. She was the primary goddess of Lykia, the Wolf Land, now in modern Turkey. The Lykians spoke a language related to Hittite and were the cultural bridge between Greece and the Levantine Coast. One myth says that Hera pursued Leto with her children to Lykia immediately after the birth. A Lykian version however says that the birth really took place there, not on Delos. In Lykia, Leto was considered a Great Mother Goddess similar to Kybele or Asherah.

William E. Gladstone (1809–1898), most famous as Prime Minister of the United Kingdom during the reign of Queen Victoria, was also an expert on Greek mythology. He identified Apollo as a divine child and savior and Leto as his holy mother. Gladstone conjectured that she was a

forerunner of Mary, Mother of Christ. Leto may be among the Pagan goddesses who masquerade under the guise of the Black Madonna. It is theorized that her name means “Lady” or “Stone.”

Leto was worshipped as a guardian of families, mothers and children. As goddess of the grave, her protection extends into the realm of death. (Wolves are among the creatures traditionally believed able to traverse boundaries between realms of life and death.)

**Sacred birds:** Quail, Rooster

**Sacred creature:** Wolf

**Sacred site:** The Temple of Leto, called the Letoon, was the most important sanctuary in Lykia. The ruins are still visible. Leto was worshipped here alongside Artemis, Apollo and Nymphs. Each possessed their own temple within the complex; the largest was dedicated to Leto. Leto’s temple dates back to the fifth century BCE. Veneration continued until the 7<sup>th</sup> century CE.

**See also:** *Apollo; Artemis; Asteria; Dione; Hera; Themis; Zeus*

## **Leucotheia**

### *The White Goddess*

**Also known as:** Leukotheia; Leucothia

**Origin:** Greece

Leucotheia is the sea goddess who, in Homer’s *Odyssey*, saves Odysseus from drowning. She lent him her veil, which he wore like a belt, enabling him to escape his wrecked ship and swim to shore. Once safely aground, he returned the veil by throwing it into the sea. (This veil was allegedly identical to the purple cloth given those initiated into the Cabeirian Mysteries of Samothrace as protection from the sea.)

There are at least two sea spirits called Leucotheia, literally “white goddess”:

- Halia, a Nymph from the island of Rhodes, was the sister of the

Telchines and the beloved of Poseidon to whom she bore six sons. When Aphrodite was first born from the sea and seeking dry land, she sought to land on Rhodes but was denied permission by Halia's sons. In revenge, Aphrodite struck them mad and they raped their mother. Halia threw herself into the sea and emerged as Leucotheia, the White Goddess.

- Ino, daughter of King Cadmus of Thebes married Athamas, king of the prehistoric, pre-Hellenic Minyan people of Boeotia. Ino may be Semele's sister. When Zeus needed to hide Dionysus, his son with Semele, Ino and her husband sheltered the baby, Ino serving as his wet-nurse. They incurred the wrath of Hera who infected Athamas with a murderous rage. After he killed one of their children, Ino grabbed the other and sprang into the sea. (Alternatively, Ino was struck mad and she threw herself and the children into the sea.) She emerged from the waves, however, transformed into Leucotheia.

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*Leucotheia is also an honorific used for Greek river goddesses and the inspiration for poet Robert Graves' 1948 epic study of the psychological and mythological origins of poetry, The White Goddess.*

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Ino was venerated throughout Greece unlike Halia whose veneration was more localized. An oracular shrine was dedicated to Ino in Laconia: questions or petitions were accompanied by barley cakes tossed into her sacred pool.

- Offerings that sank indicated an affirmative answer: Ino favored you
- If they float, you and your petition have been rejected

Leucotheia protects against the dangers of the sea, especially drowning.

**Favored people:** Sailors; travelers on the sea; swimmers; children

**Bird:** Seamew

**Plant:** Rosemary (*Rosmarinus officinalis*: literally the rose of the sea)

**See also:** *Aphrodite; Arachne; Cabeiri; Hera; Nymph; Poseidon; Semele; Telchines; Zeus* and the Glossary entry for *Mystery*

## Levana

### *The Lifter*

**Origin:** Rome

Levana has dominion over newborn babies. Her name refers to a Roman birth ritual:

1. The mother placed the brand new baby on the ground.
2. The father could acknowledge paternity (or not) by lifting the baby or not.

The Roman paterfamilias ruled his family like a god. He could acknowledge and claim a child or he could deny the child his home or have it abandoned and exposed to face virtual certain death. Levana's name derives from the Latin verb *levare*, "to lift up" as in *levitate* or *elevate*. Levana is the spirit who lifts up the baby; the paterfamilias performs the ritual but he is the proxy for Levana.

With the abolition of Roman religion, Levana faded into obscurity. She is the subject of Thomas de Quincey's prose poem, "*Levana and Our Ladies of Sorrow*." According to de Quincey, Levana only reveals her face in dreams.

Women may invoke Levana to instill paternal instincts into the fathers of their children.

**See also:** *Laverna*

## Li Tieh-Kuai

**Also known as:** Li Tieguai; Iron Crutch Li; Tekkai; Tieh-Kuai

**Origin:** China

Li Tieh-Kuai is among the Taoist Eight Immortals, perhaps the most ancient of the eight. Once upon a time, centuries ago, he was a great shaman who spent much time soul journeying, until one day he experienced the shaman's nightmare. Li Tieh-Kuai journeyed in the most traditional shamanic manner: by lying down in a trance state and sending his soul out of his body. To those unfamiliar with the process, he would look comatose, even dead, until his soul returned to reanimate his body. If the body is moved, disturbed or worse, then the soul cannot return but is forced to wander incorporeally. Li Tieh-Kuai had a disciple who routinely guarded his body while he soul-journeyed. However, during one fateful soul journey, the disciple was called home to his mother's deathbed. The trance lasted seven days. Road-cleaners found his body, presumed him dead and had him cremated. When Li Tieh-Kuai's soul flew home; there was no body to rejoin. Li Tieh-Kuai's soul searched desperately for a recently deceased body to enter. Only one fresh cadaver was available and so Li Tieh-Kuai, once strong, powerful and handsome was forced to occupy the body of an old lame beggar.

Li Tieh-Kuai is among the most beloved of the Eight Immortals. He is invoked for healing, longevity and fertility (especially for sons).

**Manifestation:** He looks like a frail old beggar leaning on an iron staff or crutch but don't be fooled: he is very sturdy and if annoyed wields his crutch as a weapon.

**Iconography:** He appears as beggar leaning on his crutch, often accompanied by a young boy carrying a gourd containing the elixir of life.

**Attributes:** His iron crutch and a pilgrim's gourd, from which a scroll escapes indicating his power to leave the body

**Sacred animals:** Deer; crab; bat

**See also:** *Eight Immortals; Primal Woman of the Nine Heavens*

**Liber**

**Also known as:** Liber Pater (essentially Papa Liber)

**Origin:** Italy; Rome

**Feast:** 17 March

Liber is the primordial spirit of libido and vitality. He is the essence of life; male procreative energy. Liber is the spirit of irrepressible fertility, invoked to stimulate agricultural abundance. At his most primordial stage, Liber was partnered with his female counterpart, Libera, the yin to his yang. He was then partnered with Ceres, spirit of grain. Liber protects all kinds of seeds: plants as well as sperm. Eventually Liber was identified with Dionysus. The name Liber is sometimes used to indicate Dionysus but they were originally distinct spirits.

Liber was served by older priestesses. His festival the Liberalia celebrated boys who had crossed the threshold into manhood. At the Liberalia, boys removed clothing identifying them as children and donned the *toga virilis*, official men's clothing marking them as Roman citizens. The festival incorporated processions in which a huge wooden phallus was carried through fields and streets; repelling the Evil Eye and beaming fertility energy to women, animals and land. At procession's end, a matron deemed exceptionally virtuous was chosen to place a wreath over the phallus.

Games held in Liber's honor were wild and raucous, as befitting his nature. By the Roman poet Ovid's day (43 BCE-circa 17CE), the games were suppressed in favor of a calmer joint celebration with Ceres on 19 April. Liber's games were briefly revived in the 4<sup>th</sup> century until the abolition of Pagan religion. Saint Augustine wrote disapprovingly of Liber's phallic processions.

**Attribute:** Phallus

**Sacred day:** 17 March (the Liberalia)

**Plant:** Ivy

**Offerings:** His traditional offering was a cake called a *libia* formed from honey and olive oil; phallic imagery; fruits and vegetables; packets of seeds



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*Liber, Libera and Ceres form the Aventine Triad named for Rome's Aventine Hill. This was a rustic part of the city; the deities worshipped here were beloved by the masses as opposed to official government deities. It was also a center for Mystery and fertility traditions.*

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**See also:** *Ceres; Dionysus; Libera* and the Glossary entry for *Mystery*

## **Libera**

**Origin:** Italy

Libera is the feminine counterpart of Liber. She is the goddess of libido; spirit of irrepressible female vitality. Liber guards seed; Libera makes sure that seed is planted in a fertile, nurturing environment. The relationship between Liber and Libera is not entirely clear. She may be his:

- Sister
- Wife
- Daughter
- Some or all of the above

In their most ancient manifestations, Liber and Libera may have been the Italian equivalent of sacred yang and yin energy. Eventually Liber was considered to be the spouse of Ceres with Libera as their daughter. Under Greek and Roman influence, Libera became identified with Persephone. (The logic being that if Ceres is identified with Demeter; then her daughter *must* be Persephone.) Liber and Libera were also identified with Dionysus and Ariadne. Less is now known about Libera than Liber possibly because no matter how offended later Christian commentators were by Liber's phallic processions, Libera's, which displayed vaginal images, must have been even more shocking.

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*One version of their myth suggests that Liber died when Libera conceived. Liber was reborn as her child and in the process Libera became Ceres, the Corn Mother. Liber is the corn, eternally born, cut down and born again.*

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**Iconography:** Statues of Libera sometimes depict her as Persephone or Ariadne. She may also be represented by cleft stones or images of female genitalia.

**Attribute:** Vulva

**Sacred day:** 17 March, the Liberalia

**Offerings:** Vulva shaped candles

**See also:** *Ariadne; Ceres; Dionysus; Liber; Persephone; Proserpina*

## **Libitina**

*Lady Death*

**Origin:** Italy

Libitina is the goddess of death, corpses and funerals. She is Holy Death; her name became a synonym for death itself. Roman undertakers who may be understood as her priests were called *libitinarii*. It is theorized that she was originally a goddess of death and the life force: her name may be related to *libido*. However, eventually her associations with death became dominant.

Libitina's sanctuaries were in sacred groves, often located in the center of those gardens of death, the graveyard. Roman undertakers maintained offices in her temples. Her temple was where you would go to report a death and make funeral arrangements. Everything necessary for a funeral was housed in her sanctuary. Offerings were made to her following a death in the family.

**Favored people:** Libitina is the matron of undertakers, gravediggers,

funeral workers and anyone who earns a living or profits from death.

**Manifestation:** Libitina appears as a looming black-robed, dark winged presence. Her face is generally obscured. She hovers like a vulture or large bird of prey awaiting the precise moment of death.

**Offerings:** Libitina was traditionally given coins and money. Cemetery maintenance and improvement would be an appropriate offering. Legend has it that one gate of the Forum was dedicated to her on behalf of fallen gladiators.

## Lieu Hanh

**Also known as:** Thanh Mau (Holy Mother)

**Origin:** Vietnam

One of the Jade Emperor's beautiful Fairy princess daughters broke a precious jade bowl in Heaven and as punishment was temporarily exiled to Earth. She assumed the identity of a Vietnamese girl named Lieu Hanh in Tien Huong Village, Nam Dinh Province. Depending on the version of the myth, she may or may not have been born a human princess. She married and was happy but died three years later (but really returned to Heaven as a Jade Fairy Princess).

The story could end there *except* that the princess' stay on Earth among people had moved her profoundly. She had developed tremendous affection for people and perceived that they needed her help. Lieu Hanh consciously chose to return to Earth to help the needy and provide protection from danger and evil. Over the centuries she has appeared in many forms.

Lieu Hanh is famous for her mastery of poetry and painting. She plays the flute. Lieu Hanh is mistress of creative and cultural arts and able to transmit talent and inspiration to others. She is identified with traditional *chao van* music, now used to invoke her protection and help. Lieu Hanh communicates via spirit mediums.

**Number:** 3

**Feast:** Festival from the first to the tenth day of the third lunar month; the third day of the festival commemorates the anniversary of Lieu Hanh's death.

**Sacred site:** Lieu Hanh has three primary Vietnamese shrines:

- Tay Ho Temple near the West Lake in Hanoi
- Van Cat-Tien Huong Pagoda in Dam Dinh Province, where Lieu Hanh was born
- Song Temple in Thanh Hoa Province, site of another incarnation

Lieu Hanh is venerated alongside the Jade Emperor and Kwan Yin (Vietnamese: Quan Am). She may be worshipped in Taoist or Buddhist context.

**See also:** *Jade Emperor; Kwan Yin*

## Lilinoe

**Origin:** Hawaii

Lilinoe is among Hawaii's snow goddesses. She is the younger sister of Poliahu and like her sister, a great rival of volcano goddess Pelé. The sisters are the antithesis of Pelé: spirits of snowy mountains (hence wet mountains) rather than fiery ones. Lilinoe is the spirit of dead and extinguished fires. Her name literally means "fine mist." She is the spirit of mist and fog, which so often enshroud the mountains with which she is associated.

She serves as Poliahu's handmaiden and combs out her sister's long hair daily. Lilinoe married Nana Nu'u, the mortal who survived the primordial flood. He lives in a cave on Mauna Kea, the mountain Lilinoe calls home. She may be venerated alongside her sisters but keep them apart from Pelé or else sparks will fly.

**Sacred sites:** Mauna Kea and Haleakala (East Maui Volcano)

**Color:** White

**See also:** *Kahoupokane; Pelé; Poliahu; Waiiau*

## Lilith

*Screech Owl; Beautiful Maiden; Dark Maid; Flame of the Revolving Sword; Maid of Desolation; Night Demon; Hand of Inanna; The Night Witch; The Howler*

**Also known as:** Lilitu (Sumeria); Lilis (Yiddish)

**Origin:** Sumeria

No spirit possesses a more fabulous history than Lilith, among the most primordial of spirits and the most modern. Few, if any, are more powerful. Her earliest appearance in recorded history is in Sumeria where she is somehow associated with Inanna. Although identified as a wind spirit, Lilith has profound associations with trees. She is a wild, free spirit who cannot be chained or contained. In the Sumerian myth of the Huluppu Tree, Inanna makes the transition to an urban, settled agricultural environment. When she instigates the chopping down of the sacred tree Lilith calls home, Lilith flees, remaining a spirit of the wilderness.

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*The Kabbalists identified Lilith as the spouse of Samael, chief of the evil angels. On the other hand, Lilith also reputedly sits at YHWH's side in Heaven, his consort following the exile of the Shekhina and thus the most powerful intercessor of all, literally able to whisper in God's ear.*

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Jewish legend identifies Lilith as Adam's first wife, the true first female, created not from Adam's rib but from Earth simultaneously with him. Adam and Lilith's relationship quickly became contentious. She refused to take direction from him, specifically refusing to lie beneath him during sex. Lilith demanded to be treated as an equal rather than a subordinate, basing her claim on their common origin. When Adam attempted to force her, Lilith uttered the secret, ineffable name of the Creator and flew away, initiating the first divorce.

Lilith makes appearances in Sumerian, Babylonian, Assyrian, Canaanite, Hebrew, Mandaean, Persian, Sabaeen and Arabic myth and folklore. She may linger in Christianity under the guise of some Black Madonnas. She is an *omnipresent* figure in Jewish myth and folklore. A book of Jewish fairy tales without Lilith is about as likely as a book of Mexican folklore without La Llorona.

Lilith demands acknowledgement. Her name appears only once in the Jewish Bible (Isaiah 34:14) and even that reference is ambiguous since it may also be literally interpreted as “screech owl.” Lilith is the suppressed goddess who refuses to disappear. If she’s not venerated, then she will be feared.

Spirit of darkness and night, Lilith is both angel and demoness of conception. Blamed for miscarriage; stillbirth, crib death and infertility, Lilith the baby killer also bestows fertility when and if she chooses. She has dominion over sexual desire, erotic dreams and sacred sex magic. Emphasizing the ambiguity of her personality, Lilith herself has revealed the tools that will guard against her:

- Rue and iron ward her off
- Lilith has vowed not to cause harm wherever she sees her name(s) posted.
- The simplest amulet to prevent Lilith from causing harm involves casting a charcoal circle on the wall. Within the circle write “*Adam and Eve, Out Lilith!*”
- The Seal of Solomon (hexagram; Jewish star) protects against Lilith and diseases or harm that she causes. For maximum effectiveness, it should be made of iron or fine silver

Lilith once encountered the Prophet Elijah who immediately recognized her and demanded new improved protective measures. Lilith revealed her other names to him and vowed not to cause harm anywhere she saw or even heard those names. Unfortunately the names were not immediately graven in stone: allegedly thirteen or seventeen names were given to Elijah but more variations exist today. For safety’s sake, these are the possible names:

- Abeko

- Abito
- Abnukto
- Amizo
- Ayil
- Batna
- Bituah
- Elio
- 'Ik
- 'Ils
- Ita
- Izorpo
- Kali
- Kea
- Kakash
- Matruta
- Odam or Odem
- Prtsa, Partsha; Partashah or Partasah
- Prta, Patrota, Petrota
- Podo
- Raphi
- Strina
- Tlto

Lilith despises sanctimonious people and punishes the prudish. She enjoys ensnaring hypocrites but is a protective guardian spirit towards those she perceives as her children, especially her daughters. (See *Lilith, Daughters of.*) Lilith has dominion over all aspects of sex, fertility and childbirth. She is immensely powerful; potentially vicious and will fearlessly eliminate any evil threatening those whom she guards.

Lilith resists attempts to classify or pigeon hole her. She breaks boundaries like the chains she abhors. Her name is synonymous with "witch." She is frequently depicted as a vampire or succubus. She is a

Queen of Demons and an Angel of Prostitution. Lilith leads 480 hosts of destroying angels and dangerous spirits. (The number is derived from numerology based on the numerical value of the letters in her name.) Yet 13<sup>th</sup> century Spanish Kabbalists described Lilith as a ladder on which one can ascend to the rungs of prophesy.

**Manifestations:** Lilith possesses many forms, appearing as an old crone or beautiful young woman. She may appear as a woman from head to waist; flame underneath. Lilith dresses in crimson. She wears forty ornaments less one. Her hair may be black or red but it will be distinctive, either because it is beautiful or because it is disheveled or both. Amid cultures where women's hair is traditionally bound and/or covered, Lilith's is loose and long. She manifests in animal form too, typically as a large black cat, black dog or owl. Even when in human form, Lilith may display bird's feet, claws or wings.

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*A seventh century BCE tablet from what is now Northern Syria depicting Lilith as a winged sphinx is accompanied by an incantation in a Phoenician-Canaanite dialect intended to assist birthing women: Oh, Flyer in a dark chamber, Go away now, oh Lili!*

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**Iconography:** The Sumerian Burney Plaque, (circa 2300 BCE) is generally identified as Lilith. It depicts her as a winged naked bird woman holding the ring and rod of power and flanked by owls. Her taloned feet stand atop reclining lions.

**Attribute:** A flaming sword; Lilith's myth contains mysterious references to hands:

- In Sumeria, Lilith is the Hand of Inanna.
- In the Kabbalah, Lilith is known as the Handmaid.

Decorate her altar with images of hands, especially the hand-shaped amulet called *hamsa*.

**Colors:** Black, red



**Planet:** The moon is Lilith's lantern; her power increases with the waning moon. Lilith is also the name given to three distinct space phenomena: Earth's hypothetical second moon (Dark Moon Lilith); the apogee of the moon's orbit (the furthest point from Earth) and an asteroid

**Star:** Algol, known in traditional Jewish astrology as "Lilith's Star".

**Element:** Lilith has associations with air, water, earth and fire. Hebrew myth has her created from earth. In Sumeria, she began her incarnation as a wind spirit. She manifests as fire. The Zohar, holy book of the Kabbalists, explains that Lilith is nourished by water while the south wind spreads her influence. Lilith is as frequently found living in wells as she is in trees.

**Creatures:** Lilith loves all wild animals but has a special affinity for jackals, hyenas, wild cats, black cats, black dogs, ostriches, snakes, dragons, spiders, and unicorns.

**Bird:** The owl is her sacred bird and messenger.

**Mount:** Lilith rides a dragon in which form she may also manifest.

**Time:** Lilith rules solstices and equinoxes and is associated with the zodiac sign Scorpio.

**Flower:** Lily

**Places:** Lilith is happiest in desolate wilderness, far removed from civilization. She loves forests, crossroads, seacoasts and especially the desert. When Lilith fled from Adam, she went to dwell in a cave in the desert on the shores of the Red Sea, reputedly still her favorite place. When she approaches people, she makes homes for herself in trees and wells. Provide them for her to keep her close.

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*It is difficult to imagine a spirit with more media presence than Lilith. Her appearances are too innumerable to list: Lilith herself or characters named in her honor appear on stage, screen and television. She appears in poems and*

*novels as disparate as Goethe's Faust or Marie Corellis The Soul of Lilith. Lilith is a constant presence in comic books, most famously as Marvel Comics' Lilith, Daughter of Dracula, which emphasizes her vampiric reputation. Lilith is also Vampirella's mother. The television series Supernatural features a vicious killer demon named Lilith. The subject of many paintings, she was a great favorite of Pre-Raphaelites like John Collier and Dante Gabriel Rossetti. Lilith Magazine, the feminist Jewish magazine, was founded in 1980.*

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**Offerings:** Frankincense; plates of jam; tea; doll babies and images of the animals she loves; trees; create a wilderness for her. Offerings may be placed on an altar or outside.

**See also:** *Agrat bat Mahalat; Aradia; Ardat Lili; Ashmodai; Herodias; Inanna; KTRT; Lechusa, La; Lilith, Daughters of; Lillu Spirits; Lilyi; Llorona, La; Medusa; Naamah; Shedim*

## **Lilith, Daughters of**

**Also known as:** The Liliot; Lilim

**Origin:** Jewish

According to some legends, Lilith is sterile; hence her resentment of pregnant women. In other legends, however, Lilith is the mother of *hosts* of spirits. The Daughters of Lilith may be among that host. These daughters may be her actual daughters or Lilith's female entourage. The term may be intended metaphorically, too. Daughter of Lilith is a Jewish term indicating a witch. It may be understood to indicate any of Lilith's mortal female devotees.

The spirits called Daughters of Lilith are accused of tempting chaste women to aggressively assert their sexuality. They seduce men and lure them to ruin. (They may kill them or just ruin them socially.) Lilith's Daughters rendezvous at spiritually powerful trees. They live within mirrors. Women were cautioned against gazing at mirrors so as not to invite the attention of Lilith's Daughters. They can allegedly possess

someone who is gazing intently within. This may actually indicate their role in mirror-gazing divination, similar to crystal ball gazing. Lilith herself is traditionally ambivalent towards mirrors. Shards of broken mirror are among the magical tools used to ward her away.

The Lilim guest stars in Neil Gaiman's 1997 novel *Stardust*.

**See also:** *Bloody Mary; Lilith*

## **Lilith-Zahriel**

*The Great Lilith*

**Origin:** Mandaean

Lilith-Zahriel is a Mandaean path of Lilith. According to their sacred text, the *Genza Rabba* ("The Great Treasure"), Lilith, daughter of the King and Queen of the Underworld, was married to the King of Light or his son. Her dowry is a crown, a magic mirror and a pearl. Their marriage unites the celestial and subterranean realms; Lilith bears a son who possesses knowledge of both realms. He later defends his mother against charges of being a child-stealing demoness instead revealing her to be a loving, benevolent spirit who sits on the beds of laboring women in order to comfort them, not harm them.

**Flower:** Lilies especially *Lilium candidum*, also known as the Madonna lily whose petals are sometimes perceived as incorporating the shape of a hexagram.

**See also:** *Aradia; Lilith*

## **Lillu Spirits**

**Origin:** Sumeria

The Lillu are a clan of primordial storm and wind spirits, many of whom developed a reputation as being vampiric or are described as incubi and succubi. Among these related spirits are:

- The Lillu, male spirits; Sumerian hero Gilgamesh's father may have been a Lillu
- Lilitu (Sumerian name for Lilith)
- Ardat Lili (possibly Lilith's handmaiden)
- Irdu Lili (Ardat Lili's male counterpart; possibly Lilith's servant)

**See also:** *Ardat Lili; Lilith; Vampire*

## Lilyi

**Origin:** Transylvania; Romani (Gypsy)

Lilyi is the second child and first daughter of Ana, Fairy Queen of the Keshalyi and the Demon King of the Loçolico. When Ana and the king's son Melalo grows up, he desires a wife; however he has no female counterpart. There is no other half Keshalyi-half Loçolico. His father is sympathetic but his mother seeks only her freedom and continues to reject her husband's affections.

Melalo the magician devised a solution: he advised his father to cook a fish in donkey's milk, thus producing a very traditional love potion. While Ana slept, the king bathed her vulva with the liquid (the traditional method of administering the potion) and then had sex with her. Nine days later, Ana gave birth to Lilyi, Spirit of Catarrhal Illness.

Lilyi has a human head but a fish body. She's not a mermaid and is grotesque rather than seductive or beautiful. Nine sticky filaments hang from each side of her head. If these filaments penetrate human flesh, catarrhal illness immediately ensues. (Catarrh involves swelling of the mucus membranes.)

The name Lilyi resembles Lilith. Like Lilith, Lilyi is the first female of her kind. Although she is described as having a person's head on a fish body; in drawings, Lilyi looks downright owl-like.

**See also:** *Ana; Keshalyi; Lilith; Loçolico; Melalo; Mermaid*

## Ling Chui Na

**Origin:** China

Ling Chui Na is a midwife spirit venerated by women who have had children or would like to have children. She is the guardian of children, especially those under sixteen years of age. Ling Chui Na was allegedly once a living person born near Fuzhou during the Tang Dynasty (618–907). She is invoked for any aspect of conception, pregnancy and childbirth as well as for caring and guarding children. Ling Chui Na supervises a large staff of female birth spirits. A host of 36 spirits is at her right side; a further seventy-two spirits await her instructions hovering at her left. Her devotees traditionally abstain from eating duck.

**Attributes:** A horn to summon her host of heavenly helpers and a magic sword to drive away enemies and evil influences

**Sacred day:** Ling Chui Na's birthday is the 15<sup>th</sup> day of the first month of the Chinese lunar calendar.

**Offerings:** Set a table of food for her; offer her any kind of cooked meal with the exception of duck. (A water demon once tried to drown Ling Chui Na but four ducks bravely and spontaneously came to her rescue. Ling Chui Na vowed never to eat duck again.) Burn candles, incense and spirit money. (See the Glossary entry for *Spirit Money*)

## Lir

**Origin:** Celtic; Irish

*Lir* literally means “the sea.” He is an ancient sea spirit, now most famous because of the many other spirits who are identified as his children as for example Manannan mac Lir. Undoubtedly many myths are lost: that so many powerful spirits are identified as his children signifies his own importance. One surviving myth describes Lir's displeasure at not being chosen King of the Tuatha Dé Danaan.

**Sacred site:** Lir has dominion over the sea; he lives alone beneath a big hill in County Armagh.

**See also:** *Llyr; Manannan Mac Lir; Tuatha Dé Danaan*

## **Lisa, Papa**

**Origin:** Haiti

**Classification:** Lwa

Papa Lisa is a lwa who travels in Ezili's entourage. His dwelling place is within trees. Ceremonies invoking and honoring Papa Lisa are held in December and January near water. An offering table for him is placed in the water. (These ceremonies are the subject of paintings by renowned Haitian artist Lafortune Felix.)

**Day:** Friday

**Colors:** Blue, green, white

**See also:** *Ezili; Lwa*

## **Lleu Llaw Gyffes**

*The Bright One of the Skillful Hand*

**Origin:** Celtic; Wales

Lleu Llaw Gyffes, the divine warrior, is the Welsh path of the Celtic spirit, Lugh. Lleu Llaw Gyffes is the subject of a complex, mysterious myth, which begins with his surprise birth to the lunar goddess, Arianrhod. She is not a nurturing, welcoming mother but subjects him to harsh taboos, which restrict his power and growth. She denies him a name, weapons and a wife: three rites of passage required for a man of this culture.

The myth portrays Arianrhod in an unflattering light unless one interprets it in the context of an older lunar goddess desperately attempting to maintain her own power in the face of a tricky, skillful, brash, aggressive solar spirit. Lugh was among the most significant Gaulish deities. His Welsh and Irish myths describe his entry into their societies, the relationships he forms with some pre-existing local spirits and the resistance with which other spirits greet him.

Lleu Llaw is a master magician. He is clever and crafty, in all senses of that word. He is invoked to find solutions for insoluble situations and for victory when the odds are against you. In myth, Lleu Llaw does not have a lot of luck with women. His mother, Arianrhod, seems to wish he would just go away. His wife, Blodeuwedd, plots to kill him. It's likely that he's a better ally for men.

**Sacred bird:** Eagle; raven

**Sacred tree:** Oak

**See also:** *Arianrhod; Blodeuwedd; Loucetius; Lugh*

## **Llorona, La**

*The Weeping Woman; The Wailing Woman; The Woman in White*

**Pronounced:** *Hyo-rro-na* (roll that 'r')

**Origin:** Mexico

La Llorona is witnessed roaming cities or near riverbanks on moonlit nights, dressed in white; her face often sheathed in a white veil. *La Llorona* means the weeping or wailing woman and sometimes she's heard, not seen. Something in her weeping and wailing terrifies, spooks and unnerves those who encounter her.

La Llorona is a fixture of urban legends and popular entertainment and so there are now different versions and myths regarding this ghostly apparition. In recent years, her name has become a catch-all for any threatening nocturnal wraithlike woman-in-white. As with La Lechusa, the same name may be used to indicate different spirits.

The earliest documented sightings of La Llorona occurred in 1502 in the Aztec capital city, Tenochtitlan, now Mexico City and are now interpreted as harbingers of the Spanish conquest. La Llorona was witnessed wandering the streets, lamenting over the fate of her children, constantly repeating, "Oh my children! Your destruction has arrived. Where can I take you?" She would then vanish into the lake. This La Llorona is a goddess who bewails the fate of her human devotees, her

spiritual children. She is most likely the goddess Cihuacoatl. Franciscan friars forbade people from uttering Cihuacoatl's name under threat of severe punishment and so euphemisms were employed.

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*Recent variations of her myth describe Llorona as a factory owner's lover/employee. She may be the victim of sexual harassment; forced into a relationship to maintain a needed job. Unbeknownst to the local populace, toxic chemicals emanating from the factory have poisoned their river. The woman drinks from this river; subsequently bearing two badly disfigured children. The factory owner rejects the woman and their children and fires her from her job, leaving her economically devastated and socially compromised.*

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The original Llorona is a harbinger of death and doom. She doesn't cause it; she may even be attempting to prevent it by issuing warnings. This Llorona is a kindred spirit of the Banshee except that she wails rather than screeches. Her appearance is a warning of impending disaster to those who hear or see her. After the Conquest, La Llorona became identified with La Malinche; mistress and interpreter of Hernan Cortes. Hostility towards Malinche, popularly perceived as a collaborator, colored perceptions of La Llorona who is now frequently blamed for her children's doom. This modern Llorona resembles a hybrid of Malinche, Cihuacoatl, Medea and Aisha Qandisha.

Encounters with La Llorona increased and the legends changed. (Alternatively different spirits are operating under the same name.) La Llorona evolved into a ghost who lures adults and children to watery graves. There are many variations on her theme but all involve a woman wailing for her dead or lost children who she may have killed. The basic theme involves a woman who has children with a man who eventually abandons her for some sort of selfish reason. In response, she drowns their children although her motivation varies depending on legend:

- She wants to win her husband back



- She wants to pay her husband back
- His abandonment has caused her to lose her sanity
- She seeks to protect the children from a life of poverty, exploitation and abuse

In some versions she then drowns herself, too but is doomed to search eternally and frantically for her lost children; drowning those who obstruct her or get in her way.

La Llorona is among the most frequently encountered spirits. Sightings now radiate beyond Mexico City throughout the Western Hemisphere. She has been encountered as far north as the United States and as far south as Peru. Her story varies depending on location; spirits haunting different locales may not be the same. She is also a staple of horror entertainment, which often ignores *any* of her traditional themes but presents her as just another scary, violent ghost. Traditionally, although Llorona may cause harm, she is herself a tormented, grieving soul.

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*The Dark Lord of Chalma and Our Lady of San Juan de los Lagos are among those traditionally invoked to protect against La Llorona. They have allegedly come to the rescue of those confronted by La Llorona.*

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La Llorona has evolved into a sort of boogie woman used to threaten children: parents warn their kids that if they play alone near the river or stay out after dark, La Llorona will get them. That said, La Llorona sometimes rescues children. (A benevolent Llorona is depicted in Gloria Anzaldúa's 2001 children's book, *Prietita and the Ghost Woman*.)

La Llorona is feared but also propitiated so that she will not cause harm. Goddess Llorona has been reemerging in recent years: a cult of devotion has developed in Mexico City and Honduras (places historically associated with La Malinche). La Llorona is blamed for unexpected death but has also been successfully petitioned to protect young Latina mothers, especially those in dire straits.

**Manifestation:** You'll know her if you see her and especially if you hear her. Her wail will make your hair stand on end. La Llorona is usually described as being magnetically beautiful.

**Color:** White

**See also:** *Aisha Qandisha; Banshee; Cihua coatl; Lechusa, La; Malinche; Medea; Rachel*

## Llyr

**Origin:** Celtic; Welsh

Llyr is the Welsh counterpart of the Irish Lir, King of the Sea. Like Lir, he is now most famous as the father of prestigious, powerful children including Bran, Branwen and Manawydan. Both Welsh and Irish mythology were originally exclusively oral traditions. Both were eventually documented on paper by later Christian commentators who loved the tales but who were, at best, ambivalent towards the inherent Pagan aspects. (It's impossible to entirely eliminate Pagan elements. Presumably myths that were truly objectionable were just not documented.)

The Irish monks who recorded Irish myth acknowledged that the characters they described were deities; their Welsh counterparts did not. Thus tales about what are clearly supernatural beings appear to be about heroes or just unusual people. Llyr's identity as Lord of the Sea has been eliminated but he and his son, Manawydan are identifiably the same spirits as Lir and Manannan about whom so much more information survives. Vestiges of Llyr's myths may survive in William Shakespeare's tragedy, *King Lear*.

**See also:** *Bran; Branwen; Lir; Manannan Mac Lir; Manawydan*

## Loçolico

**Origin:** Transylvanian Romani (Gypsy)

The Loçolico are chthonic spirits who live deep within Earth but frequently travel above the surface. On one such expedition, the King of the Loçolico saw and fell madly in love with Ana, the beautiful, magical, gentle Queen of the Keshalyi, Fairy-like spirits. Love was *not* mutual. Not one to take “no” for an answer, the King directed his Loçolico to attack the Keshalyi. Many Keshalyi were devoured; the entire species would have been exterminated had not Ana agreed to marry the king in exchange for the safety of the rest of the Keshalyi. The Loçolico are vicious spirits but their word is good: they uphold their vow and no longer harm the Keshalyi.

Ana lives atop a mountain; the Keshalyi live inside. This union of spirits of heights and depths resulted in the birth of dreaded disease spirits. However, the complex myth describing each disease demon’s birth essentially serves as a shamanic diagnostic method for determining illness and cures.

**See also:** *Ana; Bitoso; Chthonic Spirits; Demon; Fairy; Keshalyi; Lilyi; Lolmischo; Melalo; Poreskoro; Tçaridyî; Tçulo*

## Logunedé

**Also known as:** Logun Edé; Laro

**Classification:** Orixá

Logunedé, primarily venerated in Brazil, is the child of Oxum Iponda, a forest dwelling path of Oshun and either Erinle or Oxossi. Logunedé spends half the year living in the river with Mom and the other half living in the forest with Dad. (Both Erinle and Oxossi are forest dwellers.) Logunedé, an androgynous spirit, spends part of the year living as a female, the other part as a male. Logunedé, spirit of pleasure, gets to be a sexy mermaid *and* a brave hunter.

Like Erinle and Oshun, Logunedé is a spirit of beauty, luxury and wealth. In his male path, Logunedé is closely allied with Ogum and Oxossi. Together they fight as valiant warriors against malevolent magic and malicious spirits.

Although very powerful, Logunedé is a sweet natured spirit who

maintains good relations with most of the orixas. Regardless of parentage, Ogum is credited with being the onewho raised and educated Logunedé; teaching healing, metalworking and shamanic skills. Once while traveling the path between river and forest, Logunedé encountered Omolu (Babalú Ayé) who offered further instruction in healing, witchcraft and magic. Logunedé is extremely well-versed and multifaceted.

Logunedé is invoked for spiritual and physical protection but also for wealth, success and love. Logunedé is petitioned for the courage to be true to oneself regardless of whatever anyone else thinks. Logunedé defies boundaries and refuses to be pigeonholed. Logunedé is syncretized to Michael Archangel and is sometimes considered the spiritual matron/patron of gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgendered people.

**Attribute:** Bow and arrows; scales; mirror

**Animal:** Armadillo

**Colors:** Amber, coral, light blue, yellow and/ or green

**Day:** Thursday

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*Logunedé is the subject of a song by Brazilian musician, Gilberto Gil.*

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**See also:** *Babalú Ayé; Erinle; Michael; Ochossi; Ochun; Ogun; Orisha;* and the Glossary entry for *Path*

## **Loki**

**Origin:** Norse

Loki is a mysterious, contradictory spirit, perhaps the ultimate trickster. Loki is usually classified as a Jotun (giant) but was conceived when lightning (his father) struck a leafy oak (his mother) and so may be some kind of primordial fire spirit. His name is related to an Old High German

word meaning “shooting star.” Loki was born from the spark of life but his own children include the goddess of death and the wolf of doom.

Loki lives among the Aesir spirits and is Odin’s blood brother. He is Thor’s traveling companion; ostensibly his friend. Yet he conspires against them and is responsible for the death of Baldur. At the same time, he is instrumental in obtaining many of their most precious tools and attributes. Loki is the mother of Odin’s prized eight-legged steed Sleipnir. Loki constantly leads the Aesir into danger and then proceeds to rescue them as with the myth of Idunn’s apples or the theft of Thor’s hammer.

Loki’s motives and loyalties are never clear. Part of this confusion is because Norse mythology was committed to paper by later Christian commentators who identified Baldur with Christ. Extending the metaphor, Loki was identified with Judas or Satan. It is difficult if not impossible to find sympathetic portrayals of Loki. (And yet with Loki, there is always an exception: in a traditional ballad from the Faeroe Islands, after Odin and Hoenir, another Aesir spirit, fail, Loki rescues a young boy from a troll in response to prayers directed to him by the boy’s parents.)

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*If Odin masquerades in the guise of Santa Claus, as some believe, then Loki may be the original persona behind Santa’s dangerous helpers like Krampus or Black Pete.*

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Loki is more than a trickster and a plotter; he is a skilled inventor, artisan and craftsman. He is a font of obscure knowledge. He is nosy and extremely observant. He has a malicious streak and a vicious, cutting humor although he is also the only one able to make the goddess Skadi laugh following the death of her father. In the poem, the *Lokasenna*, the other deities seek to keep Loki from entering Aegir’s hall where they are feasting. He enters anyway and abuses them: publicly exposing their secrets and accusing them of cowardice until Thor returns with his hammer and forces Loki to be quiet.

**Favored people:** Loki is the patron of spies; moles; trouble-makers; plotters; secret agents; double agents; double crossers; those operating under cover. (He may or may not be a reliable patron.)

**Manifestation:** Loki is a master shape-shifter. He can appear in *any* guise. Loki's transformations are not merely superficial: when he appears in the form of a gorgeous white mare, the transformation is so complete that s/he gives birth to Sleipnir. Loki who enjoyed sexual relations with *many* of the Norse goddesses is allegedly very handsome and charming when he wishes to be.

**Consort:** Angerboda is also his sister, possibly his twin, and alter-ego. Both frequently assume other names and disguises. It's unclear whether some myths reference Angerboda or Loki in disguise as for example the giantess who refuses to weep for Baldur. Loki's second wife is Sigyn who shares Loki's exile following Baldur's death.

**Sacred animals:** Wolves, snakes, possibly spiders

**Star:** Sirius, known as *Lokabrenna* ("Loki's Brand" or "Loki's Torch") in traditional Norse astrology

**See also:** *Aegir; Aesir; Andvari; Anger boda; Balder; Hel; Idunn; Jotun; Odin; Skadi; Thor*

## Loko

**Also known as:** Papa Loko; Papa Loco; Loko Atisou; King Loko

**Origin:** Dahomey (Benin)

**Classification:** Lwa

**Feast:** 19 March

Papa Loko, a primal root lwa, is the spirit of the very first Vodou priest (*houngan*), a master magician and healer. He is the presiding spirit of Vodou and is now also associated with ceremonial magic. Papa Loko is a ritual specialist and an authority on esoteric arts and history. He is the guardian of sacred sanctuaries and religious secrets; the lwa of

vegetation and discipline. Botanicals including herbs and trees communicated directly to him, revealing their secrets and powers.

In Africa, Loko is perceived as an ancestor of the royal family. His veneration was limited to the priest-kings; he is not a spirit of the masses. Having arrived in Haiti with victims of the slave trade, however, Papa Loko evolved into a more generalized spirit, associated with religion, rather than royalty.

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*Loko is an ancient African name and has nothing to do with the American slang word "loco" meaning crazy or insane, which entered common usage in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Papa Loko is an extremely erudite, sane spirit who must always be treated with respect.*

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Papa Loko is a ritual specialist. He is not overly concerned with independent practitioners and is not usually their patron. However, he offers spiritual guidance to those considering or seeking formal initiation into Vodou and may be invoked as needed. He is also petitioned for healing and empowerment.

Papa Loko is syncretized to Saint Joseph and is feted on Joseph's feast day. Like Joseph, Loko assumes the paternal role for those who may not literally be his children. Papa Loko travels in the company of Papa Legba.

**Favored people:** Vodouistes; Papa Loko is especially sympathetic toward men

**Attribute:** Keys

**Consort:** Ayizan may be his wife

**Colors:** Gold; yellow; white; sometimes red and white

**Sacred creatures:** Butterfly; roosters, especially fighting cocks; snakes

**Sacred tree:** Mapou (the Haitian revolution began under a Mapou tree)

during a Vodou ceremony at Bois Caiman)

**Offerings:** White rum; white rice; white foods; healing herbs; efforts on behalf of the reforestation of Haiti (i.e. plant trees)

**See also:** *Ayizan; Eshu Elegbara; Gran Bois; Legba; Xtabay*

## **Lolmischo**

### *The Red Mouse*

**Origin:** Romani (Gypsy)

Lolmischo is the seventh child of Ana, Queen of the Keshalyi. Ana was suffering from a severe skin ailment and her son Melalo advised that she'd be cured if she'd let mice lick her skin. This turned out to be true *but* in the process, one mouse penetrated her body causing Ana to conceive and give birth to Lolmischo, a male disease demon. Lolmischo causes eczema by running up and down on sleeping people's skin.

**Color:** Red

**See also:** *Ana; Keshalyi; Melalo*

## **Long Do**

### *The Dragon's Belly*

**Origin:** Vietnam

Long Do literally means the dragon's navel. He is the patron spirit of the city of Hanoi and the guardian of the land on which it is built. He must approve building projects or anything that affects or disturbs the land. Although he sometimes manifests as a frail, elderly man, that's a guise: he is a potent dragon with powers over the air. Long Do raises storms so powerful they can topple buildings.

Long Do appears to people in dreams. He has various manifestations and may appear as:



- A golden dragon
- An elderly man with a long white beard
- A man dressed in boots, purple robes and a red hat riding a golden dragon

Long Do refers to the dragon itself. When he appears as a man, he is addressed as the Lord of the Dragon's Belly or the Dragon's Navel. His close ally is the river deity, To Lich. The two are enshrined together in Hanoi's ancient Bach Ma Temple.

**Favored people:** Long Do is the patron spirit of the ceramics industry

**Manifestation:** Long Do's presence in whatever form may be accompanied by the sounds of celestial music and beautiful, intoxicating fragrance.

## Long Mau

**Origin:** Vietnam

Long Mau, daughter of the King of the Sea, protects mothers and newborn babies. She may be invoked for assistance during every step of the conception/pregnancy/birth process. She is venerated alongside Ma Zu and Me Sanh, Goddess of Fecundity in temple shrines as well as on home altars.

**Manifestation:** Long Mau appears as a beautiful, serene woman in an elaborate headdress.

**Color:** Red

**Sacred site:** Long Mau is enshrined in the Thien Hau Temple in Cholon, Ho Chi Minh City.

**Offering:** Incense

**See also:** *Dragon Kings of the Sea; Dragon Queens; Ma Zu*

## Long Mu

## *Mother of Dragons*

**Origin:** China

It's the stuff of fantasy: someone brings home a beautiful stone only to discover it's really a dragon's egg. Long Mu means "Mother of Dragons" and that's what happened to her. Before she was a goddess, Long Mu was a young girl from a poor family in southern China, born circa 290 BCE. She went to the Xi River, a tributary of the Pearl River, daily to fish, bathe and do laundry. One day, she found an exquisite white stone, brought it home and life was never the same.

The stone turned out to be an egg: five little water snakes hatched from it. Long Mu treated them as if they were her own children. Although her family was poor, she saved the best food for the snakes and fed them by hand. They, in turn, became very devoted to her, too, traveling to the river with her and helping her fish.

The snakes kept growing and it soon became apparent that they were not snakes at all but dragons. Their devotion to their adopted mother did not diminish. When the area was hit by drought, the dragons summoned rain. Grateful villagers in awe of the familial relationship between woman and snakes began calling her Long Mu: *Mother of Dragons*. After death, she was deified. Long Mu remains a very popular goddess.

Long Mu is the goddess of mothers, children, family relations and loving devotion. She is invoked to instill feelings of loyalty and responsibility between those who love each other, whether related by blood or even of the same species.

**Sacred day:** Her festival is celebrated in the first week of the fifth month of the Chinese lunar calendar.

**Sacred sites:** Long Mu is enshrined in two temples in China: the Long Mu Ancestral Temple in Yuecheng, renovated as recently as 1985 and the Baisha Temple in Zhaoqing.

**Lono**

**Also known as:** Ono; Rongo

**Classification:** Akua

Lono is a spirit of agriculture, healing, romance, games and sports venerated throughout Polynesia. In Hawaii, he was considered among the four major deities alongside Ku, Kane and Kanaloa. He is a spirit of peace and fertility.

Lono initiated the Makahiki season, the Hawaiian season which was dedicated to him. Makahiki lasted for four consecutive lunar months. Work and war were forbidden. Instead time was devoted to spiritual ritual, feasting and sports.

Lono is manifest in precipitation, weather and natural phenomenon. He is rolling thunder, rainbows, earthquakes, whirlwinds and dark clouds.

**Attribute:** Triton shell

**Animal:** Pig

**Plants:** Cultivated plants

**Star:** Sirius

**See also:** *Akua; Kanaloa; Kane; Ku*

## Lorelei

**Origin:** German

Lorelei is the name of a spirit and the big rock in the Rhine River on which she sits. Lorelei, the most famous of the Rhine Maidens, is a Sirenlike mermaid who sits on her rock in the Rhine, combing her long hair and singing. The Lorelei rock is located in a particularly hazardous juncture of the Rhine, characterized by swift, treacherous currents. Lorelei's voice distracts fishermen and boaters from the dangers and they crash, many drowning.

Different legends explain her history and actions:

- She was a girl who, betrayed by a faithless lover, threw herself into the Rhine and was transformed into this alluring but deadly mermaid

- She was a local woman whose true love, a sailor, drowned and so she threw herself into the river to join him
- It's also possible that these legends camouflage an ancient Pagan goddess

The name Lorelei derives from two old Rhine dialect words: *lureln* (murmuring) and *ley* (rock). An alternative interpretation defines Lorelei as *lurking rock*. The reason Lorelei is more famous than the other Rhine Maidens is because of the success of Heinrich Heine's 1827 poem of the same name, which eventually became a well-loved song. Sylvia Plath's 1956 poem also titled *Lorelei* may pay tribute to the Rhine Maidens in general.

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*The Rhine Maidens are the mermaids of the Rhine River. They are among the stars of Richard Wagner's operatic Ring Cycle.*

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**Sacred site:** The Lorelei rock is on the Rhine's eastern bank near Sankt Goarshausen, Germany.

**See also:** *Lamia of the Sea; Mermaid; Siren*

## Loucetius

*Brightness; Lightning*

Loucetius is a British deity venerated together with the goddess Nemetona at the healing spring sanctuary at Bath. His name seems to be a Latinized form of Lugh and they are presumably the same spirit.

**See also:** *Lugh; Sulis*

## Louhi

Louhi, Mistress of the North Country, appears in the Finnish national

epic, the Kalevala. She is a Finnmark (Finno-Ugric) witch who protects the *Pohjola*, the back country or North Land. She may, in fact, be its ruler. Tuonetar, queen of the Finnish realm of death, may be her sister.

Louhi controls winds, fog, illness and wild creatures. She is a master spellcaster and the mother of the beautiful, alluring Maid of the North. The name Louhi is etymologically related to a word indicating a magical, shamanic trance. Louhi features prominently in the myth of the Magic Sampo, an enchanted device that grinds out salt, flour and gold from thin air.

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*Female characters are given short shrift in Finland's heroic epic, the Kalevala; most interpretations of Louhi are negative. She is painted as an evil witch. An exception is a retelling of the portion of the saga devoted to Louhi and her daughter in Ethel Johnston Phelps' The Maid of the North (Henry Holt & Company, 1982).*

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**See also:** *Tuonetar*

## Loup Garou

**Plural:** Loups Garoux

The *loups-garoux* of Haiti and the French Caribbean are a fusion of Breton werewolf traditions and African secret sorcerers' societies. Although technically *loup garou* translates as *werewolf*; Caribbean loup garoux transcend the technical definition of werewolves as men who transform into wolves and back: Island *loups-garoux* are predominately female, unlike the predominately male European werewolf. Ability to transform may be passed from mother to daughter. Alternatively, some loup-garoux are members of secret societies who obtain their powers from lwa like Marinette. There is also a traditional belief that barren women consumed with rage, anger, frustration and resentment involuntarily transform into loup-garoux. This person may not wish to

be a loup-garou. She may resist as hard as she can only to uncontrollably transform at night.

Unlike regular werewolves, loup-garoux can fly. Their violent attacks may be random but children of enemies are particularly vulnerable. Loups-garoux suck children's blood in the manner of a vampire rather than a traditional werewolf. Children may be consumed; those that are not killed may develop intestinal worms that resist medical treatment. A shamanic herbalist may be required to affect a cure.

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Loup Garou is the name of a song and album by singer, Willie Deville.

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Certain plants are used to ward off loup-garoux. They are not taken internally; they are not necessarily a cure for loup-garoux initiated illness. The presence of the plants around a building or home should prevent the loup-garou from approaching. If loup-garoux threaten, cultivate any or all of these plants including:

- Acajou (*Swietenia mahogany*): Caution! This plant may cause miscarriage
- Atiyoyo, a.k.a. Grand Basilic (*Ocimum gratissimum*)
- Avé (*Petiveria alliacaeeae*)
- Bamboo (*Bambusa vulgaris*)
- Bois couleuvre, a.k.a. snake plant (*Cap paris jamaicensis*)
- And especially *Kalanchoe pinnata* whose nickname is loup-garou

**Manifestation:** During the day, she looks like an ordinary woman but at night, the loup garou transforms into a winged monster. When loup-garoux travel through the sky, they produce a luminescent trail, reminiscent of a comet.

**Numbers:** 7; 13

**Time:** The seventh and thirteenth nights of each month (approximately the waxing half and full moons)

**See also:** *Aswang; Bizango; Lwa; Marin ette; Vampire*

## **Lu Tung-Pin**

**Also known as:** Lu Dongbin

**Origin:** China

Lu Tung-pin, born circa 750 CE, is one of the Eight Immortals. A scholar and recluse, he became a Taoist adept and attained immortality at age fifty. Lu Tung-pin was the student of another Immortal, Chung-li Chuan. Both men are sometimes considered the chief of the Eight Immortals. Lu Tung-pin is a genuinely helpful spirit who seeks to help people in need. He provides miracles of healing: he responds to petitions from those who are ailing. He banishes malicious spirits and rids the world of evil.

Lu Tung-pin fell in love with his fellow Immortal, Ho Hsien-Ko but she did not share his sentiments. (Alternatively, she rebuffed him because she had taken a vow of chastity.) Rumor has it that ever since then, Lu Tung-pin has been jealous of happy lovers. Be discreet about your successful love life when in his presence. Allegedly, couples who invoke him together or who visit his shrine together are fated to break up.

**Favored people:** Lu Tung-pin likes the ladies. He is also the patron spirit of barbers. (And if you're a good-looking lady barber, you may assume that it's likely that you have Lu Tung-pin's patronage.)

**Iconography:** Lu Tung-pin is usually depicted dressed in the robes of a scholar.

**Attributes:** Sword, usually worn across his back and the Taoist fly-brush

**Sacred site:** Lu Tung-pin is the primary deity enshrined in Taiwan's Zhinan Temple.

**Offerings:** Lu Tung-pin enjoys a drink: be generous with alcoholic beverages.

**See also:** *Chung-li Chuan; Eight Immortals; Ho Hsien-Ko*

## Lubana

**Also known as:** Filomena Lubana; Mai tresse Luban; Metresa Lubana; Loubana; Luban

**Classification:** Metresa

**Origin:** Dominican Republic

Lubana is a cemetery spirit; the sacred snake of the charnel house. She is a spirit of birth, death, life, and sex who unblocks roads, removing obstacles from the paths of her devotees. She opens the gates of opportunity. Lubana is a cleansing spirit who removes negativity and spiritual and psychic toxins (snake venom as antidote). Can she remove a curse? Yes, she can.

Lubana began her incarnation as a Congolese Simbi spirit. Transported to the island of Hispaniola by the slave trade; she was a comparatively obscure local spirit until the late 20<sup>th</sup> century when the image of Mami Waters arrived in the Americas. The German circus poster of a snake charmer that catapulted Mami Waters to worldwide fame served as a portal for Lubana, too. Dominican immigrants brought Lubana to the United States; her fame continues to increase.

Congolese snake spirits were transported to the Caribbean; so was an old traditional style of Iberian spellcasting, incorporating verbal petitions to aggressive spirits requesting that they impose the spellcaster's will on others. For instance, Spanish love/domination spells invoke Saint Martha the Dominator, requesting that she force an errant man to return to the spellcaster so subservient that he's crawling on his belly like a snake. Lubana is now invoked in virtually identical love-spells whose goal is to force a man to crawl after the woman he once scorned, begging on his knees. (If the spell goes correctly; the man *wants* to do this. He feels compelled. He's unresisting.)

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*Although Lubana is also commonly called Filomena, she is not identified with the young virgin martyr, Saint Philomena. Instead, she is syncretized to Saint Martha the Dominator. In Latin America, the snake-charmer image associated*



*elsewhere with Mami Waters was identified as Saint Martha who is usually depicted with a dragon or great reptile.*

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*Snake Oil*, a mass produced condition oil (magical formula oil), is used to dress Lubana's candles and summon her. Serpentine-inspired fine perfume oils like Black Phoenix Alchemy Lab's *Snake Oil* may also accomplish this purpose. If you want to visit her, Lubana lives in the cemetery.

**Manifestation:** Lubana's true form is a snake but she may also manifest as a woman who displays serpentine behavior (hissing, slithering, sticking out her tongue ...). She may have snakelike physical features. Regardless of form, Lubana doesn't speak: she hisses or communicates telepathically. (Telepathically she may use words and be quite articulate.)

**Iconography:** The image most frequently used to depict Lubana is that of the snake charmer more commonly associated with Mami Waters. Votive statues based on that image are now mass produced and may be labeled Martha the Dominator (*Santa Marta Dominadora*). Different versions of the statue exist; some hew closely to the old poster even duplicating the hairstyle; others depict her with significantly fairer complexion. Martha/Lubana wears a green dress and holds a snake. A small boy sitting on her lap holds a smaller snake. The second figure in the old poster has been reinterpreted as a child saved from a snake by the snake charmer.

**Spirit allies:** She works closely with Anaisa Pyé, Sili Kenwa, Baron Del Cementario, and other Barons.

**Day:** Monday

**Sacred date:** 29 July (feast day of Saint Martha)

**Colors:** Green, black, purple

**Animal:** Snake

**Number: 5**

**Altar:** Her offerings are traditionally placed on the floor, although theoretically, a snake climbs anywhere.

**Offerings:** Cigars; unsweetened black coffee; Malta beverage (*not* malt liquor; Malta is a type of carbonated drink whose primary ingredient is barley, which is allowed to ferment or "malt"). Malta is available worldwide, sold under different brand names; it may also be sold as champagne cola, although it's neither champagne nor cola; however, beware: although Malta may be called champagne cola, not every champagne cola is Malta.

**TRADITIONAL OFFERING FOR LUBANA**

1. Place one whole, unbroken, raw egg on a bed of coffee grounds
2. Drizzle with honey and Malta and serve

**See also:** *Anaisa Pyé; Barons; Baron Del Cementario; Damballah; Intranquil Spirit; Mami Waters; Sili Kenwa; Simbi*

**Lucero**

**Also known as:** Lucero Mundo (Light of the World); Lubaniba; Nkuyo

**Origin:** Congo

**Classification:** Nkisi

Lucero is among the most beloved spirits of the Afro-Cuban religion, Palo, which is based on Congolese spiritual traditions. Lucero is a divine messenger, master of the crossroads and guardian of the soul. He closely resembles Elegba (Eshu Elegbara) but whether or not they are the same spirit is subject for passionate debate:

- Some describe Lucero as a descendent of Elegba.
- Some identify Lucero as a Cuban path of the Haitian crossroads spirit, Maitre Carre four (who also may or may not be Elegba)
- Lucero may also be an independent Congolese crossroads spirit.

Lucero and Eshu Elegbara are easily mistaken for each other. They rule similar dominions. Even their images are similar: both spirits are venerated in the form of a concrete head embellished with cowries. However, Lucero's head is kept discreetly in a cabinet or similar enclosed, dark place, not placed openly behind the door as is done with Eshu Elegbara's image. Lucero guards travelers and opens avenues of opportunity. Small travel-sized Lucero cement heads are marketed.

Both spirits are tricksters however Lucero is more temperamental and volatile than Eshu Elegbara. (In this way, he more closely resembles Maitre Carrefour.) He shares Eshu Elegbara's solar associations but unlike Eshu, Lucero is never depicted as a child or elderly man. Lucero's name derives for the Spanish word indicating the morning star. Like Eshu Elegbara, Lucero may be associated with the Christian devil but is also syncretized to Saint Anthony.

**Iconography:** Lucero's image is a cement head packed with magical herbs and dirt gathered from the crossroads, cemetery and forest. Cowrie shells form his eyes, ears and mouth. Coins are affixed to the bottom of the image, usually five nickels. Lucero's sigil consists of a pair of crossed arrows, two suns and two crosses.

**Planet:** Sun; Venus

**Colors:** Red, black

**Offerings:** Cigars; rum in which spicy hot peppers have been steeped

**See also:** *Carrefour, Maitre; Eshu Elegbara; Nkisi*

## **Lugh**

*Master of All Skills; The Shining One*

**Also known as:** Lug; Luc

**Origin:** Celtic

**Feast:** 1 August

Lugh, Lord of Craftsmanship, Light, Victory and War, is a master builder, harper, poet, warrior, sorcerer, metalworker, cupbearer and physician. It's hard to envision anything at which Lugh does not excel.

Lugh was venerated throughout the ancient Celtic world. Modern scholars perceive him as especially significant because his veneration indicates the existence of pan-Celtic spiritual traditions. (Celts once ruled a huge swathe of continental Europe before being forced to the very edges of the continent.)

At least fourteen European cities are named for Lugh including Laon, Leyden, Loudon and Lyon. Lyon's old name was Lugdunum, meaning "Lugh's Fort." That city is believed to have been his cult center. Its coins bore the images of ravens, which may be a reference to Lugh. Carlisle in England, the former Lugubalium, is also named in Lugh's honor. Some theorize that Lugh's name is reflected in an older name for Paris: Lutetia. The Romans identified Lugh with Mercury. Many European churches dedicated to Michael the Archangel are believed to have been built over sites once dedicated to Lugh. Post-Christianity many of Lugh's sacred functions were reassigned to saints like Patrick and Luke.

Lugh apparently traveled westward through Europe. Irish and Welsh myths describe his first appearance in their pantheon. He is greeted with resistance from women in Wales. His first public act in Ireland is to join battle with the Tuatha Dé Danaan (his father's people) against the Fomorian, his mother's people. Lugh chooses allegiance with the paternal line; the myth may be interpreted as indicating the beginnings of patriarchy in Ireland.

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*Lugh's name is spelled variously depending on location. Lugh is the Irish spelling; in Wales he is Lleu Llaw Gyffes, the "Bright One of the Skillful Hand." In Europe, he was called Lugos, meaning "raven."*

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**Favored people:** Lugh is the patron of artisans, crafts people, poets and artists. He also protects and guides physicians, soldiers and warriors of

all kinds.

**Manifestation:** Lugh is described as shining, handsome, charming and witty. He has a silver tongue to match his skillful hands.

**Attributes:** Magical spear, harp

**Bird:** Raven

**Animal:** Lion; horse

**Consorts:** Lugh has different consorts in different locations but he was frequently linked to Rosmerta.

**Spirit allies:** Lugh shared the city of Lyon with Kybele and Paris with Isis. In battle, Lugh used his own weapons but also those belonging to Manannan.

**Festival:** 1 August, the festival of Lughnasa. Lughnasa means “the marriage of Lugh.” Lugh the sun and the Earth Mother renew their wedding vows annually during the full moon in August and invite all to gather and revel with them. Lughnasa celebrates the consummation of their sacred relationship.

Once upon a time, Lughnasa was a four week festival: the last two weeks of July and the first two weeks of August, roughly corresponding to when the sun is in Leo, the astrological sign that belongs to the sun and epitomizes its power. In modern Irish Gaelic, the month of August is *Lunasa*. However, the modern Wiccan sabbat of Lughnasa is almost always devoted solely to the eve of July 31<sup>st</sup> leading into Lughnasa Day on August 1<sup>st</sup>.

**Planet:** Sun

**Plant:** Red corn cockles

**See also:** *Aine; Arianrhod; Blodeuwedd; Isis; Kybele; Lleu Llaw Gyffes; Loucetius; Manannan; Mercury; Michael; Rosmerta; Tuatha Dé Danaan*

**Luna**

**Origin:** Italy

Luna is the presiding spirit of the moon, personification of all its powers and forces. There was originally very little myth associated with her however she was eventually identified with the Greek lunar spirit, Selene who does have an extensive mythology. The two names are now used somewhat synonymously: Luna is described as “the Roman name for Selene.” Children’s mythology books frequently combine Luna’s name and Selene’s myths.

Luna’s powers affect women, fertility and the sea. She may be invoked to intensify or ameliorate lunar forces or petitioned for favor when astrological lunar phases are inauspicious.

**Sacred days:** Roman festivals honoring Luna were held on 31 March, 24 August and 29 August

**Sacred sites:** Luna: Earth’s moon bears her name. On the Earthly realm, Luna had a temple on the Aventine Hill and another on the Palatine dedicated to *Luna Noctiluca* “Luna Who Shines By Night”

**See also:** *Lalinn, Madame; Liber; Selene* and the Glossary entry for *Identification*

## **Lutin**

**Also known as:** Luition (Old French)

**Origin:** French

Lutins are French house spirits, described as resembling goblins or imps. They’re tricky and a bit temperamental but not malevolent, evil or harmful. If they like the people in whose house they live, they will serve as guardians. If angered, they play tricks: they’ll hide your shoes, mismatch your shoes, tie the laces together or hide pebbles in them. They’ll blunt knives and scissors. They can make themselves invisible but you may hear them giggling at your discomfiture.

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Lutin refers to the male of this spirit species. Females are known as Lutines.

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Lutin can be charmed and bribed into becoming guardians. Be very nice and polite to them and leave food offerings for them in the kitchen after dark. They'll have a bit of whatever you're having except that they dislike salt. Salt placed strategically around a house keeps Lutins away. In exchange for kindness, affection and regular offerings, however the Lutin will guard children, animals, house and land. They will perform household chores at night while the family sleeps.

**Manifestation:** They may resemble small people or manifest as domestic animals, especially horses and white cats.

**Attributes:** Lutins own hats which provide invisibility, typically a red hat with feathers

**Colors:** Red, white

**See also:** *Kikimora; Kobold; Lantukh*

## Lwa

The lwa are the spirits of Vodou. The word *lwa* is both singular and plural. It's an African word. *Lwa* is the modern Haitian Kreyol spelling. The French spelling is *loa*.

However, many names are used to indicate these very same spirits. You will also find them called:

- Les Mystères (the mysteries)
- Les Invisibles (the invisible ones)
- Les Anges (the angels)
- Zanj (Kreyol version of the French *Anges*)
- Les Racines (literally *roots*; technically all ancestral spirits are lwa, too)
- Les Saintes (the saints: because virtually every Vodou lwa is syncretized)

to a Roman Catholic saint)

Lwa may be angels or saints but they are not gods. Vodou is a monotheistic faith: there is only one God, Bondye (from the French *Bon Dieu*, the Good God). Bondye created the world and is the source of ultimate appeal but is remote, distant and busy. Along with the rest of the universe, Bondye created the concept of delegating and that's where the lwa come in. The lwa serve Bondye but are each in charge of some aspect of existence. As with angels, anything you can think of has a presiding lwa.

The Vodou pantheon is large: there are over one-thousand lwa and more constantly appear. Some lwa were created as spirits but others were once human. Any powerful, charismatic person may become a lwa after death. Some lwa, known as root lwa, are particularly ancient. Archaeological evidence indicates that Vodou-like religious practices have existed in West Africa for at least four thousand years.

Lwa are generally divided into two pantheons, known as nations (*nanchon* in Kreyol): the Rada and the Petro. They dominate Vodou but there are other subdivisions too including the Bizango, Ibo, Congo and Nago Nations. The Barons and Gédés may also be considered their own subdivision. Although they belong to different nations, they are all lwa.

There is an infinite variety of lwa:

- Many like Ezili Freda traveled from Africa to the Caribbean with the slave trade
- Some may be indigenous Haitian spirits as some suspect Papal Zaka to be
- A few come from Europe, like Madame Brigitte or Madame Charlotte

Most lwa live in their special realm beneath the sea but others reside in caves, springs, stones, trees and waterfalls. They are ever present. The lwa communicate, heal and prophesy via ritual possession. Although lwa are specifically the spirits of Vodou, many are gregarious and eager to work with people and thus also engage in relationships with independent practitioners.

**See also:** *Agwé; Ayida-Wedo; Ayizan; Azaka; Barons; Bizango Spirits; Brigitte, Madame; Charlotte, Madame; Damballah; Ezili; Gedés; Gran Bois;*



*Kel Asuf; Lisa, Papa; Loko; Marassa; Marinette; Ogun; Petro; Rada; Simbi*  
and the Glossary entries for *Identification and Syncretism*

## M

### Ma Gu

#### *The Hemp Princess*

**Origin:** China

**Also known as:** Magu; Mago; Mako; Ma Ku; Madame Hemp

Ma Gu looks like a teenager, but she's an Immortal. Legend says this fifth-century Taoist shaman and alchemist was so adept she could walk on water in her shoes. Her husband murdered her, dumping her body in a lake. Her primary temple stands where her body washed ashore. Ma Gu still walks over the surface of the lake; many claim to see her, especially at the beginning and end of each lunar month.

After she died, Ma Gu ascended to the celestial zone where she attained Fairy status and became Hsi Wang Mu's handmaiden. As divine waitress, she serves the peaches of immortality to the Jade Emperor and the Heavenly Court. Ma Gu is venerated throughout China. Her devotees and shrines suffered terrible persecution during the Cultural Revolution (1966–1976).

Her own life cut short by murder, Ma Gu abhors violence. Bloodshed is strictly tabooed in her sacred temple precinct: fishing and hunting are banned by order of Ma Gu, who personally enforces the prohibition. Allegedly, violators drown in her lake or become hopelessly lost.

- Ma Gu is a goddess of good health and longevity.
- She presides over spiritually powerful, intoxicating substances.
- She protects women, who may call on her if they feel endangered.

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*The iconic image of Ma Gu bearing her dish of peaches (or alternatively the*

*elixir of immortality) remains a standard image for birthday greetings in China.*

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**Favored people:** Women, shamans, alchemists, mystic seekers

**Manifestation:** Ma Gu resembles a beautiful eighteen-year-old dressed in a shimmery, iridescent gown. She wears her hair in a bun, but several strands inevitably loosen and fall to her waist. Her fingernails resemble long bird talons.

**Iconography:** The standard image of Ma Gu portrays her bestowing peaches of immortality and/or a mystic elixir, which may be wine or an alchemical potion brewed from mushrooms or cannabis. This image is considered an auspicious birthday gift symbolic of good health, longevity, and immortality.

**Direction:** East

**Number:** 6

**Plants:** Hemp (*Cannabis spp.*), mulberry

**Creature:** Snake

**Mount:** Ma Gu rides a deer and flies on a crane

**Date:** Her birthday, on the sixth day of the sixth Chinese month

**Sacred site:** Initially venerated in caves, she eventually had several large shrines:

- The Yue Gu Temple complex in Yantai, Shandong Province, contains her tomb.
- Ma Gu Temple on Mount Heng in Hunan, one of China's five sacred Taoist peaks, is now part of Magu Fairyland, a major tourist attraction.

**See also:** *Bao Gu; Eight Immortals; Fairy; Ho Hsien-Ko; Hsi Wang Mu; Jade Emperor; Ma Zu*

## Ma Zu

*The Sea Angel; Lady of Heaven;  
Princess of Supernatural Favor; Heavenly Mother;  
Grandmother Ruby; Princess of Tides*

**Also known as:** A-Ma; Matsu; Ma Zhu; Mazu; Tien Hau; Thien Hau; Tin Hau

**Origin:** China

Ma Zu (960–987 CE) currently claims over one hundred million devotees. There are over fifteen hundred Ma Zu temples worldwide with over four hundred in Taiwan alone. Her shrines in homes, businesses, offices, and aboard boats are genuinely countless.

Before she was a goddess, Ma Zu was a girl named Lin Mo from a fishing village on Meizhou Island in Fujian. Her spiritual gifts manifested early. Local people called her the Dragon Girl because of her psychic ability to predict changes in weather. Sailors sought her advice before putting out to sea. At age thirteen, she began training with a Taoist monk who gave her charms and taught her secret lore. (She is also described as a devout Buddhist who began praying and burning incense twice a day when she was ten, but this may be a later attempt to bring a Taoist goddess into the Buddhist fold.)

This much-loved goddess bears several names:

- Her family named her Lin Mo.
- As a local goddess, she was called Ma Zu.
- When incorporated into the official Chinese pantheon, Ma Zu was granted the title *Tien Hau* or “*Empress of Heaven*.” Devotees call her Tien Hau and Ma Zu interchangeably.

At age sixteen, Lin Mo was praying for her father and brothers who were caught in a typhoon at sea when she fell into a trance. Her soul traveled out to sea where she manifested to them and helped them stay afloat. Meanwhile, her body lay at home in a trance so deep that her mother thought she was dead. Grief stricken, she shook Lin Mo, rousing her. (Alternate legend: Lin Mo’s soul could not bear her mother’s grief

and flew back to comfort her.) Lin Mo had time to rescue her brothers who later described their experiences, but the trance did not last long enough for her to save her father.

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*When Lin Mo was sixteen, she and a girlfriend gazed at their reflections in a well and saw a Fairy looking back. The friend panicked and ran away but Ma Zu knelt in reverence. The Fairy emerged, gave Ma Zu a copper scroll inscribed with mystic symbols and taught her the magical art of life saving.*

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In 987, people saw Ma Zu ascend to Heaven from Mount Meifeng on Meizhou Island accompanied by an escort of Fairies. Ma Zu may have become an Immortal without dying, or her ascension may have followed her death. There are different versions of her possible death:

- She committed suicide at twenty-seven rather than submit to an arranged marriage. (She may have taken a vow of chastity.)
- She drowned at age sixteen while searching for her father's drowned corpse.

Rather than resting in peace or dallying in Heaven, having departed the mortal plane, Ma Zu became even more active. Over the years, an ever-increasing number of eyewitnesses have claimed to see her apparition mysteriously appear in the middle of the sea to perform emergency rescues. Initially many of those rescued were local men who recognized her. They began venerating her image and seeking her protection. Many testified to her miracles; shrines were built and veneration spread. Eventually her protection extended to mandarins (government bureaucrats). By the twelfth century, she was incorporated into the official Chinese pantheon.

Because she protects seafarers, Ma Zu was a favorite goddess of Chinese immigrants, who built shrines for her wherever they traveled. Ma Zu is venerated worldwide. Considered an exceptionally active and responsive goddess, Ma Zu protects travelers on the seven seas as well as on the turbulent seas of life and love.

Riding clouds or traveling over oceans at high speed on a kind of magic flying carpet, Ma Zu can save people anywhere:

- If you are caught in a violent storm, call out Ma Zu's name, ideally with incense in your hand.
- If she rescues you, throw a feast in her honor. Invite guests, tell your story, and offer a portion of the food to Ma Zu.

Although she began as a goddess of sea safety, Ma Zu has evolved into an all-purpose goddess, fulfilling all her devotees' needs. She performs miracles of healing and fertility and has dominion over commerce. Ma Zu banishes ghosts and evil spirits. She spiritually cleanses areas where tragedies have occurred. For example, following the devastating 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami, a statue of Ma Zu was brought to Thailand's hardhit Phuket Island to purify the atmosphere, allay any restive ghosts and reassure would-be tourists hesitating to return to the stricken region.

**Favored people:** Sailors, maritime merchants, those who fish, travelers on the sea

**Manifestation:** Those rescued by Ma Zu consistently describe her as dressed in red. During storms she sometimes manifests as a fire ball traveling up or down the mast:

- Up is *not* auspicious as it's perceived that Ma Zu is leaving the ship.
- Down is favorable; Ma Zu is arriving and help is at hand.

**Iconography:** Ma Zu is often depicted with a black face like a Black Madonna.

**Spirit allies:** Ma Zu and Kwan Yin are compatible and will share altar space. Among the spirits traveling in Ma Zu's entourage is Me Sanh, Chinese Goddess of Childbirth. Me Sanh frequently has her own shrines within Ma Zu temples.

**Number:** 9

**Dates:**

- Her birthday on the twenty-third day of the third month of the Chinese lunar calendar.

- Her ascension to Heaven on the ninth day of the ninth lunar month.

**Sacred sites:** A comprehensive list of Ma Zu shrines would fill a book. This is but a sampling:

- Heavenly Empress Palace on Meizhou Island, a temple complex built where she ascended to Heaven.
- Tien Hou Temple in San Francisco's Chinatown, established in 1852, is the oldest Chinese temple in the United States.
- Chua Thien Hau Temple in Los Angeles' China town was established in September 2005.
- A-Ma Temple in Macao (Macao is named for Ma Zu as are the Mazu Islands near Taiwan).
- Thian Hock Keng, the oldest Chinese temple in Singapore.
- Thien Hau Pagoda in Cholon, Ho Chi Minh City (Saigon), Vietnam.

**Offerings:** Incense, fresh fruit, objects expressing marine or nautical themes: model ships, anchors, and rudders, for instance. To invoke her powers as a fertility goddess, offer images of animals playing with their babies.

#### MA ZU SEA SAFETY RITUAL

1. Place ashes taken from before her image into a red bag. Ashes may be taken from an official shrine, if appropriate, or you can create your own by burning incense and paper offerings before an image of Ma Zu.
2. Carry the bag or place the ashes like a talisman on your boat for protection, prosperity, and good fortune. If you have a shrine on board, the ashes may be placed before Ma Zu's image, but in that case they should originate in a temple.

**See also:** *Black Madonna; Dragon Queens; Fairy; Eight Immortals; Kwan Yin; Ma Gu; Miao Shan; Stella Maris* and the Glossary entry for *Apparition*

**Ma'at**

*Lady of Heaven; Queen of Earth; Mistress of the Underworld; Eye of Ra;  
Daughter of Ra; Lady of the Judgment Hall*

**Origin:** Egypt

*Ma'at* is a word, a concept, and a goddess:

- *Ma'at* is a word meaning “true,” “genuine,” “the real thing.” Thus *khesbet ma'at* means “real lapis lazuli” as opposed to blue paste.
- *Ma'at*, the concept, is a state of sacred harmony linking the mundane world with the divine. *Ma'at*, consisting of truth, justice, and balance is a state of grace, which can be damaged by human actions and negative emotions like greed. An Egyptian network of temples and divine rituals existed to maintain and preserve the state of *Ma'at*.
- *Ma'at* is the ancient, predynastic goddess who rules this state of grace. She is a goddess of truth, order, and natural ethical and moral law, the spirit of what is *right* versus what is merely legal or lawful.

*Ma'at* is now most famous for the part she plays in ancient Egyptian afterlife trials. At the final judgment, the dead individual's heart is weighed against the feather of *Ma'at*. The heart must equal or weigh less than *Ma'at*'s feather. If the heart's weight tips the scales, that person is denied eternal life.

*Ma'at* is not only a goddess of the afterlife; she has historically been venerated as a personal goddess and held up as an example of that righteous moral code, which ensures connection with the divine and the soul's survival. *Ma'at* is very closely associated with Lord Thoth. They stand together in Ra's barque and are sometimes envisioned as married.

**Manifestation:** *Ma'at* is a beautiful woman who may have wings. She may wear her signature feather on her head.

**Iconography:** She is sometimes portrayed as a woman with an ostrich feather for a head.

**Attribute:** Ostrich feather, scales of justice

**Consort:** Thoth

**Birds:** Ostrich, vulture



**Star:** Vega

**See also:** *Metis; Michael; Thoth*

## **Mab**

**See:** *Maeve*

## **Mabon**

*Son; Young Man; The Boy*

**Also known as:** Maponus

**Origin:** Celtic

Mabon, a hunter spirit whose myth appears in the Welsh epic tale of “Culhwch and Olwen”, is the son of Modron, whose name literally means “mother.” There’s no mention of any father. *Mabon, child of Modron* literally means “Son, child of Mother.” He is the divine child, and like so many divine children he was menaced, then rescued.

Stolen from his mother at three nights old, Mabon disappeared for many years, held captive in the Underworld. King Arthur and his cousin, Welsh hero Culhwch, searched for him, finally discovering and rescuing him from Gloucester Castle. By the time they released him from his enchanted imprisonment, Mabon was the eldest of all living creatures. Mabon is a paradox: simultaneously the youngest and oldest of souls.

Mabon is generally considered to be identical to Maponus who was venerated in Britain and Gaul. The Romans identified Maponus with Apollo. His name is invoked on ancient curse tablets.

**Sacred sites:**

- Roman soldiers venerated Apollo Maponus near Hadrian’s Wall.
- Maponus’ sanctuary at Chamalières, now modern France, featured a therapeutic spring.

**Day:** Mabon, the harvest festival and Wiccan sabbat, coincides with the

autumn equinox.

**See also:** *Mothers; Rhiannon*

## **Macarena, La**

### *The Madonna of Hope; La Esperanza*

La Macarena is a mysterious, beautiful, powerful Madonna. Her true title is Our Lady of Hope or La Esperanza, but she takes her nickname from her home, the Macarena district of Seville, Spain. *This* Lady of Hope manifests somewhat differently than others.

Macarena is now intensely identified with a miraculous statue, credited to sculptor Luisa Roldán (1652–1706) who is famed for the lifelike quality of her work. Some devotees insist that angels made the statue or at least assisted La Roldána. The image of Macarena is ubiquitous in Seville, appearing in bars, restaurants, and taxis.

La Macarena's devotees come from all walks of life. She is venerated by various religious societies (confraternities), but she also has two special constituencies:

- La Macarena is beloved by Gitanos, Seville's Gypsies.
- She is adored by bullfighters, not just locally but throughout Spain and Mexico.

Bullfighters traditionally invoke La Macarena's blessings before entering the ring. Her veil is sometimes used to miraculously heal injured matadors. Her most famous devotee, Seville's own Joselito, "Little José", José Gomez Ortega (8 May 1895–16 May 1920), was born in the Macarena neighborhood. At age seventeen he became the youngest to earn the title matador. Joselito spent a fortune buying emeralds for Macarena. When he died, fatally gored in the ring, she wore black for a month, the only time she has ever dressed in black.

Passionate veneration of La Macarena predates the image Roldán was commissioned to create. The image is a reflection of devotion, not the other way around. Confraternities devoted to her were approved in 1595. Because of the intense passion she evokes and because there has

always been an unconventional element to her veneration, there has long been speculation regarding Macarena's origins:

- Some theorize that her roots lie in the mysterious Saint Sara.
- Before Jews were expelled from Spain in 1492, Seville was the center of Kabbalistic veneration of a now mysterious spirit called the *Fallen Widow*, possibly Mary Magdalen and possibly an early manifestation of Macarena.

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*La Macarena's rival is La Triana, another beautiful, miracle-working Esperanza statue, this one housed in Seville's Triana neighborhood. La Triana, like Macarena, has a large Roma (Gypsy) fan base, but rather than matadors, she is beloved by sailors and flamenco dancers. La Triana is (unofficially) considered the matron of the gay community. Her statue is housed in the Chapel of the Mariners.*

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The statue of Macarena is damaged: she has a bruise on her right cheek, not as part of the original statue but inflicted by a drunk in the crowd during a Holy Week processional. He threw a glass bottle at her image, striking her. A bruise emerged. Artists were hired to repair the statue, but each time restoration was complete, the bruise mysteriously reappeared. (When the drunk sobered up and saw the damage, he repented.

For the rest of his life, every Holy Week he walked before her statue, wearing chains on his feet and carrying a large cross. After his death, his descendents took up his cross, continuing his penance.)

**Manifestation:** La Macarena is a gorgeous lifelike, life-size statue of a beautiful, sorrowful woman, always exquisitely dressed. (Her clothes are on display in a museum devoted to her.) She looks like a Fairytale queen. Her face glistens with crystal tears; she wears a massive gold crown of stars.

**Sacred site:** The Basilica de la Macarena in Seville plus countless home

altars.

**Time:** La Macarena is a star of Seville's Holy Week (the week prior to Easter.) Thousands throng the streets to greet her passionately when she emerges from her basilica for her annual Holy Week parade through the district.

**See also:** *Black Madonna; Black Madonna of Czestochowa; Maries de la Mer, Saintes; Mary Magdalen; Sara la Kali*

## Macha

**Also known as:** Mhacha

**Origin:** Ireland

Macha, ancient, powerful horse goddess of fighting and fertility, is among the most important deities of ancient Ireland. Along with the Badbh and the Morrigan, Macha is among a group of goddesses concerned with Ireland's prosperity, welfare and safety.

Macha is simultaneously one and three mythic figures:

- Wife of Nemedh, leader of the Third Invasion of Ireland. She died of a broken heart after foreseeing Ireland's destruction.
- Ireland's warrior queen, who established Ulster's pre-Christian political center, Emhain Macha, which means "Macha's twins."
- The divine bride of the mortal Ulster widower, Crunnchu.

Macha's third and most famous incarnation features in a mysterious myth: Crunnchu, a wealthy widower, was very lonely until the day a beautiful woman (Macha) sat down at his hearth. She spent the day performing his household chores without ever saying a word, or at least not that first day. At night she accompanied him to bed and made love with him. She stayed; he prospered; they were happy; she conceived.

All was well until Ulster's annual assembly loomed, attended by crowds from all over Ireland. Crunnchu wished to go but Macha begged him to stay home. She warned that his departure would lead to tragedy, but he insisted. Finally she agreed with the proviso that he must not say

a word about her or their union. He gave his word and left while she stayed home.

The assembly featured a great horse race, which the king's horses won. Onlookers and sycophants extravagantly praised the horses until finally Crunnchu, just unable to resist, cried out, "My wife runs faster than those two horses!" It may seem like an innocent boast, but the king ordered Crunnchu trussed up and Macha rounded up to race his prize horses. Macha, already in labor, refused to go until told her husband would be killed if she didn't. Arriving at the scene, she begged the assembled bystanders for help, crying, "Because a mother bore each of you," but to no avail. She begged the king for a delay until after she gave birth, also to no avail. He insisted she race.

Macha won her race readily, giving birth to twins before the king's horses even reached the finish line. Suddenly all the men assembled were stricken with weakness as, just before she died, Macha delivered a curse. (A deathbed curse is considered the most lasting and difficult to break.) Her curse applies only to men: whenever danger or oppression strikes, men who did not help her or put the sacred right of motherhood above a king's pride are doomed to be as vulnerable and helpless as a birthing woman for five days and four nights until the ninth generation. The only warrior exempt from Macha's curse is Cu Chulain, whose horse is named the Grey of Macha.

An analysis of Macha's myth is found in Mary Condren's *The Serpent and The Goddess* (Harper & Row, 1989). Although her myth describes her "death", Macha is a living goddess who is very beloved by modern Wiccans and Neo-Pagans. She is a fierce spirit of protection, fertility, and righteousness.

**Planet:** Sun

**Animal:** Horse

**Bird:** Crow

**Sacred site:** Emhain Macha, Ulster's ancient capital, was named in her honor, as was Armagh, the county and city in Northern Ireland, whose name derives from the Gaelic *Ard Mhacha*: "Height of Macha."

**See also:** *Badhb; Demeter; Despoena; Fergus; Maeve; Morrigan; Rhiannon*

## Madama, La

**Origin:** Puerto Rican Espiritismo

When I first received a statue of La Madama, I wasn't sure why I was being given an image of Aunt Jemima. I soon learned that La Madama is the powerful matron of fortune-tellers, psychics, mediums, and healers, but unless you're familiar with her, some of her traditional images are indistinguishable from those of the pancake queen.

There is one dominant La Madama who presides over a host of Madama spirits:

- Devotees who seek protection and sponsorship without personal communion can focus on the one presiding spirit.
- Mediums or shamanically-inclined devotees may discover that they possess their own personal Madama spirit.

The name *Madama* is a generic term used in Espiritismo (Spiritualist) traditions to identify non-Hispanic, female spirits of African descent. There are an infinite number of Madamas, just as there are an infinite number of guardian angels, Caboclos, or Pretos Velhos. My Madama may not be the same as your Madama. La Madama spirits are souls of once-living women who were shamans, mediums, diviners, and healers and so are naturally attracted to people in those fields. Extremely communicative, responsive spirits, they offer training, initiation, advice, and oracles.

The tradition of working with these spirits derives from the Spanish Caribbean, but you'll note that the name is not La Señora. La Madama is a Spanish quasi-translation of the French *madame*. In 1780, the Spanish government authorized Puerto Rican landowners to import slaves from the French Caribbean. Some French landowners fleeing the Haitian Revolution resettled in nearby Puerto Rico. As slavery was not abolished in Puerto Rico until 1873, some brought slaves with them.

Who is your Madama? Talk to her and find out. La Madama is activated via her image. Different methods are used to initiate

communication:

- Place a lit candle between you and her image in a dimly lit room, gaze at her image in a relaxed but attentive manner, and wait for her to speak.
- Tie seven or nine kerchiefs together and placethem on her altar or around her image to signal your desire to communicate.
- Some Madamas communicate with devotees via dreams, mediums, or séances.

Personalize your Madama: adorn her with bead necklaces, toy snakes, real snakeskin, or whatever seems appropriate to you. Her image is sometimes placed near the door as a barrier against evil (human, spiritual, vibrational, or generic). For this purpose the most effective Madama holds a broom. Images, sold with and without brooms, come in all sizes from inches tall to virtually life-size. If you are unable to find one, a traditional Aunt Jemima dressed in red is really a dead ringer. An old cast-iron Aunt Jemima may house a very powerful Madama spirit.

La Madama, powerful healer, banishes demons, ghosts, and nightmares. She is invoked for prophetic dreams, especially dreams for winning lottery numbers or general good fortune. Place her image by your bedside and tell her what you need before you go to sleep. The appearance of La Madama, especially if unbidden, may indicate someone's destiny, talent, and aptitude toward mediumship, clairvoyance, or healing.

Variations on the traditional La Madama include:

- *La Madama Francesita* dresses in the traditional folkloric costume of Martinique, including an elaborately tied madras headwrap. She may be a Vodouiste.
- *La Madama Negrita* dresses in traditional African clothes as opposed to the standard Madama's Western garb. This form of Madama is often represented by a handmade soft doll. She dresses in black and white as well as the usual red and white and is profoundly identified with herbal healing.

**Favored people:** Fortune-tellers, psychics, mediums, traditional healers

**Iconography:** The traditional, mass-produced Madama is a statue of a cook or kitchen worker. A strongly built woman, she usually wears a headwrap and a large white apron over a long red dress. Look for an image that makes good eye contact. Handmade La Madama images may be more detailed and personalized. An image called *Siete Potencias Madamas* (“Seven Madama Powers”) serves as a protective amulet. Seven Madamas are portrayed. The largest holds a book while six smaller figures surround her.

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*The traditional image of La Madama is also sometimes used to represent the lwa Ezili Dantor.*

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**Attributes:** Broom with which to banish evil and perform cleansing rituals, fan

**Colors:** Usually red and white, sometimes black and white

**Altars:** Fortune-tellers, healers, and psychics may leave tools of the trade on the altar for La Madama to bless, purify, and empower.

**Offerings:** Flowers; liquor; tobacco products including cigars or snuff; sea shells; cowrie shells; red fabric; fortune-telling devices (tarot cards, crystal ball, bones); medicinal herbs; fruit; a basket filled with herbs, oils, and other botanical products plus a deck of playing cards with which to tell fortunes

**See also:** *Caboclos; Ezili Dantor; Lwa; Metresa; Preto Velho*

## **Mae Nak**

**Also known as:** Mae Naak; Nang Nak; Mae Naak Phra Khanong

**Origin:** Thailand

In life, Mae Nak, Thailand’s most popular ghost, was a chieftain’s



daughter who rejected an arranged marriage with a rich merchant to elope with Mak, a handsome but poor gardener. They went to Phra Khanong, a village east of Bangkok to labor as rice farmers. (Due to urban sprawl, this village, site of Mae Nak's primary shrine, is now part of Bangkok.)

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*Mae Nak is estimated to have lived in the eighteenth or nineteenth centuries.*

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Nak and Mak, star-crossed, tragic lovers, adored each other and were deliriously happy until Mak was conscripted into the army, leaving pregnant Nak behind. Although not emphasized in most modern retellings, Nak was very much a stranger in the village: a young, rich, pregnant girl unused to manual labor, left alone with no family or husband, at the mercy of not necessarily sympathetic strangers. This may explain some of her ghost's later hostile behavior.

Nak had a slow difficult labor; her son refused to emerge from the womb. Mother and child died in childbirth, the type of death associated with the most dreaded ghosts. Because of this, they were not cremated but buried in an attempt to confine their souls underground.

Nak's soul would not stay buried, rest in peace, or travel to the appropriate next realm. The love Nak felt for Mak transcended death. She traveled to him, found him injured on the battlefield, and cared for him. They eventually returned to their village together. (In some versions of their myth, he's tended by Buddhist monks and returns home to find Nak and his son patiently waiting.) Again Mak and Nak "lived" happily together.

Mak was unaware that Nak was dead as she was completely corporeal, at least to him, and behaved lovingly, at least to him. He noticed the neighbors behaving strangely—cold and distant—but blamed this on them, not on Nak. Bad things happened to neighbors who tried to warn Mak that he was living with a ghost and so they allowed him to remain in the dark.

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*Mae Nak's skull allegedly passed into the hands of the Prince of Jumborn, a royal collector of occult objects who is considered the father of the Thai navy and is himself now popularly venerated as a guardian spirit. Since his death in 1923, the whereabouts of her skull are unknown.*

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One day, Nak dropped a lemon through the floorboards of their home on stilts, fifteen feet above the ground. Not a problem: she just stretched (and *stretched!*) out her hand, retrieving the lemon from the ground below. Mak realized something was up. A few more macabre experiences and he fled, taking refuge with neighbors. Nak, enraged at Mak's abandonment, (clearly *his* love was not stronger than death), transformed into a ghostly killer, snapping villagers' necks like twigs.

Nak fled to a Buddhist monastery where a monk/magical adept performed a standard Thai ghost disposal by forcing Nak's soul into a pot, sealing it with magical cloth, and dropping it into the river. Mak remarried but he did not live happily ever after.

A fisherman accidentally released Nak, now absolutely livid with rage. She did not handle Mak's remarriage well and once again became a dangerous, vengeful, bloodthirsty ghost. The monk advised Mak and surviving neighbors to create a graveside shrine for Nak. Via rituals of appeasement, Nak was transformed into Mae Nak (*Mother Nak*), a compassionate and often helpful ghost, now venerated as a protective spirit.

Her shrine is on the outer edge of a large temple complex in Bangkok. She protects local residents but is popular throughout Thailand and now worldwide. Mae Nak was featured in two of Thailand's earliest sound movies (1936, 1937) and a 1957 radio feature. She's been the subject of an opera and several modern movies, most notably 1999's *Nang Nak*, which set box office records in Thailand, even outselling *Titanic*. *Nang Nak* won the award for Best Picture at the 1999 Pan Asia Film Festival.

Despite the horror movies, Mae Nak is considered generally benevolent, if a little volatile. She is especially renowned for providing winning lottery numbers and lucky numbers for gamblers. She reveals

numbers through dreams and via Chinese fortune-telling sticks, (known as *Siem Si* in Thai), which involves shaking a container of individually numbered sticks until one or more falls out.

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*Mae Nak likes to watch television, especially Thai movies. At home, leave the television on for her, especially when no one else is around.*

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Mae Nak is not easily bribed. She doesn't respond to coercion. She only helps when she feels like it. She accepts comparatively minor gifts but you *must* give whatever was promised. She becomes angry if something perceived as hers is taken away or not received, and we know what happens when she gets angry.

No need to travel to Bangkok. Mae Nak is venerated at home shrines and she also visits in dreams. Mae Nak offers protection from disasters as well as general prosperity and good luck. She may be invoked for virtually any kind of aid however women traditionally do not request help with conception and fertility for fear they will end up like her.

**Iconography:** Her shrine's votive statue, reputedly made from dirt gathered from seven cemeteries, is covered with paper-thin gold leaf. Devotees apply sheets of gold leaf to her statue as offerings. The statue is periodically covered with cream to encourage the gold leaf to adhere but with the additional result of making it feel like human flesh.

**Sacred site:** Apparitions of Mae Nak have been witnessed at her Bangkok shrine.

**Offerings:** Flowers, especially orchids; cosmetics; yellow candles; incense; fruit; pilgrimage; dresses, especially traditional Thai clothing. Apply gold leaf to her statue and celebrate her by throwing a party in her honor. Spread her legend by showing movies about her to others or giving copies of the DVDs. Find her skull and return it to her shrine. Gifts traditionally given to her baby include toys, diapers, baby bottles, and whatever would please a baby or a new mother.

**See also:** *Ghost; Mae Posop; Nang Takian (2); Phii Tai Tang Klom*

## **Mae Posop**

**Also known as:** Mae Phra Posop; Mae Phosop

**Origin:** Thailand

Once upon a time, rice required no labor or cultivation. All you had to do was gather it. Yesteryear's rice was far superior to our own: each grain was silver, fragrant, and five times larger than a human fist. Unfortunately, one day, a bad-tempered widow husking rice roughly smashed a grain with a piece of wood. The rice shattered and splintered, the pieces radiating out in all directions, one landing in Mae Posop's lap.

Mae Posop is the rice mother, inherent in every single grain of rice. Furious at this disrespect, she levied a curse that prevented rice from growing for one thousand years. People began to starve, and other deities attempted to coax Mae Posop into releasing rice. She finally agreed but only with the following stipulations:

- Rice is now smaller, the size of the offending splinters, not the original grain.
- Rice must be cultivated with labor.
- All due respect must be given rice and Mae Posop.

Mae Posop is the mother of the rice crop. When rice plants begin to seed, that means she is pregnant. Women traditionally place offerings in a bamboo basket, similar to giving gifts at a baby shower. In addition to her standard offerings, Mae Posop is given gifts that pregnant women are perceived as craving, like sour fruits. Baskets are brought to the rice fields where women chant for her.

She is generous and fertile but tense and skittish. She panics easily. Any sudden shock or disturbance may cause her to flee. From the time of seeding until the harvest, no men are permitted in the rice fields. Loud noises and morbid or scary discussions of death or demons are forbidden. Failure of the rice crop is perceived as miscarriage.

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*As Thailand has become increasingly urban and rice farmers have moved to cities, Mae Posop may have evolved into Nang Kwak.*

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**Manifestation:** Mae Posop is a beautiful woman with long dark hair. She wears a tiara and a sarong with a golden belt.

**Attributes:** A sheaf of rice stalks in her right hand and a bag of wealth in her left

**Offerings:** Flowers, perfume, combs, mirrors, sarongs, desserts

**See also:** *Mae Nak; Nang Kwak*

## **Mae Thoranee**

*Mother of the Earth; Earth Goddess*

**Also known as:** Mae Phra Thoranee; Mae Torranee

**Origin:** Thailand

Mae Thoranee, guardian of Earth, cattle, people, and their possessions is the most popular Thai Buddhist female deity. Mae Thoranee epitomizes the benevolent powers implicit in Earth, but she embodies divine feminine energy, too. Mae Thoranee protects against physical, magical, and spiritual dangers.

- She is invoked at the beginning of the rice planting season to protect the harvest.
- Soldiers invoke her blessings before battle.
- Request her protection daily before taking your first step on Earth.

Mae Thoranee vanquishes malevolent spirits. She is requested to help overcome inner demons, too, including addictions, obsessions, and compulsions.

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*To request Mae Thoranee's blessings, pray, petition, and then hold your breath while placing a bit of soil underfoot and on top of your head.*

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Mae Thoranee may be petitioned for personal fertility. She is invoked for rain in times of drought:

1. Place offerings in a bowl and place this on Earth.
2. Pour a libation of water onto Earth.
3. Speak to Mae Thoranee. Explain the need for rain and tell her that when rain arrives, you will return with more offerings.

There is no need for offerings to always accompany petitions, but vows *must* be fulfilled immediately after she has granted your request.

Vestiges of ancestor-veneration survives in the Thai Buddhist belief that merit, earned by doing good deeds, may be transferred to the deceased, reducing their suffering in Hell, improving their karma, and helping them achieve rebirth sooner. In addition to other methods, merit (essentially “karma points”) may be accrued and transferred by offering alms or food to Buddhist monks who, in turn, chant blessings and perform rituals. Merit-dedicating rituals involve pouring water into containers, chanting, and then pouring the water on the ground. Mae Thoranee is invoked to witness these rituals. She uses her long hair to receive the water. (Some schools of Buddhism perceive the implication that merit can be bought as offensive and heretical.)

According to legend, Buddha Shakyamuni, seated beneath the bodhi tree, vowed not to rise until he attained enlightenment. Demons arrived to distract him, but Buddha touched the ground and invoked Mae Thoranee to witness his good deeds. Instantly emerging from the ground, she twisted and squeezed her hair so that water representing Buddha's accrued merit emerged. Enough water flowed to drown the host of demons.

**Manifestation:** Mae Thoranee is the essence of Earth, but she also manifests as a woman. Usually formless, she manifests only when

necessary as when summoned by Buddha. Mae Thoranee's hair is so long it touches the ground. Sacred literature describes her as having black skin and green hair like rich, fertile soil and grass respectively, but she is often portrayed as a black-haired Thai woman. Her eyes are the color of a blue lotus.

**Iconography:** Mae Thoranee is usually portrayed in the act of twisting her long, beautiful hair to squeeze out water. Statues of Mae Thoranee are positioned to protect Buddha in Thai and Lao shrines. Her image is incorporated into the logo of the Thai Democrat Party.

**Offerings:** Place offerings in or on Earth. Traditional offerings include water, rice, sugar cane, betel nuts, flowers, incense, or candles.

**See also:** *Buddha Shakyamuni*

## Maeve

*She Who Intoxicates; The Inebriating One; The One  
Who Is Like Mead*

**Also known as:** Medb; Mab

**Origin:** Ireland

Maeve, Goddess-Queen, a powerful, wild warrior deity, sponsored and destroyed heroes. No king can rule Ireland unless he has engaged in the Sacred Rite with Maeve and satisfied her. Maeve takes mortal kings as her consorts, contracting them in sacred marriage, giving them their right to rule, and bestowing prosperity on the land, but only as long as she perceives them fit to rule. (Or until she finds someone more fit.)

Maeve makes kings and breaks them, too. She can deprive men of their strength merely by being in their presence. Maeve rides around the battlefield in her chariot: her potent presence "unmans" the warriors. She really has no need for that chariot. What do they say about Superman? *Faster than a speeding bullet?* That's Maeve: she runs with the speed of a superhero, swifter than champion racehorses. No one can catch her unless she wishes to be caught.

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*Maeve is a goddess of sex, fertility, death, and war. She is the essence of the power, promise and abundance of Earth. Her name derives from the same root word as mead. She is a heady, intoxicating presence, a goddess of ecstasy.*

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Irish myth describes how Maeve manifested to Niall of the Nine Hostages as an old crone guarding a well. She gave him water, and he agreed to have sex with her. In his arms, she transformed into a young, gorgeous woman and granted him kingship of Ireland. Fergus is her first husband. She abandoned the second, Conchobar, once she perceived him unworthy to be king. She has several criteria for choosing her third: his courage, fearlessness, and generosity must match hers, and he must not be jealous—this is crucial as she must engage in sacred marriages. Of course, when *he's* unfaithful, she kills him.

Irish myths were transmitted orally. The first to write them down were Christian monks who sought to preserve them but clearly disapproved of Maeve's rampant sexuality. (Maeve stars in the Ulster Cycle.) They did not represent her as a grand Pagan goddess but as a lustful, violent, warrior woman, the archetypal Fairytale evil queen.

Maeve was not forgotten or relegated to storybooks. Too powerful to suppress, post-Christianity, she emerged as a Fairy queen. In Ireland, she remained full-size, but in England and Wales, fierce warrior goddess Maeve, under the name Queen Mab, is reduced to a flower Fairy, a tiny miniature spirit who rides a chariot pulled by insects.

Even when tiny, Maeve/Mab continues to exert her allure, emerging as the favorite Fairy queen of authors, playwrights, and poets:

- In Mercutio's famous Queen Mab speech in *Romeo and Juliet*, William Shakespeare describes her as the "Fairies' midwife... no bigger than an agate stone" in an alderman's ring. "Her chariot is an empty hazelnut" he writes, evoking ancient Ireland's hazelnuts of wisdom.
- She stars in poems by Ben Jonson, William Butler Yeats, and Percy Bysshe Shelley.
- She is a fierce force in Mike Carey and John Bolton's 2007 graphic



novel, *God Save the Queen*.

**Manifestation:** She frequently manifests with birds on her shoulders, or a bird on one and a squirrel on her other. Some scholars think this indicates her primeval origins as a tree goddess. Maeve is an extraordinary shape-shifter, appearing as a female of any age or appearance: from gorgeous goddess to frightening hag.

**Color:** Red

**Creatures:** Squirrels, birds, cattle, swine, wolves

**Sacred sites:**

- Cruachan, capital of ancient Connacht and center of her spiritual rites.
- The Hill of Tara, ancient seat of the High Kings of Ireland.
- Maeve's Cairn on Knocknarea Mountain, County Sligo, believed to be a Neolithic passage grave, dated approximately 3000 BCE
- Maeve's sacred pool on Clothrann Island in Lough Ree, now called Quaker's Island.

**See also:** *Fairy; Fairy, Flower; Fairy Queens; Fergus; Macha; Nechtan* and the Glossary entry for *Marriage*

## **Magajiyar Jangare**

*Heiress of Jangare*

**Classification:** Bori

Magajiyar Jangare is the spiritual mother of all devotees of Bori spirits. She is not a spirit to be trifled with: the afflictions she potentially causes include impotence, severe headaches, and pneumonia. However, she is generally a good-natured spirit who is not easily angered. If you like Bori spirits, she probably likes you. Magajiyar Jangare is married to Sarkin Aljan Biddarene, Chief of the Second House of Bori Spirits.

**Color:** White

**See also:** *Bori; Sarkin Aljan Biddarene*

## **Mahalat**

### *The Dancer*

**Also known as:** Mahlat; Mahalath; Makh lat

According to Jewish legend, Hagar arranged a marriage for her son Ishmael with the Egyptian daughter of the sorcerer Khasdiel. Abraham disapproved and later made Ishmael divorce and banish his pregnant bride, who went to live in the desert where she gave birth to Mahalat. When Mahalat grew up, the demon Agratiel (also known as Igratiel), Ruler of the Desert, fell in love with her. Agrat is their daughter.

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*Khasdiel, Mahalat's grandfather, is described as a sorcerer, but his name appears among lists of angels on protective amulets and talismans. Khasdiel's name is invoked on amulets intended to ward off Lilith.*

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Mahalat has also been romantically linked with her cousin Esau and with Samael the Poison Angel, but her primary relationship seems to be her rivalry with Lilith. The two rendezvous annually on Yom Kippur, the Jewish Day of Atonement to war with each other. Mahalat leads four hundred seventy-eight hosts of dangerous spirits as opposed to Lilith's four hundred eighty. (The numbers derive from numerological calculations of their names.) The two demon-goddesses meet in the middle of the battlefield and shriek at each other. Nothing indicates that they don't enjoy this war. To some extent they're shirking other responsibilities. Both are Accusing Angels as well as demons; they really should be accusing people of sins and violations, not fighting with each other. (Another version says the two demons are shrieking at the top of their lungs to drown out the sound of human prayer, which offends their ears.)

**Manifestation:** Consistently described as *very* beautiful, Mahalat is a compulsive, nonstop dancer. She dances while leading a band of evil

angels.

**Spirit allies:** Her daughter, Agrat bat Mahalat

**See also:** *Agrat bat Mahalat; Lilith*

## **Mai Dawa**

*Owner of the Bush; The Bow Man; The Short Man*

**Also known as:** Mai Baka

**Classification:** Bori

Mai Dawa is the head of the eighth house of Bori spirits, the House of Archers and Hunters. Mai Dawa, courageous master hunter, is afraid of nothing. He's a spirit hunter, not a regular hunter: his prey includes demons. Mai Dawa's primary wife is Barhaza, Inna's younger sister. Details of his parentage are hazy.

The afflictions that Mai Dawa causes and controls include unexplained bleeding. His illness begins as a slight cold but accelerates. The victim develops a head or bronchial cough but eventually coughs up blood. Because it's a progressive illness, Mai Dawa leaves time for the victim to consult a shamanic healer who can prescribe treatment. Mai Dawa also possesses poison arrows for which no antidote exists.

**Manifestation:** Mai Dawa crouches as he walks, like a hunter stalking prey, hence his epithet, the Short Man. He's not that short when he stands up straight.

**Attribute:** Bow and arrow

**Color:** Black

**See also:** *Barhaza; Bori; Inna; Ochossi*

## **Mai Gizo**

*Owner of the Matted Hair*

**Also known as:** Yero

**Classification:** Bori

Mai Gizo, son of Sarkin Fulani, renounced Islam and was banished from his father's home. Adopted by Pagan Bori spirits, he is now considered one of them. He is volatile and unpredictable, considered among the most potentially dangerous of Bori, but that may reflect tensions between Islam and the traditional Hausa religion to which Mai Gizo reverted.

Mai Gizo is blamed when humans renounce Islam: that renunciation is considered one of his afflictions. Others include chronic headaches plus mental illnesses tenuously related to the compulsive rambling caused by his father, but intensified. Mai Gizo's victims stop paying attention to cleanliness, hygiene, and personal appearance, not just a little but to the extreme. Their teeth rot. They stink. Others avoid them. They wind up wandering aimlessly all by themselves. A difficult spirit to propitiate and appease, Mai Gizo's illnesses are difficult to remove, even for the trained shamanic healer.

**Attribute:** Hatchet

**Color:** Black

**Offerings:** Alcoholic beverages and tobacco products

**See also:** *Bori; Malam Alhaji; Sarkin Fulani*

## **Maia**

*Queen of May*

**Origin:** Greece

**Classification:** Nymph

In modern mythology books, especially those oriented toward children, Maia is but a mere footnote: her claim to fame is as Hermes' mother and one of Zeus' few paramours able to avoid Hera's wrath. Maia, however,

is not just someone's mother and girlfriend. She is a great goddess in her own right, significant enough to have a month named in her honor. Veneration of Maia spread from Greece to Italy and through Europe. She had a significant following in Marseilles, and some scholars consider her an archetype for some Black Madonnas of southern France.

There is a reason Maia is given such short shrift in mythology books: very little is now known about her. She was among those female spirits classified as Bona Dea: a "Good Goddess" whose rites and Mysteries were restricted to women. Nothing was written down or documented, perhaps especially because it's intimated that her rites were licentious and sexy. No stories regarding Maia survive beyond the birth of Hermes, but scholars believe she was once very significant based on references in ancient texts.

Maia's name means "nurse," as in to breastfeed. She's the eldest of the Pleiades, the Seven Star Sisters, daughters of Atlas. When the goddess Callisto, was transformed into a bear, her son Arcas was raised by her good friend, Maia. Maia is a mountain goddess, content to remain a wild cave dweller far from civilization. It's baby Hermes who, literally from the first day of his life, plots to advance himself *and* his mother to Olympus.

Maia has a good relationship with Artemis and Dionysus but is a relatively solitary spirit. She has a consistently close relationship with her son: Greek vase paintings depict them in deep consultation with each other. Post-Christianity, her month was rededicated to Mary.

**Favored people:** Women

**Manifestation:** A beautiful, bejeweled woman often depicted with upswept hair.

**Iconography:** Maia's image appears on coins from Pheneos, Arcadia (Hermes is on the flip side).

**Bird:** Dove

**Animal:** Pig

**Element:** Earth

**Constellation:** Pleiades

**Time:** The month of May is named in her honor. The first and fifteenth days of the month are especially sacred to her. (Once upon a time, this would have corresponded with the new and full moons.) Sacrifices to Maia were incorporated into the Floralia Festival (23 April–3 May) when a pregnant sow was sacrificed to her on 1 May.

**Altar:** Place Maia's altar within a cabinet or reproduce some sort of cave space for her. She is a private spirit but may be venerated alongside Artemis, Callisto, Hermes, Dionysus, and a host of Nymphs.

**Offerings:** Honey, cookies, and pastries in the shape of pigs

**See also:** *Bona Dea; Callisto; Flora; Hera; Hermes; Nymph; Pleiades; Zeus*

## Maitreya

**Classification:** Buddha

Maitreya, Buddha of the Future, the essence of love and compassion will be the successor to our Buddha Shakyamuni. (Maitreya will be Buddha number five.) Until then, he provides instruction at his celestial home. As with other messianic figures, over the centuries many have claimed to be Maitreya, but his estimated arrival on Earth is circa 100,000 C<sub>E</sub>. His name derives from a root word indicating "loving kindness".

**Iconography:** Maitreya is portrayed as a Bodhisattva; he holds a vessel containing the elixir of immortality.

**Attribute:** Golden stupa (a mound-shaped reliquary, symbolic of enlightenment)

**See also:** *Amida; Bodhisattva; Buddha; Ma Gu*

## Malam Alhaji

**Classification:** Bori

Malam Alhaji is the chief of the third house of Bori spirits, the House of

Koranic Scholars. Alhaji literally means that he has made the pilgrimage (the *Haji*) to Mecca. He is the younger brother of Sarkin Aljan Suleimanu.

The affliction Malam Alhaji controls is chronic coughing. He presides over a method of healing, which involves writing Koranic verses onto a slate. Water poured over them absorbs the sanctity of the text and is then consumed.

**Manifestation:** He is envisioned as a dignified, elderly gentleman. Unlike other Bori spirits, he doesn't dance, even during possession rituals. Instead he sits, fingers his rosary, and writes Koranic verses on a slate.

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*It is important to note that although Malam Alhaji is described as a Muslim scholar, he is not a Muslim spirit. Malam Alhaji is a Bori spirit. Participants in Bori understand him as a Muslim, but conventional Islam does not accept or condone Bori traditions and rituals. The paradox is that if Malam Alhaji was truly the conservative Muslim he is portrayed as being, he would not participate in Bori but would condemn it.*

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**Color:** White

**Tree:** Baobab

**See also:** *Arziki; Bori; Mai Gizo; Nakada; Sarkin Aljan Suleimanu*

## **Malandros**

**Origin:** Venezuela

Sometimes it takes a thug to beat a thug. Malandros are spirits of criminals (thieves, hoodlums, murderers) petitioned to protect people against their living human equivalent. They are invoked and venerated by those who cannot avoid dangerous streets, neighborhoods, and

locations. The Malandros are petitioned to travel beside you, serving as a spiritual bodyguard and protecting from all danger. They are also invoked for justice, legal or otherwise. Because they are criminals, the Malandros are sometimes asked to fulfill petitions other spirits might reject. They form a Maria Lionza court.

**See also:** *Maria Lionza*

## **Malinalxochitl**

### *Beautiful Wildflower*

**Also known as:** Malinal Xochitl

**Pronounced:** *Mah-lee-nahl-show-chee-tul*

The Aztecs spent centuries wandering, searching for their promised land, initially led by the warrior deity Huitzilopochtli and his sisters. Tension developed between Huitzilopochtli and one sister, Malinalxochitl, an exceptionally beautiful, powerful spirit of witchcraft and magic. He accused her of talking too much, asking too many questions, and sowing seeds of doubt. Huitzilopochtli persuaded the Aztecs to leave her. Following his directions, they abandoned her with her attendants as they slept, just like Ariadne abandoned on the isle of Naxos, slipping away to continue their migrations without her.

The name *Malinalxochitl* literally means “grass flower” or “wildflower,” but it derives from two words, *Malinal* and *Xochitl*, describing two types of spiritual forces:

- *Malinal* is short for *Malinalli*, a force of untamed nature: it is what stands outside civilization. *Malinalli* names plants (technically a type of wild grass but also wildflowers) that will not be domesticated. *Malinalli*, considered a female (yin) force, is associated with death. The Cihuateteo and spirits of death are described and portrayed as wearing skirts made of malinalli.
- *Xochitl*, on the other hand, is a force of beauty and purity, a dynamic, sexual, creative force. (See also: *Xochitl*.)

Malinalxochitl is the crossroads where these forces meet. Even after



her abandonment, the Aztecs remained conscious of her as a formidable power hovering outside their civilization. She developed a reputation as a fierce sorceress.

Her son, Copil, a shaman, raised to despise Huitzilopochtli, vowed to avenge his mother. He rallied neighbors to destroy the Aztecs. Instead, the Aztecs, under Huitzilopochtli's command, captured Copil. His still-beating heart was ripped from his chest and flung into the middle of marshy Lake Texcoco. A *nopal*, or prickly pear cactus, grew from his heart, nourished by Copil's blood. Huitzilopochtli revealed that the sign that marked their sacred destination was an eagle sitting on a cactus with a snake in its mouth. When the Aztecs saw their sign, it was on the nopal growing from Copil's heart. The name of their capital city *Tenochtitlan* means "Place of the Prickly Pear Cactus."

In the meantime, Malinalxochitl collected devotees, too. Because Aztec authorities considered her an enemy, she evolved into a secret goddess. Devotees set up secret societies in Coatepec, Malinalco, and Michoacan, areas still renowned for magic, witchcraft, sorcery, and shamanism. She is invoked for magical power and knowledge.

Malinalxochitl has power over venomous creatures like snakes, spiders, and scorpions.

**Favored people:** Magical practitioners

**Manifestation:** Malinalxochitl is envisioned as a beautiful young girl, a teenager.

**Sacred site:** The place where Malinalxochitl was abandoned is now called Malinalco, approximately twenty-five kilometers southwest of Mexico City.

**Date:** The Aztecs traditionally considered Malinalli, the twelfth day of their calendar, with ambivalence at best. On one hand, those born on this day are allegedly fated to be rebellious, difficult, or unlucky people—and to have their children torn away from them. On the other, the day indicates the tenacious power of weeds, that which can never be completely uprooted or eradicated. It is considered a positive day for the suppressed but not for those who suppress them.

**See also:** *Ariadne; Cihuateteo; Coatlique; Coyolxauhqui; Guadalupe; Huitzilopochtli; Llorona, La; Malinche; Xochitl*

## **Malinche**

**Also known as:** Malinalli; Malintzin; Doña Marina

La Malinche (born circa 1500), the native woman who was Spanish conqueror Hernan Cortes' mistress and interpreter, remains incredibly controversial. Is she a goddess or a whore? An unwilling accomplice, a traitor, a collaborator or an avenging angel? Impassioned arguments are made for all those possibilities and interpretations.

La Malinche is shrouded in mystery. Even her real name is subject to speculation. *Malinche* may be a Spanish corruption of *Malintzin*, the affectionate diminutive for *Malinalli*, which is generally believed to be her name, if only because it resembles *Marina*, the name by which the Spanish called her. Virtually no documented information regarding this woman survives. Whatever does exist derives solely from Spanish sources. Although La Malinche translated for others, her own voice is silent. She is an ephemeral, if powerful, presence. It is difficult to know what to call her. The names Malintzin and Malinalli are used within this encyclopedia to refer to her prior to her encounter with Cortes and her transformation into Doña Marina and the infamous Malinche.

She was probably born near Coatza coalcos ("the place of the snake"), now part of Veracruz but then on the frontier between Aztec and Mayan territories. Her father was reputedly a local ruler. When she was a child, her family sold or gave her to Mayan slave traders. (*Why* this occurred is subject to speculation. Spanish chronicler Bernal Diaz who knew her personally wrote that her mother sold her to ensure that a favored brother would inherit what was rightfully Malintzin's. A young slave was murdered and passed off as Malintzin; a funeral was held so that no one would search for the princess.)

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*La Malinche may be the restless spirit (or one of them) who roams the night*

*as La Llorona. Although elsewhere her name is synonymous with “traitor”, in Mayan regions, she is venerated as a goddess, sometimes alongside Guatemalan deity Maximon.*

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In 1519, the Chontal Maya gave Cortes a gift of twenty women including Malintzin. He insisted on baptizing them. She was renamed Marina, possibly because it resembles Malinalli. (If you switch the *r* in Marina to an *l*, the names are almost identical.) She was originally assigned to Alonso Hernando Puertocarrero, technically the most noble of the Spanish party, but Cortes eventually took her for himself. She was Cortes’ interpreter, counselor, consort, and mother of his son, Martin. Malinche/Marina, who spoke Nahuatl and Mayan languages and quickly learned Spanish, played a crucial role in the conquest. Cortes allegedly said that after God, she was the primary reason for his victory.

Cortes is described as communicating with various Aztec leaders including Emperor Moctezuma but, in fact, the Aztecs spoke to Malinche, who conveyed their meaning to Cortes. The Aztecs had an extremely hierarchical society, especially in terms of who could address whom. By no means was it acceptable for a female slave from the hinterlands to address the emperor. Whether Cortes was aware of this (and he may have been), Malinche was surely aware of her subversive role.

The Spanish referred to her with respect, calling her Doña Marina (Lady Marina). She is the only woman among the twenty whose name was recorded. The Aztecs were very conscious of her power, too, but not in a good way. Whether or not the Aztecs really thought that Cortes was a returning god (this may be Spanish fantasy), Malinalli was perceived as an avatar of their nemesis, the return of the goddess Malinal xochitl.

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*When Moctezuma’s successor, Emperor Cuauhtémoc surrendered on 13 August 1521, he addressed Cortes as the equivalent of “Mr. Malinche”. Whether this was intended to slight Cortes or because he truly perceived*

*Malinche as the dominant power is now subject to speculation.*

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The resemblance is greater than their names. Legend says that the beautiful teenage Malinalxochitl was abandoned for talking too much. Beautiful, youthful Malinche talked a lot, too, sabotaging Aztec resistance by revealing plans to attack the Spanish army. Malinche became the lightning rod for Aztec rage against the conquistadors. Perceived as a willing collaborator, not a slave, Malinche became symbolic of betrayal to foreign interests:

- *Malinchismo* is a modern Mexican term that indicates betrayal.
- A *Malinchista* is a traitor to one's own people, a lover of foreigners.

Of course, she was *not* one of them. Instead, Malinche was among the most marginalized members of their society, a slave who must have learned from a very young age to protect herself. Her romantic relationship with Cortes eventually ended and she was married to another. Malinche, as the mother of Martin Cortes (born 1522), is frequently described as the mother of the first mestizo, those of mixed indigenous Mexican and European ancestry. She may have had other children, too: when the Spanish first received Malinche, she was accompanied by a small girl who is presumed to be her daughter. (Malinche kept the little girl close and personally cared for her.) She may also have had one or more children with her husband. Malinche may be venerated as an ancestral spirit.

The mysteries continue: how, when, and where Malinche died is unknown. She disappears from history after March 1528. Rumors suggest that she was killed by her husband, Juan Xaramillo, her body dumped in Mexico City's canals. This is possibly the basis for her identification with La Llorona. If, however, she was truly an avatar of Malinalxochitl, then maybe she never died.

Malinche is identified with Mary Magdalen. (This is intended as an insult, implying that she was a prostitute.) So-called Malinche Dances were once held throughout Mexico, usually coordinated with the feast of Mary Magdalen. Some dances portray her as a villain, others as a

prophetess who tells Moctezuma's future.

La Malinche is a spirit of empowerment, of refusing to be devalued—a goddess of the marginalized and angry. Invoke her when survival is in doubt. She is the subject of *many* paintings, books, and films:

- José Clemente Orozco's painting *Cortes and Malinche* depicts them as Adam and Eve.
- She is the only woman in Diego Rivera's mural *La Historia de México*.
- Anna Lanyon's *Malinche's Conquest* (Allen & Unwin, 1999) describes the author's quest for the true Malinche.

**Favored people:** Translators, interpreters, slaves, the defamed, those who must please others in order to preserve their own safety

**Manifestation:** Described as very beautiful; Bernal Diaz said she had "manly valor."

**Iconography:** Although she was an Indian woman, traditional Mexican dance masks portray her as a blond European with gold-capped teeth. In artist Jesus Helguera's famed calendar print, she rides romantically cradled in Cortes' arms. Because she sits before him on his horse, technically she leads the armed conquistadors who follow them. The tarot card for the Wheel of Fortune may be used to represent her.

**Date:** 22 July, coinciding with the feast of Mary Magdalen

**Sacred site:** La Malinche, an inactive volcano in Mexico, is named in her honor.

**See also:** *Llorona, La; Malinalxochitl; Mary Magdalen; Maximon; Quetzalcoatl* and the Glossary entries for *Avatar* and *Identification*

## Mami Waters

*The Queen Who Lives in the Waters; Mother of the Waters; The More Than Beautiful Woman; The Crocodile Woman; The Laughing Water Goddess*

**Also known as:** Mami Wata; Mammy Waters; Mammywater; Madame Poisson

**Origin:** West and Central Coastal Africa Mami Waters—a complex, volatile spirit—brings joy, wealth, ecstasy, success, and prosperity to her devotees. She causes *and* cures infertility, impotence, and various illnesses, especially chronic fatigue and venereal diseases. She bestows health, beauty, and musical prowess.

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*The snake charmer most commonly associated with Mami Waters is also identified with Lubana, Martha the Dominator, and various Bori spirits. In Haiti, the central snake charmer is identified as the lwa Reine Travaux “Queen of Works.” The big snake entwined around her is Damballah, and the smaller inset image is Ayida Wedo.*

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Mami Waters, snake goddess, emerged from her home in a lake to become the most successful traditional African deity of modern times. While other traditional deities are marginalized by Christianity and Islam, Mami Waters is more popular now than ever. Fifteen years ago, she was barely known outside Africa; now she is venerated worldwide. Mami Waters was prominently featured in New York City’s American Museum of Natural History’s 2007 exhibition on mythic creatures.

A specific image served as her portal from obscure rural goddess to world power: Mami is identified with an iconic image of a snake charmer, painted circa 1880 in Hamburg by a now-unknown artist. The model was a Hamburg zookeeper’s wife. Later rendered as a chromolithograph, it was distributed as a poster throughout Africa, evoking tremendous spiritual response. Even though it doesn’t resemble earlier images of Mami Waters, people looked at the picture and recognized her.

The image portrays a beautiful dark-skinned woman with long thick hair. Dressed as a snake charmer, she holds one large snake. Another twines around her. Because her whole body is not shown—the image terminates beneath her hips—she could be a snake-woman or a mermaid. A smaller inset image depicts what may be the same woman (same costume, different hairdo) playing a double flute and charming

snakes.

Mami Waters is characterized by *joie de vivre* but is also described as emotionally remote, although not physically. She is a “living” spirit, meaning that she sometimes manifests as a flesh-and-blood woman, physically, not just in dreams or visions. Many people describe actual physical encounters with her, whether on a city street or by a stream or river. She has sex with those who appeal to her.

Although Mami also frequently manifests as a mermaid, in urban areas she may appear as a stylish young woman, so beautiful she draws gasps, stops traffic, turns heads. If bejeweled, her gold is blinding in its brilliance. Her hair is long and wonderful. Her skin may be literally white, like chalk, or she may be a very fair-skinned black woman.

Because of her skin color, some anthropologists consider Mami Waters a European importation, suggesting that she was inspired by ship figureheads in the form of mermaids. However, her devotees *never* consider her Caucasian. She is envisioned covered by or embodying the essence of the white clay or chalk traditionally used to delineate death or to demarcate sacred or forbidden territory. Mami Waters is a goddess of fertility and birth but also of death and danger, sometimes held responsible for drowning deaths, although she also rescues people.

Mami Waters heals impotence, but if she really likes a guy, she may permit him to be potent with her alone, thus cutting him off sexually from the human community. The men she most adores typically devote themselves exclusively to her, sacrificing other romantic or sexual ties. They achieve positions of tremendous wealth and power, thanks to Mami Waters, but in true fairy tale fashion, must keep their relationship with her a secret or their good fortune will evaporate.

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*Although now frequently portrayed as a classic mermaid with a fish tail, Mami Waters was originally a snake goddess: her lower half is serpentine. Her iconic images usually feature a snake somewhere in the picture.*

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Mami Waters typically demonstrates interest in a person via illness, specifically medically inexplicable fatigue and malaise. The person becomes remote and distant. No medical cause can be found. Health doesn't improve until the person contacts Mami Waters, either directly or through her clergy. This malaise is perceived as a kind of spirit possession but more like that of a Zar spirit than Western demonic possession. The person may dream about Mami Waters or her symbols constantly. Alternatively, they just daydream compulsively. Sometimes infertility or the inability to bear a living child indicates Mami Waters' attempts at communication with women.

Like a Zar spirit, Mami Waters can be transformed into an ally: she can reverse all negative ailments she causes. She does not intend them badly—she may not know a better way to signal someone's attention. She may in fact be a Zar spirit. Some consider her a Simbi, and still others suggest that Mami Waters forms her own family of spirits and so there are many individual paths or avatars of Mami Waters, not all identical.

- In Latin America, Mami Waters is syncretized to Martha the Dominator. Elsewhere she is syncretized to Eve.
- Nigerian author Flora Nwapa's 1966 novel, *Efuru*, explores a woman's relationship with Mami Waters.

**Favored people:** She allegedly has a soft spot for harpists and other musicians.

**Manifestation:** Whether as woman, mermaid, or half-woman/half-snake, she is consistently gorgeous and charismatic. She may be accompanied by pythons that wrap themselves around her. She may wear an extremely expensive, even ostentatious, watch (even as a mermaid—the watch is waterproof). If she has a cell phone, it's the most expensive model. Mami makes her presence known via the sound of merry laughter.

**Iconography:** Her image is painted on walls of lottery parlors to bring wealth and luck.

**Attribute:** Golden comb, expensive wrist watch



**Colors:** Red, white

**Creatures:** Snake, crocodile

**Element:** Water

**Sacred sites:** She has shrines throughout Western and Central Africa, Europe and South and North America.

**Rituals:** Those called by Mami Waters are encouraged to spend time in water, whether herbal or enchanted baths or immersion in living water (ocean, lake, river, spring).

**Offerings:** Traditionally, Mami Waters does not drink alcoholic beverages but accepts soft drinks. Her favorite is lemonade. However, recent reports indicate she has developed a taste for Campari. Mami Waters likes tropical fruit and exotic, luxurious food. She enjoys perfume, cosmetics, mirrors, and expensive sunglasses. She likes toys, especially Barbie or other fashion dolls.

**See also:** *Aisha Qandisha; Ayida Wedo; Bori; Damballah; Ezili; Lalla Malika; Lalla Mira; Lilith; Lubana; Lwa; Melusine; Mermaid; Sarkin Aljan Suleimanu; Sili Kenwa; Simbi Spirits; Zar*

## **Manannan Mac Lir**

*King of the Land of Promise*

**Origin:** Isle of Man

Manannan, son of the ancient sea deity Lir, is a sea spirit, too. Ocean waves are his horses. The sea is his cloak. He is a trickster, a master of true magic, illusion, and sleight of hand. He controls the weather. Manannan presides over an Other-world realm named Mag Mell, a joyous paradise populated by dead souls and other members of the Tuatha Dé Danaan. He serves as a psychopomp, ferrying souls to his realm. Although Manannan is classified among the Tuatha Dé Danaan, it is widely acknowledged that he is older than that family of spirits. He may be among the primordial spirits of Earth.

Manannan possesses a magical crane-bag filled with treasures:

- He owns a boat that requires no sails or oars but obeys the thoughts of its captain.
- He owns a horse that rides equally well on land or water.
- He owns a magic sword named Fragarach (“The Answerer”) that penetrates any armor.
- He owns pigs that are slaughtered and consumed but are then reborn, fully grown the next day so that they can be eaten over and over again.

**Manifestation:** His cloak of mist enables him to be invisible when he chooses. He wears a flaming helmet. Often envisioned as an older man with long, flowing white hair and beard, he is a master shape-shifter and full of surprises.

**Emblem:** Some scholars think the Triskelion, the three-legged wheel which is the emblem of the Isle of Man, represents Manannan.

**Element:** Water

**Sacred sites:** He was the first king of the Isle of Man, named in his honor and still serves as the island’s spirit guardian. In addition, the spirit realm Manannan rules lies beneath the waves.

**Day:** Midsummer’s Eve or the summer solstice

**Altar:** Decorate his altar with marine imagery

**Offerings:** Flowers, bundles of reeds and/or alcoholic beverages including Okell’s Mac Lir wheat beer, which features his image on the label.

**See also:** *Aoife (2); Cliodna; Fand; Lir; Llyr; Manawydan; Psychopomp*

## **Manasa**

*Queen of Snakes; Destroyer of Poison*

**Also known as:** Manasi; Manasadevi

**Classification:** Naga

Manasa, sister of Vasuki, the Naga King, is a snake goddess who is extremely popular among women in parts of India. Manasa heals, bestows, and enhances personal fertility. She grants wishes, protects against snakes, and provides wealth, abundance, and success. Manasa is a healing spirit; her specialty is infectious and contagious illnesses including smallpox and AIDS.

Once upon a time, Manasa married the sage Jaratkaru and strove to be the perfect wife. One day Jaratkaru fell asleep with his head in her lap. She didn't move for hours lest she disturb him, but finally the sun set and she knew it was time for him to perform important evening rituals. Very, very gently and respectfully, she woke her husband. He was livid, claiming that he would have woken up on his own at the right time. Accusing Manasa of breaking her vow of obedience, he abandoned her.

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*Manasa can allegedly heal any snake bite, even those for which no known antidote exists. Herpetologists who search for unknown species might do well to cultivate a relationship with Manasa, just in case.*

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Ever since her husband's rebuke and rejection, she has been a touchy, somewhat hypersensitive spirit who demands respect and devotion. She is jealous and may or may not be willing to share devotees with other spirits. (In other words, if you develop a close relationship with her, she may prefer that you not venerate other spirits.)

Manasa demonstrates interest in people by causing their hair to mat. If she is aggravated or defending a devotee, her preferred weapon is snake bite. Snakes are her messengers.

**Manifestation:** Manasa may manifest as a beautiful woman or a snake. She rides through the sky in a chariot drawn by snakes. She may have one eye.

**Iconography:** A woman covered or surrounded by snakes. Alternatively

she stands upon one. She is wreathed by a canopy of seven hooded cobras.

**Attribute:** Lotus

**Spirit allies:** Nagas; she travels in Shiva's entourage and is sometimes called his daughter, but this may be intended to make her subservient to him instead of a competitor.

**Element:** Water

**Time:** The Manasa Puja (feast) occurs during the Hindu month of Sravana.

**Offerings:** Flowers, fruit (especially bananas), milk, incense, vermilion powder, and/or terra cotta snakes.

**See also:** *Mariamman; Naga; Shiva*

## **Manat**

*Time; Fate; Destiny*

**Also known as:** Menat; Manathu

**Origin:** Arabia

Manat is among the three pre-Islamic goddesses mentioned in the Koran. Less information about her survives than about her compatriots Allat and Al-Uzza. Manat is a spirit of destiny and fortune, whether good or bad. The Greeks identified her with Tyche. Manat's shrine, located between Mecca and Medina, was destroyed by order of the Prophet Muhammed.

**Manifestation:** A large black, uncut stone

**Planet:** Moon

**See also:** *Al-Uzza; Allat; Tyche* and the Glossary entry for *Identification*

## Manawydan

**Origin:** Wales

Although recognizably the same spirit as Manannan, Manawydan's mythology is different. It is possible myths are lost, but in Wales his associations with the sea are de-emphasized. Instead emphasis is placed on his relations with other spirits. Manawydan is the son of Llyr, the brother of Bran and Branwen, and the husband of Rhiannon. However, he remains a potent magician and master craftsman just as he is in Ireland and the Isle of Man.

**See also:** *Bran; Branwen; Llyr; Manannan; Rhiannon*

## Maneki Neko

**Origin:** Japan

Maneki Neko, the Japanese Beckoning Cat, virtually unknown one century ago, may be the most ubiquitous amulet on Earth today. The standard image of Maneki Neko depicts a Japanese bobtail cat holding up one paw in invitation. In Japan, the gesture of placing an open-palmed hand up to one ear indicates *come here*. Maneki Neko is perceived as exerting a magnetic come-hither effect and so the image should be placed near a door or window, looking out:

- A cat with a beckoning left hand invites business.
- A cat with a beckoning right hand invokes cash.
- Particularly hard-working Maneki Nekos keep both paws raised.
- Maneki Neko bells cleanse the aura while beckoning prosperity.
- Leopard-spotted Maneki Nekos are prized by politicians and those seeking votes. (The word for *leopard* in Japanese is a homonym for *vote*.)

It is important to appreciate that Maneki Neko is not just a doll or statue but radiates the power of a spirit in the same way that a Daruma doll radiates the power of that Bodhisattva. (Sometimes Maneki Neko is costumed as Daruma or is portrayed holding a Daruma doll in one hand,

thus blending and magnifying their powers.) Maneki Neko is a benevolent cat spirit of abundance, wealth, and protection.

Various legends attest to the roots of this image:

- A cat saves a samurai's life.
- A cat brings prosperity to a monastery.
- A cat brings economic success to its namesake cathouse, a bordello.
- A cat transforms into a courtesan to raise funds for the impoverished people she loves.

Although all these legends may be true, the last two best evoke Maneki Neko's documentable history. Maneki Neko first emerged as a lucky amulet after previously popular phallic images were banned during the Meiji era (1868–1912). Cute Maneki Neko was the substitute and quickly proved her worth. Maneki Neko may secretly and discreetly evoke the power of female genital imagery, coming out of the closet just as her more explicit male counterpart was banished within. (See *Konsei Myojin* for further details.)

Although any Maneki Neko brings luck, different types of Maneki Neko images fulfill different needs. Cats are color coded:

- A white Maneki Neko brings luck and happiness.
- A gold Maneki Neko beckons wealth and prosperity.
- A black Maneki Neko serves as a spiritual guardian.
- A small black Maneki Neko worn as a charm allegedly protects against stalkers.
- A red Maneki Neko fosters good health.
- A pink Maneki Neko attracts romance and protects children.
- Tri-colored Maneki Nekos are considered especially auspicious
- A small Maneki Neko of any color worn around the waist protects against pain and illness, especially from arthritis.

No need to limit yourself to one Maneki Neko. Many fans accrue massive collections. Maneki Neko comes in all sizes. Many are ornamented with assorted good luck charms to enhance their power.

Maneki Nekos housed in bars frequently clutch bottles of beer and are positioned to gaze at customers. Maneki Neko frequently masquerades as other spirits, including Okame and the Shichi Fukujin.

**Iconography:** Maneki Neko statues are commonly manufactured with a slot in back so that they can serve as piggy banks. Allegedly feeding the statue some coins on a regular basis makes Maneki Neko work even harder.

**Attributes:** The standard Maneki Neko holds a koban, a gold coin common during the Edo era (1603–1867) and wears a red collar with a bell. More ornate Maneki Nekos wield attributes closely associated with other spirits especially Daruma dolls, the hammer that identifies Daikoku and the red fish that is emblematic of Ebisu. The implication is that Maneki Neko wields their power as well as her own.

**See also:** *Bastet; Daikoku; Daruma; Ebisu; Fukusuke; Nang Kwak; Neko-Mata; Okame; Shichi Fukujin*

## Manes

**Origin:** Rome

**Feast:** 24 August

The Manes are Rome's deified ancestors. A modern term for "ancestor worship" is *manism*. Their name may mean the "kindly" or "goodly ones," possibly an attempt to soothe and propitiate difficult spirits, sort of like hopefully addressing a snarling hound as, "Good doggy!" The goddess Mania presides over this host of infernal spirits.

The Manes were originally envisioned as the benevolent dead, who must be consistently propitiated to stop them from becoming the threatening dead like the Lemures. *Manes* eventually became a looser term, incorporating spirits associated with death like tomb and cemetery guardians in addition to dead souls.

**Spirit allies:** Mania and Ceres are venerated alongside the Manes.

**Day:** 24 August, the Roman Festival of Mania. On this day the cover that

shielded the entrance to Hades was lifted so that the ghosts had easy access. Just to be on the safe side, however, the Manes are also traditionally honored and propitiated throughout the entire year.

**Offerings:** Beans, bread, eggs, honey, milk, oil, wine, and roses

**See also:** *Ancestors; Ceres; Ghosts; Lemures; Mania*

## Mania

*Mother of Ghosts; Grandmother Ghost*

**Also known as:** Mana; Manea; Manuana

**Origin:** Italy, possibly Etruscan

**Feast:** 24 August

The term *mania* derives from this goddess' name. Mania supervises the Manes, Spirits of the Dead. She is their Mother Superior and leader. A goddess of life and death, her mania (lunacy, moon-illness, lunar-inspired madness) is a conduit to the divine.

Although the Manes are sometimes called the benevolent dead, they weren't always *that* benevolent, and neither is Mania. At the New Moon nearest November 1, windows were shuttered, houses sealed up, and mirrors turned to face the wall. The Manes were loose. (The Manes can slip in through cracks and use mirrors as portals.) Woolen dolls called maniae were hung over doorways with garlic and poppies to serve as protection.

The Manes were accused of stealing children. Speculation exists that in ancient days, young boys were sacrificed to Mania at the Festival of the Crossroads (the Compitalia) in exchange for her protection of the remaining family. This tradition was allegedly abolished following the expulsion of the Etruscan kings and the founding of the Roman Republic. Poppies and garlic were substituted for human sacrifice.

Post-Christianity, Mania lost her goddess status but survives in Italy as a dreaded night witch who haunts people's dreams. Her afflictions include chronic nightmares, madness, and manias. She can be invoked to



banish ghosts if she's feeling benevolent.

**Manifestation:** Mania appears alone in dreams but otherwise leads a host of spirits. She wears a mask, rarely if ever revealing her face.

**Attribute:** Mania is associated with the fig hand (*mano fica*), her life-affirming protective gesture. The fig hand mimes sexual intercourse: make a fist and thrust the thumb through the first two fingers. It repels the Evil Eye and ghosts. Mania commands ghosts. The gesture lends you some of her authority. Make the sign of the fig hand whenever ghosts threaten. Fig hand amulets may be worn or posted on a wall.

**Consort:** Mantus, overlord of a realm of death

**Realm:** Mania governs the subterranean Land of the Dead. For the Romans, this wasn't just some abstract realm someplace underground: an entrance was located in the pit beneath the *lapis manalis* in the Roman Forum. This stone was lifted three times a year in order to release the Manes, who emerged to accept offerings from the living before returning, shepherded by Mania in both directions.

**Offerings:** Garlic, poppies

**See also:** *Endymion; Ghost; Lara; Manes*

## Manitou

*Manitou* is a word for "spirit" used by the Anishinaubae (Ojibwa/Chippewa) people of North America. *Manitou* literally means "mystery" or "essence." The word refers to spirit beings but also to a quality, energy, or sacred power. There are countless Manitous. Like Orishas and Lwa, some are concerned with people, but many others are not. Manitous may be benevolent, malevolent, or anything on the spectrum in between. Many are guardian spirits of regions or specific departments of life.

**See also:** *Lwa; Mishepishu; Nebaunaubae; Orisha; Windigo*

## Manjushri

*Lord of Wisdom; The Gentle Voiced Lord; Glorious Gentle One; The Lamp of Wisdom*

**Also known as:** Manjusri; Monju (Japanese); Wen Shu (Chinese); JamdPal (Tibetan)

**Classification:** Bodhisattva; Bosatsu; Buddha; Yidam

Manjushri, the first Bodhisattva, is the essence and spirit of wisdom, embodying the wisdom of *all* Bodhisattvas. Guardian of sacred knowledge and spiritual seekers, his sword slices through illusions that cloud the minds of Buddhists as well as any other obstacles on the road to enlightenment. Manjushri, Lord of Awareness, served as initiator of the Buddhas of the past and will fulfill this role for Maitreya in the future.

Manjushri is a culture hero, too:

- The Manchu dynasty derived its name from Manjushri.
- Manjushri is considered the founding father of Nepalese culture.

**Favored people:** Students, calligraphers, knowledge seekers, those born in the Year of the Rabbit

**Manifestation:** Manjushri travels in the guise of a simple mendicant (begging) monk.

**Attributes:** Lotus, bow and arrows, book, flaming sword

**Color:** White

**Creature:** Dog

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*When Manjushri travels in the guise of a mendicant priest, he is always accompanied by a small dog like a Pekinese, Lhasa Apso, Shi Tzu, or similar breed. Manjushri is not really a simple monk. Likewise, his companion is not really a simple dog but actually a disguised celestial snow lion (also known as*

*a lion-dog). When Manjushri's presence is urgently needed, his pet assumes its true form and serves as his mount.*

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**Mount:** Kang-seng, the snow lion—a pre-Buddhist Tibetan spirit—serves as Manjushri's mount and appears on the Tibetan flag.

**Direction:** East

**Time:** He is the guardian of the Year of the Rabbit.

**Date:** New Year's Day is dedicated to Manjushri.

**Sacred site:** His home on Wutaishan (Five Terrace Mountain), one of China's four sacred Buddhist peaks. Many visions and apparitions of Manjushri have been reported on the mountain since the Tang Dynasty.

**Mantra:** *OM AH RAH PAH CHAH NA DHIH*

(Chanting his mantra allegedly enhances wisdom, memory, and the ability to study, learn, teach, and articulate one's thoughts. Manjushri is associated with various mantras, some reserved for initiated adepts.)

**See also:** *Avalokiteshvara; Bodhisattva; Bon spirits; Bosatsu; Buddha; Maitreya; Marichi; Yamantaka; Yidam* and the Glossary entry for *Mantra*

## Marassa

**Also known as:** Mabasa

**Classification:** Lwa

**Feast:** 28 December

The Marassa, Vodou's sacred twins, are spirits of paradox:

- They are two distinct bodies who share one soul (or they are one soul with two bodies).
- They are opposites who are simultaneously the same.
- They are yin and yang, and yet they are one.

- They are mirror reflections, but they represent both sides of the mirror.
- They are the Creator's very first children as well as the very first dead.

The Marassa rule thresholds; they span divides; they encompass, embody, and resolve contradictions. Their name derives from a Kikongo word, *Mabasa*, meaning “those who come divided” or “the one who comes as two.”

They are mystic, sacred, powerful, mysterious spirits. They are children, but they are ancient. The Marassa are profoundly potent healers and guardians of children. Do you want children? The Marassa provide and protect fertility, too. If asked, they will guard babies in the womb and oversee the childbirth process.

Of course, what is reproduction but the union of polarities? It takes two to make three. Another of the Marassa's paradoxes is that “the one who comes as two” may really come as three. In esoteric Vodou cosmology, twins are perceived as incomplete. They await the third who completes them, the delayed triplet. The twins are forerunners of this third. The single child born after twins is considered even more magically powerful.

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*The Marassa are traditionally fed and represented by special three-chambered ritual bowls, one chamber per child. The bowls are also emblematic of procreation and generation: yin and yang, male and female, opposing energies will create a third.*

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The Marassa typically manifest as rambunctious, capricious, playful but demanding children. Traditionally the first lwa honored at Vodou ceremonies (after invocation of Papa Legba, gatekeeper of the spirits), the Marassa race in like children who can't wait to get to where they're going. They crave sugar, toys, and treats. It is crucial to recall that although the Marassa resemble children, they are *not* children but potent

spirits who like to manifest in the guise of children. Devotees are sometimes tempted to parent or discipline them. Don't. The Marassa don't need vitamins, vegetables, or anything "good" for children. Attempts to parent them may indicate to the Marassa that you have forgotten their true sacred nature.

Powerful and responsible spiritual bodyguards, they may be invoked to guard children. The Marassa love children and may spontaneously assume guardianship. They are also superb, enthusiastic guardians for toy stores, candy stores, commercial spaces specializing in children's birthday parties, any kind of place that fills children with joy. Set up an offering table for the Marassa and request that they protect the establishment and keep business booming.

The Marassa's personal feast day, 28 December, coinciding with the Roman Catholic Feast of the Massacre of the Holy Infants, is devoted to:

- Protection of living children.
- Celebration and commemoration of children who have died.
- Solace and comforting the families of dead children.

Traditional rituals include a big party honoring the Marassa. Invite lots of children and encourage them to be proxies for the Marassa, standins who help consume offerings of cakes, cookies, and soda.

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*The Marassa are sometimes considered the children of Saint Nicholas and the lwa Clairmesine. A standard chromolithograph of Saint Nicholas depicts him standing beside two children inside a tub. Sometimes there is a third who kisses his foot. These children are interpreted as the Marassa and the third child.*

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The Marassa have the attention span of spoiled kids. Do *not* make them wait for promised offerings. They are not vicious or violent spirits

but will throw some major hissy fits and tantrums. It is also crucial to treat them equally or they may get jealous and fight; never offer just one slice of cake, for instance. Either give sufficient quantity for sharing (a big bowl of individually wrapped candies, fudge cut into numerous squares) or clearly delineate a share for each. Marassa usually manifest as either two or three. Ask them to identify how many of them there are so that you can make appropriate offerings.

- The Marassa may be Fon creator spirits Mawu-Lisa in disguise.
- The Marassa are syncretized to Saints Cosmas and Damian.
- Three Marassa are often envisioned as female.
- They are syncretized to the Charites Three Graces; Saints Faith, Hope and Charity; and Saintes Maries de la Mer.

**Favored people:** Children in general, twins and other multiple births as well as the single child born after multiple births regardless of age, parents whose children are dead

**Manifestation:** The Marassa may be male, female, or a combination. Ask them to let you know so you can give appropriate gifts. The Marassa often manifest directly to children. The phenomenon known as imaginary friends may actually be visitations from the Marassa.

**Iconography:** Images of any of the saints or sacred beings with whom they're syncretized may be used to represent the Marassa.

**Attributes:** Palm branches and leaves

**Days:** Monday, Friday

**Colors:** Black, white

**Time:** The Season of the Twins is the month between 6 December (Feast of Saint Nicholas) and 6 January (The Feast of the Epiphany).

**Altar:** Hungry children are cranky and troublesome, so keep full bowls of candy or popcorn on their altar at all times so they can snack when they wish.

**Offerings:** The Marassa have the appetites of growing children. Give them treats that make kids happy: candy, cookies, honey, popcorn, toys, and fun, fizzy drinks. Wrap food up in banana leaves. Throw parties for them, inviting other children to come feast with them. Consciously bringing joy to children is in itself an offering to the Marassa.

Do *not* give the Marassa vegetables or leafy greens. It insults them. On a superficial level, these rambunctious kids don't want to eat their vegetables, but the deeper subliminal implication is that they require botanicals because you think their own innate miraculous powers of healing are insufficient. If any herbs are needed, *they'll* tell *you*. (The Marassa sometimes specify herbal prescriptions and remedies during ritual possession. They may also do so during dreams.) Regardless of what you feed your own children do *not* feed the Marassa anything like sugarless, wheat-free cake. They have no allergies. They will never have health problems. Just give them whatever makes a child's eyes light up with glee.

**See also:** *Charites; Clairmesine; Dioscuri; Ibeji; Maries de la Mer*

## Mari (1)

**Also known as:** Mayan

**Origin:** Basque (Euskara)

Mari, great goddess of the Pyrenees and eldest of the Basque deities, dwells within deep caverns. She controls storms and is intensely identified with lightning. Emerging from her caves, she flies through the air encompassed in flames. Her caves are filled with enchanted gold and gems which, if stolen, transform into coal.

An all-powerful goddess, she is head of the Pagan Basque pantheon. The meaning of her name is unknown although many interpret it to mean "lady". Devotees must uphold her moral code: Mari despises lying, thieving, and bragging. She is a queen and must always be treated with due respect. Removing anything from her sacred sites is forbidden and incurs swift punishment. It is considered good manners to request her permission before entering any place associated with her. Do not sit in

her presence.

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*Mari is a global traveler with an impeccable sense of direction. Allegedly if you call her name aloud three times when lost, she will appear overhead to provide directions. (Remember, she's a shape-shifter!)*

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Mari provides accurate oracles. She can produce miracles of healing, fertility, rescue, and protection. Traditionally Mari heals via herbs and the water dripping from stalactites. Post-Christianity, Mari was redefined as a Queen of Witches. Her devotees were arrested by the Inquisition and accused of practicing witchcraft. Even so, her veneration survived. Mari remains an extremely popular goddess. She is as hostile toward Christianity as it has historically been toward her. Although she will share devotees with other Pagan deities, she does not tolerate anything redolent of Christianity.

**Manifestation:** Mari has a massive repertoire of forms including a woman, a woman with bird feet, a tree, a tree radiating flames, a woman radiating flames, gusts of wind, lightning, rainbows, a cloud, and birds. She sits, spinning or combing her hair. She may sit on a golden throne or at the entrance to a cave.

**Iconography:** She is portrayed as a woman with the full moon behind her head.

**Attribute:** Comb, distaff, sickle

**Consort:** Maju, also known as Sugaar, the Dragon Lord of Thunder

**Day:** Friday

**Planet:** Moon

**Mount:** Horses pull her chariot; she rides a lightning bolt or travels in the form of a fireball. Sometimes she rides a sheep or goat.

**Animal:** Snake, goat



**Birds:** Crow, vulture

**Sacred sites:** Numerous places in Basque territory are named in Mari's honor. She is venerated in caves, within stone circles, and atop mountains. Mari inhabits the highest peaks of Pyrenean Mountains like Aizkorri, Amboto, and Muru.

**Elements:** Earth, fire, water

**Color:** Red

**Offerings:** Flowers and candles. It is traditional to leave cash or stones within caves as gifts for Mari.

**See also:** *Aatxe; Mari (2); Pelé*

## Mari (2)

In addition to the now more famous Basque goddess named Mari, there is another Mari, a mysterious water goddess worshipped in the Amorite city-state also called Mari, located on the right bank of the Euphrates in what is now Syria. It is now unknown whether the city was named after the goddess or vice-versa. The city of Mari was at the peak of its power circa 2900–2370. Hammurabi conquered it in 1759 BCE. The city was abandoned in the eighth century BCE.

The Sumerian word *mar* may be interpreted as “womb” or “sea”. Scholars speculate that the Amorites may have been the first to venerate Asherah, Lady of the Sea. Mari may or may not be the same goddess as Asherah. Alternatively Mari may be the goddess of the star-gazing Nabataeans and/or the mysterious dolphin goddess whose image appears throughout the Middle East. This Mari may or may not be the goddess of the same name who is currently venerated in the modern Feri tradition.

**See also:** *Al-Uzza; Allat; Asherah, Lady of the Sea; Atargatis; Mari (1); Maries de la Mer*

## Maria Lionza

## *La Reina; The Queen*

**Also known as:** Maria Leonza

**Origin:** Venezuela

Maria Lionza names a goddess (maybe two) and a spiritual tradition:

Maria Lionza is a snake goddess with dominion over love, romance, sex, fertility, and abundance invoked for protection, success, and virtually anything a devotee desires. Her origins are the subject of diverse legends: common factors are her green eyes and a giant anaconda.

Maria Lionza was first venerated by Venezuela's Indians. A prophecy foretold that the birth of a green-eyed child among them was a harbinger of disaster. Sure enough, the green-eyed baby girl was born right before the Spanish Conquest. Different tribes have different versions of what happened to her and how she became a goddess:

- She may have been closely guarded or sent to live alone on a mountain.
- An anaconda fell in love with her and she became its queen.
- Thrown into a lake as a sacrifice for an anaconda spirit, she emerged as a goddess.
- When she saw her reflection in a lake, *she* transformed into an anaconda.
- Some or all of the above.

Maria Lionza rules nature, all living waters, animals, and plants. In addition to sources of water, her sacred sites include mountains and caves. Maria Lionza punishes those who harm or kill wild animals as well as those who cut down forest trees. Originally a local jungle goddess, her veneration spread: she is now the primary focus of a rapidly expanding religion named after her. Devotees, known as *Marialionceros*, call her Venezuela's spiritual queen.

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*Yara, Caribe deity of love and nature, was venerated in what is now the Venezuelan state of Yaracuy, meaning "Yara's Place." After the Spanish*

*Conquest, devotees trying to integrate her into Catholicism began calling her Santa Maria de la Onza (“Saint Mary of the Jaguar or Cougar”). Eventually this evolved into Maria Lionza.*

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After World War II, secular authorities attempted to suppress religious aspects of Maria Lionza, celebrating her as a national myth instead. Meanwhile, attempts were made to re-envision sexy Maria Lionza to resemble the Virgin of Coromoto, an apparition of Mary who in 1651 appeared to the chief of Venezuela’s Coromoto Indians and encouraged him to abandon the forest, join the Spanish settlement, and convert to Christianity. On 7 October 1944, Pope Pius XII declared the Virgin of Coromoto Patroness of Venezuela.

The traditional image of Maria Lionza depicts her as a green-eyed Indian woman, living amongst animals in a jungle paradise. After World War II, a secondary iconic image evolved depicting a beautiful, crowned, and usually brown-eyed Creole woman wearing a blue-and-white colonial-era gown. (Blue and white are Mary’s colors.) This image may be the original goddess or her daughter, sometimes identified as Venezuela’s first *mestiza* (“woman of mixed European and Indian descent”).

Mother and daughter may be venerated side by side. Legend says that the original Maria bore a conquistador’s child. (She was allegedly the lover of the infamous Lope de Aguirre, the Wrath of God, who did have a *mestiza* daughter, Elvira.) Alternatively, the second image is a Spanish girl who escaped into the jungle where she was allegedly worshipped by Indians. Both images of Maria Lionza are ascribed similar powers. Maria Lionza is syncretized to the Virgin Mary, especially Our Lady of Coromoto and, as Santeria becomes more popular in Venezuela, increasingly identified with Yemaya.

Mara Lionza, the spiritual tradition, is a blend of indigenous Venezuelan, African, Spiritist, and Christian religions. Spirits venerated in the Maria Lionza tradition are divided into courts. For example:

- The Court of Africans includes the Seven African Powers.
- The Celestial Court includes angels and official saints.

- The Court of Indians is led by Guaicaipuro.
- The Court of Liberators is led by Simon Bolivar.
- The Court of Vikings is led by Thor under the *nom de guerre* Mr. Barbaro.

A devotee addresses the court that best fulfills his needs. Thus the Warrior Court is invoked to fight hexes or curses. Each court is identified with a color, although there is debate as to which court is assigned which color. Maria Lionza, the goddess, presides over these courts. Her own personal court—the inner circle—is called the Three Potencies and consists of Maria, Guaicaipuro, and Negro Felipe. The image of Maria as Spanish princess is used, thus the three spirits represent Europe, Africa, and South America, the three continents from which modern Venezuelan culture derives.

Legends of Maria Lionza inspired William Henry Hudson's 1904 novel, *Green Mansions: A Romance in the Tropical Forest*.

**Manifestation:** Maria Lionza manifests as a beautiful naked jungle goddess or a crowned, bejeweled princess wearing Spanish clothing.

**Iconography:** The most famous image of Maria Lionza is the twenty-foot-tall statue that loomed over the freeway bisecting Venezuela's capital city, Caracas, placed there in 1957 by dictator and devotee Marcos Pérez Jiménez. Maria is portrayed as a nude, voluptuous Indian woman riding a tapir. The statue evolved into a public shrine with devotees dashing across five lanes of heavy traffic to lay flowers at her feet. Pollution, humidity, and constant traffic vibrations damaged the statue, which broke dramatically on 6 June 2004, splitting apart at the waist, the top half toppling backwards. Many perceived this as a harbinger of disaster.

**Color:** Blue

**Creatures:** All of them, but a blue butterfly serves as her special messenger.

**Element:** Water

**Sacred site:** Maria's home, Mount Sorte approximately 180 miles west of Caracas, declared a national park in the 1980s.

**Time:** The pilgrimage to Sorte on 12 October coincides with the day Columbus arrived in Venezuela. Holy Week is also considered sacred, but people visit all the time.

**Altar:** Reproduce a jungle ambience on home altars.

**Offerings:** Flowers, fruit, incense, candles, water, champagne, black coffee, pilgrimage

**See also:** *Barbaro, Mr; Guaicaipuro; Malandros; Malinche, La; Negra Francisca; Negro Felipe; Seven African Powers; Thor; Yemaya*

## **Mariamman**

**Also known as:** Amman

**Origin:** Tamil (India)

Mariamman, Goddess of Smallpox, a Tamil tribal goddess with dominion over wind, rain, and moisture, is among Earth's guardian spirits. Popular and powerful, she was incorporated into the Vedic Hindu pantheon, eventually traveling around the world.

According to Hindu myth, Mariamman's husband, ascetic sage Jamadagni, perceiving that his faithful wife had momentarily lusted in her heart for another and had thus become impure, ordered their son to behead her. The son did as told but was overcome with grief and depression. The father, feeling sympathy for the son, eventually relented. Telling his son to gather Mariamman's head and body, he taught him a secret resurrection formula. The son, nervously hurrying, immediately recognized his mother's head on the pile of recently executed female corpses but accidentally joined it to the body of a low-caste woman allegedly killed for committing all kinds of unspeakable (sexual, violent, transgressive) vices. The result was that Mariamman's Brahman mind was overwhelmed by her tribal body. (Is a metaphor intended? You bet.)

Her husband expelled her from her home. Mariamman then revealed

herself as a wrathful, rampaging goddess. Ravaging the region, she was unstoppable until deities seeking to propitiate her offered her dominion over smallpox. With the ability to cause and cure this dread disease, she was assured constant worship. She remains among the most popular goddesses of Southern India, the southern counterpart to northern Sitala.

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*Mariamman's myth is a forerunner of horror movies like Peter Lorre's Mad Love, in which an executed murderer's hands are surgically grafted onto someone else, who then feels overwhelmingly compelled to kill.*

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In the early twentieth century, South Indian traders brought Mariamman to Vietnam where she found new devotees, mainly of Vietnamese and Chinese descent, especially female entrepreneurs, transport workers, service industry workers, and students. After several generations, she is considered a local goddess, associated with success and prosperity more than illness. Venerated outside a traditional Hindu context, she is considered a powerful purveyor of miracles.

Mariamman heals all illnesses associated with redness, heat, and rashes, including chicken pox and measles. She is invoked for virtually everything, including protection, progeny, and prosperity.

- In India, she is syncretized to Durga and Parvati.
- In Vietnam, Mariamman is identified with Ba Den and Kwan Yin.

**Iconography:** As a tribal goddess, she is sometimes venerated in the form of a stone tipped with a sharp point and/or dyed red. In Hindu context, she is envisioned as a very beautiful woman, seated on a throne or a lion; sometimes her face is red.

**Attributes:** Trident, bowl, spear, sword

**Colors:** Red, yellow

**Tree:** Neem

**Animals:** Snake, lion

**Offerings:** Incense, oil lamps, red flowers, pumpkins

**See also:** *Ba Den; Babalu Ayé; Jari Mari; Kwan Yin; Manasa; Sitala*

## **Marichi**

*Goddess of Dawn; Queen of Heaven; The Diamond Sow*

**Also known as:** Marici (Sanskrit); Mari shi; Marishiten (Japanese)

**Classification:** Buddha; Yidam

Marichi is a goddess, a full-fledged Buddha, and a powerful guardian spirit. She began her incarnation as an Indian goddess of the morning sun. (In Vedic traditions, she is considered male.) Her Sanskrit name means “a ray of light.” When Marichi was incorporated into Buddhism, her veneration spread throughout the Buddhist world.

Marichi protects against natural disasters and dangers deriving from any kind of living being, including malefic people, thieves, criminals, muggers, enemies, animals, and vicious spirits. She is invoked for protection when traveling.

Marichi is particularly popular in Tibet and Japan. In Tibet, she is considered a Buddha, the female counterpart of Manjushri and hence associated with acquisition and protection of wisdom. She may appear in the entourage of Green Tara.

In Japan, she’s called Marishiten. By the eighth century, she was the matron deity of the Samurai and warrior classes. Goddess of mirages, she controls perceptions: how and what people see. Thus she can block, obscure, or confuse what an enemy sees. Marishiten determines who will win or lose battles. Because she is profoundly associated with success, Japanese merchants began to venerate her in her guise as Lady of Victory and Wealth.

**Favored people:** Warriors (literal and meta-phoric)

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*Marishiten is the Matron of Zen warfare. Contemplating and venerating*

*Marishiten or her images allegedly enables one to reach a state of transcendent fearlessness and selflessness. With no worries about life, death, winning, or losing, a warrior can make truly clearheaded strategic decisions.*

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**Manifestation:** Depending on her aspect, she is very beautiful, very fierce, or both. She is strongly identified with pigs (either wild or domestic) and may signal her presence via some sort of porcine reference.

**Iconography:** She is portrayed on Tibetan mandalas with three faces and multiple arms (six, eight, twelve, or fourteen). The more arms she has, the more weapons she can wield. As Red Marichi, a wrathful form of Marichi, she has a sow's head on a woman's body.

**Attributes:** Vajra (ritual dagger), sewing needle, bow, arrow, medicinal plant, noose

**Time:** Marichi is most often invoked at the crack of dawn.

**Creature:** Sow

**Mount:** Marichi rides a boar or pig. Sometimes piglets pull her chariot. Alternatively she rides atop a lotus drawn by pigs or boars.

**Numbers:** 7, 9

**Planet:** Sun

**Sacred site:** Japanese mountain peaks and volcanic craters are named in her honor.

**Mantra:** *OM MARICHI (YE)\* MAM SVAHA* (\* *Ye* is not pronounced; it is a space holder indicating a pause for emphasis.) Among other purposes, her mantra is used to promote acquisition of wisdom and insight and to protect travelers.

**See also:** *Buddha; Eos; Manjushri; Tara, Green; Vajra; Vajravahari; Yidam*



## Maries de la Mer, Saintes

**Also known as:** Three Ladies of Egypt; Saint Marys of the Sea

Sometime after the crucifixion of Jesus circa 33 CE, a small boat fled Roman-occupied Judea or Alexandria, Egypt. It is unclear whether the boat never had sails or oars or whether these were lost at sea before landing in what is now France's Camargue region. The passenger list on that little boat may have included Joseph of Arimathea, Saints Lazarus and Martha, and possibly as many as four women named Mary:

- Mary Magdalen
- Mary of Bethany
- Mary Jacobe
- Mary Salomé

Upon reaching France, the party split up to have their own adventures. Mary Jacobe and Mary Salomé stayed together, and they are now the two saints venerated as *Maries de la Mer*: the "Marys of the Sea." Among the group of women who stood at the cross witnessing the Crucifixion, Mary Jacobe and Mary Salomé may be the Virgin Mary's sisters, thus Jesus' aunts. They may be the mothers of Saints John and James, Greater and Lesser. (Another *very* unofficial theory suggests that they are Jesus' sisters.)

Although there are only two Saintes Maries de la Mer, they are venerated as a trinity alongside the mysterious Sara, who may have met them in France or traveled with them on the boat. Depending on the version of the myth one prefers, she was their young Egyptian servant or the daughter of Jesus and Mary Magdalen, in which case smuggling Sara to safety may have been the reason for the flight to France. The Maries are Sara's caretakers, or she is theirs.

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*Although there may have been four Marys, they are usually envisioned as three: Mary Jacobe and Mary Salomé with either Mary of Bethany or the Magdalen, either because one didn't accompany them or because Bethany*

*and Magdalen are considered the same woman. The two constants are Mary Jacobe and Mary Salomé.*

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Their boat disembarked at an ancient settlement called Ra or Ratis, then a city of three goddesses—Artemis, Isis, and Kybele were venerated on its acropolis since at least the fourth century BCE. These three goddesses are interpreted as corresponding to the three Marys, with holy child Horus corresponding to Saint Sara.

In 1448, René of Anjou, King of Provence, found relics for which he had long been searching, identifying these bodily remains as those of les Maries de la Mer. A church was built for them and the town renamed in their honor. Marie Jacobe and Marie Salomé are official saints. Saint Sara is not and for a long time was only openly venerated by Roma (Gypsies), who were the only ones permitted to enter her crypt. In the context of the Gypsy pilgrimage, the two Marys are subordinate to Sara but still holy.

Coffin-shaped reliquaries allegedly containing Jacobe and Salomé's relics are carried in annual processions to the sea, accompanied by statues of Sara and the saints, which are dipped three times into the Mediterranean before being returned to their shrine. Allegedly simultaneously dipping tarot cards or other divination tools *quickly* into the sea enhances their power, but only if accomplished when all three statues are in the water.

Saintes Maries de la Mer are invoked for all blessings, especially healing and happiness.

**Sacred site:** The French seaside town of Saintes Maries de la Mer, once called Sainte Marie de Ratis or Notre Dame de la Mer (Our Lady of the Sea)

**Time:** The Roman Catholic feast of Mary Jacobe is 25 May, coinciding with that of Saint Sara. Roma from around the world begin converging on Saintes Maries de la Mer during previous weeks. This is the big festival. A second festival coinciding with the feast of Mary Salomé on 22 October includes another procession to the sea.

**Offerings:** *Navettes* (traditional French pastries in the form of their boat), candles, incense, fabric, pilgrimage

**See also:** *Artemis of Ephesus; Horus; Isis; Kybele; Marassa; Mary Magdalen; Sara la Kali*

## Marinette

**Also known as:** Marinette Bwa-Chèche (Marinette of the Dry Arms)

**Classification:** Lwa

The Haitian Revolution was initiated at a Vodou ceremony at Bois Caiman when a priestess (Mambo) sacrificed a black pig, invoking the lwa, Ezili Dantor, and Ogun. Marinette may be that priestess, now deified and a lwa herself. (She still maintains positive relationships with Dantor and Ogun.) Marinette, a mysterious, solitary lwa, belongs to the Petro and Bizango pantheons.

Marinette had a difficult life. She is a bitter spirit who prefers to be alone. People disappointed her. Rather than being celebrated as a heroine, she was first aggressively pursued by French colonial forces, then denied glory when Haitian revolutionary leader Toussaint L'Ouverture banned women from battle front-lines. Even now she is frequently dismissed as an evil spirit while her male contemporaries are lionized. She is a spirit of rage and frustration but also, in her way, a spirit of justice.

She is a controversial spirit. Many insist that she should never be invoked, as she is dangerous and hostile. She is certainly not a spirit for beginners. (You can't fool her: as a priestess, she can immediately distinguish an adept from a novice.) Marinette is *never* enshrined or invoked within the home (or inside buildings, period), as it is considered unsafe—she literally burns with rage and has a tendency to burn down buildings while within them, whether intentionally or not.

Marinette is invoked by secret societies as well as experienced initiates and sorcerers to provide disciplinary action against malefactors. She chafes at abuse of power and liberates devotees from bullies and oppression.

- Marinette is the matron of werewolves and loups-garoux.
- Marinette is syncretized to Joan of Arc or the Anima Sola.

**Manifestation:** Marinette is described as left-handed, symbolic of her willingness to work with sorcerers for hire and to fulfill less than ethical requests. Her eyes are red, indicating her state of rage. Her appearance is avian. Her hands and feet may resemble claws.

**Element:** Fire

**Attributes:** Cross, stake

**Colors:** Black, red

**Bird:** Screech owl

**See also:** *Ayizan; Bizango Spirits; Ezili Dantor; Ezili Ge Rouge; Lilith; Loup-Garou; Lwa; Ogun*

## Mars

**Also known as:** Mamers; Marmar; Marmor; Mavors; Maris

As the father of Romulus, Mars is literally considered the father of Rome. He is an ancient spirit who was venerated throughout the region, possibly originally by the Etruscans. His name is not of Indo-European derivation. Although now most famous as the lord of war, in his earliest incarnation he was a spirit of agricultural fertility and an aggressive, protective guardian of fields and boundaries.

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*An old Roman prayer requests that Mars banish visible and invisible ailments, trouble, disasters, and inclement weather.*

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His associations with war came to the fore when he later became intensely identified with the Greek war spirit Ares—and when Rome emerged as a military power. *Martial*, a synonym for *warlike*, derives from his name (martial arts, martial plan, martial law). A society of priests dedicated to him opened and closed the military calendar with martial dances. Mars is a spirit of prophesy: spears housed in his shrine provided an oracle via their spontaneous movement. They were understood as the voice of Mars himself.

Mars presided over Rome's conquest of Europe, North Africa, and the Middle East. He was the favorite deity of Roman soldiers who carried him wherever they conquered. He became very popular in Gaul, now mainly modern France, however here, as in other Celtic regions, Mars' associations with healing, fertility, and protection were emphasized, possibly because of ambivalence toward the Roman occupation. Mars is a warrior against illness, sterility, and death. Veneration of Mars may survive in veneration of Saint Martin of Tours and Saint Maurice.

**Favored people:** Farmers, soldiers, mercenaries and those born under the zodiac sun signs Aries and Scorpio, as well as those born in March.

**Iconography:** In ancient days, Mars was venerated in the form of a spear. This is recalled in the form of his glyph which now also serves as a universal symbol for the male gender: ♂.

**Attributes:** Shield, spear

**Consorts:** Vacuna, Vitula, Venus

**Bird:** Woodpecker

**Animals:** Wolf, horse, bull, boar, ram

**Day:** Tuesday (in French: *Mardi*)

**Number:** 3

**Planet:** Mars

**Metal:** Iron

**Trees:** Fig, bay laurel, dogwood, oak

**Color:** Red

**Month:** March

**Feast:** 1 March, Rome's original New Year's Day prior to calendar reformation, is his birthday. He is venerated alongside his mother, Juno. Other festivals include 27 February, 14 March, 17 March, 19 March, 23 March, 1 October, 15 October, and 19 October.

**Sacred sites:**

- His temple on Rome's Palatine Hill.
- Rome's Field of Mars (*Campus Martius*).
- Paris' Field of Mars (*Champ de Mars*).
- The site of his Gallic temple in Boulognesur-Mer is now the largest crypt in France, housing the tomb of Ida of the Ardennes, mother of Crusader king Godefroy of Bouillon.

**See also:** *Ares; Bellona; Janus; Juno; Lenus; Loucetius; Venus; Vesta* and the Glossary entry for *Identification*

## Mary Magdalen

**Also known as:** Mary Magdalene; Maria Magdalena

**Feast:** 22 July

Mary Magdalen is described as Jesus Christ's beloved companion. But what does that mean? Volumes have been filled attempting to answer that question. Passionate debate rages with no sign of abatement:

- Was she among Christ's most dedicated disciples?
- Was she among the women who raised funds to support Jesus and his disciples?
- Was she a repentant sinner?
- Was she a prostitute and, if so, what kind? Secular or temple priestess?
- Was she Jesus' wife?

Whoever she was, she is an extremely significant character in the New Testament. Mary Magdalen is the only woman mentioned who is never identified in relation to a man: she is not identified as anyone's wife, sister, or daughter. (Unless you believe her to be the same woman as Mary of Bethany, in which case she is the sister of Lazarus.) She is also the first person to witness the resurrected Christ.

Part of the problem resolving Mary Magdalen's identity is the popularity of the name Mary. It seems that virtually every other woman in first century Judea was named Mary. There are so many Marys in the New Testament that their identities become confused. In the Church's early years, the identities of these women were left ambiguous.

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*In Hebrew, the word Migdal, from which Magdalen derives, means a "tower," "castle," "fortress," or "raised-up place." Her name may be interpreted as Mary from the fortress or Mary who is the fortress. The name is also evocative of the "high places" associated with worship of the Hebrew goddess Asherah.*

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In Eastern Christianity, Mary Magdalen, Mary of Bethany, and the unnamed woman of Luke 7:37–50 “who was a sinner” are considered three distinct individuals. In Roman Catholicism, Pope Gregory the Great (540–604 CE), a great devotee of the Virgin Mary, declared these three women to be one and the same. Eventually a fourth, “the woman taken in adultery” from John 8:3–11, was also included. Mary Magdalen is also often confused and conflated with self-avowed, repentant harlot Saint Mary of Egypt.

Many are offended by the suggestion that Mary Magdalen was Jesus’ wife. However, these suggestions were not invented by Dan Brown, author of the 2003 bestselling novel *The Da Vinci Code*, nor by Michael Baigent, Richard Leigh, and Henry Lincoln’s 1982 study, *The Holy Blood and the Holy Grail*. These rumors date back to the early days of Christianity and stem mainly from Gnostic sources. The Magdalen is a pervasive presence in Gnostic texts. *The Gospel of Mary*, estimated written in the early second century is sometimes attributed to her. (Less than eight pages of original text are available.)

*The Gospel of Philip* refers to Mary Magdalen as Jesus’ “companion,” using a Greek word indicating “partner” and “consort.” Philip the Apostle was a devotee of John the Baptist before he became a disciple of Jesus. *The Gospel of Philip*, attributed to him and believed written in the late second century although possibly based on earlier sources, describes three women who “always walked with the master. Mary his mother, sister and Mary Magdalen called his companion. For ‘Mary’ is the name of his sister, his mother and his companion.”

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*The Magdalena is a comic-book heroine (Top Cow Comics) descended from Mary Magdalen and Saint Sara and secretly employed by the Vatican. She wields the Spear of Destiny and battles vampires.*

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Mary Magdalen is the secret keeper. She is the repository of sacred mysteries. Her modern identity may depend upon the eyes of her beholders. Mary Magdalen is venerated by Christians, Jews, and Pagans



alike. Mary Magdalen is a Christian saint. Her official hagiography says she traveled to France as a missionary. Others insist that she is the founder of an alternative and now secret spiritual tradition. This theory, the basis for *The Da Vinci Code*, is also based on Gnostic texts such as the *Pistis Sophia*, which portrays Mary Magdalen in conflict with Peter, considered the first pope and founder of the Church. Still other people perceive that Mary and Jesus were adepts in secret spiritual traditions devoted to Isis or Asherah of the Sea. Alternatively Mary Magdalen was a priestess of Atargatis, whose symbols are doves and fish. Some consider her an avatar of any or all of these goddesses.

In the 21<sup>st</sup> century, Mary Magdalen has emerged as an independent goddess, venerated by goddess devotees around the world. Whether as saint or goddess, Mary Magdalen is invoked for miracles of love, romance, safety, and fertility. She may be asked to protect those who are burdened or threatened by secrets. Mary Magdalen is a constant presence in classical art and popular culture.

**Favored people:** Beauticians, hairdressers, aromatherapists, perfumers, pharmacists, lovers

**Manifestation:** She is sometimes described as having naturally red or henna-reddened hair.

**Attributes:** An alabaster jar or box of perfumed unguent or solid perfume, a skull, an egg

**Plant:** Spikenard (*Nardostachys grandiflora*)

**Constellation:** Mary Magdalen is identified with the constellation Virgo, interpreted as resembling a lone woman holding the divine child.

**Sacred site:** The cave at Sainte-Baume, near Marseilles, where one legend says she lived for thirty years.

**Offerings:** Candles, Galilean or French wine, sugar skulls, alabaster or other ornamental eggs (give her Fabergé eggs for a true miracle and if you can afford it); burn myrrh incense in her honor

**See also:** *Asherah of the Sea, Lady; Atargatis; Black Madonna; Helen of Troy; Isis; Macarena, La; Malinche; Mari (2); Maries de la Mer; Sara la Kali*

## Matilda of the Night

**Also known as:** Mallt-y-Nos

**Origin:** Wales

Once upon a time, Matilda was a beautiful, irreverent Norman lady who loved hunting so much that she proclaimed that if there was no hunting in heaven, she'd rather not go. Apparently, there is no hunting in heaven—after she died, Matilda became a leader of the Wild Hunt. She travels with Arawn and his hounds, but sometimes she takes the dogs out by herself.

The story is sometimes told as a pious warning, but within may be a reminder that many of the Normans who accompanied William the Conqueror were still Pagan. Ma tilda still rides and hunts, which is what she loves to do. Annwn, the Afterlife with which she is affiliated, is a paradise, not a hell.

**See also:** *Annwn, Hounds of; Arawn; Wild Hunt*

## Matuta

**Also known as:** Mater Matuta

**Origin:** Rome

Mater Matuta is the goddess of the dawn light but also has dominion over infants and sea travel. Her festival incorporated elaborate theatrical rituals enacted by Roman ladies of status in precisely this order:

- A slave woman brought into Matuta's temple was then driven out with slaps and blows.
- The women carried their sisters' children in their arms to receive Matuta's blessings.

Exactly what these rituals meant to the Romans is now unclear, but the first part is often interpreted as a reenactment of Dawn vanquishing malefic nocturnal spirits. The second part may represent Matuta's

nurturing the sun, who is not her child but a relative. Alternatively it's a reminder to entrust your children to family, not to strangers or slaves. This was a women's Mystery tradition. There may have been an accompanying myth that is now unknown. (See the Glossary entry for *Mystery*.)

Matuta is invoked to protect your sister's children. An aunt must perform the invocation, not the mother.

**Favored people:** Newborn babies whom she protects. Obviously, others may petition on their behalf.

**Feast:** 11 June, the Matralia; before revision of the calendar, this was very close to the Summer Solstice.

**Spirit ally:** Fortuna shares the same feast day. The two goddesses had temples next door to each other in the Forum Boarium.

**Sacred sites:** Harbors and ports where she also possessed shrines

**Offerings:** Cakes, traditionally baked in terra cotta; flowers

**See also:** *Bona Dea; Fortuna*

## Maui

*Maui of a Thousand Tricks; Maui the Wise; The Super-Super Man*

**Origin:** Polynesia

Maui, trickster hero, is a beloved magician spirit renowned throughout Polynesia. Maui of a thousand tricks is subject of a thousand tales. He helped the creator deities complete the world and personally brought many gifts to humanity, sometimes challenging the authority of the deities in order to do so. Maui famously snared the sun in the sky, but he also controlled the winds, arranged the stars, and stole fire for people. Maui fished up the Hawaiian Islands and New Zealand's North Island, too.

There are different versions of his origins. He may have two divine parents or just one. His mother is usually Hina. Chants, invocations, and

magic spells attributed to Maui are repeated by devotees in the belief that they strengthen and empower.

**Manifestation:** A skilled, tricky, inventive shape-shifter

**Attributes:** Canoe, hook

**Constellation:** Scorpio (in Hawaiian astrology: Maui's fishing hook)

**Sacred sites:** Places throughout Polynesia are associated with him. For example, he snared the sun from Maui's Mount Haleakala.

**See also:** *Hina*

## **Maximon**

*The Old Man; The Uncle*

**Pronounced:** *Mah-shee-mon*

**Also known as:** Maam; Don Pedro; Saint Simon; Brother Simon; Brother Peter

**Origin:** Maya

Christian missionaries who came to Guatemala to convert the local people encountered the primordial Mayan deity Maam. Attempts to syncretize him to Saint Simon backfired. Instead of the Mayan god fading discreetly into the identity of the saint, Maximon, as he became known, took on a whole new life and personality of his own: defiant, rambunctious, anti-social. The Church then attempted to syncretize him with Judas Iscariot or even Satan, but it was too late. All they did was enhance Maximon's outlaw image and make his devotees love and admire him even more.

The name *Maximon* is often interpreted as deriving from *Maam* and *Simon*. Another theory suggests that it derives from *Maam* and *ximon*, a Mayan word that may refer to a bundle or the act of "tying up", essentially creating a bundle. (The use of bundles as sacred objects is not uncommon in indigenous American spiritual and magical traditions.)

Although his wardrobe has been updated and modernized, Maximon is an ancient, primordial spirit. He has survived numerous attempts to suppress his veneration and is now more popular than ever, venerated throughout the Americas and Europe. He is generally benevolent, associated with healing, prosperity, and protection. In Guatemala, Maximon is traditionally invoked for protection for or from anti-government forces. Nothing is beyond his assistance or outside his jurisdiction, but he is a trickster. Be wary.

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*Maximon is invoked to heal addictions. He may be invoked on behalf of someone else who cannot or will not ask him themselves. It is not necessary to tell the person that you have requested Maximon's blessings on their behalf. The deal is between you and Maximon.*

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Maximon is a crossroads spirit. He mediates between the living and the dead, people and spirits. He serves as a bridge between malevolent and benevolent spirits. Maximon is an extremely responsive spirit who works for comparatively modest offerings. He will accept requests on behalf of others, especially addicts. Make offerings, and then tell him what the other person needs. However, even if the other person reaps the blessings, Maximon is doing *you* the favor: *you* must fulfill any vows.

Maximon is invoked in numerous magical spells, rituals, and operations:

- Place his image in shops to stimulate better business and for luck, money, and protection. Maximon foils and/or punishes shop-lifters and thieves.
- If someone abuses you, whisper your needs directly into the ear of Maximon's image. Place the person's photo under Maximon's left foot, or write a note and place it there.
- Coil a rope around his image (even around his neck!) to show him that you need his help capturing someone's heart (or hobbling competing suitors); whisper in his ear to tell him what you need.

- Wrap a rope around his image to keep your spouse from running off with another.

Maximon often accumulates an extensive wardrobe. He is a fastidious spirit whose clothes must be kept clean. The rinse water used when hand-washing his clothes may be preserved as Holy Water or magically charged water. It allegedly has magical and healing powers.

**Manifestation:** Maximon may indicate his presence via the smell of cigar smoke when no cigars are present. He visits in dreams.

**Iconography:** The oldest images of Maximon consisted of masks and mysterious wrapped bundles. However a modern votive image has also evolved possibly based on the only known existing photograph of shaman, wizard, and Maximon devotee Francisco Sojuel (died circa 1907), credited with crafting the first modern Maximon mask. This image depicts Maximon as a mustached man wearing a black suit and a Stetson or similar hat. He is usually, but not exclusively, depicted sitting. The modern image closest to his ancient one consists of a bundle of fabric topped with one or more Stetson hats.

Votive images range from pocket-size to life-size. The mouth of his statue may be open so a real cigar may be inserted. Alternatively, the statue may be designed so that the cigar can be placed in his hand. Ashes and stubs from offerings are collected and preserved. Placed in a small charm bag, they serve as amulets, allegedly bringing good luck. Sometimes tubes are inserted into statues so Maximon can actually “drink”. Liquor passing through his system is then reserved for ritual use.

**Colors:** An elaborate color scheme is used to communicate with Maximon. Those who are experienced candle-burners may choose to retain their own candle color associations, but the following color chart is commonly used to communicate desires and petitions to Maximon. Burn the color candle that closest represents your needs:

- **Black:** Protection from envy, jealousy, enemies, and the deliberately cast Evil Eye
- **Blue:** For good luck, employment

- **Brown:** Protection from resentment and the accidentally cast Evil Eye
- **Green:** Business, prosperity, cash
- **Light Blue:** Cash, travel, education, and happiness
- **Pink:** Hope, health
- **Red:** Love, fidelity
- **White:** Protection of children
- **Yellow:** Protection for adults

**Time:** Guatemalan festivals coincide with Holy Week, culminating on Good Friday.

**Sacred site:** Maximon is the subject of innumerable home shrines, but his major public shrine is in Lake Atitlan, Guatemala.

**Offerings:** Hats, silk scarves, flowers (he likes bougainvilleas, carnations, and gladioli), fruit, tobacco products especially cigars, copal incense, water, Coca-Cola, tequila, aguardiente. An elaborate offering when you really need a big favor or as fulfillment of a vow is forty candles plus copal incense.

**See also:** *Ajitz; Malinche*

## Mayahuel

*Lady Maguey; The Woman of Four Hundred Breasts*

**Also known as:** Xochitl

**Origin:** Aztec

Mayahuel is the spirit of the maguey plant (*Agave americana*), also known as the century plant, among the most sacred botanicals of preconquest Mexico. The maguey's gifts (and thus Mayahuel's) include food, shelter, drink, medicine, soap, cloth, thread, needle, baskets, blankets, and paper. Maguey thorns were used as ritual bloodletting instruments. Last but not least, maguey is made into the alcoholic beverages pulque and mescal. (Tequila is made from a different type of

agave.) Pulque was the most common alcoholic beverage in prequest Mexico.

Different legends connect Mayahuel to maguey. She may have always been a plant goddess or she may have been a mortal peasant woman who discovered maguey and offered it to the spirits. They were so delighted that they instantly transformed her into a spirit, too. The essence of vitality, libido, and fertility, Mayahuel has dominion over Earth, the night sky, intoxication, drunkenness, and hallucinations.

- Mayahuel can correct female reproductive rhythms and is invoked for fertility.
- She is a spirit of healing and sacred ecstasy.

**Manifestations:** Mayahuel is a beautiful woman or a maguey plant.

**Iconography:** Her main icon is a blooming maguey, but she is also depicted as a birthing woman with big breasts and open legs, seated on a turtle. In the Borgia Codex manuscript, she nurses a fish. She is sometimes envisioned with four hundred breasts, a reference to maguey's *aguamiel*, the milky sap from which pulque is made.

**Attributes:** Two cups, presumably containing pulque

**Elements:** Earth, water

**Consort:** Xochipilli

**Creatures:** Snail, rabbit

**Time:** Mayahuel is linked to the Aztec rabbit day.

**Offerings:** Maguey plants or any products of maguey, including pulque and mescal. Mescal is sometimes sold in ornate, handcrafted artisanal bottles fit for a goddess.

**See also:** *Xochipilli; Xochitl*

## **Mazzik**

*The Injurer; The Harmer*



**Classification:** Demon

**Origin:** Jewish

*Mazzik* may be a specific type of spirit or a blanket term for various Jewish categories of possibly malicious spirits including *Ruhin*, *Shedim*, and *Lilim*. The plural is technically *Mazzikim* or *Mazzikin*, but many just call them *Mazziks*. *Mazzik* may be understood as a generic term for “demon.” The *Mazzik* is generally a relatively low-level demon. Jewish demonology traditionally reserves its largest concerns for possession by *dybbuks* (ghosts, disembodied souls).

- *Dybbuks* are a crisis.
- *Mazziks* are a fact of life.

*Maskim* are ancient Mesopotamian spirits. Their name is translated as “Those Who Lay Ambushes.” Surviving Babylonian clay tablets recount exorcisms and incantations used against them. There are fourteen *Maskim*:

- Seven reside beneath Earth and cause earthquakes and epidemics.
- Seven reside over Earth and are destructive, malevolent wind and storm spirits.

Underworld *Maskim* live in *Ereshkigal*’s court, serving as her messengers and throne bearers.

The name *Mazzikim* may derive from *Maskim*. Although the names are essentially the same, the spirits are *not* identical.

*Mazziks* are rarely possessing spirits. They tend to attack only if angered or unhappy. Most *Mazzik*-lore assumes coexistence. Invisible *Mazziks* are ever-present, and so the best defense is to know how to live with them. The Jewish equivalent of Feng Shui is largely concerned with maintaining peaceful relations with demons.

*Mazzikim*, like *Djinn*, prefer uninhabited wild places (deserts, fields, forests), bathhouses, and old-fashioned outhouses. They like ritually impure places and slaughterhouses. They love deep shadows: moon-shadows, shade trees, and especially nut trees. *Mazzikim* linger under

roofs and rain gutters on moonlit nights, possibly a stimulus for protective gargoyles, which may guard against them. They love ruins and cemeteries.

What appears to be unoccupied land may not be. It is dangerous to construct homes or buildings on land that is already claimed by Mazziks, as with the Fairy Roads of Ireland. Are there a disproportionate number of accidents? Is the death rate unusually high? This could be a sign that Mazziks are asserting land rights. If it's not Mazziks, fasting, praying, and good deeds should improve the situation, but if there isn't a marked improvement relatively soon, the simple solution is: *move!* Preferably somewhere far, where provoked demons won't follow.

- Don't construct new buildings on unoccupied land. (There may be a good reason it's unoccupied.) If you must build, make it look as impermanent as possible—a tent may not evoke a Mazzik's fury. Stone houses imply permanence, which the demons may perceive as arrogant and an insult.
- Don't move into a new house at all. Look for an older home with a happy, healthy history. Don't move into a home previously occupied by people with more than their fair share of illness and bad luck. Once upon a time, in medieval European Jewish communities, people were paid to live in new homes until safety had been established.
- If an old house is demolished in order to replace it with a new one, keep the windows and doors in the same old places. Mazziks are famously *not* the geniuses of the spirit world —move their usual entrance and they will constantly bang their heads. Their standard response isn't to learn the new locations but to strike out at whoever took the old ones away. (That's why they're demons, not research assistants.)
- Mazziks don't like to have their movement impeded. They have a tendency to throw fits and cause trouble if they can't get in or out. Don't make doors and windows absolutely air-tight: leave tiny cracks or holes, even a keyhole, so they can travel through.

A legend describes Hungarian Jews who settled in a previously unoccupied place. Their death rate suddenly soared. They prayed, fasted,

wondered what they had done wrong but to no avail. One day the leader of their community encountered what appeared to be a band of people whose leader rode a lion using a snake as a bridle. This demon leader advised the community leader to leave; the land was already claimed. The people left, and their death rate immediately receded back to normal.

Mazziks aren't all bad. They can be benevolent or beneficial toward people. They are sometimes summoned to reveal the future. If they deem the questioner worthy, Mazziks will tell the truth. If not, they may answer a summons to appear but refuse to answer or cooperate. (Alternatively they may lie or tell deceptive half-truths.) The King of the Mazzikin is named Kafzefoni. The angel Jophiel protects against him and his two wives, the Dreary One and the Little Leper.

Certain types of bad luck are associated with Mazziks:

- A disproportionate number of bereavements in a family, especially of children.
- Women whose husbands die. (Anyone may be a widow once but surviving multiple husbands may indicate demonic interference à la the biblical *Book of Tobit*.)

Contact with Mazzikim may cause illness characterized by alternating fever and chills. Mazziks may not intentionally inflict illness. Sensitive people, especially children, may simply react negatively to their presence. Should you survive a Mazzik-attack, it's recommended that you and yours avoid the scene of the attack, lest the demon is awaiting another opportunity to try again. Amulets and appeals to protective spirits, especially guardian angels will keep Mazziks away or at least keep you safe.

**Manifestation:** Mazziks can shape-shift. Favored forms include dogs, frogs, and goats. They may appear as people, too.

**Plants:** Caper bushes, nut trees

**Direction:** North

**Offerings:** Water as well as oil and breadcrumbs, which may be cast on

the ground

**See also:** *Demon; Djinn; Dybbuk; Eresh kigal; Lilim; Mahalat; Raphael; Shedim; Siddhe* and the Glossary entry for *Pos session*

## Medea

**Origin:** Georgia by the Black Sea

In the epic myth of Jason and the Argonauts, Jason is presented as the hero who stole the Golden Fleece. Really Medea accomplished the task. She orchestrates their escape from Colchis with the fleece, too. If anyone is a hero in that story, it's Medea and yet she's more famous as a notorious villain, a mother accused of killing her sons, possibly to protect them but possibly to spite their father.

Greek mythology presents Medea as an enchantress, witch, priestess, and shaman. She is Circe's niece and Hekate's chief priestess. Medea is not Greek. She was a Georgian princess from Colchis, a place the Greeks then associated with the ends of the Earth. Her associations with witchcraft and herbalism were perceived as threatening, frightening and foreign.

Eventually, according to myth, Jason rejected Medea in favor of a proper Greek princess, Glauce of Corinth. This action is allegedly what stimulated Medea to murder her sons. Depending on the version of the myth, Medea either killed herself too, or she escaped in a chariot pulled by dragons, sent by Hekate or Hera.

Medea may be a villain elsewhere, but she is a goddess in Georgia, where people scoff at the notion that she would kill her children. One legend suggests that the boys escaped with Medea. Another says that she didn't kill them—they were killed by Corinthians who perceived them as a threat to Jason's future Greek children.

- Medea and her sons were venerated in Georgia.
- Her two young boys were venerated in Corinth but possibly as propitiation so that they wouldn't harm their murderers.

Medea is a goddess of magic, witchcraft, and fertility. She is a healing

goddess. In the legend of Jason and the Argonauts, Medea presides over the huge healing garden attached to the temple of Hekate. She may be a deified priestess. Medea comes from a family of deities including Circe, Helios, Pasiphae, and Hekate. Why shouldn't she be a goddess, too?

- Italian myth suggests that when Medea fled Greece, she traveled to Italy where she became Angitia.
- Because Medea was the only mortal to effectively refuse Zeus' advances, Hera honored her with immortality.
- Medea may be married to Achilles in the afterlife.
- Medea's myth is preserved in Euripides' play *Medea*, first produced in 431 BCE. Opera diva Maria Callas plays Medea in Pier Paolo Pasolini's 1969 film, *Medea*. She is also the subject of several operas.
- Medea is a maligned heroine in German author Christa Wolf's 1998 novel, *Medea*.

**Animals:** Snake, dragon

**Planetary object:** Medea is the name of a large asteroid.

**Offerings:** Georgian wine, flowers, herbs, perfume, incense, images of snakes

**See also:** *Achilles; Angitia; Circe; Helios; Hekate; Hera; Pasiphae; Zeus*

## Medusa

**Origin:** Libya

Medusa, the most beautiful and only mortal Gorgon sister, is a sea spirit. Poseidon courted her. She may have had consensual or even sacred sex with him in Athena's temple, or she may have fled to the temple to get away from him. Pursuing her, he raped her there. Either way, Athena was furious. She transformed Medusa into a terrifying creature with snakes for hair and a face that literally turned those who gazed at her to stone.

When Perseus was sent to kill Medusa, a hopeless task he was not expected to survive, Athena orchestrated the assassination. Perseus

beheaded Medusa while she slept, but her severed head retained its power to paralyze and turn viewers to stone. Perseus used it as a weapon before surrendering it to Athena. Pegasus, the winged horse, emerged from Medusa's severed head, apparently conceived during her tryst with Poseidon, who often manifests as a stallion.

That's the Greek myth. Other legends suggest that Medusa is a Libyan snake goddess. She may be Athena's mother, a closely related spirit, or possibly even the identity Athena left behind when she moved from North Africa to Greece. Athena's participation in the destruction of Medusa may be interpreted as the goddess destroying her own past. Alternatively she desired Medusa's power. Athena wore Medusa's head on her aegis and shield. Another myth suggests that Athena possessed more than Medusa's head: she flayed Medusa and wore her skin.

Medusa is not just a minor sea spirit. She is a goddess of menstrual power and hence female power. There is an ancient metaphysical belief that menstrual blood is the single most spiritually and magically powerful substance on Earth. It can be used to destroy or overwhelm any other power.

Snakes are traditionally associated with menstruation. Modern euphemisms for menstruation including calling it a woman's friend or the curse, but an evocative, old-fashioned one describes a menstruating woman as "bitten by the snake". A German folk belief, documented as late as the eighteenth century, suggests that if a menstruating woman's hair is buried in Earth, it will become a snake. In southern Asia, there's an ancient belief that menstruation indicates possession by snake spirits.

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*Coral is allegedly Medusa's blood, which spilled into the sea and was petrified. Medusa heads were traditionally carved as coral cameos for an extremely powerful protective amulet.*

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Medusa embodies menstruation's protective powers. Statues of Medusa were used to guard Pagan Greek temples. Her image was used in

Byzantine Greece to protect pregnant women and newborns. The image of her severed head remains a powerful protective amulet. She may also be accessed as a living goddess by those seeking menstrual, serpentine mysteries.

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*The technical term for the image of Medusa's severed head is gorgoneion.*

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**Manifestation:** Medusa may manifest as the beautiful goddess she was prior to her transformation or in her classic monster form with contorted face and snake locks. She may also manifest as a mermaid.

**Iconography:** Medusa is usually portrayed as the monster she became after her transformation by Athena. Most frequently, only her severed head is depicted. Sometimes, however, she is portrayed as a living woman. Her face is a Gorgon's mask, but her body is that of a woman dressed and girded for battle. Modern images of mermaids, some with snakey hair, are also sometimes labeled Medusa, but these are usually modern Gorgon mermaids. In 2008, the Mattel company produced the "Barbie Doll as Medusa", a collector's doll that portrays a beautiful, sexy pre-transformation Medusa. She wears snake jewelry and a chiffon fishtail skirt. Her hair forms long curls that, according to Mattel, foretell the serpents that will become her hair.

**Planet:** Moon (many, including Orpheus' disciples, have seen Medusa's face in the moon)

**Star:** Algol, usually considered a star of ill-fortune, is traditionally perceived as representing Medusa's eye. Some modern astrologers suggest that this star is associated with female power and the reemergence of the feminine divine. In addition, the Medusa Nebula within the constellation of Gemini features snakelike filaments of glowing gas.

**Creatures:** Lions, snakes

**Offerings:** Coral, anything serpentine, menstrual blood stained pads or garments

**See also:** *Arion; Athena; Despoena; Gor gons; Iodama; Lady of the Beasts; Lilith; Mermaid; Metis; Pallas; Poseidon*

## Melalo

**Origin:** Romani (Transylvanian Gypsy)

Melalo the master magician is the first child of Ana, Queen of the Keshalyi, and her husband, King of the Loçolico. Melalo is considered the most dangerous of her children and an exceptionally powerful demon. His name means “filthy,” as in dirty but also obscene.

Melalo, an expert on love and fertility magic, is the mastermind who orchestrates the births of his siblings, disease demons one and all. The king of the Loçolico is genuinely in love with Ana. He seeks to have sex with her because he desires her. Melalo, however, hates people and encouraged his father’s pursuit of his mother so that she would continue to produce disease demons to kill people and stop them from multiplying. On the other hand, Melalo and his sister/wife Lilyi have many children to whom they are devoted.

Melalo causes mental illness and strokes. He stirs up rage, deliberately instigating rape, murder, and wanton destruction. He is described as ripping out human hearts with his claws.

**Manifestation:** Melalo resembles a two-headed bird with dull green plumage.

**See also:** *Ana; Bitoso; Keshalyi; Lilyi; Loçolico; Minceskro; Poreskoro*

## Melk

**Also known as:** Malk; Plural: Mlouk

The Mlouk are the spirits summoned and venerated by Morocco’s Gnawa Brother hood. Although the name resembles a Semi tic word for “king”



(Arabic: *Malik*, Hebrew: *Melekh*), it actually derives from an Arabic verb meaning “to own.” The Mlouk are literally the owners or possessors, all implications intended.

Mlouk are invoked via rituals, incense, music, songs, and colors. Each individual Melk has songs, rhythms, fragrances, colors, and so forth that call him or her. Mlouk are both female and male. The various Mlouk derive from African shamanism, Sufism, and the Jewish Bible. (Moses is the Blue Melk.) Most are considered either Muslim or Jewish; a few are Pagan.

There are seven Mlouk troops who are identified by colors: purple, red, blue, black, green, yellow, and white. Each has a leader. For example, Lalla Mira is the Yellow Melk.

As with Vodou or Bori spirits, Mlouk appear during rituals in specific order. Male Muslim Mlouk appear first, followed by female Muslim Mlouk and then Jewish and Sudanese Mlouk, who appear together. Aisha Qandisha and Aisha Sudaniyya are considered Sudanese Mlouk. (In this context, the term Sudanese refers to sub-Saharan Africa in general and not just the modern nation.)

Mlouk are possessing spirits. They *cannot* be exorcised. The possessed person is inhabited by a spirit who can become either an ally or an enemy:

- If the human is a welcoming host, a symbiotic alliance is formed.
- If the human is not welcoming, then the spirit tenant who *can't* be evicted causes trouble, anguish, and poor health.

**See also:** *Aisha Qandisha; Aisha Sudan iyya; Bori; Djinn; Lalla Mira; Mimoun, Sidi* and the Glossary entry for *Possession*

## **Melkart**

*King of the City*

**Also known as:** Melquart; Tyrian Heracles; Ba'al Melqart

**Origin:** Phoenician; Canaanite

Melkart, chief deity of the city-state Tyre, now in modern Lebanon, was venerated across the Mediterranean coast of Europe and North Africa, especially in Carthage. He is lord of the sea and sky, credited with discovering the Tyrian purple dye extracted from mollusks, from which Phoenicia made her fortune. (Alternatively the dye was discovered by Melkart's lover, the Nymph Tyros, or his dog.) The earliest known written reference to Melkart derives from the ninth century BCE. Hannibal is Melkart's most famous devotee.

Ba'al Melkart may or may not be the same Ba'al that the prophets railed against in the Old Testament. His great temple in Tyre served as the architectural prototype for Solomon's Temple in Jerusalem. The Greeks and Romans identified him with Heracles. Heracles was also widely venerated—references to him in Phoenician areas or formerly Phoenician areas may refer to the Greek deity or to Melkart.

**Manifestation:** He resembles classical images of Heracles—a huge, powerful man.

**Consort:** Astarte, Astronoë, and Tyros are among the goddesses with whom he is linked

**Planet:** Sun

**Element:** Water

**Color:** Purple

**Animal:** Dog

**Mount:** Seahorse

**Sacred sites:** In addition to Tyre and Carthage, Melkart had temples in Cadiz, Ibiza, Cartagena, and what is now Cape Saint Vincent, the southwestern-most point in Europe.

**See also:** *Astarte; Ba'al; Heracles; Nymph; Solomon*

## Melusine

**Also known as:** Melusina

## Origin: France

Raymond of Poitou was riding through a medieval French forest when he discovered Melusine, a beautiful, solitary woman bathing in a freshwater spring. He fell madly in love with her and asked her to marry him. She agreed on the condition that once a week, on Saturdays, she be given utter, total privacy. He agreed.

All was well for a while. Melusine and Raymond had several children. Some of the children had unusual features, exceptionally large teeth for instance, or tusks. It's unclear whether it was the children's appearance that whetted Raymond's curiosity or if he ever wondered *why* he had met Melusine bathing all alone in the middle of a lonely forest, but after several years, her Saturday ritual of locking herself away and disappearing for the day became too much for him. Consumed with curiosity, he spied on Melusine. He discovered her all by herself, bathing in a huge tub of water, but she was not the woman he knew; instead she was part woman, part dragon—complete with wings and a serpent tail.

When she realized her privacy had been broached and her secret revealed, Melusine flew away. She never returned to her husband, but she periodically returned to see her children.

Various legends describe why Melusine is a dragon-woman. In some it is a result of a curse. In others, that's just her natural form—she's a goddess. Melusine's true home may be the Celtic afterlife paradise, the Isle of Avalon. She is an ancestral spirit. Many claim to be descended from her. When a member of her family dies, even now Melusine or a dragon allegedly manifests, flying overhead and weeping.

That one day of privacy was apparently necessary for Melusine's survival. She may be petitioned by those who seek time to express private, secret aspects of their personalities or who need time to allow hidden talents to emerge. She is a goddess of magical and spiritual wisdom.

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Melusine *may mean* “sea mist,” “*marvel*,” or “*wonder*.”

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**Manifestation:** Melusine may manifest as a woman, but her true form is a dragon woman: winged woman above the waist, serpentine tail below. In whatever form, she is exceptionally beautiful.

**Iconography:** Melusine is sometimes portrayed as a mermaid rather than a snake-woman.

**Element:** Water

**See also:** *Mami Waters; Toyotama-Hime; Vouivre*

## Meness

**Also known as:** Menuo; Menulis

**Origin:** Baltic

Meness is lord of the moon and guardian of the dead. He is also a chthonic spirit of Earth. It was believed that the old waning moon lived underground, while the young new moon lived in the sky. Meness is invoked for health and good fortune. *Always* address Meness as if he were a prince.

Meness is closely associated with Saulé, Goddess of the Sun to whom he was once married. Meness is fickle, changeable, like the moon—the marriage ended when he fell in love with Ausriné, but he still hangs around the silver gates of Saulé's palace, flirting with her daughters.

**Manifestation:** Meness is the moon. He wears a cloak of starry night.

**Mount:** Meness' chariot is drawn by gray horses.

**See also:** *Ausriné; Chthonic Spirit; Saulé*

## Menthe

**Also known as:** Minthe

**Classification:** Nymph

Although longstanding, the marriage of Hades and Persephone is not

generally considered a love match. Hades apparently wished to marry Persephone in order to strengthen his position as Lord of Death in the same way that his brothers Poseidon and Zeus forced themselves upon their brides, Amphitrite and Hera. It was a strategic alliance. Hades' heart really belonged to another, the Nymph Menthe.

Hades and Menthe may have been lovers before his marriage. An alternative myth suggests that Persephone's coldness toward her husband drove him into another's arms. Either way, when Persephone's mother Demeter discovered this affair, she was outraged and transformed Menthe into the humble mint plant so that everyone would trample her. (Another version suggests that Persephone herself discovered the lovers and performed the transformation.)

The joke was on the enraged goddess, whether mother or daughter: the transformation did not halt the affair and it only served to increase Menthe's powers. When mint is trampled underfoot, it releases its signature seductive aroma. Mint remains among the most beloved of all herbs.

Hades and Menthe continued their affair. Menthe was worshipped alongside Hades at some of his shrines, sometimes discreetly, sometimes not. Menthe's powers are manifest in mint plants. Many species are aphrodisiacs with profound healing powers. They are potent cleansing agents; hence the popularity of mint flavored toothpaste and facial cleansers. Menthe is an erotic goddess who may be invoked for assistance with love, healing, and spiritual cleansing. Mint also has contraceptive properties. Peppermint and spearmint were allegedly the favorite plants of Roman prostitutes. Menthe is a goddess of contraception. She heals digestive ailments.

**Favored people:** The other woman

**Manifestation:** Fresh mint plants evoke Menthe's presence. She also manifests as a beautiful woman dressed in green.

**Spirit allies:** Menthe and Hades may be venerated together. Keep Menthe far from Demeter and Persephone.

**Offerings:** Fresh mint plants, mint scented cosmetics, mint tea, Crème de Menthe liqueur, mint juleps, and peppermint candy

**See also:** *Amphitrite; Daphne; Demeter; Hades; Hera; Kura; Nymph; Persephone; Poseidon; Zeus*

## Mephitis

**Also known as:** Mefitis; Mefite

**Origin:** Italy

Sometimes healing springs smell foul; that's the abode of Mephitis, Goddess of Fumes. She presides over noxious vapors *and* healing. Mephitis has dominion over emanations, especially those that smell foul or that have some sort of profound effect on the body. Thus she presides over poisonous gas *and* sulfur springs. Mephitis specifically protects against malaria, once a serious health problem in Italy before its many swamps were drained. She is also petitioned to avert bad smells from sewers. Lakes and grottoes associated with Mephitis may be gates to the Underworld. She is a threshold spirit who lingers between realms.

Mephitis was an Italian goddess, possibly originally Sabine or Samnite, whom the Romans inherited. She was widely venerated throughout southern Italy. A fourth-century BCE wooden statue identified as Mephitis was found near Benevento, later famous for its witchcraft traditions. Mephitis is now an obscure goddess, but her name is firmly entrenched in modern vocabulary:

- *Mephitic* is a synonym for *malodorous*.
- *Mephitic* are lakes, grottoes, or other sources of water that exude poisonous or noxious vapors or steam.
- *Mephitis mephitis* is the scientific classification assigned to skunks.

Mephitis is petitioned to protect against negative effects of these emissions. She is also invoked to reap their healing benefits where applicable.

**Sacred site:** Mephitis had a temple near Ampsanctus on the Appian Way. The temple precinct included a cave that gave off suffocating vapors. She also had a shrine in Lucania in southern Italy.

**See also:** *Diana; Palici*

## Mercury

**Also known as:** Mercurius

**Origin:** Italy

Mercury is a trickster spirit who is happy to masquerade as other spirits. Long ago the Italian deity Mercury was syncretized to Greek Hermes. The two are now virtually indistinguishable, but they are not the same spirit. Mercury is urban, while the roots of Hermes lie in the rustic countryside. Hermes has a broader base of interests, while Mercury is a spirit of money, finances, and prosperity. His name is related to words like *merchants*, *merchandise*, or *commerce* as well as *mercenary*, a soldier of fortune.

- In Rome, Mercury was most closely associated with commerce.
- In Celtic areas, where he was very beloved, he was also associated with prosperity, fertility, and healing. (This may derive from identification with local Celtic deities or with Hermes.)

He had no official consort in Rome, but in Celtic regions Mercury was paired with various Gaulish goddesses, especially Rosmerta. Following the advent of Christianity, his role and many shrines were reassigned to Michael Archangel.

In Roman influenced Teutonic regions, the name Mercurius was applied to Odin, possibly because of physical resemblances. Both deities traditionally dress as travelers. (See the Glossary entry for *Identification*.) This is well-documented beginning in the first century CE and continuing to the High Middle Ages. (For example, twelfth century historian Geoffrey of Monmouth writes explicitly of the identification of the two deities.)

Mercury assumed Odin's associations with magic and occultism, not present in his original Italian form. (Alternatively, Odin's true nature peeks out from behind the mask of Mercury.) By the medieval era, Mercury was profoundly associated with alchemy and ceremonial magic as he remains today.

Mercury is a generous spirit but his temperament is mercurial. He

loves practical jokes and word games. Always be exceptionally careful how you phrase petitions to him, paying close attention to nuance and implication, lest he give you what you accidentally asked for, rather than what he knows very well that you desire. Mercury has quicksilver intelligence and wit. He is easily bored. Keep him entertained and he'll be more likely to keep you happy, healthy, and prosperous. Although Mercury patronizes the dishonest, he may also be invoked to protect against them.

**Favored people:** Merchants, perjurers, forgers, counterfeiters, alchemists, astrologers, ceremonial magicians as well as those born under the zodiac signs Gemini and Virgo. People born when the planet Mercury was retrograde, regardless of sun sign, are also Mercury's special children.

**Manifestation:** He wears a traveler's cloak and either a broad-brimmed traveler's hat or a winged cap. He went native in Gaul and is depicted wearing a torc; sometimes in Gaul, his hat is replaced by horns and he resembles Cernunnos.

**Iconography:** Mercury is a popular subject of ancient as well as Renaissance art. He may be the inspiration for the Magician tarot card, which may be used to represent him.

**Attributes:** Caduceus (staff with two entwined serpents), money bag. In Gaul he also sometimes has a drawn sword indicating that he aggressively guards devotees' finances.

**Creatures:** Rooster (cockerel), tortoise

**Day:** Wednesday (in French: *Mercredi*)

**Date:** 15 May, the Festival of the Mercuralia

**Planet:** Mercury

**Metals:** Quicksilver/mercury and zinc

**Plants:** Dog's Mercury (*Mercurialis perennis*) and other members of the potentially dangerous *Mercurialis* plant family, also known as the Spurge family. Mercury also rules kitchen herbs like anise, dill, and fennel.



**Spirit ally:** Neptune—together they support the maritime trade.

**Sacred site:** His temple on the Aventine Hill dedicated in 495 BCE was associated with the formation of a brotherhood of merchants.

**Offerings:** Mercury Head Dimes, Mercury-brand cars and tools of magic

**See also:** *Asklepius; Hermes; Michael; Morgan Le Fay; Odin; Rosmerta*

## **Meretseger**

*She who Loves Silence; Lioness of the Summit; Lady of the Necropolis*

**Origin:** Egypt

Meretseger, guardian of the Necropolis, lives atop a pyramid-shaped mountain overlooking Egypt's Valley of the Kings. She protects graves from tomb raiders and treasure hunters. Meretseger protects the righteous but punishes malefactors. Laborers who lived and worked in the Valley of Kings feared her wrath, lest their actions be misunderstood as threatening graves.

Meretseger's punishment is usually administered via snake bite or scorpion sting, but just staying far from snakes isn't sufficient to avoid her justice. Meretseger can also inflict blindness. She is not a hard-hearted goddess, however. She responds to repentance and can heal afflictions associated with her, whether or not she personally caused them. Meretseger, cosmic security guard, protects the living as well as the dead, especially against snakes and venomous creatures.

**Manifestation:** Meretseger may manifest as a cobra or a woman with a cobra's head, a cobra with a woman's face peeking out from the hood, or a cobra with three heads: snake, woman, and vulture.

**Bird:** Vulture

**Animals:** Snake, lion

**Offerings:** Incense, fresh water and images of snakes

## Mermaid

Nearly every culture on Earth possesses mermaid lore. They appear all over the world. Those lacking oceans have freshwater mermaids who inhabit springs, lakes, wells, rivers, and swamps. Archaeologists in the Middle East have excavated three-thousand-year-old bronze images of mermaids.

In general, mermaids share the following traits and talents:

- The power of prophecy.
- The ability to grant wishes and fulfill petitions.
- The power to bestow or remove fertility, prosperity, and abundance.
- A volatile temperament to varying degrees.
- Mermaids are not inclined to turn the other cheek; they are vengeful if angered or wronged.

Many but not all mermaids are skilled healers and quite a few are psychopomps leading dead souls to their next realm. Mermaids are associated with female sexuality and power. Cultures bearing ambivalence toward that power often portray the mermaid as dangerous and alluring, the seductress with evil intent. Mermaids eventually became symbols of lust and sin for the medieval Church.

**Iconography:** Images of mermaids appear as carved motifs in European cathedrals, including Auxerre, Basel, Beauvais, Cologne, Freiburg, and Lyons. They often appear holding or nursing babies similar to a Madonna with child.

**Attributes:** Fish, seashells, musical instruments, human babies and especially combs and hand mirrors. In English, *comb* is an innocuous word with a single meaning. The Greek word for “comb,” *kteis*, also signifies “vulva” and “seashell.” The Latin word for “comb,” *pecten*, can signify “vulva,” too.

**Element:** Water

**Planet:** Moon

**Amulet:** Coral is traditionally perceived as the petrified menstrual blood of mermaids and thus an exceptionally powerful protective charm.

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*A list of mermaids may be found in the appendix.*

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**See also:** *Medusa; Psychopomp; Vampire Mermaids*

## **Merrow**

**Also known as:** Murdhuacha (Gaelic)

The Merrow are Irish mermaids. There are mermen, too, but they have little interest in people and hence little contact. Female Merrows, on the other hand, display interest in human life and so sometimes emerge from the water.

The Merrow's little red hat distinguishes her from other mermaids. She needs it to navigate between watery and terrestrial realms. Capture the hat and capture the Merrow. Legends describe men stealing her hat in order to marry the Merrow. She usually makes a good wife and adapts to human society. The hat must remain hidden, though, because if she regains it, she will return to the sea, abandoning her husband, children, and whatever life she has created on land, no matter how happy, content or in love she may be. (It's unclear whether the Merrow chooses to go or whether the hat exerts an irresistible lure.)

Merrows are reasonably gentle mermaids. As with others of their kind, they sit on rocks, sing alluringly, and create distractions; hence, they are blamed for shipwrecks. Merrows also have a tendency to manifest just before storms, so their appearance may be perceived as a dreaded harbinger. Merrows possess magical skill and knowledge, which they use on behalf of those humans they love or for whom they feel loyalty.

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*An Irish legend suggests that in addition to banishing snakes, Saint Patrick transformed recalcitrant Pagan women into mermaids.*

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**Favored people:** Their descendents: characterized by webbed digits and/or scaly skin.

**Manifestation:** Merrows are shape-shifters. They appear as beautiful mermaids, but on land may sprout legs and resemble human women. (The tip-off to their true identity may be inexplicable water dripping from hair or clothing.) They also emerge from the water in the form of small, hornless cattle.

**Attribute:** That jaunty little red hat

**Offerings:** Flowers (real or crafted from paper or clay), candy, fruit, wine

**See also:** *Kua; Lorelei; Mermaid; Morgan Le Fay; Nixie*

## Meskhenet

**Also known as:** Meshkent; Meshkhenet

**Origin:** Egypt

Meskhenet, Goddess of Childbirth, protects laboring women and newborn babies. She is a mistress of magic and an expert on charms, spells, and incantations. Meskhenet is a spirit of destiny who may reveal or ordain the child's future at birth. She also assists with rebirth into the afterlife, following a person's death.

**Favored people:** Midwives

**Manifestation:** She manifests as a beautiful woman wearing a headdress in the form of a cow's uterus. She sometimes appears to laboring women in her guise as the Four Meskhenets: dancing girls. They also dance at Khnum's side, chanting incantations and banishing evil.

**Iconography:** A brick topped by a woman's head

**Attribute:** The birthing brick on which Egyptian women would kneel during labor

**Emblem:** Cow's uterus

**See also:** *Anubis; Fairy, Birth; Hathor; Isis; Khnum; Ma'at*

## Metis

### *Wise Counsel*

Metis, daughter of Oceanus and Tethys, is an ancient goddess of wisdom and cleverness. Metis gave Kronos the emetic potion that caused him to vomit him up the children he had swallowed.

Metis married Zeus. She is his first or second wife, depending on whether one counts Dione. Prophecies foretold that Metis was destined to bear incredibly brilliant, wise children. You would think most fathers would be happy about this, but not Zeus.

- Metis' first child, Athena, was destined to equal her father in wisdom and courage.
- Her second child was destined to conquer his father, just like Zeus and Kronos had conquered theirs.

Zeus determined that there would be no second child. He outfoxed Metis. When she was pregnant with Athena, he played a shape-shifting game with her. She took various different forms, and when she became a tiny fly, he swallowed her. The implication is that he killed and consumed her, somehow managing to rescue daughter Athena, who later emerged full-grown in full battle gear from Zeus' head.

Another theory suggests that Metis exists within Zeus: he is able to draw on her wisdom, with or without her permission. Alternatively, Athena—who was born full-grown—is Metis. Athena's insistence on virginity and chastity is her way of staying safe: Zeus will never permit the birth of the second child. (Erichthonios, the child she must keep

secret, may be that child.)

- Metis may originally derive from North Africa, possibly related to Ma'at.
- Metis, Athena, and Medusa may form a trinity of closely related spirits.

**Manifestation:** Metis is a skilled shape-shifter, a talent that led to her undoing.

**Element:** Water

**See also:** *Athena; Dione; Erich tonios; Kronos; Ma'at; Medusa; Oceanus; Zeus*

## Metresa

The Caribbean island of Hispaniola is divided into two nations: Haiti and the Dominican Republic. Although Vodou has historically been associated with Haiti, related traditions exist in the Dominican Republic, too. The Dominican tradition is usually spelled *Vodo* or referred to as the Twenty-One Divisions. *Metresa* is the term used to describe Vodo female spirits. It is a Spanish adaptation of the French word *Maîtresse* or, in English, *Mistress*.

**See also:** *Anaisa Pyé; Lubana; Lwa; Ma da ma, La; Metresili*

## Metresili

**Classification:** Metresa

Metresili derives from Metresa Sili or Maitresse Ezili. Metresili is the Dominican path of Ezili Freda Dahomey. Just as Ezili is beloved in Haitian Vodou, so Metresili is among the most beloved Metresas. Like Ezili, Metresili is syncretized to Our Lady of Sorrows. Unlike the wanton Ezili, however, Metresili has a reputation as a conservative and chaste, albeit romantic, spirit. She is invoked for love, romance, and prosperity.

**Iconography:** Metresili is represented by the traditional image of Our Lady of Sorrows—a beautiful woman whose heart is pierced by swords.

**Feast day:** 15 September

**Colors:** Pink, white, light blue

**Offerings:** Pink roses, pink champagne, rosé wine, pink and red carbonated drinks; pink liqueurs; heart-shaped milagros; old-fashioned lace Valentine hearts

**See also:** *Ezili Freda Dahomey; Lwa; Metresa* and the Glossary entries for *Milagro, Path, and Syncretism*

## Miach

**Origin:** Ireland

**Classification:** Tuatha Dé Danaan

Miach is the father of healing herbs and the patron of herbalism. He is the son of Dian Cecht and is Airmid's brother. When Nuada, Ruler of the Tuatha Dé Danaan, lost his hand in battle, he also lost his throne. Only someone with no physical imperfections was allowed to rule. Dian Cecht, Sacred Physician, fitted him with a silver prosthetic hand, but the throne was given to Bres, who proved to be an inadequate ruler. Dian Cecht's children, Airmid and Miach, determined to heal Nuada so he could reclaim his throne.

They located Nuada's severed hand, which had been buried, removed the silver prosthetic, and placed the original hand on the stump, chanting an incantation:

*Sinew to sinew; nerve to nerve;  
joint to joint*

In three times three days and nights, Nuada was good as new and fit to reign again. Dian Cecht was unhappy: his children had publicly shown themselves to be greater healers than he. His anger was specifically directed at his son. He challenged him by slicing into Miach's head with a sword and challenging him to heal. Miach did. Dian Cecht repeated the action, this time slicing deeper. Again, Miach self-regenerated. Three times, Dian Cecht repeated the action; each time Miach was able to heal

himself. Finally, Dian Cecht cut open his head and removed the brain, and Miach was dead. After he was buried, 365 healing plants sprang from his grave, one for each day of the year, one for every illness.

**See also:** *Airmid; Dian Cecht; Nuada; Tuatha Dé Danaan*

## **Miao Shan**

**Also known as:** Kwan Yin

**Origin:** China

Once upon a time, there was a king who had no children but desperately wanted them. Well, what he really wanted were sons. He petitioned the Lord of T'ai Shan, offering tremendous sacrifices. His petition was heard, and the king's wife shortly had three babies, but they were girls. The king was terribly disappointed but was finally appeased by the thought that he would gain son-in-laws via his daughters' marriages.

The eldest two were amenable, but the youngest, Miao Shan—the future Kwan Yin, Lady of Compassion—refused. She wished to lead a spiritual life in a convent, causing bitter conflicts with Dad. Miao Shan tried to compromise by offering to marry a doctor so she could help him relieve suffering. That wasn't the kind of son-in-law Dad had in mind; he sought politically advantageous marriages.

Eventually he seemed to relent, sending Miao Shan to the Monastery of the White Sparrow, but it was a ploy. He gave instructions that she be treated so miserably that she would run home, give up her dreams, and beg to be married to her father's choice. Miao Shan was ordered to wash, cook, and care for all five hundred nuns by herself, an impossible task. Then the miracles began:

- The Mother of the Great Bear sent a dragon to dig Miao Shan a well.
- A tiger brought wood for the fire.
- Birds gathered vegetables.
- The Spirit of the Hearth prepared all the meals.

Not impressed by these miracles, the king was enraged when he



realized his plans had been foiled. He ordered the convent burnt down with all the nuns inside. Miao Shan quenched the fires with a fresh miracle. Enraged, the king ordered her beheaded. Even when the sword broke upon touching her neck, her father would not relent and recognize her holy nature. Finally, she was strangled to death.

She continued performing miracles after death. Miao Shan became the center of a tremendous cult in Western China. She received a peach of immortality from Hsi Wang Mu and joined the Chinese pantheon as a goddess of eternal patience, mercy, and compassion.

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*In approximately 1100 CE, an official named Chiang Chih Ch'i visiting the Hsiang Shan monastery was given a text, which purported to reveal Kwan Yin's true identity: she was really Princess Miao Shan. Events associated with her earthly incarnation had occurred on the site where the monastery now stood. The monastery quickly became a major pilgrimage for Kwan Yin devotees.*

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This myth has an alternative ending: Following various spiritual post-death trials, Buddha appeared to Miao Shan and gave her a Peach of Immortality. She could have journeyed to Heaven but instead chose to stay on Earth for as long as there was one breath of human suffering, and thus Princess Miao Shan evolved into the Bodhisattva Kwan Yin.

Miao Shan, once the focus of a significant spiritual tradition, is now virtually entirely absorbed by Kwan Yin. Statues of Kwan Yin are used to represent Miao Shan (or vice versa.) Offerings and other pertinent information regarding veneration of Miao Shan are found in the entry for Kwan Yin.

**Attribute:** A giant pearl of such luminosity that it serves Miao Shan as a night light; the pearl was a gift from the Dragon King for saving his son.

**See also:** *Bao Gu; Dragon Kings of the Sea; Hsi Wang Mu; Lady of the Beasts; Kwan Yin; Ma Zu; T'ai Shan, Lord*

## Michael

### *Captain of the Lord's House; Prince of the Heavenly Host*

If there was ever an angelic popularity contest, it's likely that Michael Archangel would win. Michael is beloved by Pagans, Jews, Christians, Muslims, and the unaffiliated. His name means "who is like the Lord." Statement or question? You decide.

Michael is head of the Lord's Army. He crushed the Rebel Angels. Legend has it that if Lucifer could only have persuaded Michael to join him, Heaven would have been overthrown.

Michael is the angel of righteousness—he does what is *right*. He cannot be bribed. He is allegedly among the few angels who know the Ineffable Name of Power.

Michael is invoked for protection from anything that frightens you. If you are worried about the safety of loved ones, Michael may be petitioned on their behalf. He accepts petitions from one person on behalf of another. He is the archangel of justice and may be invoked to provide justice for crimes committed against you. He is the special protector of victims of rape and may be invoked for protection against sexual abuse.

An old verbal charm invokes Michael's vigilant protection:

*Michael to the right of me,  
Michael to the left of me,  
Michael above me,  
Michael below me,  
Michael within me,  
Michael all around me,  
Michael, with your flaming sword  
of cobalt blue, please protect me.*

This charm's power is enhanced by simultaneously visualizing being surrounded by cobalt blue flames emanating from Michael's sword. Further appeals may be added at the end of the charm. (For example, *Michael, please protect my cat, my dog, my true love* and so forth. Be as specific as possible. Name and visualize your desire.)

Michael has dominion over fire magic and candle spells. He is the angel of fire safety, also invoked for safety at sea. He is the patron of those suffering from sea sickness or motion sickness. Moroccan folklore suggests that precipitation (rain, snow, hail) falls from a celestial reservoir or sea. Michael presides over this sea. Precipitation only occurs according to his command.

Michael serves as a psychopomp, escorting dead souls to the next realm and guarding them on their journey. Russian folklore envisions him as a ferryman bringing good souls toward Paradise's radiant light. Michael guards the gates of

Paradise. At the Final Judgment, he will weigh the souls of the dead.

Michael is the Angel of Insomnia, which he both heals and causes. According to Jewish legend, the reason King Ahasueros couldn't sleep in the Queen Esther story is because the Creator sent Michael to afflict him with sleeplessness.

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*Michael makes frequent public appearances. Apparitions of Michael have been recorded in Mexico, Italy, and France. Most recently, in 1995 and 1996, Egyptian Christians and Muslims witnessed numerous apparitions of Michael in the Church of Saint Michael in the village of Kafr Yusuf Samri. He appeared in various forms both with and without wings. Miracles recorded include exorcisms, healings, and multiplication of oil.*

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John Travolta played the warrior angel in the 1996 movie, *Michael*.

**Favored people:** Theoretically Michael as humanity's defender is everyone's guardian, but he is also specifically patron of firefighters, warriors, paratroopers, radiologists, fencers, sword smiths, knights, ambulance drivers, artists, mariners, and law enforcement officers. Judaism, Coptic Christianity, and Roman Catholicism all claim him as their special patron. He also favors professionals who utilize scales, including chemists, pharmacists, bakers, and grocers, possibly also drug dealers and weight watchers.

**Manifestation:** Michael takes many forms ranging from a classical winged angel to a being of brilliant, blinding light to a head of garlic. Garlic contains his essence and is thus more than just a protective amulet; it is an actual manifestation of Michael.

**Iconography:** Michael is frequently portrayed as a winged Roman soldier. He is commonly portrayed with a dragon; this is now interpreted as representing his victory over Lucifer, but this image may hark back to the days when Michael was worshipped as a deity in Babylonia and Persia. He may once have ridden that dragon. (Sometimes a devil is substituted for the dragon.)

**Attributes:** Shield, sword, and scales

**Planets:** Sun, Mercury

**Plant:** *Angelica archangelica*, garlic

**Elements:** Fire, water

**Direction:** Various directions are attributed to him, usually south or east; the Kabbalah places Michael on the *right* side. (Gabriel, his compatriot, is on the left.)

**Colors:** Red, silver, and cobalt blue

**Date:** 29 September, the feast of Michael mas. Coptic tradition recommends the twelfth of each month for requesting protection and help from Michael.

**Sacred sites:** Michael is the patron saint of France. Mont-Saint-Michel in Normandy was dedicated to Michael in 708 CE after the archangel appeared to Aubert, Bishop of Avranches, in a series of dreams, ordering him to transform it into a shrine dedicated to him. Pilgrimage to Mont-Saint-Michel allegedly guarantees smooth passage to the next life. (The waters here demonstrate some of the strongest tides on Earth.) Mont-Saint-Michel bears a mystical reputation, sometimes associated with the Grail. It may be part of an aligned chain of sacred standing stones including Delos, Delphi, and Mount Carmel.

**Offerings:** Frankincense, myrrh, angelica, garlic. In Sicily, he is given

sugar and sweet liqueurs.

**See also:** *Belié Belcan; Gabriel; Hermes; Ma'at; Mercury; Ogun; Peacock Angel; Raphael*

## **Mictlancihuatl**

*Lady of Death*

**Origin:** Mexico

Mictlancihuatl is Queen of Mictlan, the Aztec realm of death, which she presides over with her husband, Mictlantecuhtli. She guards the bones. Mictlancihuatl also presides over the Aztec festival of the dead, which evolved into the modern Mexican holiday *Día de los Muertos* (“Day of the Dead”). She is sometimes described as having been destined to become Lady Death. Sacrificed as an infant, she was essentially born to die. The spirit *La Santísima Muerte* may be a modern manifestation of Mictlancihuatl.

**Color:** Red

**Bird:** Owl

**Time:** The fifth hour

**Feast:** Day of the Dead, culminating on 2 November. The length of the festival—days to weeks—depends on location.

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*Mictlancihuatl and Mictlantecuhtli, partners in death, are venerated together. They may be petitioned for peaceful, painless death at the appropriate time.*

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**See also:** *Mictlantecuhtli; Santísima Muerte*

## **Mictlantecuhtli**

## *Lord of Death*

**Also known as:** Tzontemoc

**Origin:** Mexico

According to Aztec cosmology, there are thirteen celestial levels and nine Underworld levels. Souls of the dead must pass through each lower level until reaching the very last, Mictlan, during an arduous journey that takes years to accomplish.

Mictlantecuhtli is Lord of Mictlan, the Aztec realm of death. His wife and partner is Mictlancihuatl. Those who die uneventful deaths enter his realm. At the beginning of this world, Quetzalcoatl went to Mictlan to gather old bones in order to create a new race of people. When Mictlantecuhtli wouldn't give them to him, Quetzalcoatl stole them.

In Javier Hernandez's comic book *El Muerto: The Aztec Zombie*, Mictlantecuhtli seeks the return of traditional Aztec religion.

**Manifestation:** Mictlantecuhtli, a bloodstained skeleton, wears paper clothing, owl feathers, and a collar made of eyeballs. (Paper clothing was a traditional offering to the dead.)

**Attribute:** Skull

**Direction:** North or south

**Time:** The eleventh hour

**Animals:** Dog, bat, spider

**Bird:** Owl

**Offerings:** Once upon a time, the Aztecs buried loved ones with valuable gifts to be presented to Mictlantecuhtli upon arrival in Mictlan.

**See also:** *Mictlancihuatl; Quetzalcoatl; Xolotl*

## **Mimi**

**Origin:** Australia

The Mimi are a species of powerful, profound, yet tricky and mischievous spirits who live within crevices of rocks and caves in Arnhem Land, Australia. Mimi are immortal. They may be the souls of primordial people who lived on the land before the aboriginal people and taught them survival and creative skills. They appear in various Dreamtime legends.

Mimi blow on cracks in rocks, and the rocks respond by opening and allowing them inside. Sometimes Mimi are friendly toward people; sometimes they're not. (They allegedly occasionally eat people, although their primary food is wild yams.) Mimi enjoy dancing and singing and are credited with teaching songs and dances to people. They also taught the art of cave painting, and the oldest cave paintings are attributed to them. Mimi protect animals, guarding the balance between them and people. For instance, although Mimi protect kangaroos, they also taught people how to hunt and cook them.

**Manifestation:** The Mimi are tall and so thin, they won't go outside when it's windy, lest their necks snap like twigs.

**Creatures:** Snakes, kangaroos, wallabies

## Mimir

**Origin:** Norse

Mimir is a lord of wisdom. He is the keeper of a well at the base of Ygdrassil, the World Tree. He stands halfway immersed within the well. (Alternatively his severed head guards the well.) The well is a source and repository of hidden wisdom. Drinking from it bestows the gift of prophecy. Odin wanted the wisdom and gifts that the well bestowed, but unable to steal it from Mimir, he struck a deal: Odin sacrificed one eye to drink from the well.

Mimir may or may not be Odin's uncle, brother of his mother, Bestla. He is an Aesir spirit, sent as a hostage to the Vanir to ensure peace between the two pantheons. The Vanir sent Freyr, Freya, and Njord, three of their most significant spirits, to the Aesir. Angered because they felt that the Aesir had not sent equally powerful hostages, they beheaded

Mimir and sent his head to Odin. Odin used herbs to preserve Mimir's head and prevent it from decaying, and then chanted spells over the head to magically activate it. Odin consults with Mimir's head before the final apocalyptic battle of Ragnarok.

There are different reports as to what's exactly in the Well of Mimir: water or mead? After Odin hung for nine days on the World Tree, Mimir revived him with a drink of mead. Mimir drinks mead every morning.

Mimir himself is a font of wisdom. He is accessed via dreams, visualizations, and shamanic journeys.

**Manifestation:** Mimir is a speaking oracular head.

**See also:** *Aesir; Angerboda; Bran; Freya; Freyr; Maeve; Njord; Odin; Vanir*

## Mimoun, Sidi

**Origin:** Morocco

**Classification:** Djinn; Melk

Sidi Mimoun, King of Djinn, may have traveled from Guinea to Morocco with the ancestors of the Gnawa. Because he is a king, Sidi Mimoun is able to restrain, exorcise, or control other Djinn. Sidi Mimoun is invoked during healing rituals by the Gnawa Brotherhood. He causes and heals seizure disorders including epilepsy. He is also associated with hysterical disorders and mental illness.

Sidi Mimoun is the Black Melk. His emblem is a black veil, which demarcates his sacred space. When requesting his assistance, toss a black veil over the person requiring healing. Sidi Mimoun is also invoked to protect children. Place the baby or child for whom you seek protection under a black veil when requesting help from Sidi Mimoun.

**Consort:** Lalla Mimouna

**Color:** Black

**Days:** Saturday, Sunday

**See also:** *Djinn; Melk; Zagaz*



## Mimouna, Lalla

**Origin:** Morocco

**Classification:** Djinn

Lalla Mimouna lives in wells and deserted houses. She likes to seduce traveling men but will attack both men and women. Lalla Mimouna is married to Sidi Mimoun. She has a sanctuary in Marrakech.

**Colors:** Blue, black

**Incense:** *Hasalban* (rosemary)

**See also:** *Djinn; Mimoun, Sidi*

## Min

*Lord of the Eastern Desert; Lord of Foreign Lands*

**Origin:** Egypt

Min is the lord of male sexuality, virility, and fertility. The gifts he bestows on devotees include sexual energy, vitality, vigor, and fertility. Min ensures production of healthy sperm and semen and may also be petitioned to bestow fertility to women. During the New Kingdom (1567–1085 BCE), Min was honored during pharaonic coronation rites to ensure the pharaoh's sexual vigor and to guarantee a male heir.

Min is paired with Nephthys and also sometimes with Isis, either as a son or a consort. He may be an avatar of Osiris. Min also has other functions. He is a storm spirit with control over precipitation and is associated with the agricultural harvest. He was the lord of caravan routes through the desert, protecting merchants from various potential dangers emanating from spiritual and human sources as well as from the desert itself.

**Favored people:** Travelers, nomads, merchants, hunters

**Attribute:** Thunderbolt

**Color:** Black, white

**Creatures:** White Bull, Ram

**Tree:** Palm

**Planet:** Sun

**Element:** Air

**Sacred sites:** Min's most important sanctuaries were at Koptus (Qift) and Akhmim (Panopolis). His temple was among the last, if not *the* last, to be abandoned following the abolition of traditional Egyptian religion. Min rules desert roads. Historically, he ruled the caravan routes that left Koptus, journeying through the desert to the Red Sea.

**Offerings:** Min was traditionally offered a portion of the harvest. In addition, he was given lettuce, but not just *any* lettuce. The Egyptians possessed a special phallic-shaped lettuce with a milky residue reputed to have aphrodisiac properties. Substitutions are appropriate but some attempt should be made to maintain the phallic nature of the sacrifice; cucumbers or large endives might be more appropriate than plain lettuce leaves or a head of iceberg. Phallic-shaped ex-votos may also be offered.

**See also:** *Isis; Nephthys; Osiris*

## **Minceskro**

**Origin:** Romani

Ana, Queen of the Keshalyi, distraught that she was the source of monstrous disease demons, asked her son Melalo how she could become sterile. He advised her to bury herself in a dung heap. She did as he suggested, but a dung beetle slipped inside her body. Ana conceived and gave birth to Minceskro, her eighth child, a female demon who causes blood disorders and illnesses characterized by blood abnormalities (anything with elevated or lowered white blood cells, for instance). Minceskro married Lolmischo. Their children cause red diseases: measles, smallpox, and scarlatina.

**See also:** *Ana; Keshalyi; Lolmischo; Melalo*

## **Minerva**

**Also known as:** Menerva; Menrva

**Origin:** Italy

The Romans received Minerva from the Etruscans, who may or may not have received her from the Italian tribes. Minerva was worshipped throughout Italy. The origin of her name is unclear, but it is believed to be related to *mental*. She has dominion over the intellect, mental processes, and activities.

The Romans identified Minerva with Greek Athena. She is now so subsumed by Athena that it is difficult to disentwine the two goddesses, although they were originally distinct. The rites of Brigid in Kildare are described as resembling those of Minerva.

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*In her guise as Minerva Medica, Minerva presides over the medical profession and healing arts.*

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- In 1899, Guatemalan President Manuel Es trada Cabrera (1857–1924) initiated and tried to promote Feasts of Minerva, which involved honoring teachers and students.
- The most famous modern Minerva may be Harry Potter's Minerva McGonagle.

**Favored people:** Artisans, artists, crafts people, teachers, philosophers, musicians, writers, poets

**Iconography:** Images of Athena are generally used to portray Minerva. The Queen of Spades playing card traditionally represents Minerva.

**Attribute:** Embroidery tools

**Spirit allies:** She was worshipped with Juno and Jupiter as part of the Capitoline Triad.

**Feasts:**

- 19 March-23 March, Festival of Artisans; Minerva is honored by artisans, artists, and teachers.
- The full moon in June; flautists honor Minerva.

**Sacred sites:**

- She was venerated alongside Juno and Jupiter on the Capitoline Hill.
- Her temple sanctuary on the Aventine Hill was a center for the arts.
- Rome's Church of Santa Maria Sopra Minerva was built over Minerva's temple.

**See also:** *Athena; Brigid; Juno; Jupiter; Sulis; Victoria*

## **Minona**

**Origin:** Fon (Benin, formerly Dahomey)

Minona, powerful spirit of magic, lives deep within the forest. She presides over women and the home. Minona is either the mother or the sister of Legba, with whom she is closely associated. Minona can be a bit of a trickster, too.

- Minona grants personal fertility to women.
- She bestows and enhances agricultural fertility.
- She teaches women every type of magic plus divination via palm kernels.

**Favored people:** Women

**Attribute:** Spindle

**Sacred site:** Minona lacks official shrines. Instead, women create personal shrines in their homes.

**Offering:** Fruit, flowers, efforts to preserve African rainforests

**See also:** *Eshu Elegbara; Legba*

## Mishepishu

**Also known as:** Mishupishu

**Origin:** Cree, Ojibwa

**Classification:** Manitou

Mishepishu is a horned water spirit from North America's Great Lakes region. He lives at the bottom of rivers and lakes. If Mishepishu was an Asian or European spirit, he would automatically be classified as a water dragon. Mishepishu must be propitiated and appeased so he won't cause storms or sink boats.

Mishepishu is the guardian of copper. He punishes those who collect copper without obtaining his permission. However, he sometimes does allow people to cut copper from his horns. Hunters invoke Mishepishu's assistance via copper charms. (The charms are then ritually destroyed.)

**Manifestation:** Mishepishu is described as having a cat-like face. His horns are copper.

**Iconography:** Mishepishu appears on rock paintings. Traders and merchants learned that the Native people north of the Great Lakes liked guns with brass side plates ornamented with images of dragons—they interpreted these as Mishepishu.

**Offering:** Tobacco

**See also:** *Manitou*

## Mixcoatl

**Also known as:** Camaxtli; Camastli

Mixcoatl, the cloud serpent, Lord of the Hunt, is a deified hunter and warrior, the first to use flint to start a fire. Originally a spirit of the Chichimeca and Otomi, his role was taken over by the Aztec

Huitzilopochtli. His mother is Cihuacoatl. In some traditions, Mixcoatl is Quetzalcoatl's father. He is also the father of Coatlique's four hundred sons. Mixcoatl governs the stars and the Milky Way and is closely associated with Tezcatlipoca.

**Manifestation:** Mixcoatl's body is ornamented with painted red-and-white stripes, sort of like a candy cane. The black mask he wears is trimmed with stars.

**Attributes:** Bow, arrows, basket covered with netting

**Element:** Fire

**See also:** *Cihuacoatl; Coatlique; Huitzilopochtli; Malinalxochitl; Quetzalcoatl; Tezcatlipoca*

## Mnemosyne

*Memory*

**Origin:** Greece

Mnemosyne, daughter of Gaia and Uranus, lay with Zeus for nine nights in order to conceive nine Muses. She and Achelous are sometimes considered the parents of the Sirens.

According to legend, prior to Mnemosyne, memory didn't exist. She may be invoked to help preserve memory and to access past-life memories.

**See also:** *Achelous; Muses; Sirens; Zeus*

## Moirae

*The Fates*

**Origin:** Greece

The Moirae live together in a cave by a spring from which white water gushes. They are the original Fates, Goddesses of Destiny. In Greek,

*moira* indicated a *portion, lot* or *share*. The Moirae determined one's allotted portion or fate. They are eternal and were once considered even more powerful than the gods. Their names are:

- Lachesis
- Clotho or Klotho
- Atropos

The Moirae represent the waxing, full and waning moons: creation, existence and destruction, birth, life and death. Clotho the Spinner puts the wool around a spindle. Her sister Lachesis the Sustainer measures the thread and spins the wool. Atropos the Cutter snips the spun thread.

The Moirae are usually described as daughters of Nyx. An alternative genealogy describes them as daughters of Themis and Zeus, perhaps as a way to make them subject to Zeus.

**Manifestation:** They are described as wearing white

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*Atropos is the oldest, smallest, and most powerful of the Moirae. The potentially deadly alkaloid atropine is named in her honor.*

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**Attribute:** Brass pestle as well as a spindle, scroll and scales

**Planet:** Moon

**See also:** *Fates (1); Fates (2); Kali; Nyx; Persephone; Polyboea; Shiva; Themis; Zeus*

## **Mokosh**

*Moist*

**Also known as:** Mokosha; Mokosz

**Origin:** Slavic

Mokosh is the spirit of moisture. She is an ancient spirit but was also the preeminent female deity of the later Slavic official pantheon. She is manifest in dampness and liquids. Mokosh protects mother's milk and semen. Rain is considered to be her milk. Czechs invoked her aid during times of draught.

As late as the sixteenth century, Christian authorities were complaining that Slavic women "went to Mokosh." Pilgrimages to Mokosh stones in the Ukraine reportedly continued through the nineteenth century as women petitioned her for good health and fertility.

**Favored people:** Those who work with sheep in a manner that is not harmful to the sheep.

**Manifestations:** Mokosh manifests as a woman and as stones, especially those that are breast-shaped.

**Iconography:** Mokosh is portrayed spinning beside a well.

**Attributes:** Mokosh carries a spindle and/or a child.

**Creature:** Sheep

**Offerings:** Grains

**See also:** *Zemyna*

## **Mononoke**

**Origin:** Japan

The word *Mononoke* may theoretically be used to refer to any kind of spirit. Hayao Miyazaki's 1997 film, *Princess Mononoke*, may be translated as "Princess of the Spirits," but the word is also specifically used for a kind of possessing spirit. Mononoke are spirits that can inhabit inanimate objects. Mononoke live near shrines, temples, and cemeteries but can slip inside objects and appliances.



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*According to Japanese tradition, once a year, inanimate objects become animated: they come to life. It is their annual opportunity to administer justice, rewarding or punishing humans as they deem fit.*

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Some Mononoke are the stuff of nightmares, like doors or walls with eyes. Other Mononoke are your favorite household appliances now come to life. Many have prankster inclinations. Some are hostile to people and enjoy scaring them. Mononoke sometimes display poltergeistlike activity and occasionally are genuinely destructive. Mononoke can be exorcised.

**See also:** *Oiwa; Poltergeist; Tsukumogami; Yokai*

## Mo'o

**Origin:** Hawaii

**Classification:** Akua, Aumakua

Mo'o are gigantic dragon-like water lizard deities. Although that is their true form, Mo'o can shape-shift into the form of people. They can also possess humans (voluntarily and involuntarily).

Mo'o are guardians of water. They have dominion over dreams at night and storytelling during the day. (The Hawaiian word translated as "myth" is *mo'olele*.) Mo'o possess the power to reanimate and/or deify the dead.

Individual Mo'o may serve as personal guardians of specific families and lineages. They are considered part of the family (and may, in fact, be ancestral spirits) and thus expect to be honored and propitiated by their family members. Their long serpentine vertebrae are emblematic of their role as ancestral spirits. Each vertebra is a link in the ancestral chain, the family tree.

Mo'o offer protection and bestow abundance, health, fertility, and prosperity.

**Manifestation:** Their true form is as a gigantic water lizard, but they shape-shift in many forms, not limited to those of humans or lizards. For example, in one Hawaiian myth, a Mo’o takes the form of fog and torrential rain in an attempt to obstruct the goddess Hi’iaka.

**See also:** *Hi’iaka; Kihawahine; Klu; Mo’o Inanea; Nagas;* and the Glossary entry for *Possession*

## Mo’o Inanea

**Origin:** Hawaii

Mo’o Inanea’s name is sometimes interpreted as the “self-reliant dragon.” She raised the primordial woman Hina and introduced her to Ku, arranging their marriage. She then traveled to Hawaii with them. Mo’o Inanea is among the highest-ranking Mo’o.

**Sacred sites:** A clay pit on Oahu is among the places Mo’o Inanea calls home.

**See also:** *Hina; Ku; Mo’o*

## Morgan Le Fay

**Also known as:** Morgana Le Fay; Mor gaine Le Fay; Fata Morgana

*Morgan Le Fay* literally means “Morgan the Fairy.” *Morgan* probably derives from the Welsh word for “sea,” *mor*; Celtic mermaids are known as *morgans* or in Ireland, *merrow* from the Gaelic *muir*. Although now most famous as King Arthur’s half-sister, Morgan Le Fay is older than the Arthurian Saga. One theory suggests that Morgan was originally a Celtic death goddess, similar to an angel of death or a psychopomp.

Morgan is the ruler of the Celtic paradise, Avalon, the Isle of Apples. She is sometimes envisioned as a mermaid. She may be an aspect of Celtic war goddess, the Morrigan. A theory suggests that Arthurian tales of Morgan and Avalon recall a shrine on a small, isolated British isle, a Pagan outpost that survived invasions and Christianity at least for a

while.

Morgan first appears in the Arthurian sagas in Geoffrey of Monmouth's twelfth-century *Life of Merlin* as a healer. Morgan leads the Nine Holy Women of Avalon who tend Arthur's wounds following the final Battle of Camlan. In this version, she's not Arthur's sister. They fall in love, and he promises to stay with her in Avalon. By end of the twelfth century she was portrayed as Arthur's sister but was still benevolent. By the thirteenth century, a different story emerged and Morgan was transformed: Cistercian monks composed the *Prose Lancelot* (also known as the *Vulgate Cycle*) between 1230 and 1250, which describes the adventures of Lancelot of the Lake and the Quest for the Holy Grail.

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*Morgan also has powerful roots in Italy, where she is called Fata Morgana. (Fata is Italian for "Fairy.") Fata Morgana is also the name of a fatal mirage, an optical illusion that lured sailors to their deaths in the Straits of Messina.*

*The goddess Morgana was held responsible.*

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Frustrated by the popularity of romances with not-so-hidden Pagan sympathies, Cistercian scribes determined to remake these romances as religious allegories and in so doing, demonstrate the superiority of spirit over flesh, male over female, Christian over Pagan. They believed it was blasphemous to attribute powers of healing and prophecy to women who were unaffiliated with religious orders. New elements were added to the story: incest and demonic possession, with Morgan the wicked witch as Arthur's primary antagonist.

Morgan emerged as the sorceress supreme, an expert in botanical magic, especially poisons. She was consistently portrayed as a heartless, plotting, but beautiful monster. Morgan Le Fay remains a ubiquitous presence in popular culture, usually as a villain but occasionally as a heroine:

- Morgan is a Pagan priestess and heroine in Marion Zimmer Bradley's 1982 novel *The Mists of Avalon*.

- She is a primary antagonist in Bryan Davis' series of Christian fantasy novels, *Dragons in Our Midst* in which Morgan is envisioned as an avatar of Lilith
- Helen Mirren, Helena Bonham Carter, and Julianna Margulies are among the many actresses who have portrayed Morgan
- Sir Edward Burne-Jones, Anthony Fred erick Sandys, and Aubrey Beardsley are among the artists inspired to paint portraits of Morgan.
- Morgaine Le Fey is among the many powerful witch characters featured in DC Comics

Morgan Le Fay is a spirit of healing, love, and romance. She is the mistress of illusions, hallucinations, visions, and dreams. She may be invoked for magical instruction, and spiritual guidance. Her functions as a psychopomp may also be requested.

**Manifestation:** Morgan is a brilliant shape-shifter who can assume virtually any form.

**Bird:** Crow

**Sacred sites:** Morgan is no simple woodland Fairy but has substantial real estate holdings:

- She rules an underwater kingdom possibly near Brittany.
- She rules a Fairy paradise near or on Mount Aetna called Mongibello (or Mongibel).
- She has a castle staffed with beautiful Fairies near Edinburgh.
- She lives on the magical Isle of Avalon.

**See also:** *Aeronwen; Aetna; Fairy; Lilith; Marichi; Mermaid; Merrow; Morrigan; Oberon* and the Glossary entry for *Avatar*

**Morozko**

*Father Frost*

**Origin:** Russia

Morozko is responsible for the ferocity of Russian winters. Whatever he touches with his staff instantly freezes. Morozko can raise or lower the temperature and cause snow to fall. His daughter is the Snow Queen.

In a famous Russian fairy tale, a step-mother sends her step-daughter out into the forest at night, assuming that Morozko in the guise of freezing weather will kill the girl. Morozko does find the girl, but when he inquires whether she's cold, the girl answers so politely and bravely that even his cold heart is touched. Father Frost makes her a fire and sends her home with gifts the next morning. The step-mother then sends her own daughter out into the woods at night, presuming that she'll come home with valuable gifts, too. The spoiled girl whines and complains to Father Frost, who lets her freeze to death.

Morozko is petitioned for snow and for safety from snow.

The 1966 Russian film *Morozko* features a kinder, gentler Father Frost. He doesn't kill the step-sister, only humiliates her.

**Manifestation:** Morozko signals his presence with the abrupt sound of ice cracking or trees snapping from the weight of snow.

**Attribute:** An icy scepter; anyone who touches his scepter instantly falls asleep and will allegedly never awake.

## Morpheus

### *He Who Forms*

Morpheus is the Lord of Dreams, son of Hypnos, Lord of Sleep. His name derives from the same root as *metamorphoses*. The drug morphine is named in his honor.

Morpheus is petitioned for anything having to do with the dream process. He can protect against frightening dreams but is also invoked for prophetic or more frequent dreams.

Morpheus is the star and title character in Neil Gaiman's comic series, *The Sandman*.

**Flower:** Opium poppy (*Papaver somniferum*)

**See also:** *Hypnos; Nyx; Oneirei; Somnos; Thanatos*

## **The Morrigan**

*Phantom Queen*

**Also known as:** Morrighu, Morrigna

**Origin:** Ireland

The Morrigan is a powerful spirit of birth, death, sex, destruction, and fertility. She is among the goddesses associated with Ireland's well-being and sovereignty. Her name is variously translated as "Great Queen," "Sea Queen," "Phantom Queen," or even "Terrifying Queen." She is an oracular, prophetic spirit who can reveal the future and anyone's destiny—that is, if she feels like it. The Morrigan is a headstrong, passionate goddess who does as she pleases. She is among those goddesses serving as Washers at the Ford.

- The Morrigan may be one spirit.
- The Morrigan may be a triple goddess (a trinity: three manifestations of one).
- The Morrigan may name a triad of distinct goddesses—usually Badbh, Nemain, and Morrigan, but sometimes Macha is included.

The Morrigan is most famous as a war goddess. She may instigate battle or meddle with it. The concept of minding her own business does not exist: Battle is her business. Anything that captures her interest is her business. The Morrigan is also renowned for giving sound battle advice. She advised the Dagda on how to deal with the Fomorians.

The Morrigan determines war's outcome, bestowing victory to whichever army or warrior she favors, but she has a reputation for being capricious. Her favors can never be taken for granted. Her frenzied war-fury unnerves armies. Her shriek is deadly.

More than just a battle goddess, the Morrigan is also a goddess of life, birth, and sex. She is sometimes identified as a mermaid. On Samhain, the beginning of the Celtic dark half of the year, the Morrigan stands

astride a river with one foot on either bank to engage in the Great Rite—sacred, transformative, ritual sex—with the Dagda (Ireland’s All-Father).

**Manifestations:** Her many manifestations include, but are not limited to:

- A beautiful woman
- A hag
- A crow
- A deer (doe or stag)
- A white heifer with red ears and no horns
- A black eel long enough to coil three times around the legs of Cu Chulain, a giant man

**Birds:** Corvids: crow, raven, rook

**Creatures:** The Morrigan owns a herd of enchanted, magical cattle.

**Color:** Red

**Day:** Samhain (the night of 31 October and 1 November)

**See also:** *Aeronwen; Badbh; Dagda; Maeve; Macha; Morgan le Fay; Nemain; Washers at the Ford*

## **Morts, Les**

### *The Dead*

**Pronounced:** *Mor*, or in Kreyol: *Mo*

**Origin:** Vodou

*Les Morts* literally means “the dead” in French, but if one thinks of death as disappearance or as severing links between people, then in Vodou cosmology, no one really dies. In the words of Bob Dylan, “Death is not the end.” The soul does not die, nor does it depart for some remote, distant afterlife. Instead, it remains close at hand, albeit usually invisible to the living.

Dead souls travel through an abyss to Ginen, Vodou's ancestral afterlife realm. Ginen lies beneath the sea but may be accessed via mirrors and water. This journey is a transformative process; upon arrival, the benevolent and beneficial dead transform into ancestors, both literal ancestors and spiritual ancestors. (And the not-so-benevolent dead? You know them as ghosts.) Ties between living and dead are not severed. Les Morts communicate their wisdom and elucidate mysteries to the living.

Les Morts communicate via dreams and visions as well as certain types of divination, especially mirror and crystal-ball gazing and scrying in pans of water.

Les Morts may be invoked for practical information but, they will also engage in philosophical discussions. Ask them to reveal secrets of the afterlife. They can be especially benevolent toward those who are terminally ill and essentially already have one foot in the grave as well as for those who are morbidly, overwhelmingly afraid of death.

**Offerings:** Basins of water, candles, flowers, any type of food or drink you think they might enjoy, with the caveat that offerings containing salt may or may not be accepted.

**See also:** *Ancestor; Ghost; Gran Pays; Lwa; Phii Ruan*

## **Morya**

*Master of Wisdom*

**Also known as:** El Morya Khan; Master M.

**Classification:** Ascended Master

Morya, a member of the Great White Brotherhood, was allegedly one of Madame Blavatsky's own spirit guides, helping her establish the Theosophical Society. Morya is the Chohan or Chief Adept of the First Ray. His incarnations allegedly include Abraham, King Arthur, and Sir Thomas More. Morya was also Melchior, one of the three Magi. Morya is associated with the throat chakra.



**Iconography:** The traditional image of Morya depicts him as a bearded man with vividly blue eyes.

**Day:** Tuesday

**Color:** Blue, white

**Gemstones:** Lapis lazuli, diamond, sapphire and star sapphire

**See also:** *Ascended Master; Blavatsky, Madame Helena; Great White Brotherhood*

### **The Mothers**

The Mothers are goddesses of birth, fertility, prosperity, abundance, death, and rebirth. Relatively little is now known about them. What knowledge exists is based on interpretation of archaeological evidence. However, based on the sheer prevalence of the Mothers' images and how widespread they were, clearly the Mothers were once wildly popular throughout pre-Christian Europe. Their veneration seems to date from a very early era. The Mothers were venerated in both Celtic and Teutonic regions and by the rich and poor, men and women alike. At Pesch in the Lower Rhine, over one-hundred-sixty altars dedicated to the Mothers have been discovered, most offered by soldiers.

There may be one, two, or three Mothers. In Aquitaine, two are portrayed, one significantly older than the other, possibly a mother and daughter. The Romans identified the Mothers with the Parcae or Fates.

**Iconography:** The most typical votive image of the Mothers depicts three seated women. The middle one is usually significantly younger than the others. She has long flowing hair while the others wear distinctive headwear, something like a big linen bonnet. All may wear robes. One or more Mothers may expose one breast like a nursing mother. When only one Mother is portrayed, she is typically envisioned seated with something on her lap, usually an egg or a loaf of bread. Sometimes she holds a lap dog.

**Attribute:** The Mothers are depicted with babies, fruit, grain, and big

loaves of bread. Other attributes include: horn, spindle, distaff, sphere, box, scroll (interpreted as the Scroll of Destiny), basket of fruit.

**Spirit allies:** The Genii Cucullati.

**Creature:** Lap dog, snake (both animals identified with healing in Celtic regions)

**Feast:** Mothers' Night traditionally coincided with the winter solstice or the new moon nearest the winter solstice. Ancient Germans considered it the equivalent of New Year's Eve. According to the monk and historian called the Venerable Bede (circa 672–May 25, 735 CE). Mothers' Night was the most important Pagan festival in eighth-century Britain and coincided with Christmas Eve. Little information about the holiday survives. Divination was practiced. Dreams experienced on this night were considered prophetic.

**Sacred sites:** They had shrines throughout the Rhineland, often at healing springs as well as in Aix-les-Bains in France and Chichester and York in England. The Mothers may have been venerated at the site now called Les-Saintes-Maries-de-la-Mer. Some of their shrines were huge temple complexes; others were rustic sanctuaries and domestic altars.

**Offerings:** Fruit, bread, wine, flowers

**See also:** *Bethen; Genius Cucullatus; Maries de la Mer*

## Mountain Spirit

**Also known as:** San Shin

**Origin:** Korea

*San Shin* literally means "Mountain Spirit." Approximately 70 percent of Korea is covered by mountains. Technically each peak possesses its own presiding Mountain Spirit: they are many and diverse, yet simultaneously one and unified.

The Mountain Spirit, a pre-Buddhist, shamanic spirit, is among the most beloved and popular Korean deities. Korean Buddhist temples

sometimes contain a Shaman Hall, an area designated to honor earlier, ancestral spirits. These halls may be of varying sizes and may honor any number of spirits. If only one is honored, it is almost inevitably the Mountain Spirit.

San Shin the Mountain Spirit is the essence and epitome of yang (male) energy. He bestows personal fertility in general but is also renowned for specifically providing male children—but you must advise him if this is important to you. He may also be invoked for longevity. His attendants carry the peaches of immortality. San Shin is the master of mysticism and may be petitioned for spiritual guidance and instruction.

**Iconography:** The Mountain Spirit is consistently depicted as a kind, smiling, old, white-bearded man, usually accompanied by a tiger. He may cradle a tiger cub in his arms. He may or may not lead an entourage of spirits.

**Attributes:**

- Double-gourd containing the alchemical elixir of immortality
- Feather fan indicating his power to summon winds and other spirits

**Creature:** Tiger

**Plant:** Pullocho, the Korean name for Reishi mushrooms, also known as Ling Zhi in Chinese. Although technically now considered a fungus, Pullocho, at least according to Korean folklore, is the Herb of Immortality.

**See also:** *Hsi Wang Mu; Ma Gu*

## Mpungu

**Origin:** Congolese

A Mpungu is a Congolese spirit. The plural is *Kimpungulu*. These spirits form the pantheon of the Afro-Cuban spiritual tradition, Palo. The term *Nkisi* is sometimes used as a synonym for Mpungu, but technically a *Nkisi* is an object that contains a Mpungu.

**See also:** *Lucero; Nkisi*

## **Mrityu**

*Lady of Death*

**Origin:** India

In one myth, Brahma is responsible for creating the world. Creation multiplied all by itself and Earth became terribly overcrowded. Contemplating Creation, Brahma scowled. Mrityu, dressed in red, emerged from that scowl.

*Mrityu* literally means “death.” She did not wish to be the goddess of death. When she learned her function, she began to weep—her tears became diseases. Mrityu was so distressed, she wept even more, and then she ran away. She hid in a lotus flower. She hid in the depths of the sea. Wherever she hid, Brahma found her. He patiently explained the importance of her function:

- Without death, the wheel of life cannot turn.
- Without death, there is no rebirth or reincarnation.

Mrityu lives within the crematorium and within cremation grounds. Those visiting these places must perform purification rituals when leaving to ensure that Mrityu doesn't follow them home. Unlike Yama, Mrityu doesn't only deliver death strictly on schedule. She also strikes when she feels like it or when angered; thus it is extremely important to keep her propitiated.

Mrityu has the power to overturn the decrees of fate.

**See also:** *Yama*

## **Mullo (1)**

**Origin:** Celtic

Mullo is a Celtic deity who was once very popular in what is now

northwestern France, especially Brittany. He is a spirit of healing whose specialty was eye ailments. His shrines included therapeutic baths. The Romans identified him with Mars. The meaning of his name is now either unknown or may indicate a link to mules, as *Mullo* is Latin for “mule.”

**Sacred sites:** Mullo had shrines in Allonnes (Sarthe), Crâon, and Rennes, France.

**Offerings:** Coins, ex-votos (milagros), especially in the shape of eyes

**See also:** *Mars*

## Mullo (2)

**Also known as:** Mulo; the plural is Mulé

**Origin:** Romani (Gypsy)

In the Romani language, *Mullo* literally means “dead one” or “one who is dead.” Theoretically everyone becomes a Mullo at death, but the average Mullo who rests quietly in peace isn’t the stuff of legends.

- The word *Mullo* may be used to indicate a fetch or spirit-double.
- Mullo names revenants who return to haunt loved ones and relatives left behind.

A Mullo may be protective, benevolent, dangerous, or malignant. Some return to protect loved ones. A Mullo may simply long for the presence of its loved ones and do no harm (or at least not intentionally). Others are hungry ghosts, lusting for sex, vitality, the essence of life, or yang energy. The Mullo may vampirize the living, not by drinking blood but by absorbing their aura or life-essence. A Mullo may return every night to have sex with former partners. Although not necessarily intended badly, this may ultimately have a debilitatingly vampiric effect, drawing out their life essence.

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*A Mullo appears in the fifth season of the television series Charmed to deliver*

*a warning to a loved one.*

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The most dangerous Mullo tend to be deceased children, especially stillborn children. The Mullo is active after dark, but it is most powerful at the exact moment of noon. According to Romani cosmology, at this precise moment, everything belongs to the Mullo, to the realm of death. It's theorized that this is because at this moment, the shadow does not exist or is not visible.

**Manifestation:** Mullo take various forms. A Mullo may appear as an obviously reanimated corpse—akin to a Hollywood zombie—as a pale specter like a classical ghost, or as odd, disembodied lights.

**Date:** The Mullo is considered especially powerful and dangerous on New Year's Eve, the threshold between the old and new years.

**See also:** *Ghost; Hone-Onna; Pixie; Vam pire*

## **Murugan**

**Also known as:** Murukan; Muruga

Murugan, originally the chief deity of the Tamils of Southern India, was eventually identified with Karttikeya, Shiva's son. Murugan is a spirit of fertility, birth, death, and victory. In his original incarnation, he joined his mother, Korraivai, on the battlefield to feast on the dead.

**Bird:** Rooster

**See also:** *Karttikeya; Korraivai; Mariam man; Shiva*

## **Muses**

**Origin:** Greece

Their mother is Mnemosyne, Goddess of Memory. Their father is Zeus, chief of the Greek gods. The Muses are nine-tuplets, born from their

parents' nine-day ritual marriage at the summit of Mount Olympus. (Hesiod said the Muses were from Macedonia.) The Muses were originally mountain Nymphs. An alternative version of their birth says their parents are Gaia and Uranus. Their name derives from a root word meaning "mountain."

#### **THE STANDARD LIST OF MUSES**

- Kleio: "Giver of Fame," Muse of History
- Euterpe: "Giver of Joy," Muse of the Flute
- Thalia: "The Festive," Muse of Comedy
- Melpomene: "The Singer," Muse of Tragedy
- Terpsichore: "Lover of Dance," Muse of the Lyre
- Erato: "The Awakener of Desire," Muse of Dance
- Polymnia: "She of Many Hymns," Muse of Storytelling
- Urania: "The Heavenly," Muse of Astronomy
- Kalliope: "She of the Beautiful Voice," Muse of Heroic Song

The Muses are catalysts and bestowers of divine inspiration and talent. They may be petitioned en masse, individually, or in any combination. Thus, for instance, a dancer may invoke Erato alone, if so desired. The Muses have a longstanding rivalry with the Sirens. These two groups of spirits should not be invoked together. Keeping them far apart is recommended.

**Manifestation:** The Muses may appear as women or birds.

**Spirit allies:** Apollo and Orpheus. The Charites share the Muses' abode as does Himeros, Eros' double.

**Sacred sites:** The Muses are traditionally associated with springs, mountains, and pastoral landscapes. Their shrines were known as *Museums*. Modern museums are under their dominion.

- They had a sanctuary on Greece's Mount Helicon and shrines throughout Macedonia.
- The Muses have palaces and dance grounds at the summit of mythic Mount Olympus.

**See also:** *Apollo; Charities; Eros; Erotes; Gaia; Mnemosyne; Orpheus; Sirens; Zeus*

## **Muso Koroni**

*The Knowledgeable One; The Pure Woman with the Primeval Soul*

**Also known as:** Nyalé; Mousso Koroni

**Origin:** Bamana/Bambara

According to myth, Muso Koroni, Leopard Goddess of Mali, is the world's first female while the first male was a blacksmith. Muso Koroni is among those spirits involved with the magical traditions of smithcraft. Originally a divine Creatrix, she traveled as a whirlwind sparking the process of creation.

Veneration of Muso Koroni was severely repressed by Islam. She is now considered a dangerous spirit who must be carefully controlled. Demoted from goddess to witch, she is called the Mother of Chaos. The epitome of primal womanhood, Muso Koroni is now perceived as chaotic, defiant, and unruly. Every human being is believed to possess a fragment of her wild, primeval nature. This wild part is called *wanzo* and in Mande tradition is the feminine force of chaos, which is excised from men via circumcision so that they become completely masculine.

Muso Koroni has dominion over witchcraft. She presides over women's secret societies and is invoked in love magic.

**Manifestation:** Muso Koroni appears as a black panther, a many-breasted woman or as a little old lady with white hair who haunts granaries. Muso Koroni is identified with hot, dry winds that evaporate moisture.

**Color:** Black, associated with fertility and black fertile soil

**Elements:** Fire, air (wind)

**Offerings:** Smiths traditionally craft metal images of her in the form of candelabra. Her spirit is invoked when the lamp's cups, filled with shea



butter, are lit.

**See also:** *Artemis of Ephesus; Lilith; Oya*

## Mut

*Lady of Heaven; Queen of Deities; Mother of the Mothers*

**Origin:** Egypt

Her name means “Mom.” Mut, the vulture goddess, is the spirit of maternity. So potently fertile that she conceived and gave birth to herself, Mut, an extremely beloved goddess, was venerated throughout Egypt. She bestows personal fertility and protection.

Although originally a local goddess, she became a national goddess during the New Kingdom (approximately 1550–1070 BCE). During this era, the brides of Pharaohs, queens of Egypt, served as Mut’s chief priestesses. Originally venerated as an independent goddess, as Mut became increasingly popular, she absorbed characteristics of other goddesses. Eventually a marriage was arranged between Mut and the state deity Ammon and Mut assumed the role of the less popular Amonet. Mut is sometimes identified as the Eye of Ra.

**Manifestation:** Mut appears as a crowned vulture, a white vulture, or a woman who may have wings and/or wear a vulture headdress.

**Iconography:** Later depictions of Mut portray her as a lioness, a cow, or a cobra-headed goddess, but this may derive from identification with other goddesses, especially Sekhmet.

**Attribute:** Ankh, the symbol of life

**Spirit allies:** Mut and Ammon are the parents of Khonsu. The three spirits are venerated together as the Theban triad.

**Bird:** Vulture, especially griffon vulture (*Gyps fulvus*)

**Flower:** Blue water lily (*Nymphaea caerulea*)

**Sacred sites:** Temples were dedicated to her throughout Egypt and

Nubia; her popularity cannot be overemphasized. Her primary shrine was at Karnak, where Mut had a sacred lake in the shape of the crescent moon.

**Offerings:** Incense. If you wish to give a traditional, lavish offering, give two hand mirrors: one silver, one gold. You are symbolically giving her the moon and sun.

**See also:** *Ammon; Amonet; Khonsu; Nekhebet; Sekhmet*

## **Mylitta**

**Also known as:** Milidath

**Origin:** Assyria

Mylitta descended to Earth in the form of a flaming, falling star that landed in the freshwater spring named Afqa, source of the Adonis River in Lebanon. A shrine set up for her beside the spring was dedicated to sacred sex or debauchery, depending on who's telling the tale. Sparks and flames from ritual fires that fell into the waters were believed to possess revitalizing power, symbolizing the union of fire and water, the male and female principles.

Mylitta may be a completely distinct spirit or an Assyrian name for Astarte, Aphrodite, and/or Inanna-Ishtar. Reputedly every Babylonian woman, regardless of class or status, was expected to sit in the courtyard of Mylitta's temple at least once during her lifetime. There she awaited the first stranger who desired to engage her sexually. The man signaled his choice of the women by throwing a coin into her lap. She could not refuse. Proceeds went to the temple. The women expected guaranteed fertility in return. What the men expected beyond sex is unknown. The accuracy of this legend, based on the writings of Herodotus, is also not known.

An ancient pilgrimage road once ran along the Adonis River valley to the river's source at Afqa, where Adonis and Astarte (or Aphrodite or Mylitta) were venerated.

Mylitta is petitioned for fertility and to spark your love life.

**Creatures:** Goat, turtle

**See also:** *Adonis; Aphrodite; Astarte; Inanna-Ishtar*

## **Myrrha**

**Also known as:** Smyrna

**Origin:** Phoenicia

Either Princess Myrrha or her father, king of Assyria or a Phoenician kingdom, aggravated Aphrodite. As punishment, she compelled Myrrha to conceive an incestuous passion for her father. Myrrha plied her father with liquor and seduced him. They had rapturous sex for twelve nights, at which point one of two things happened:

- Myrrha repented and ran off to hide in the forest, vowing to kill herself.
- Dad repented and chased Myrrha around with a knife, vowing to kill her.

Either way, Myrrha ended up transformed into a myrrh tree to preserve her life. Most versions have Aphrodite affecting the transformation. In the meantime, Myrrha had conceived Adonis.

In the original Semitic version of this myth, Adonis is the product of a virgin birth. The later story may have evolved after veneration of Adonis spread to Greece. The back story involving his scandalous conception suited the Greek cultural need to establish paternity. The shame of incest would explain why the story had previously been secret.

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*Myrrh trees weep resin, These are traditionally understood to be Myrrha's tears.*

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Many scholars perceive the origins of Christianity in veneration of

Adonis and his mother. Myrrha and Mary may be variants of the same name. Both are associated with virgin birth and resurrecting sons. Myrrha may be a suppressed great goddess. The myrrh is not just any tree, but is traditionally an emblem of primal womanhood, mercy, and fertility. Myrrh incense is associated with Isis and Hathor, the great goddesses of Egypt. There is no reason to assume that Myrrha is a lesser goddess. Myrrha may be accessed via the fragrance of myrrh incense.

**Offering:** Myrrh

**See also:** *Adonis; Aphrodite; Hathor; Isis*

## N

### Naamah

*The Charmer; Mother of Divination; My Darling*

Naamah, ancient and mysterious spirit, is a sometime ally, sometime rival, sometime traveling companion of Lilith. Like Lilith, she takes many forms: Naamah is a demon, an angel (albeit of prostitution), and a primordial goddess.

The Kabbalah describes Naamah as being similar to Lilith. Like her sister demon, Naamah seduces men and strangles sleeping babies. (She's blamed for SIDS: Sudden Infant Death Syndrome, also known as crib or cot death.) Like Lilith, she can be a powerful ally to those she perceives as her constituents. Beautiful Naamah is so enticing and seductive that men, women, angels, demons, and spirits of all kinds lust for her. She is the lover and/or wife of some of the most formidable angels, demons, and biblical heroes, including Azazel, Samael, Shemhazai, Solomon, and Noah (and maybe his son, too). Her children include the Nephilim, Shedim, and Ashmodai.

The Hebrew name *Naamah*, meaning "pleasant," appears in the Bible and Jewish folklore but may or may not refer to the same being:

- The name may be shared by different women.
- *Naamah* may name one spirit with a very long, interesting history.
- *Naamah* may be both a goddess, possibly a divine ancestress and the women named in her honor.

The first appearance of the name *Naamah* is early in the Book of Genesis. Genesis 4:22 details Cain's descendents including the first ironworker and his sister: "And Zillah ... bore Tubal Cain, an instructor of every artificer in brass and iron and the sister of Tubal Cain was Naamah." The verse is unusual as it mentions a female descendent.

Female descendents are rarely sited in the Bible without significant cause. Why Naamah is considered worthy of mention is not specified, but according to Talmudic sources, this Naamah (widely acknowledged as the demon) was a shaman, cymbal player, and singer whose pleasant voice lured humanity to idolatry.

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*Naamah is a sea spirit. The Zohar, Kabbalah's sacred text, describes her as "alive to this day" and living amongst the waves of the Great Sea.*

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The other official biblical reference to Naamah is as a princess of Ammon, an ancient kingdom near the Dead Sea, wife of King Solomon and mother of his son and successor, King Rehoboam. Talmudic and Jewish lore identifies other Naamahs, too:

- Naamah, young, beautiful princess, fell in love with the rebel angel Azazel. According to some myths, when her sister Ishtar rejected the angel Shemhazai, Naamah had sex with him, too. Azazel and Shemhazai were severely punished. Naamah, originally mortal, evolved into a spirit, attaining immortality or something very close to it.
- Naamah is the name of Noah's wife and thus ancestress of all born after the Flood. (Naamah's son Shem's wife may also be named Naamah. They may or may not be the same Naamah.)
- Some interpret the two women who presented one baby to King Solomon in the days before DNA testing, requesting that he determine the true mother, as Naamah and Lilith playing tricks.

Naamah is a spirit of women's sexual autonomy and sacred erotic rites. Naamah rules the ecstatic point where sex, spiritual ecstasy, and music intersect. Those who comprehend this point and seek to attain it are her constituency.

**Favored people:** Musicians

**Offerings:** Naamah *adores* music (her half-brother Jubal is ancestor of

all musicians); incense, water, desert fruits

**See also:** *Ashmodai; Azazel; Lilith; She dim; Solomon, King*

## **Nabu**

**Also known as:** Nebo

Nabu is the Babylonian lord of wisdom and writing, introduced to Mesopotamia by the Amorites, a powerful Western Semitic nation. Nabu originally served as Marduk's scribe, but they were incorporated into the Babylonian pantheon as father (Marduk) and son (Nabu). Nabu is the official spokesman for the Babylonian pantheon and eventually became the Assyrian Empire's primary deity.

Nabu engraves each person's destiny on the tablets of sacred record. He is the ultimate editor of the Babylonian equivalent of the Book of Life. Although fate is decreed by the deities, Nabu has authorization to increase or diminish anyone's life span. His name may be related to the Hebrew word *navi*, meaning "prophet."

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*References to Nabu in the Bible (Isaiah 46:1 and Jeremiah 48:1) indicate his prominence in the Babylonian pantheon and his fame throughout the Middle East.*

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**Iconography:** Statues depict him as a dignified bearded man wearing a horned cap

**Attribute:** Clay writing tablet, a writing stylus, a wedge (for cuneiform writing)

**Mount:** Winged dragon

**Planet:** Mercury

**Sacred site:** The center of his veneration was in Borsippa on the

Euphrates River, now in modern Iraq. His temple in Babylon (Iraq) has been restored. Semiramis built Nabu a temple in Nimrud (Calah), now near Mosul, modern Iraq.

**See also:** *Mari (2); Nisaba; Semiramis*

## **Naddaha, Al**

### *The Caller*

**Origin:** Egypt

*Al Naddaha* literally means “the caller,” but the word is also translated as “Siren,” meaning a deadly mermaid. *Al Naddaha*, a spirit of the Nile, is an Egyptian urban legend. It is unclear exactly when she first emerged, but she became particularly notorious in the 1950s.

*Al Naddaha* mysteriously appears and calls to young men strolling by the Nile at night. Her voice is alluring like a traditional Siren’s. She may possess a hypnotic gaze. If men respond to her call, allegedly she drowns them. She causes no harm to those who do not approach but is an elusive, disturbing presence. It is unclear whether she is a spirit who lingers by the water (like *Aisha Qandisha*) or whether she actually lives *in* the water (like the *Lorelei*). Egyptian folklore classifies her among the *Djinn*.

Like *La Llorona*, *al Naddaha* has captured public imagination. In addition to being the subject of spine-tingling horror tales, *Al Naddaha* is the name of an Egyptian avant-garde literary journal as well as a novella by Egyptian author Yusuf Idris (1927–1991).

**Manifestation:** *Al Naddaha* manifests as a beautiful woman with long dark hair flowing down her back. Her skin is sometimes described as exceedingly white. Alternatively she is described as being semitransparent or as wearing a long, semitransparent, white dress (possibly similar to ancient Egyptian linen garb).

**See also:** *Aisha Qandisha; Djinn; Llorona, La; Lorelei; Mami Waters; Mermaids; Siren*



## Naga

**Origin:** India

**Also known as:** Naginis (females)

*Naga* means “snake,” and the Nagas are a vast class of powerful snake spirits featured in Hindu, Buddhist, and Jain mythology and beloved by independent practitioners, too. They are pre-Hindu, tribal spirits renowned for their beauty, wisdom, and magical powers. The category Naga encompasses a vast variety of serpent spirits. Dragons may be categorized among the Nagas. Nagas live underwater (oceans, lakes, wells, springs, rivers) and underground, especially in subterranean caves converted into magnificent jeweled palaces. Termite mounds may mark the entrance to a Naga’s lair. Some Nagas live within trees or beneath them. Nagas also possess their own realm, the subterranean metropolis, Bhogavati.

They are guardians of Earth’s treasures including minerals, metals, and gemstones. Nagas guard anything of value found within Earth. Petroleum deposits may be under their dominion. Nagas are associated with ancient tree veneration, fertility, and healing. They’re associated with illness, too. Many Nagas have notoriously short fuses. People aggravate them, whether by stupidity or by rude or destructive behavior. Nagas are guardian spirits and must be propitiated before anything they guard is disturbed or even approached. It is especially crucial to maintain cleanliness and purity of natural sources of water as these are the Nagas’ homes. They punish those who pollute air, earth, and water.

Nagas express frustration, anger, and unhappiness by causing illness, especially those ailments that manifest on the skin, ranging from acne to leprosy. They have dominion over skin disorders and may be petitioned for cures, too. Nagas may also cause infectious disease and mental disorders.

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*Boils allegedly may result from chopping down trees without requesting permission and forgiveness from Nagas dwelling within.*

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- Blessings of the Nagas include fertility, wisdom, and wealth.
- Really angry Nagas cause disasters.

Center of Naga veneration may originally have been Kashmir. The Nagas are described as Kashmir's first inhabitants. Myth and geology agree: the Vale of Kashmir was once filled with water like a huge reservoir or lake bounded by mountains. Myth explains that land was eventually elevated from the waters and placed in the Nagas' care. (Geology suggests that earthquakes aided this process.) Some five-hundred-twenty-seven named Nagas were traditionally worshipped in Kashmir. A court historian for the sixteenth-century Mughal Emperor Akbar listed seven hundred places in Kashmir sacred to the Nagas. From Kashmir, veneration spread throughout the subcontinent, the Himalayas, and southeast Asia, especially Cambodia and Indonesia.

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*Nagas are pivotal to the plot of Shekhar Kapur's comic book series Snake Woman.*

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**Manifestation:** Nagas may manifest as snakes, as snake-human hybrids, or as people with something serpentine about them, possibly jewelry or a crown. Serpentine Nagas may have five, seven, or more heads. Many Nagas are brilliant magicians and skilled shape-shifters.

**Iconography:** Snake stones, votive slabs bearing images of snakes, are placed beside wells or sacred trees by women petitioning the Nagas for personal fertility.

**Spirit ally:** Shiva

**Creatures:** Snakes of all kinds, dragons

**Element:** Water

**See also:** *Garuda; Klu; Manasa; Naga Kanya; Parnashvari; Shiva; Vajrapani*

## Naga Kanya

### *Cobra Woman*

**Origin:** India

Naga Kanya, famous Naga goddess, is a benevolent spirit who bestows treasure of all kinds (material, romantic, spiritual, and esoteric). Naga Kanya is petitioned for rain during drought, and happiness when that is in short supply.

There may be one Naga Kanya, or Naga Kanya may name a class of snake Fairies. Naga Kanya is identified with Lakshmi. Because she has a positive relationship with Vishnu, she is considered apart from other Nagas who have a tense relationship with his mount, Garuda. Naga Kanya is also venerated by Buddhists who perceive her as a guardian of the Dharma and a Tantric goddess.

**Manifestation:** Naga Kanya is a winged woman from the waist up and a cobra below. She wears a five-headed cobra headdress.

**Attribute:** Conch shell

**Number:** 5

**Flower:** Cobra lily (*Arisaema costatum*)

**See also:** *Eight Dharma Protectors; Fairy; Garuda; Lakshmi; Naga*

## Naiad

**Origin:** Greece

Naiads are freshwater Nymphs. Theoretically each spring, well, fountain, lake, pond, or river is home to at least one Naiad. Naiads also reside in areas near or dominated by water. Their name is related to a Greek verb meaning “to flow.” They are weaving spirits, indicating that they have power over fate.

**Offerings:** The Greeks traditionally sacrificed lambs and goats to the Naiads and poured libations for them of honey, wine, and olive oil. Dolls

and ex-votos in the forms of people were placed in wells and springs.

**See also:** *Cymbee; Lara; Nymph; Oinone*

## **Nakada**

*The Striker; Causer of Downfall*

**Origin:** Hausa

**Classification:** Bori

Nakada, son of Malam Alhaji, renounced Islam and was banished from his father's home. He now lives in the Ninth House of Bori Spirits, the House of Pagans. Nakada is an extremely important spirit because he is the last one summoned to Bori ceremonies. Upon arriving, Nakada closes the door. No other Bori follows him. The affliction Nakada causes and heals is mental illness.

**See also:** *Bori; Malam Alhaji*

## **Nakaq**

*The Liposuction Vampire*

**Also known as:** Pishtaco

The Nakaq is an Andean vampire except that instead of sucking blood, he extracts fat. If he lived in the United States and if only his attacks weren't fatal, victims might be lining up for him rather than attempting to elude him.

The Nakaq, a figure of Peruvian folklore, is envisioned as a charismatic, magnetic, mesmerizing man with a hypnotic gaze. The Nakaq is inevitably envisioned as a white man, although whether he is living, a phantom, or a ghost varies. His victims are almost invariably local Indians. He drags them to his subterranean lair, hangs them upside down, and extracts their body fat. Victims do not survive the procedure.

The Nakaq, long suspected of collusion with the Roman Catholic

Church, is traditionally envisioned as a knife-wielding priest seeking human fat to forge church bells. Alternatively he seeks fat for magical or industrial reasons, to manufacture medicines or for nefarious government schemes.

The earliest documented reference to the Nakaq was written in Spanish in the seventeenth century. Although the concept of a fat-removing monster may sound amusing to those in weight-obsessed Western industrialized nations, the Nakaq is no joke in the Andes but rather the subject of genuine dread. The Nakaq is the bane of anthropologists: lone white men who appear in Indian villages as if from nowhere, seeking to ingratiate themselves with locals (like many anthropologists do) are often viewed with tremendous suspicion. Many have been chased out of town, beaten, or worse in the belief that their true identity is the Nakaq.

**See also:** *Vampire; Viracocha*

## **Nakawé**

*Our Grandmother Growth; The Little Old One*

**Also known as:** Takutsi Nakawé

**Origin:** Huichol

The Huichol are an indigenous people of Mexico now famous worldwide for their complex, shamanic religion, which fascinates anthropologists and for their beautiful artwork, much coveted by collectors. Nakawé is the Huichol goddess of Earth and senior deity of water. She is the female principle of Creation. The male is associated with fire and the sun. Nakawé controls the generative, reviving power of water, which balances, counteracts and alleviates the sun's heat, making life possible.

Nakawé, powerful magician, may be the original shaman who first created the world using her magical bamboo staff and her medicine basket. Nakawé is responsible for vegetation and agricultural abundance. She gave people healing and spiritual rituals.

Nakawé formed red flowers from her own bloody undergarments.

permeated with her menstrual blood. She tossed these flowers into a desert spring, and fruits and flowers sprang up—as did her daughter, the Huichol goddess of childbirth. Nakawé, primal ancestress, also influences personal fertility. She blesses people with longevity and safe, easy childbirth.

In the Huichol version of the deluge myth, Nakawé foresaw the coming flood. (She may also have caused it.) Nakawé was the deity who warned the sole survivor, advising him to build a canoe and stock it with maize, squash, and beans. She then guided him to the place that would be his home after the waters receded, teaching him to plant and cultivate the seeds he had preserved.

Jealous men schemed to steal Nakawé's power. As she was too powerful to attack directly, they tricked her, inviting her to perform a curing ceremony. Meanwhile they stole her staff in which her heart was hidden. They planted her heart in their fields, and maize of five different colors sprouted. A pepper tree sprang from her heart's blood. Nakawé escaped underground, and the men became the first male shamans, appropriating her power and position.

**Manifestation:** Nakawé manifests as an elderly woman who walks with a staff. Like Moses, her staff may transform back and forth into a serpent. She is often accompanied by a javelina (wild pig) in which form she can also manifest.

**Iconography:** Wooden images of Nakawé serve as protective amulets intended to guard children, vulnerable landscapes and/or sources of water.

**Attribute:** A medicine basket and her snake-staff (*Iwaitsu*: a bamboo staff patterned to resemble snake skin), which is symbolic of her high authority.

**Planet:** Moon

**Direction:** West

**Number:** 5

**Bird:** Macaw

**Animals:** Javelina (peccary) and snakes, especially water snakes

**Tree:** Pepper tree (*Schinus* spp.), known as the pirul tree in Huichol territory. It has many traditional medicinal uses.

## Namaka

**Origin:** Polynesia

Namaka, Ocean Goddess, is the child of Haumea and Ku and is volcano goddess Pelé's older sister. Conflict with Namaka was the primary reason for Pelé's migration to Hawaii. Tahiti, their birthplace, wasn't big enough for both these powerful, turbulent goddesses. Different reasons for the bitter conflict between the sisters are offered:

- They may have quarreled over a lover.
- Pelé may have seduced Namaka's husband.
- Namaka's beloved dog may have had an unfortunate encounter with fire, leaving the water goddess bitterly hostile to fire deities.
- The two sisters may just be elementally incompatible.

Pelé's departure failed to satisfy Nam aka, who pursued her kid sister from island to island, extinguishing all her fires and threatening Pelé. Namaka's name means "eyes," and she kept those eyes fixed on Pelé, who finally reached safe haven in Hawaii. Needless to say, the two sisters cannot safely share altar space together. They will fight and compete with each other via fire and water. In general, Namaka manifests anger through tidal waves.

**See also:** *Haumea; Kapo; Ku; Pelé; Poliahu*

## Namtar

**Origin:** Sumer (Mesopotamia)

The name *Namtar* means "death" or "destiny." Namtar, death spirit, is responsible for creating illness in general and for directing it toward

specific people. He is the chief minister and messenger of Ereshkigal, Ruler of the Realm of Death.

**See also:** *Ereshkigal*

## **Nana Buruku**

**Also known as:** Nana Bukwu; Buklu; Bukúu

**Origin:** West Africa

One vision of Creation describes life emerging from some primeval swamp. Nana Buruku, ancient mother, presides over that swamp. Lady of marshes, swamps, mud, and clay, she is the primordial mother, the root ancestress. Nana Buruku, like her son Babalu Ayé, appears throughout West Africa and is incorporated into Fon, Yoruba, and Keto pantheons. Thus she is significant to various African Diaspora spiritual traditions. Nana Buruku is an ancient root lwa, eldest of the watery orishas.

Nana Buruku is an old fierce swamp witch, an austere, severe spirit. In Africa, her altars are traditionally maintained outside—she’s considered too volatile to safely bring indoors. She is extremely generous with those she loves. Nana Buruku is a fearless warrior who is petitioned for victory.

Nana Buruku, divine herbalist, presides over medicinal plants and may be petitioned to help discover herbal solutions to health issues. Ask her to empower and enhance herbal remedies. Nana Buruku is present in clay, which also has therapeutic uses. She may be requested to enhance its magical and medicinal powers. Nana Buruku is traditionally believed able to identify and heal illnesses which physicians are unable to locate, treat, or acknowledge. She is invoked for personal fertility but is also a guardian of the dead. If angered, she may cause illnesses characterized by a swollen abdomen. Nana Buruku is syncretized to Saint Anne.

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*Nana Buruku prefers bamboo knives to those made of iron. Anthropologist*



*and author Lydia Cabrera suggests that this is because she predates the Iron Age.*

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**Favored people:** Herbalists, healers, root doctors, potters

**Manifestation:** Nana Buruku appears in the guise of an incredibly old woman and travels in the form of a freshwater snake.

**Attribute:** Nana Buruku carries a special staff constructed from palm fronds and decorated with cowrie shells.

**Sacred sites:** She lives in swamps and earthen mounds.

**Spirit ally:** Her son, Babalu Ayé

**Planet:** Moon

**Creatures:** Snakes, especially pythons

**Tree:** Camwood (*Baphianitida*), also known as African sandalwood, which is the source of a blood-red dye

**Colors:** Dark blue, black, pink, white

**Stone:** Tourmaline

**Days:** Monday, Saturday

**Numbers:** 7, 9

**Offerings:** Roses, mandrake and other roots, swamp plants

**See also:** *Babalu Ayé; Lwa; Orisha; Oshumare In Fon cosmology, Nana Buruku may originally have been a hermaphroditic being who independently gave birth to all the deities but was eventually eclipsed by younger spirits.*

## **Nandi**

**Origin:** India

The name *Nandi* means “rejoicing.” He is a sacred white bull as well as Shiva’s mount and foremost devotee. They are venerated together. Nandi, the very essence of virility, fertility, strength, and power, is emblematic of male procreative power. His presence radiates this power, which may be transmitted to devotees. Nandi may be a bull, but he’s an accomplished musician and dancer, too.

**Manifestation:** A huge but graceful white humpback bull

**Iconography:** The image of kneeling Nandi is at the entrance of every Shiva temple, where it faces the image of Shiva.

**See also:** *Gajasura; Garuda; Shiva*

## Nang Kwak

**Origin:** Thailand

Nang Kwak is a Thai spirit of wealth. Her image is kept in homes and stores to attract customers, business, money, prosperity, and financial stability. Immensely popular, she is considered a spiritual magnet for good fortune.

Nang Kwak may be an indigenous Thai spirit or she may be a derivation of the Hindu spirit Parvati. Like many other Thai spirits, her power is accessed through amulets created in her image. Images of Nang Kwak come in assorted sizes: small enough to wear around your neck or large enough to be the central focus of an altar. Her image is ubiquitous throughout Thailand and in Thai restaurants around the world.

Nang Kwak’s image depicts her as a beautiful, kneeling woman dressed in traditional Thai clothing. She holds a money bag securely in her lap and lifts one of her hands in a gesture of beckoning. This gesture allegedly beckons prosperity, business, and good fortune to her devotees.

Nang Kwak’s image has powerful associations with other amulets, too:

- Maneki Neko, the Japanese Beckoning Cat, serves similar spiritual functions and closely resembles Nang Kwak. Nang Kwak, herself, is sometimes depicted with a cat’s face or tail.
- Nang Kwak is also intensely identified with Thai phallic amulets. Some

statues merge their imagery. The front of a statue may appear to simply portray Nang Kwak, but if one looks closely, especially from the back, phallic imagery becomes apparent. From behind, Nang Kwak's body is modeled in the form of a penis; she wears a glans-shaped hat.

In addition to traditional associations with luck and wealth, phallic-shaped images of Nang Kwak possess the added function of protecting against the Evil Eye and are also reputed to banish malevolent spirits. Although Nang Kwak's associations with better business and wealth are now dominant, once upon a time she was associated with magical healing and plants. The very oldest images of Nang Kwak were carved from roots and embellished with auspicious words like *wealth* and *treasure*.

**Favored people:** Shopkeepers, peddlers, and owners of small businesses and restaurants

**Day:** Every day

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*Is there a day when you don't need good fortune? Consequently, Nang Kwak works around the clock for you, seven days a week, never taking a day off. If you don't want her to slack off, it is customary to give her daily offerings.*

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**Color:** Red

**Creature:** Cat

**Offering:** Garland her image with red flowers. Serve her water or tea and a small dish of food daily. She accepts cooked rice and/or peeled fruit. If you would like to offer something more elaborate, she favors prawns.

**Ritual:** Chant Nang Kwak's four syllable mantra (*NA SHA LI TI*) daily while focusing on your desire for luck, success, prosperity, and good fortune.

**See also:** *Buddha, Emerald; Golden Boy; Mae Po Sop, Maneki Neko; Parvati* and the Glossary entry for *Mantra*

## **Nang Nak**

*Nang* is Thai for “lady” or “madame.” It is an honorific or title of respect commonly used to address female spirits, as is *Mae* meaning *Mother*. These titles are sometimes used fairly interchangeably, so the famous ghost Mae Nak is also known as Nang Nak.

**See also:** *Mae Nak*

## **Nang Takian (1)**

**Also known as:** Lady Takian

**Origin:** Thailand

*Nang Takian* means “Lady Takian.” Nang Takian spirits reside in Takian trees (*Hopea ferrea*). Takian wood is waterproof and hence desired for boat building, but it’s otherwise traditionally considered a very inauspicious tree, not least because of its indwelling spirits. Once common but now endangered, Takian trees are associated with death—they are not planted near homes. According to prehistoric Thai cosmology, Takian trees are portals to the Underworld. If you cut the tree, you’ll allegedly hear its spirit shriek. Whether Nang Takian are ghosts or Fairies is unclear and subject to debate:

- They may be forest Fairies.
- They may be ghosts of women who died violently.

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*Although Nang Takian names a type of tree spirit, when most people refer to Nang Takian, they mean the specific spirit who shares the shrine of Mae Nak.*

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Nang Takian exhibit Siren-like behavior. They serenade solitary men with melancholy but alluring songs. Their voices are beautiful. When men investigate the source of this music, they discover a pretty, friendly girl. She may look harmless, but beware! If a man submits to her embrace, she'll squeeze the life out of him like a snake.

**See also:** *Fairy; Ghost; Lady Banana Ghost; Mae Nak; Nang Takian (2); Siren*

## Nang Takian (2)

**Also known as:** Lady Takian

**Origin:** Thailand

Nang Takian is the spirit who lives in the Takian tree shading Mae Nak's Bangkok shrine. She is a unique Takian spirit, considered especially powerful because of her proximity to the powerful ghost, Mae Nak. Unlike other Takian tree spirits, this particular Nang Takian is considered generally benevolent and is beloved for her willingness to bestow winning lottery numbers. If her bark is rubbed vigorously (but respectfully and lovingly), patterns in the wood allegedly reveal numbers. She will reveal numbers for financial, magical, and other purposes, too. According to a legend popularized by a Thai movie, Lady Takian was once a mortal woman who hung herself from the big Takian tree in shame and despair after being raped. Her soul entered the tree, and she was transformed into its indwelling spirit.

**See also:** *Mae Nak; Nang Takian (1)*

## Nanshe

*Our Lady of Dreams; Lady of Abundance; The Queen Mother*

**Origin:** Sumeria, Babylonia

Nanshe, the daughter of Sumerian deities Enki and Ninhursag, is a divine prophetess and an oracle. Her temple priests served as dream interpreters. Nanshe, herself, communicates via dreams. She is a goddess

of personal and creative fertility who possesses the power to increase abundance. The Sumerian *Hymn to Nanshe* describes her as the benefactress of the cities she sponsors and the protectress of the weakest members of society.

Nanshe guards widows, orphans and refugees. She will not assist ingrates or the arrogant. Nanshe punishes those who offend her by afflicting them with mental illness, insanity and/ or torturous dreams. Nanshe determines fate. She has dominion over fishing, literal and metaphoric. According to the Sumerian *Hymn to Nanshe*, no other divine powers match hers.

**Favored people:** Dream workers; dream interpreters; sleep therapists; Pisceans

**Attributes:** A fish within a water-filled vessel (intended as a uterine symbol); containers made of reeds that are never empty

**Consort:** Nindara

**Spirit allies:** Enki, Nisaba

**Creatures:** Fish

**Element:** Water

**Metal:** Silver

**Day:** New Year's Day

**Sacred site:** The Sumerian city Nina, now modern Sorghul, Iraq

**Offerings:** Fresh water; wine; fruit; hot and cold prepared meals

**See also:** *Enki; Nisaba*

## Nantosuelta

*The Meandering Stream; The Winding River*

**Origin:** Celtic

Nantosuelta is a mysterious goddess of fertility and abundance who was once extremely popular in Burgundy, the lower Rhone Valley, Luxemburg, and the Rhineland. After Christianity became the official religion, Nantosuelta was almost completely erased from history; thus her present elusiveness may not be inherent but instead derives from a simple lack of information.

Nantosuelta was venerated without a consort in Eastern Gaul, but alongside the Celtic deity Sucellus elsewhere. Together they presided over Burgundy's wine harvest. Their iconography depicts them with barrels of wine.

**Manifestation:** She has thick, curly hair and was depicted wearing a flounced skirt and massive torc, emblematic of her power and importance.

**Attributes:** A small house (like a doll's house) atop a long staff, a bowl of apples

**Bird:** Raven

**Creature:** Dog

**Offerings:** Burgundy or Rhine wine, fruit, honey, honeycombs

## Narcissus

**Origin:** Greece

The Nymph Echo was deprived of the faculty of speech by Hera, who caught her *in flagrante delicto* with Zeus. Echo could only repeat another's words. She wandered in the forest until one day she came upon an incredibly handsome boy named Narcissus and fell in love with him at first sight. Narcissus paused to drink from a clear pool of water but became entranced by his own reflection. He spoke to it saying, "I love you!" Echo repeated his words but to no avail. As if hypnotized, he just gazed at his own image, never leaving, eating, or drinking until finally he pined away and died. A narcissus flower sprang up where he died, and the word *narcissism* entered the language. Echo, too, pined

away for love, leaving only her echo behind.

That's a particularly famous myth, but it's only half of it—and the latter half at that. Narcissus was *not* an ordinary mortal boy. He was radiantly handsome because he was a woodland spirit, the son of river spirit Kephisos and the Nymph Leiriope “Lily Face.” Modern mythology books emphasize his rejection of Echo, but by the time she met him, he couldn't help himself. He wasn't narcissistic: he was cursed.

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*The ancient Greeks would have recognized Narcissus' fascination with his reflection as the motif of a horror story. For the ancient Greeks, dreaming about seeing your own reflection (in a mirror or in water) was a death omen. In modern Greek folklore, the ailing are discouraged from looking in mirrors.*

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Narcissus was not narcissistic, but he was arrogant or perhaps too immature to appreciate deep emotions. He mocked the sincere love that he had inspired in another, thus insulting the spirits of love, not least Aphrodite. The lover Narcissus repeatedly rejected was *not* Echo—whom he was too entranced to even notice— but a male suitor, Amenias. Narcissus did not reject him gently or nicely. He taunted him. Narcissus' harsh rejection of Amenias was what originally lost him sympathy in this myth.

Narcissus finally gave Amenias a gift of a sword, a deliberately ironic gift, considering the phallic imagery. Humiliated and suffering unrequited love, Amenias used the gift to commit suicide right in front of Narcissus' home, cursing Narcissus as he died. Another popular ancient Greek belief was that deathbed curses were particularly lethal and virtually impossible to break. Narcissus' doom was sealed.

A temple dedicated to love was erected at the site of his death. Narcissus is invoked by those who have previously rejected a lover but would now like a second (or third or fourth) chance.

**See also:** *Aphrodite; Hera; Nymph*



## Nats

**Origin:** Burma (Myanmar)

The term *Nat* indicates “power” and names a vast variety of Burmese deities, including ancestral spirits and those of rivers, trees, snakes and other creatures. Many of the most famous and widely venerated Nats are the souls of people who died tragic or violent deaths. Technically, countless Nats exist, with more emerging daily.

Centuries of attempts to tame Nats (and their devotees) have never been completely successful. Thirty-seven Buddhist Nats were officially designated as acceptable for worship. All other Nats are considered disreputable (as are their devotees by extension), especially those that hew to indigenous shamanic and animist traditions and do not acknowledge the superiority of Buddhism. (See also: *Nats, Thirty-Seven.*) The Thirty-Seven Nats are called the Inner Nats because they are permitted into the Buddhist pagoda precinct. All others are called Outer Nats.

Nats are involved in all facets of human life. They are invoked:

- For protection
- To prevent and heal illness
- At every stage of the agricultural cycle
- To fulfill desires

Individual Nats demonstrate their own unique personalities, but generally Nats protect those who feed them. If not appeased and propitiated, many are volatile, fast-tempered, and sometimes mean-spirited beings.

Nats are honored with small private rituals but also celebrated with huge public festivals featuring singers, musicians, and shamans. A festival for Nats is known as a Pwe. Nats engage in voluntary ritual possession of shamans. As in other spiritual traditions, individual shamans may possess a specific repertoire of spirits whom they channel.

**Sacred site:** Although individual Nats are associated with different locales, the spiritual home of Nat veneration is the extinct volcano

Mount Popa (“Flower Mountain”), also known as Mahagiri (“Great Mountain”), approximately thirty miles southeast of Pagan, now designated a national park. A partially covered staircase ascends to the top.

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*Images and music from a Nat Pwe may be witnessed on the 2004 DVD Nat Pwe: Burma’s Carnival of Spirit Soul.*

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**Offerings:** In terms of devotion by individuals, the standard offering is one coconut and two bunches of bananas. An individual seeking to offer something more substantial can make a pilgrimage or sponsor a Pwe. Nats love loud, lively music and vivid colors, so these are integral to rituals and Pwes. Food is served to Nats, they consume the spiritual essence via the aroma; the food itself is generally eaten by participants and devotees.

**See also:** *Koumyoumin; Nats, Mahagiri; Nats, Thirty-Seven; Taungbyon Brothers; Youkhazou*

## **Nats, Mahagiri**

**Also known as:** Min Mahagiri; The House Nat

**Origin:** Myanmar (Burma)

**Classification:** Nat

Once upon a time, a blacksmith named Nga Tin De (“Mr. Handsome,” also known as U Tin De) and his sister, Shwem Yethna (“Golden Face”) lived in the city of Tagaung. Both were kind, generous, gorgeous, powerful, and beloved. Nga Tin De was so strong he wielded two hammers at once, one in each hand. They were not just siblings; they were best friends. King Thinlik yaung (344–387 CE) resented the blacksmith’s magical powers and spiritual authority, not to mention his physical strength. The king sent an assassination squad to cut his throat while he slept, making it look like a robbery so the king wouldn’t be

suspected. One assassin secretly warned Mr. Handsome, who fled into the forest.

Meanwhile the king, smitten with beautiful Golden Face, allayed her suspicions, admitting that he sought to capture her brother but only to discover whether he was plotting against the throne. Golden Face married him, becoming one of his queens. (It's never clear whether his love is sincere or if it's all a ploy to capture her brother.) The king explained to Golden Face that since he and Nga Tin De were now in-laws, the blacksmith had nothing to fear. She fell for his argument. As a truthful, honest person, she expected her husband to behave likewise. Golden Face sent a messenger to the jungle inviting the blacksmith to join her at court.

She traveled to the forest's edge with the king and royal entourage to greet her brother, or so she thought. As Mr. Handsome emerged, guards grabbed him, bound him to a saga tree, piled tinder around him, and set him on fire. Not believing her eyes, Golden Face attempted to intervene, but guards restrained her. Finally realizing that she'd been used to betray her beloved brother, she shouted out a curse, broke free of the guards, ran to the tree, and flung herself on the flames. Brother and sister burned to death, in the process transforming into angry Nats who dwell in the tree. Only their heads were left unburned.

- Legends circulated regarding how generous the two had been toward poor villagers.
- The royal court was plagued by disasters ranging from epidemics to lost treasure.

The poor and oppressed began to worship the Nats. The king's original fears about Mr. Handsome proved true: in death, the blacksmith's power began to rival his own. The king ordered the saga tree chopped down and thrown into the Irawaddy River. The ruler of the rival kingdom of Pagan, aware of the situation, had the tree fished out of the river as it floated downstream. He commissioned beautiful images of the brother and sister, which were enshrined atop Mount Popa, transforming the blacksmith and his sister into benevolent oracular spirits, known as Min Mahagiri—"Lords of the High Mountain" even though one is a lady.

There are technically seven Mahagiri Nats:

- The blacksmith Min Mahagiri
- Shwei Na Bai, his dragon wife
- Shin Byu and Shin Nyou, their sons
- Golden Face, his sister who died with him
- Ma Htwei Byu, another younger sister
- Ma Ne, his younger sister's daughter

Min Mahagiri are considered the oldest of the thirty-seven official Nats. Brother and sister are venerated together, but she is now somewhat subordinate to her brother. (Other members of their family are enshrined with them, too.) Although theoretically, Thagya Min (Indra) is chief of the thirty-seven official Nats, in reality, Min Mahagiri the blacksmith is their leader. For centuries, until King Anawratha abolished Nat veneration, the first act of Burmese kings upon coronation was a pilgrimage to the Min Mahagiri shrine, where brother and sister would manifest and prophesize.

The Mahagiri Nats provide blessings of all kinds. Pilgrimages are still made to their mountain shrine. They are also household Nats, guarding individuals and their homes. As he was a blacksmith in life, it's considered wise to acknowledge him when working with metal. Offerings are placed beside the appliance, machine, or tool in use. The Mahagiri Nats protect against thieves and illness but, like most Nats, are volatile. If they perceive disrespect, they cause illness or otherwise demonstrate displeasure, usually via domestic disharmony.

**Iconography:** Min Mahagiri may be represented by a coconut.

**Attributes:** Coconut

**Tree:** Saga (*Michelia champaca*), also known as champa or champak

**Sacred site:** In addition to the shrine on Mount Popa, Min Mahagiri is also the official household Nat who lives within the coconuts hung in his honor in Burmese homes.

**Ritual:** Traditionally a coconut, representing Min Mahagiri's presence

and protection, is hung from a beam or post. Replace when the stem falls off or it begins to rot or decay, whichever comes first. Make offerings to Min Mahagiri when the coconut is replaced.

**Offerings:** Coconuts (the juice soothes their burns), jaggery, sticky rice, plain cooked white rice, bananas, pickled tea leaves, sandalwood

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*A coconut traditionally hung from the home's southeastern pillar is simultaneously an offering to Min Mahagiri, an image of Min Mahagiri, and a home for Min Mahagiri.*

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**See also:** *Nats; Nats, Thirty-Seven*

### **Nats, Thirty-Seven**

**Also known as:** Thirty-Seven Chief Nats; Inner Nats; *Thounze Khunna Min Nat*

**Origin:** Burma (Myanmar)

King Anawratha (reigned 1044–1077 CE), founder of the Buddhist Kingdom of Pagan and first to unite upper and lower Burma, sought to convert the nation to Theravada Buddhism and away from Tantra, shamanism, and animism. His attempts to suppress Nat veneration failed; it was too deeply ingrained. (How deeply? Almost one thousand years later, it still survives.) Instead a political decision was made to co-opt, control, and limit Nats by placing them under Buddhist supervision.

Thirty-six especially popular Nats were officially selected and endorsed. A thirty-seventh, Thagya Min, patterned after Hindu deity Indra, was added as the king of Nats. King Anawratha in conjunction with his Buddhist monk advisers embellished the stories of each of the thirty-six official Nats so that they became devout followers of Buddha.

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*Among the newly enshrined Nats was Anawratha's father, Kunshaw, Lord of the White Umbrella. Anawratha reclaimed the throne after his father was deposed by his step-sons, who forced him to enter a monastery. As an ancestral Nat, Kunshaw is envisioned as a Buddhist monk, rather than as a king.*

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It was declared that there were no longer countless Nats, only these thirty-six plus one. Although new Nats sometimes replace old ones, the official number remains thirty-seven. Although called the Thirty-Seven Nats, there are not consistently thirty-seven of them. Historically, there have been fewer. *Thirty-seven* is, in essence, a category demonstrating that Nats can be controlled, not a literal count or number. (For the sake of symmetry, there is also an official *unofficial* group of Thirty-Seven Outside Nats, even though there are really an infinite number of Outside Nats.)

**Iconography:** The Thirty-Seven Nats are often accompanied by Buddhist imagery.

**Sacred sites:** Individual Nats generally have their own specific shrines and are not venerated in Buddhist pagodas, with one exception: Shwezigon Pagoda in Pagan, King Anawratha's capital city. He had images of the Thirty-Seven chosen Nats moved to the new pagoda, allegedly saying that if men wouldn't come for the sake of the new faith, they'd come for the old and gradually be converted.

**See also:** *Bon Spirits; Eight Dharma Protectors; Indra; Nats, Mahagiri; Nats*

## **Nebaunaubae**

**Origin:** Ojibwa

**Classification:** Manitou

The Nebaunaubae, a merman who lives at the bottom of lakes, rivers,

and sea, is held responsible for the disappearance of young women. He lures human females toward him, not to kill or consume them but to transform them into mermaid companions. (This female counterpart is called the Nebaunaubaequae.) This is one way of increasing the mer community; however they can reproduce in the standard way too.

If the Nebaunaubae wishes to visit land, he can transform into full human shape. He is able to shift between these forms easily, however if the Nebaunaubae stays on land too long, he will die. He can linger in threshold areas like beaches for longer periods, but he must periodically return to the water. The Nebaunaubae is most likely witnessed after dark or during stormy, overcast days. His eyes are accustomed to dim underwater light, and so the bright lights of the upper world are too harsh and painful for him. A Nebaunaubae wandering around on a sunny day in full human form will likely be wearing dark glasses.

**See also:** *Manitou; Mermaid; Nixies*

## **Nechtan**

**Origin:** Ireland

Nechtan is an ancient Irish water deity, Keeper of the Well of Wisdom. Only Nechtan and his three cup bearers were permitted near the well, no one else. Nechtan's wife Boann, defied this taboo, visiting the well with fatal consequences. The name *Nechtan*, deriving from a root word meaning "to wash," was once very popular, shared by several Pictish kings as well as a saint associated with a holy well.

**Sacred site:** His well, Sidhe Nechtan, source of the Boyne River

**See also:** *Boann; Nixie*

## **Nefertem**

**Also known as:** Nefert-Temu; Nefertum

**Origin:** Egypt

Nefertem is the lord of fragrance and perfume. He reminds us that perfume can be more than just a pleasant fragrance. He presides over ritual, erotic, therapeutic, and shamanic uses of fragrance. Nefertem brought a water lily to the solar deity Ra to ease his suffering.

Nefertem, the subject of many amulets, is usually identified as the son of Ptah and Sekhmet. The goddesses Bastet and Wadjet are sometimes identified as his mother instead. Nefertem is sometimes considered an aspect of the solar creator of the universe, known variously as Ra, Atum, or Ammon.

**Favored people:** Perfumers, aromatherapists

**Iconography:** Nefertem is usually depicted as a handsome young man bearing a lotus and standing on a lion. He is sometimes envisioned with a lion's head and a mummy's body, combining the images of his parents, Sekhmet and Ptah. He may be depicted as a human head emerging from a water lily.

**Planet:** Sun

**Flower:** Blue lotus (*Nymphaea caerulea*) (Although called a lotus, it's really a water lily.)

**Offerings:** Flowers, incense

**See also:** *Ammon; Bastet; Ptah; Sekhmet; Wadjet*

## Negra Francisca

**Pronounced:** *Neh-gra Frahn-sees-ka*

Negra Francisca is considered a saint in Venezuelan Espiritismo and a very prominent spirit in Maria Lionza's African Court. Negra Francisca is a historical person, the consort of escaped Cuban slave and revolutionary leader, Negro Felipe. Francisca, of Yoruba ancestry, was born near the Venezuelan coastal town of Higuerote. A friendly, gregarious spirit, she is invoked for protection and romantic remedies.

**Manifestation:** Negra Francisca is envisioned as a beautiful woman with



a red turban and large hoop earrings.

**Element:** Air (wind)

**Color:** Red

**Offering:** Rum, beer, flowers, incense, candles, cigars, cigarettes

**See also:** *Maria Lionza; Negro Felipe*

## **Negro Felipe**

**Pronounced:** *Neh-gro Feh-lee-pay*

The historical Negro Felipe (literally “Black Philip”) was an escaped slave from Cuba who played a prominent role in the Cuban struggle for independence. He served as Simon Bolivar’s aide before being murdered by Spanish colonists in Venezuela. Now among the most beloved of the spirits of Maria Lionza, he is venerated independently and as one of the *Très Potencias*, the triad consisting of himself, Maria Lionza, and Guaicaipuro. Felipe is head of the African Court and a member of the Court of Liberators. Originally from Cuba, Felipe serves as the spiritual link between Maria Lionza and Cuban Santeria, increasingly popular in Venezuela.

Negro Felipe is invoked for protection from enemies.

**Iconography:** A handsome black man with military bearing, wearing a red turban and a military uniform

**Consort:** Negra Francisca

**Color:** Dark blue

**Offerings:** Rum, tobacco products

**See also:** *Guaicaipuro; Maria Lionza; Negra Francisca*

## **Nehalennia**

**Origin:** Celtic

On 4 April 1970, fishermen, working off Colijnsplaat, an estuary of Holland's East Scheldt River, recovered three fragments from two altars eighty-five feet below the surface. In the process, they also recovered the forgotten goddess to whom those altars were dedicated. Further exploration recovered over one hundred twenty altars and sculptures. Inscriptions identified the goddess as Nehalennia, which has been interpreted as "leader," "pilot," or "steers woman." Extremely popular during the early centuries of the Common Era, Nehalennia's riverside temple was submerged by the North Sea when the shoreline receded at the end of the Roman era.

Nehalennia possessed at least two substantial shrines on Holland's North Sea coast. (If there were more, they have not yet been recovered.) Based on what's been recovered, Nehalennia was not a goddess of the starving masses but matron of the wealthy and entrepreneurial. Surviving altars include information regarding donors. Nehalennia's shrines were well-endowed, patronized by the prosperous.

Nehalennia is a goddess of well-being and prosperity; her successful devotees were a living testament to her prowess. People traveled great distances to visit her shrine. Devotees included Celts from every corner of the Celtic world as well as Roman citizens and those of Germanic derivation. Nehalennia sponsored and protected North Sea traders and travelers. Many devotees were merchants, the ancient equivalent of business travelers.

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*Nehalennia's emergence from under -water obscurity may indicate that she is actively back in business and ready to receive new clientele.*

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Virtually always portrayed with a large hound who sits beside her, Nehalennia's pooch is consistently a big, friendly companion dog rather than a fierce or aggressive guard dog. Celtic deities closely associated with dogs tend to be associated with healing, death, and/or the afterlife, so Nehalennia's canine companion leads to speculation that, in addition to being a protective goddess of prosperity, she is also a goddess of

healing and/or death.

**Iconography:** Nehalennia is depicted as a youthful woman wearing distinctive clothing (small round hat; short shoulder-length cape). She is portrayed with a dog that gazes up at her or touches her knee with his nose. Sometimes she is enthroned beneath a shell-shaped canopy. She's sometimes portrayed in the company of Neptune. Nehalennia sometimes stands in a ship's prow in similar manner to Isis and some Black Madonnas.

**Attributes:** Boat, rope, rudder

**Element:** Water

**Creature:** Dog, dolphin

**Altars:** Nehalennia's altars are decorated with marine motifs

**Sacred sites:** Two temples have been found in what is now modern Holland:

- Colijnsplaat
- Domburg on the island of Walcheren

**See also:** *Ailinn; Black Madonna; Isis*

## Neith

*The Oldest One; Nurse of Crocodiles*

**Also known as:** Nit

**Origin:** Libya

The inscription on Neith's temple in Sais in the Nile Delta (now modern Sa el-Hagar) read:

*I am all that has been,  
that is and that will be*

*No mortal has yet been able*

*to lift the veil that covers me*

Neith, the First One, primordial goddess, was never born but always existed. Alternatively she is completely self-generated. Neith traveled from the deserts and oases of Libya to emerge as among the greatest of Egyptian goddesses. In one Egyptian creation myth, Neith brought forth Ra, the sun. Then she invented the shuttle and loom, put the sky on her loom, and wove the world into existence. Neith, the first to give birth, invented weaving. Her name may derive from a word for “to weave” or “to knit.”

Neith is a goddess of hunting. She presides over crafts of all kinds, including witchcraft and warcraft. Amuletic weapons placed in the tomb to protect the deceased from evil spirits were consecrated to Neith. She is the judge of the Egyptian deities. After eighty years, when the lawsuit between Horus and Set in the Court of Deities was still not resolved, Neith was called in to render a decision to which all would defer. (She favored Horus but compensated Set. Neith has historically had a close, positive relationship with Set.)

Neith was worshipped with Mysteries and lantern processions. She may be venerated independently or together with her son, Sobek. The Greeks identified her with Athena, also identified as originating in Libya. Many consider Athena to be a Greek path of Neith or at least a very closely related spirit. (See the Glossary entry for *Path*.)

**Favored people:** Soldiers, hunters, weavers, artisans

**Manifestation:** Neith appears as an androgynous woman. She wears the red crown of Lower Egypt. She sometimes appears in the guise of a golden cobra, too.

**Iconography:** She is customarily depicted with a green face and hands. Neith is portrayed suckling a crocodile at each breast.

**Attribute:** Two arrows and a shield, shuttle

**Creatures:** Crocodile, snake, bee

**Color:** Green

**Plants:** Flax, papyrus

**Sacred site:** Her primary shrine was in Sais

**See also:** *Athena; Horus; Set; Sobek; Tanit*

## **Nekhbet**

*Lady of the South*

**Also known as:** Nekhebet

**Origin:** Egypt

Although in modern Western culture, vultures are commonly perceived as harbingers of death, in traditional African cosmology, vultures are symbols of motherhood—no joke or sarcasm intended. A vulture's huge wingspan was associated with a mother's sheltering arms. Despite their fierce appearance, vultures are gentle birds that do not kill but eat carrion. Their inclination to stand vigil by the dying was not perceived as gruesome but as protective: vultures drive away malicious, harmful spirits and then, by devouring the corpse, perform the necessary clean up. What appear to be vulture goddesses are among the earliest documented sacred images.

Nekhebet, primordial vulture goddess of Upper Egypt, presides over maternity, childbirth, life, and death. Nekhebet is the guardian of infants. She was eventually incorporated into the official state solar pantheon as Ra's daughter and right eye. Her protective capacities were so admired that Nekhebet was enlisted as the pharaoh's own guardian. Nekhebet guarded the royal children in the palace; she hovered over the pharaoh during battle.

Nekhebet is the Great Mother who vigilantly protects her children. She gives birth to them, supervises them carefully, and then attends them in death, finally removing the body. Nekhbet presides over natron salt, an integral component of the Egyptian mummification process. She may be invoked to enhance the protective and magical capacities of salt.

**Manifestation:** Nekhbet is a woman with a vulture's head but also appears as a complete vulture, especially a white one or as a complete

woman.

**Iconography:** Envisioned as the pharaoh's guardian, Nekhebet shields him with her outstretched wings. She wears the White Crown of Upper Egypt.

**Attributes:** Bow and arrows; Nekhebet carries a long-stemmed water lily with a winged serpent entwined around it

**Creature:** Vulture, snake

**Color:** White

**Spirit allies:** Set, Wadjet

**See also:** *Harpies; Set; Wadjet*

## Neko-Mata

**Also known as:** Nekomata

**Origin:** Japan

**Classification:** Yokai

The Neko-Mata may look like an ordinary cat, but it's not. It's a powerful cat spirit able to shape-shift into human form. The Neko-Mata is a species of *Bake-Neko* or *Obake-Neko*, meaning "cat spirit." (Other types of cat spirits, Japanese or otherwise, also exist who manifest and behave completely differently than the Neko-Mata.)

In its youth, the Neko-Mata may be indistinguishable from regular cats. When the Neko-Mata attains ten years, its tail begins to fork into two, and its full magical powers start to manifest. *Neko-Mata* literally means "forked cat." Technically, it's not a Neko-Mata until it's reached full power and its tail develops the characteristic fork. Before that, it's just a cat with potential. Its tail develops prehensile qualities serving as extra, magical hands. As the Neko-Mata ages and increases in power, even more tails may appear, as with the nine-tail fox. The nature of the Neko-Mata largely depends on the treatment it received *before* its powers manifested.

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*It is unclear if Neko-Matas are just innately grouchy as a species or whether many are so bad tempered because they are on missions of revenge.*

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Fox spirits (Kitsune) tend to manifest as beautiful women, as do Japanese snake spirits. There is, however, rarely anything kittenish about the Neko-Mata's human form. The guise they usually assume is that of a grouchy, bad-mannered, unpleasant old lady. The Neko-Mata assumes the form of the granny from hell. Although the Neko-Mata appears human, she maintains feline characteristics although not necessarily the most attractive. The Neko-Mata behaves like an old, surly, grudge-keeping, short-tempered, smelly semi-feral cat.

Of course, plenty of humans are surly with bad hygiene, too. Personality isn't the tip-off to the Neko-Mata's true identity. The true clue is the one thing the Neko-Mata *cannot* do. The Neko-Mata can walk and talk like a human but despite that extra tail/hand, she is unable to eat like a person, only like a cat, actually putting her face into the bowl rather than using utensils or fingers. Aware of this weakness, the Neko-Mata usually insists on eating alone. Because she is unpleasant, uncouth, and unsightly, she rarely has to turn down many invitations but is left alone at mealtimes, preserving her secret.

The Neko-Mata was never an ordinary cat even when it resembled one. She's not an ordinary old lady either, even if she resembles one. The Neko-Mata possesses incredible magical knowledge. She operates as a shaman and usually a necromancer. The Neko-Mata eats carrion, including human corpses and so she may be discovered in the cemetery, still in human form, ostensibly performing necromantic rituals but really snacking. Whether because of contact with corpses or because they are disease spirits, Neko-Matas eventually become the source of infectious illness.

In addition to causing illness, the Neko-Mata is blamed for starting mysterious fires. The Neko-Mata also sometimes takes involuntary possession of a person, although less frequently than fox spirits. An Inari shaman may be able to perform an exorcism.

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*The Neko-Mata has profound associations with death and has power over both dead and living humans. Via her shamanic knowledge, the Neko-Mata can raise and control the dead like a zombie master. Like a puppet master, the Neko-Mata forces the reanimated dead to dance like marionettes. A really vengeful Neko-Mata may seek out her victims' dead relatives, controlling them in order to cause her target special pain.*

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The Neko-Mata is potentially a very dangerous spirit but, in general, she does not attack randomly. The Neko-Mata tends to have a reason for targeting someone. She is not a trickster out for fun but a grouchy spirit out for revenge—or justice. Like Djinn, Fairies, or bori spirits, the Neko-Mata punishes those perceived as causing it harm. However, unlike Djinn, Fairies or bori, the Neko-Mata does *not* engage in the sudden strike. She may hold a grudge for years, biding her time.

The most dangerous Neko-Matas are those that were abused or mistreated as kittens (when they were indistinguishable from other cats). The people they target may have treated them cruelly when they were young and helpless, but now the worm has turned. They pursue their foes relentlessly even though the targets may have no memory of their crime. A thoughtless act of cruelty to a cat may bring the revenge of the Neko-Mata many years later. (And the simplest method of never having problems with Neko-Matas is always to be kind to cats.)

The Neko-Mata may be appeased with sincere and abject apologies as well as generous, frequent, and consistent food offerings. She can theoretically become an ally and may share shamanic and magical skills and wisdom.

**Manifestation:** Neko-Matas can transform back and forth between cat and human form. In cat form, they are described as fierce, ragged, gray cats: gray like an old person's hair.

**Iconography:** Neko-Matas are fun to draw and so are a favorite subject of Japanese artists. In the nineteenth century, images of Neko-Mata were occasionally incorporated into Maneki Neko amulets. This type of



Maneki Neko may have a tail, not the bob-tail sported by traditional Maneki Nekos, but that's not the tip-off to their identity. You'll recognize this kind of Maneki Neko by her vaguely malevolent aura and staring yellow eyes. Instead of beckoning prosperity, this Maneki Neko beckons revenge.

**See also:** *Bastet; Bori; Djinn; Fairy; Fox Spirits; Inari; Ketta; Maneki Neko; Obake; Tanuki; Yokai*

## Nemain

**Also known as:** Nemhain

**Origin:** Ireland

The name *Nemain* means “frenzy.” She is the goddess of battle fury. Nemain is the least known of the Irish battle goddesses. Nemain does not fight in battles; she has other methods of influencing the outcome:

- Like a supreme, cosmic cheerleader, Nemain exhorts her favorites to victory.
- She intimidates the other side with her shrieking and terrifying presence.
- She incites warriors to frenzy and spreads absolute panic on the battlefield.

Nemain is a vocal presence. Her trademark characteristic is her death shriek. When Nemain shrieked at the army of Connacht, one hundred extremely courageous men instantly dropped dead from fright.

Nemain's shriek is a weapon, but it's also a harbinger of death. Nemain may be understood as a Banshee goddess, a Banshee on a grand scale: her death shriek prophesies battlefield massacres, the deaths of many—not of one or a few. She's not only audible but visible when she wishes to be. Unlike the standard Banshee, Nemain isn't attached to one family: she appears to hosts of soldiers on the battlefield.

**See also:** *Aeronwen; Banshee; Morrigan*

## Nemesis

**Origin:** Greece

Nemesis, the goddess of divine justice and retribution, spins the wheel of fortune as a warning and promise that what goes around, comes around. She is implacable and remorseless, but she is not cruel. Nemesis distributes just desserts. She is the spirit of righteous, justified anger, directing her powers against those who have violated cosmic order. Nemesis has broader jurisdiction than the Erinyes, who may be her sisters. While the Erinyes only avenge shed blood, Nemesis takes action wherever natural laws are flouted, broken, or disrespected.

Nemesis Stones are stones taken from an altar of Nemesis. Stones are engraved with an image of Nemesis, usually in the form of a young woman standing with one foot on a wheel. They were worn as amulets around the neck and set into rings. They exorcise and ward off evil spirits as well as preventing and banishing nightmares and healing the moonstruck.

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*Nemesis serves as a personal goddess offering protection and sponsorship to devotees. Those who invoke her protection are expected to behave honorably and to uphold natural moral code.*

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Greek apocalyptic prophecy suggests that when humanity finally achieves maximum wickedness, Nemesis and Aidos, Goddess of Shame will abandon Earth, and *then* the hard times will really start. Nemesis hasn't left yet and is still administering justice: German painter Alfred Rethel (15 May 1816–1 December 1859) painted her as an avenging angel in hot pursuit in his 1837 painting, "Nemesis Pursuing a Murderer." According to legend, a high-ranking man with secret, undiscovered crimes on his conscience won Rethel's painting in a Frankfurt lottery. Contemplation of Nemesis' portrait allegedly drove him mad.

**Manifestation:** Nemesis resembles modern images of angels. She is a winged, wreathed woman, usually dressed in white. She may also manifest as a griffin.

**Iconography:** Egyptian faience amulets from the Roman period (circa second century CE) depicting Nemesis in the guise of a griffin with her wheel of fate were used to ward off bad luck.

**Attributes:** Wheel of fate, cubit ruler, staff, branch laden with apples, hourglass, scales, bridle, scourge, sword

**Spirit allies:**

- Nemesis' closest companion is Aidos, Goddess of Shame.
- Nemesis may be worshipped together with Themis, Goddess of Divine Order.
- Artemis is Nemesis' good friend.
- Nemesis is often found in the company of Tyche, Goddess of Fortune, if only to ensure that people get what they deserve.
- Nemesis is the daughter of Nyx and sometimes identified as the secret mother of Helen of Troy. Images from her shrine at Rhamnous showed Leda presenting Helen to Nemesis.

**Plant:** Mullein

**Creature:** Griffins pull her chariot

**Sacred site:** Her primary sanctuary at Rhamnous, Greece, dates back to at least the sixth century BCE.

**See also:** *Artemis; Erinyes; Helen of Troy; Nyx; Themis; Tyche*

## **Nephtys**

*Lady of the House; Lady of Life; Lady of Darkness; Lady of Death that Is Not Eternal; Mistress of the West*

**Origin:** Egypt

Quiet Nephthys is overshadowed by her famous and more flamboyant siblings—Isis, Osiris, and Set—yet she, too, is a vital, significant and powerful deity. Nephthys is the spirit of magic, sorcery, darkness, decay, death, and immortality.

Isis, Nephthys, Osiris, and Set are quadruplets. Isis and Osiris fell in love in the womb and were married. Nephthys and Set were paired off by default. Set desired Isis, too. Nephthys wished to bear a child, but Set is a barren, sterile spirit.

Resourceful Nephthys conceived by trickery: she seduced Osiris by impersonating Isis and secretly gave birth to Anubis. Although she betrayed her sister and they underwent a period of estrangement, they eventually reconciled. When Set killed Osiris, Nephthys became Isis' great ally and constant companion. Nephthys shared maternity of Anubis with Isis. Anubis invented the mummification process, which ultimately helped to resurrect Osiris. Nephthys also assisted in the temporary revival of Osiris' virility, so that Isis, too, might conceive a child.

Nephthys is a modest but determined spirit. No cult centers have been discovered that are dedicated to her alone, but she shares shrines with others. Shunning the spotlight, Nephthys quietly sets about fulfilling her desires. She has her son, her beloved sister, and eventually found personal satisfaction as consort to Min. She is venerated with all three.

Nephthys is a guardian spirit, invoked in magical rites. She may be petitioned for fertility, especially by those who have been assured that they will never have children but wish to prove naysayers wrong.

Nephthys guards the threshold between life and death, fertility and sterility. Egypt was known as the Black Land with black, the color of rich, fertile soil, considered emblematic of life and abundance. The harsh, dry desert, which challenges survival, was known as the Red Land. In Egypt, the dividing line between fertile earth and the desert, the black and the red, was visible. One could literally stand with one foot on fertile land, the other on barren soil. Nephthys straddles, determines, and rules over that borderline.

**Attributes:** Skull and bones

**Colors:** Black, red

**Planet:** Moon

**Birds:** Vulture, crow, kite

**Animal:** Snake

**See also:** *Anubis; Horus; Isis; Min; Osiris; Set*

## Neptune

**Origin:** Italy

Although Neptune is now considered the Roman Lord of the Sea, he was originally a freshwater spirit. His associations with the ocean derive from his identification with the Greek Poseidon. The identities of the two originally distinct spirits are now so intertwined that it is virtually impossible to distinguish between them. Their names are used interchangeably. If you search for information about Neptune, you will almost certainly find only information that originally pertained to Poseidon. Little information survives regarding Neptune prior to his identification with Poseidon. However, we know that the Romans invoked Neptune to protect fresh water, especially for agricultural uses.

**Day:** July 23, his Roman feast day known as the Neptunalia. His festival was celebrated with feasting. Games were held in Neptune's honor.

**Planet:** Neptune

**See also:** *Mercury; Poseidon* and the Glossary entry for *Identification*

## Neraida

**Origin:** Greece

Neraida are spirits of modern Greek folklore, not ancient mythology. Their name derives from *Nereids*, but they may or may not be the Nereids of yore. The name may just be borrowed, or alternatively the Nereids have emerged from their ocean and changed their disposition. Modern Neraides are female spirits dwelling in forests, freshwater

springs, and wild nature, in general, not only in the ocean. If they are the ancient spirits, then they derive from the entire category of Nymphs. (The word *Neraida* may be singular or plural but the plural *Neraides* is also sometimes used.)

Neraida resemble Nymphs: beautiful, seductive spirits who sing, dance, weave, and spin in the moonlight. They haunt caves, groves, grottoes, springs, wells, and mountains—the Nymphs' old territory. They like mill ponds, too. This is not an exclusively female type of spirit. The Neraida's male counterpart is the *Neraidos*; however the female is the primary subject of lore.

Nereids (and Nymphs in general) were considered generally benevolent spirits who bestowed good health, good luck, psychic power, prosperity, and fertility to devotees. The modern Neraida is a dreaded spirit who causes death, disease, and misfortune. What happened? Here are some possibilities:

- Neraides are completely different spirits with little in common with Nereids beyond their name; there's no reason to expect them to behave like Nereids.
- Neraides who may or may not be Nymphs are really not so malevolent or dangerous but were saddled with a bad reputation by a Church seeking to discourage people from contacting and venerating them.

Nymphs have always displayed tempers when angered or treated disrespectfully. After two thousand years of denigration, not veneration, Neraides have reason to be volatile.

A Neraida *can* bestow health, wealth, and fertility. She can withhold it, too, or cause it to disappear. It's considered crucial not to interrupt or aggravate them in any way as Neraides strike out suddenly in the manner of Djinn. The afflictions that they potentially cause include blindness, muteness, impotence, and seizure disorders, especially epilepsy. Children who fail to thrive or who suffer from wasting ailments are described as struck by Neraida.

Neraida are mischief makers. Among their other misdeeds, Neraida stand accused of capturing or seducing men and women, luring them to their caves and forcing them to dance from dusk to dawn, sometimes

with fatal results. They are among those spirits accused of stealing human babies and leaving changelings behind. They steal midwives, too, whenever they require their services.

A Neraida can be captured by stealing an item of her clothing. If she gets it back, though, she'll depart. Solitary men try to trap them for sex, companionship, and their legendary culinary skills.

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*“The Man Who Loved the Nereids,” a story by author Marguerite Yourcenar (1903–1987) contained in her 1938 book, Oriental Tales, draws on modern Neraida lore.*

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The traditional invocation against the Neraides should you encounter, anger, or fear one is to quickly say aloud, *“Honey and milk in your path!”* It's a promise that must be kept. Deliver the requisite offering as soon as possible. In addition, the goddess Artemis and her successor Saint Artemidos are invoked for protection and to remedy any harm caused by Neraides, including illness and possession. Garlic is also used in traditional rituals that attempt to undo damage perpetrated by Neraides.

**Manifestation:** Neraides resemble beautiful women but some have donkey or goat feet.

**Colors:** White, gold, yellow. They usually dress in white.

**Sacred days:** The early days of August are sacred to the Neraides. It is forbidden during this time to cut trees or to use water for washing or household tasks, anything that will sully the purity of the water.

**Time:** The Neraides exert their maximum power after dark and at high noon.

**Ritual:** Offerings are served outdoors under shady trees or wherever one has encountered or anticipates encountering Neraides:

1. Lay a clean, white cloth on the ground and serve offerings on plates.

Give them a full table-setting, including clean glasses, forks, and knives. (The Neraides are not afraid of iron.)

2. A complete ritual offering includes bread, honey, honey cakes, assorted sweets and pastries, and a full bottle of good wine. Open the bottle for them.
3. Light some fragrant incense or burn a new candle, dedicating it to the Neraides.

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*The names Neraida and Nereid are used interchangeably. Clearly Nereids and Neraides are virtually indistinguishable. Either name may indicate either the ancient sea spirits or the modern nature spirits. In the context of this book, for the sake of clarity, Neraida indicates the modern spirits, and Nereid the ancient ones; however, this is an artificial construct. In real life, no such clarity exists.*

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**Offerings:** The simplest offering is honey and milk or wine. Honey is the essential ingredient; other things may be offered as well, but honey is always included among their offerings. Brides traditionally offer items of clothing from their trousseau.

**See also:** *Aisha Qandisha; Artemis; Djinn; Exotika; Gello; Gorgon; Leshii; Lilith; Merrow; Nereids; Nymphs; Padilha, Maria*

## Nereids

**Origin:** Greece

The Nereids are the fifty beautiful daughters of sea spirit Nereus. The most famous are Amphitrite, Galatea, and Thetis, but other sisters were also beloved, venerated, and well-known.

Nereids are generally benevolent toward people. Although famous for their lovely voices, they do not use them to lure travelers to their doom (or at least not very often and certainly not randomly). Nereids were



never trivial spirits but important, powerful goddesses. Shrines and altars were erected to them throughout coastal Greece.

The Nereids are spirits of magic and smithcraft. They provided Hephaestus with his first forge, so they already knew about metalworking. According to legend, the Nereids were the first to reveal the Mysteries of Persephone and Dionysus to people. Nereids possess the power to soothe or agitate ocean waters. They are invoked to protect travelers on the sea. Nereids can travel anywhere they wish on sea or land, but their primary stomping grounds are the waters of the Aegean, where they live in undersea caves.

**Manifestation:** The Nereids may appear in the guise of women or mermaids.

**Mounts:** Nereids ride dolphins, giant crabs, hippocampi, and sea creatures of all kinds.

**Offerings:** Jewelry, ornaments, golden spindles, things that sparkle and glitter

**See also:** *Amphitrite, Dionysus; Hephaestus; Neraiida; Nereus; Nerites; Persephone; Poseidon; Thetis* and the Glossary entry for *Mystery*

## Nereus

### *The Old One of the Sea*

**Origin:** Greece

Nereus, Lord of the Aegean and Mediterranean Seas, was eventually overshadowed by Poseidon. However, he still resides in the sea and may be invoked for assistance, especially by those seeking information. Nereus possesses incredible oracular powers and is renowned for always telling the truth. He is traditionally considered a kind, fair, and generous deity. He and his wife, Doris, have fifty daughters, the Nereids. Nereus communicates via dreams, visions, and apparitions.

**Manifestation:** Nereus usually appears as an elderly man or merman with long flowing hair and beard, which may be adorned with coral and

shells. However, he is an extremely skilled shape-shifter and may be full of surprises.

**See also:** *Nereids; Nerites; Poseidon*

## Nergal

### *The Burning*

**Also known as:** Alad

**Origin:** Sumeria (Mesopotamia)

Nergal, Lord of Mass Destruction, produces and controls epidemics, disasters, and wars. A violent spirit who delights in carnage, Nergal is lord of the realm of death called Irkalla, the Land of No Return. He inherited this position via marriage to Ereshkigal, Goddess of Death, its original ruler. She may now co-rule with Nergal, or she may defer to him. How this shift in power occurred is subject to myth and debate:

- Ereshkigal may have fallen violently in love with Nergal, demanded his presence in her realm and offered him *anything* because of her love.
- Nergal may have decided that he was entitled to rule Irkalla because as a demon of epidemics and disasters, he was already a major contributor to its population. He penetrated Ereshkigal's realm, posted his own guards at the gates, dethroned and married her. He then spread the story that Ereshkigal had begged him to marry her and take over her realm.
- As society became increasingly conservative and patriarchal, many preferred a male king of death and hence favored Nergal over Ereshkigal, regardless of the actual relationship or dynamic between the two spirits.

In addition to disease and war, Nergal's weapons include famine, drought, heat, lightning, and fire. The hot, dry desert wind is his breath. (Illnesses were traditionally considered to ride in on those winds.) He is a spirit of the sun as a devastating force. Nergal may once have been a preeminent solar deity from an earlier pantheon, now dethroned and

forced to find a new home and role for himself, hence his general destructive, angry, bad mood.

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*Nergal knows the cure to every illness he controls. He decides who dies or is injured in wars or epidemics but he decides who is spared, too.*

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Nergal was a major deity, not an obscure one. He was subject to state-sponsored rituals and offerings. His name lingers in cultural memory, still bearing an aura of dread:

- Based on medieval lore, demonologists consider Nergal to be chief of Hell's secret police and Beelzebub's spy.
- Nergal appears in the fantasy series *Conan the Barbarian*.
- Nergal is the name of the primary villain in the video game *Fire Emblem 7*.

**Manifestation:** A man or lion

**Attribute:** Lion-headed staff

**Planet:** Sun

**Time:** Noon

**Creature:** Lion

**Day:** The summer solstice when the sun is at the height of its powers

**Sacred site:** His primary sanctuary was at Kutha on the Euphrates River, but he had other temples and shrines, too.

**See also:** *Ereshkigal; Inanna-Ishtar; Sekhmet*

## Nerites

**Origin:** Greece

Nerites is the only son of Nereus and Doris, sole brother of the fifty Nereid sisters. He is allegedly the absolute handsomest of the male species, mortal or immortal. Before Aphrodite emerged on land in Cyprus, she lived beneath the sea. Nerites was her only lover. When she was admitted to the Olympian pantheon, Aphrodite wanted Nerites to accompany her as her consort. He wasn't interested in joining any new pantheon, preferring to stay in the sea with his family. Aphrodite gave him wings so that he could travel back and forth between realms. Nerites wasn't interested. He underestimated Aphrodite. Angered and unwilling to see her lover with anyone else, she transformed him into a scallop or cockle shell, one of her primary emblems. Then she found other companions for herself, including Ares, Eros, Hermes, and Hephaestus.

Another version of Nerites' transformation suggests that he engaged in a very happy, mutually satisfying love affair with Poseidon, his sister Amphitrite's husband. He somehow annoyed Helios either by challenging him to a race or because Helios couldn't stand the speed with which Nerites swam alongside Poseidon's chariot. Helios transformed Nerites into a mollusk. Regardless of who effected the transformation, Nerites' power and essence may be accessed via his sacred shells.

**See also:** *Amphitrite; Aphrodite; Ares; Eros; Hephaestus; Hermes; Nereids; Nereus; Poseidon*

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*According to one myth, Aphrodite took the wings originally intended for Nerites and bestowed them upon Eros, who then became her constant companion and lover.*

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**Nicnevin**

*The Bone Mother*

**Also known as:** Gyre Carlin

**Origin:** Scotland

Nicnevin, Scottish witch goddess, can transform water into rocks and sea into dry land. Her name is believed to derive from the Gaelic *Nic an Neamhain*, “Daughter of Frenzy.” Nic nevin flies through the night. Although usually invisible, her presence is announced by the cacophony of geese. The Romans identified her with Diana.

Following Scotland’s official conversion to Christianity and brutal witch trials, Nicnevin, a former goddess, was reclassified as both a Fairy and a demon. (Scotland suffered particularly virulent witch hunts, second in scope only to the German lands in terms of prosecutions and executions.) She is considered the Queen of the Fairies of Fife, Scotland and is among the spirits associated with the Wild Hunt.

**Manifestation:** Nicnevin manifests as a beautiful woman and a dried out hag. She wears a long gray mantle.

**Attribute:** Magic wand

**Element:** Water

**Birds:** Geese

**Day:** Samhain (Halloween) is Nicnevin’s sacred night when she grants wishes and answers petitions. She is traditionally honored with celebratory feasts and toasting. On Samhain, Nicnevin makes herself visible as she flies through the air accompanied by a retinue of witches and honking geese. Rituals are also held in Nicnevin’s honor on November 1.

**See also:** *Diana; Fairy; Nemain; Wild Hunt*

**Nike**

*Winged Victory*

**Origin:** Greece

Nike, Goddess of Victory, may be the daughter of Styx and the Titan

Pallas. Styx dedicated her children to Zeus' victory during the war between the Titans and the Olympians. Nike sometimes serves as Zeus' charioteer.

Nike provides victory in all contexts, peaceful as well as violent. Soldiers invoke her aid as do athletes and anyone entering any kind of competition. Pie eating, poetry slam, spelling bee, you name it: if winning is involved, Nike may be petitioned for victory. She certainly brought success to the shoe manufacturer that bears her name.

**Manifestation:** A young winged woman

**Iconography:** Nike is often depicted in the company of Zeus or Athena.

- A solid gold image of Nike once stood on the open right hand of the colossal statue of Athena in the Parthenon.
- The now-headless, armless *Winged Victory of Samothrace*, housed in the Louvre Museum, is among the most famous and frequently reproduced statues on Earth. It may have once served as an altar in the Samothrace temple complex.
- Since 1928, the image of Nike has graced Olympic medals.

**Attributes:** Palm branch, pomegranate, helmet

**Spirit ally:** Athena and Nike are constant companions.

**See also:** *Athena; Cabeiri; Olympian Spirits; Pallas; Styx; Titan; Victoria; Zeus*

## Nisaba

**Also known as:** Nidaba; Nanibgal

**Origin:** Sumeria

Nisaba is the goddess of education, learning and writing. She also has dominion over harvests of all kinds, agricultural or otherwise. Nisaba is in charge of marking and recording boundaries. She may be invoked by those involved in boundary or territorial disputes.

Nisaba presides over a hall that serves as a school of higher, esoteric

learning. She is the scribe and recording secretary of the Sumerian pantheon, although this position was eventually reassigned to Nabu who may be her student and/or her husband.

Nisaba is the daughter of Enki and Ninhursag and the sister of Nanshe, her partner and ally. On New Year's Day, Nisaba organizes those who line up to be judged by Nanshe. Nisaba also records Nanshe's prophecies and dream interpretations.

**Favored people:** Scribes; archivists; librarians

**Manifestation:** She is described in the Sumerian "Hymn to Nisaba" as possessing the colors of the stars of heaven

**Iconography:** Nisaba is depicted wearing a horned diadem over her long, flowing hair

**Attributes:** Crescent moon; sheaf of wheat; lapis lazuli tablets

**Element:** Earth

**Creature:** wild cow

**Sacred sites:** Nisaba had shrines in the ancient Sumerian city Umma and in Uruk, now modern Warka, Iraq

**See also:** *Enki; Nabu; Nanshe*

## Nix

**Also known as:** Neck; Nicor; Nykur

**Origin:** Teutonic

Nixes are the male counterpart of the female Nixies, sea spirits who may be generous or malicious as they choose. Nixes love music. They are brilliant musicians who teach musical skills and transmit musical talent to humans. They may be persuaded to do so in exchange for regular offerings. Nixes are unabashedly Pagan spirits who will not compromise with Christianity. They work with Pagans but may demand the renunciation of Christianity. (This has been interpreted as diabolical.)

They love human women, too, and will attempt to seduce them.

Iron repels Nixes. An iron or steel knife placed in the bottom of a boat as an amulet provides safety from them while traveling over the water.

**Manifestation:** Skilled shape-shifters, Nixes appear as they like, manifesting as horses, mermen, or in the guise of human men. The guise varies. The Nix can resemble a small, cute boy; a handsome man; or a repulsively bloated drowned corpse with green teeth. The Nix has been witnessed in the form of an elderly man sitting on sea cliffs, wringing water from his long hair and beard. Alternatively, the Nix lingers waist-deep in water. He appears to be a very handsome man, but the parts of his body hidden beneath the water are those of a horse.

**See also:** *Each Uisge; Kelpie; Leshii; Nechtan; Nereus; Nixie*

## Nixie

**Origin:** Teutonic

Nixies are female water spirits and freshwater mermaids. Their male counterparts are the Nixes. They live in societies that parallel those of humans in underwater cities and communities. Nixies, described as seductively beautiful, reputedly entice mortal men to a watery doom. Nixies typically manifest as mermaids, but they are passionate shoppers who like to frequent local markets and fairs, so that mermaid tail can get in the way. Unlike the Hans Christian Andersen tale, there's no *Little Mermaid* angst regarding lack of legs for Nixies:

- When Nixies wish to walk on land, they sprout legs.
- When Nixies wish to return to their watery homes, legs are replaced with fins and tails.

Allegedly, the clue to two-legged, land-walking Nixies' true identity is the water that they constantly drip, like a leaky faucet. Nixies are unable to ever be completely dry. Some item of their clothing is always soaked. Once upon a time, their apron strings were always soaked; now that aprons are out of style, it might be a hem, a scarf, or any item of clothing.



The word *Nixy* derives from the Old High German *nihhusa* translated as “female water sprite.” (The male is *nihhus*.) It may also be related to the Old English *nicor*; Grendel’s mother in the tale of Beowulf is described as a *nicor*. *Nixie* may also derive from an Old Irish root word for *washes*. Nixies may be related to the Irish deity Nechtan or to the Washers at the Ford. Various water spirits throughout Northern and Western Europe have similar names; most are considered threatening and malevolent. In Germany, Nixies are accused of switching babies, stealing the human one and replacing it with a changeling.

Nixies love music and dancing. They like to bask in the sun and comb their long hair. They are oracular spirits and can be petitioned for information however they are temperamental and thus potentially dangerous. Nixies must always be addressed very politely and courteously.

**Manifestation:** Nixies typically manifest as mermaids or as beautiful women, but they can take any shape they please. Gray horses are another favorite form.

**Offerings:** Hair ornaments, hand mirrors, deluxe combs and brushes, gift certificates, or anything that evokes shopping

**See also:** *Each Uisge; Kelpie; Mermaid; Nechtan; Neraida; Nix; Ondine; Washers at the Ford*

## Njord

**Origin:** Norse

**Classification:** Vanir

Njord is the spirit of the sea and lakes, the father of Freya and Freyr. The three Vanir spirits were sent to live among the Aesir, essentially as hostages following the war between the pantheons. They get along well with their Aesir hosts and seem at home in Asgard. However Njord is destined to return to the Vanir at Ragnarok, the apocalypse of the deities.

Like his children, Njord is a spirit of fertility, abundance, and wealth,

which he distributes (or doesn't) as he sees fit. He presides over fertile land near water. He has dominion over ships and boats. Njord presides over a harbor realm known as Noatun, or Ship Town. He is the lord of good fortune.

**Favored people:** Sailors, mariners, those who fish, those who love the sea, boat builders

**Manifestation:** Njord is a mature, bearded man. His skin may be weathered from the effects of sea wind, but he allegedly has extremely beautiful feet—from walking barefoot in the waves, no doubt. His children are exceptionally good-looking; presumably they inherited at least some of their looks from him.

**Rune:** Laguz

**Element:** Water

**See also:** *Aesir; Angerboda; Freya; Freyr; Herta; Mimir; Skadi; Vanir*

## Njuzu

**Also known as:** Njusu; Nzuzu; Zuzu

**Origin:** Shona (Zimbabwe)

Njuzu, beautiful water spirit, lures (or kidnaps) people she finds interesting to her underwater realm. Initially, she treats them harshly, but Njuzu is not really cruel: it's a test to see how the person reacts and behaves:

- The person must accomplish whatever tasks Njuzu sets responsibly and graciously.
- Njuzu's captive must eat whatever is offered. Otherwise the person will never be permitted to return home.

Njuzu initially offers food that a person is unlikely to desire: mud, worms, insects. Harsh treatment may last weeks, months, or even longer. If the person passes Njuzu's test, then treatment improves as does the

diet. Njuzu offers rice and various delicacies.

Njuzu can be extremely kind and generous. She is a wise spirit, a repository of knowledge. If captives pass her tests, they essentially become her apprentices to whom she bestows information and teaches various healing arts. Eventually, if all goes well, a kidnapped person is sent back home with a basket filled with magical medicines (*mushonga*). Njuzu has supplied this person with the skills, knowledge, and tools needed to become a potent and successful healer. The process can take a year or longer. Meanwhile those people left behind on land must participate, too. The captive's relatives and loved ones must sing traditional ritual songs to Njuzu to ensure the person's safety and return. Songs praising Njuzu are sung while kneeling and are accompanied by clapping. The song "Njuzu" by Zimbabwean singer and *mbira* musician Stella Chiweshe is available on her CD *Ambuya?* (Shanachie Records).

**Favored people:** Njuzu kidnaps and instructs both men and women.

**Manifestation:** Njuzu may appear as a mermaid or a beautiful woman.

**See also:** *Mermaid*

**Also known as:** Inkisi; Mpungo

**Origin:** Congo

Nkisi are Congolese spirits venerated by various African Diaspora traditions including:

- Cuba's *Reglas de Palo* ("Rules of Palo"), also known as *Reglas de Kongo*
- Brazil's *Candomblé Congo (Kimbanda)*, also known as *Candomblé Angola*

Nkisi include all kinds of spirits, divine ancestors, and elemental forces. Many Nkisi seem to correspond to Orishas, but whether or not they are the same, are distinct, or have influenced each other is subject to vigorous debate.

**See also:** *Centella Ndoki; Lucero; Mpungu; Orisha; Siete Rayos*

**Nodens**

## *The Cloud Maker; He Who Bestows Wealth*

**Also known as:** Nodons

**Origin:** Celtic

Nodens is a spirit of healing and the sea. Little is now known of him: what is known has largely been pieced together from archaeological evidence and inscriptions. Nodens may or may not be the same as Nuada. The Romans identified him with Mars, Mercury, Neptune, and Sylvanus, indicating his versatility and his inability to be pigeon-holed.

He was venerated at a temple complex and healing sanctuary on the banks of England's Severn River. Nodens specialized in healing eye ailments. The shrine seems to have contained a dormitory for incubating healing dreams and visions. Nodens is among those spirits whose name is invoked on curse tablets, an ancient magic ritual by which petitioners could request that a deity deliver vengeance or justice, depending upon perspective.

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*Arthur Machen, the influential Welsh author, mystic, and member of the esoteric society the Golden Dawn, described Nodens as "the god of the Great Deep or Abyss" in his controversial 1894 novella, The Great God Pan.*

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**Creature:** Dog (images found at his shrine are identifiable as deerhounds)

**Sacred site:** Nodens had a healing sanctuary/ temple in Lydney Park on the banks of the Severn River in Gloucestershire, England. He may also have had a shrine in Lancaster.

**Offerings:** Nodens was offered votive images of dogs.

**See also:** *Mercury; Neptune; Nuada; Sylvanus*

**Norns**

## **Origin:** Norse

The Norns are the Norse goddesses of fate and guardians of the World Tree. According to Norse mythology, they are the most powerful of all beings. The Norns determine the fate and destiny of all living beings.

Ygdrasil, the World Tree, is fed by the Well of Urd. The Norns live in a beautiful hall by the well and are Ygdrasil's caretakers. The Norns are spinning goddesses. Ygdrasil is the spindle on which they weave destiny. The Norns are repositories of all knowledge: past, present, and future.

The Norns operate together: they are a unit. Their name may derive from a reference to spinning techniques or twining. The three Norns are:

- **Urd**, eldest sister, Norn of the Past, who wraps the wool around the spindle
- **Verdandi**, Norn of the Present, who spins the wool
- **Skuld**, "Shall Be" youngest of the Norns, cuts the thread, terminating existence
- Skuld allegedly sometimes takes it upon herself to change benevolent fates bestowed by Urd and Verdandi. Skuld sometimes appears on lists of Valkyries.

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*The Norns figure prominently in old folk wisdom and modern popular entertainment. In the Faroe Islands, white spots that sometimes appear on fingernails and may indicate illness are known as Nornaspor ("tracks of the Norns"). The Norns are a force to be reckoned with in Neil Gaiman's novel American Gods. They appear in the manga/anime series Mythical Detective Loki Ragnarok where they retain their own names while in the manga/anime series Oh, My Goddess! Verdandi has transformed into the beautiful Belldandy.*

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**Manifestations:** The Norns manifest as women but may appear as mermaids. Sometimes Urd manifests as elderly, Verdandi as a woman in

her prime, and Skuld as a young girl but sometimes they appear to be of the same age. Skuld may manifest as a Valkyrie.

**Planet:** Moon

**Bird:** Swan

**Creature:** Spider

**Rune:** Nauthiz. The Norns are associated with runes in general and especially with a modern method of casting runes, possibly based on the traditional tarot three-card spread. Three runes are cast, each representing the voice of one Norn. The first rune describes the past, the second the present, and the third the most likely future outcome.

**See also:** *Fates; Moirae; Valkyries* and the Glossary entry for *Rune*

## Nu Kua

**Also known as:** Nu Wa; Nu Gua

**Origin:** China

Nu Kua, primordial female, was married to the primordial male, Fu Xi, but she was bored and lonely. To amuse herself, she crafted human-shaped dolls from Yellow River mud and breathed life into them. Those first humans regarded Nu Kua as their mother, and she took good care of them. However, the thought of spending eternity crafting endless people inspired her with more boredom. Nu Kua invented sexual intercourse so that people could reproduce all by themselves.

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*Nu Kua is central to the plot of the classic eighteenth century Chinese novel  
A Dream of Red Mansions.*

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Nu Kua arranged the world so that it would be safe for people. She controlled floods and taught people the arts of irrigation and dam-

building. When disaster struck and the sky was damaged, she smelted the sacred five-colored stones to repair the sky. She banished monsters, which were threatening the existence of humanity. She cut off the feet of the Great Tortoise and used them to support the four pillars of the universe lest they collapse. Nu Kua retired to the sky but will respond to petitions. She is invoked to provide personal fertility and has dominion over marital relations.

**Manifestation:** Nu Kua resembles a human female from the waist up. Below the waist she may be a dragon, snake, or snail. She is sometimes envisioned as a mermaid complete with fish tail.

**Attribute:** Compass

**See also:** *Damballah; Dragon Queens; Fu Xi; Khnum; Mermaid*

## Nuada

**Also known as:** Nuadu; Nuadu Argatlam; Nuada of the Silver Hand

**Origin:** Ireland

**Classification:** Tuatha Dé Danaan

Nuada was an early spirit king of the Tuatha Dé Danaan. He is a powerful seer, warrior, champion of Ireland and an ancestral spirit. He lost his hand in a battle, forcing him to relinquish his kingship, as the Tuatha Dé Danaan demand that their rulers be physically perfect and intact. Dian Cecht, divine smith of the Tuatha Dé, crafted a silver hand for him, earning him a new name, Nuada Argatlam (“Nuada of the Silver Hand”). Eventually Dian Cecht’s children, master healers, were able to reattach the severed hand, enabling Nuada to once again serve as king. Nuada eventually abdicated in favor of Lugh during the Tuatha’s battles with the Fomorians. Nuada may or may not be the same deity as Nodens. Their names are cognates and may have the same meaning.

**Attribute:** His magic sword is among Ireland’s sacred treasures.

**See also:** *Airmid; Dian Cecht; Lugh; Miach; Nodens; Ogma; Sulis; Tuatha Dé*

*Danaan The myth of Nuada's silver hand may serve as inspiration for what happened to the character Peter Pettigrew in the Harry Potter novels.*

## **Nure-Onna**

### *Wet Woman*

**Origin:** Japan

Nure-Onna, a water serpent spirit from coastal Northern Japan, sits on the beach during storms, washing her long hair. Her name means “wet woman” allegedly in reference to her hair. She is a feared spirit. Traditionally, fishermen and shore-dwellers dreaded her appearance. She is physically very powerful and may be able to flatten trees with her tail. She also swims extremely fast.

Nure-Onna's motivations are subject for speculation. Some say that she deliberately preys on people. Others suggest that she isn't particularly malevolent. She's just solitary and extremely goal-oriented. Nure-Onna comes ashore with a purpose. She wants to eat and she wants to wash her hair and she wants to be left alone. She becomes enraged and violent if disturbed, interrupted, or thwarted. Given the opportunity, just stay out of her way. Nure-Onna allegedly prefers a diet of entrails, presumably that of sea creatures, but some stories suggest that she has a taste for humans, too.

According to legend, Nure-Onna, like Yuki-Onna, sometimes carries an infant. She may ask you to hold her baby. You must do so gently and lovingly or the child will vanish and Nure-Onna will attack.

**Manifestation:** Nure-Onna has the head of a long-haired woman atop a very long serpentine body. Like a snake, she periodically sticks out her long tongue as if tasting the air. However, she is a shape-shifter who can take various forms, including that of a beautiful woman—in which shape, she may deliberately lure victims toward her. The tip-off to her identity is that her hair is always wet.

**See also:** *Yokai; Yuki-Onna*



## Nurikabe

**Origin:** Japan

Nurikabe is a spirit that manifests as a wall. Unlike regular walls, however, the Nurikabe is mobile and sentient. Some Nurikabe may serve as guardian spirits but others may just be malevolent. The Nurikabe mysteriously appears in the form of a tall wall in front of someone out walking late at night. One may not immediately realize that is not an ordinary wall. Guardian Nurikabe may seek only to divert those coming too close to whatever they are guarding. This type of Nurikabe also operates as an invisible wall.

Other Nurikabe, however, seem to target individuals:

- Turn and walk away, and the wall reappears before you. No matter which direction you turn, the wall appears in front of you.
- If you try to pass the wall, depending on the malevolence or intent of the spirit, it will either extend in all directions indefinitely or collapse on top of you, smashing you.

How do you escape Nurikabe? Keep your wits. Slap the bottom of the wall with a stick, and it will disappear.

A family of Nurikabe spirits operating under the name Blockhead are demon guardians in the video game *Okami*. Nurikabe now also names a popular Japanese number puzzle similar to Sudoku.

**See also:** *Yokai*

## Nut

*Mother of Stars; Queen of Heaven; Mother of the Deceased; She Who Holds a Thousand Souls; Mistress of All; She Who Protects*

**Also known as:** Nuit

**Pronounced:** *Noot*

**Origin:** Egypt

Nut is the spirit of the sky. Initially she cleaved to her brother/lover, Geb, spirit of Earth, but the two were forcibly separated by their father Shu (Air) who holds them apart. Geb and Nut's children are Isis, Osiris, Set, and Nephthys, and possibly Horus the Elder.

Although Nut and Geb are separated during the day, at night, Nut is permitted to descend to join her true love, hence darkness. Sometimes Nut slips a little bit closer to him during the daytime, too, resulting in dark, dull, stormy days.

Nut was envisioned as a huge sow. The stars are her piglets. She gives birth to them each night, and then swallows them up every morning. Every morning Nut births the sun, reabsorbing it into herself at dusk. Likewise, she receives the dead into herself. Stars were envisioned as the souls of the dead, lying amid Nut's bosom. Her associations with the dead caused her image to be frequently painted on the underside of sarcophagus lids.

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*Nut's image has served as a symbol for the women's Take Back the Night movement.*

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Nut is the queen of star knowledge and wisdom. She is the guardian of the dead, the lady of birth and resurrection.

**Favored people:** astrologers, astronomers

**Manifestation:** Nut appears in the sky as the Milky Way. She may also manifest as a cow, a sow or as a woman wearing a long, tight, blue dress covered with stars.

**Iconography:** Nut is most frequently depicted as a naked woman stretched across the sky, covered with stars. She is also depicted as a sow suckling piglets, a vulture, a hippo, or a cow.

**Attribute:** Ladder, water pot, ankh

**Color:** Dark blue

**Tree:** Sycamore fig

**See also:** *Horus the Elder; Isis; Nekhbet; Nephthys; Osiris; Set*

## Nyai Loro Kidul

**Also known as:** Gusti Kanjeng Ratu Kidul; Batu Loro Kidul

**Origin:** Java

Nyai Loro Kidul, Queen of the South Seas, lives in the Indian Ocean off Java's southern coast. She rules a luxurious underwater realm, where she is attended by a court of beautiful sea spirits, musicians, courtiers, and male guards whose green hair is encrusted with seashells and seaweed.

Before Islam, Nyai Loro Kidul may have been Queen of Java. (*Nyai* means "queen." Her many names consist of various royal titles. She expects to be addressed formally. Very close devotees address her as Grandmother.) She was the guardian of the sultan's palace in Jogjakarta and the spirit wife of Javanese kings who waded into her waters to request her guidance before doing anything important. Nyai Loro Kidul is also an ancestral spirit with many people claiming descent.

Various legends explain how Nyai Loro Kidul became Queen of the South Seas. One version envisions a Snow White scenario: she was once the exceptionally beautiful mortal daughter of the King of Java and possessed the proverbial, wicked, jealous step-mother. (Another version describes her as the most beautiful wife in the king's harem, preyed upon by other jealous wives.) Her bathwater was poisoned so that her entire body was covered in painful, disfiguring boils. No longer beautiful, she was banished from the palace. The princess wandered the wild forests until she reached Java's southern shores. A voice beckoned to her from the sea, telling her to jump in, be healed, and rule like a goddess. She plunged into the waters and emerged, more beautiful than ever, transformed into Nyai Loro Kidul. In the sixteenth century, Nyai Loro Kidul or an avatar returned to the palace to marry the King of Java. She taught him to shamanize and how to gain and maintain power over spirits.

Men, especially young, handsome ones, are cautioned not to wear

green bathing trunks when swimming along Java's southern coast lest Nyai Loro Kidul perceive that you belong to her. She may drown you and keep you in her realm.

Nyai Loro Kidul controls the Indian Ocean. She soothes and raises ocean waves. Devotees gather on her shores on Thursday evenings to seek guidance, offer petitions, and request prophetic dreams. She may be petitioned for virtually anything, from healing to romance to fertility, success, and prosperity. Nyai Loro Kidul is often accompanied by an entourage of Nymphs and Fairies. It's considered good manners to leave offerings for the entourage as well as their queen.

Nyai Loro Kidul sponsors the annual springtime harvest of edible swallow's nests (collected to make bird's nest soup.) Harvesting the nests is exceedingly dangerous: no nest is touched (at least not traditionally) before Nyai Loro Kidul is invoked, propitiated, and honored in rites including a gamelan orchestra.

**Manifestation:** Nyai Loro Kidul, renowned for her breathtaking beauty, manifests as a gorgeous woman with long black or green hair dressed in a gold embroidered sarong. She may also manifest as a mermaid or a water snake woman. Fish, shells, and coral cling to her. In some versions of her myth, Nyai Loro Kidul is beautiful and benevolent from the new moon until the full, but as the moon wanes, she transforms into a malevolent hag.

**Day:** Thursday

**Color:** Green—don't wear it; it belongs to her. Devotees traditionally refrain from wearing green, but her altar may be decorated in green, and she likes green offerings.

**Time:** She is honored with a spring festival in the fishing village Pelambuhan Ratu ("Queen's Harbor").

**Sacred site:** The Samudra Beach Hotel in Pelambuhan Ratu reserves a suite for Nyai Loro Kidul. She gave permission for the resort to be built, providing they reserved a room for her. Room 308 now serves as a shrine to the queen and may be visited.

**Altar:** Nyai Loro Kidul's altars resemble dressing tables: include a mirror

so she can see herself, plus a comb, a brush, and cosmetics (face powder, kohl, perfume). A true devotee may decorate an entire room for Nyai Loro Kidul, similar to the rooms dedicated to the Vodou lwa Ezili Freda Dahomey.

**Offerings:** Although offerings may be placed on an altar, especially if you're far away (Nyai Loro Kidul is perfectly capable of traveling wherever she will), it's considered good manners to bring offerings to her home, if at all possible. Offerings are laid at the ocean's edge, sometimes served on bamboo trays decorated with fresh flowers, shells, and streamers. Otherwise they may be respectfully tossed into the water. Offerings include bananas and other fruit, coconuts, rice, incense, bowls of fragrant flower petals, betel leaves, mirrors, cosmetics, clothing, and perfume.

**See also:** *Ezili Freda Dahomey; Fairy; Mermaids* and the Glossary entry for *Avatar*

## Nymph

**Origin:** Greece

*Nymph* is a blanket term encompassing female spirits of wild nature. Theoretically, naiads are freshwater Nymphs, dryads are tree Nymphs, and Nereids are ocean Nymphs.

The word *Nymph* derives from *numphe* meaning "bride" with the added implication that a girl is old enough to be considered sexually. (Hence the old-fashioned, derogatory pseudopsychological term: *nymphomaniac*.) There are countless Nymphs: Ovid wrote in his *Metamorphosis* that every tree harbors a Nymph. The same could be said for every spring, well, or mountain cave.

Nymphs are not trivial, minor, or marginal spirits. Many are profoundly powerful and were once widely venerated, some with organized cults. Shrines existed throughout Greece, often set up in a cave or beside a healing spring. Many were extremely popular and subjects of pilgrimages from great distances.

Veneration of Nymphs was ubiquitous throughout the Greek world

before Homer and continued into the Hellenistic era and beyond. They predate the Olympian pantheon, but many Nymphs possess close associations with Olympian deities, especially Artemis, Apollo, Dionysus, Hermes, and Persephone. (To some extent, Apollo and Artemis absorbed many of their functions, at least officially.) In general, Nymphs were spirits beloved by rural, rustic populations rather than the elite who frequented state-sponsored cults. In Homer's *Odyssey*, when Odysseus finally reaches his island home, he first kisses Earth and then prays to the local Nymphs. Only then does he invoke Athena.

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*Nymphs are possessing spirits: people prophesize accurately while possessed by Nymphs or under their influence. Nympholepsy, meaning "possession" or more accurately "seizure" by the Nymphs, was once perceived as a blessing, a positive source of divine inspiration and oracular ability. During the Christian era, nympholepsy was reassessed and considered wholly negative and diabolical. Nymphs were syncretized to evil spirits, including fallen angels and scary demons like the Lamiae and Gelloudes.*

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Nymphs were and are ideal deities for independent practitioners. Twenty-three thousand *astragaloi* (knucklebones used for fortune-telling and gaming) have been discovered in the Korykian Cave of the Nymphs at Delphi. It's been theorized that those who couldn't afford the expensive consultations at Apollo's official shrine consulted the Nymphs instead. Archaeological evidence suggests renewed interest in nymphs' ancient cave shrines during the third and fourth centuries CE. Jennifer Larson in her study, *Greek Nymphs* (Oxford University Press, 2001) theorizes that this resurrection of Pagan devotion may have been a response to Christianity.

Nymphs, in general, are associated with healing and prophecy. They are concerned with human reproduction overseeing fertility, pregnancy, childbirth, child care, and children. When the lives of Zeus and Dionysus were endangered as babies, they were entrusted to Nymphs who guarded, nursed, and raised them. (According to some myths, baby

Hephaestus was entrusted to Nereids, Nymphs of the sea.) Nymphs also provided funeral rituals for heroes.

Nymphs have dominion over beekeeping and honey production and may have taught humans the art. They are guardians of Earth, presiding over the harvesting of wood or quarrying for minerals, which allegedly cannot be safely done without their express permission.

Gifts of the Nymphs include musical talent, heightened sensitivity, ESP, psychic skills, prophetic ability, and eloquence. They express their displeasure by inflicting bad luck, infertility, impotence, and mental disorders, including insanity, depression, and the inability to find joy. Nymphs are sometimes blamed for drownings in rivers, springs, and wells. (Their modern descendents, the Neraida are still held responsible.)

Nymphs may be invoked for anything under their dominion. They are traditionally honored by women before giving birth as a protective measure and then honored afterwards in thanks. If problems exist for mother or baby, the Nymphs may be invoked for help and remedies.

**Favored people:** Beekeepers, diviners and fortune-tellers, midwives, artisans, makers of artisanal cheese and olive oil, those who revel in nature and fight to preserve it

**Manifestation:** In general, Nymphs appear as beautiful women, but many are skilled shape-shifters. Be prepared for surprises.

**Creatures:** Bees, lions

**Trees:** Black poplar, plane, oak

**Sacred sites:** Mountains, freshwater springs, caves—especially caves containing natural springs and those frequented by bees, bears, or other animals (Greece possesses countless caves with springs)

**Time:** During the ancient Sicilian festival of the Nymphs, people celebrated all night by going from house to house, offering sacrifices, drinking (not water!), and dancing around images of the Nymphs in a precursor of Mardi Gras and Carnival.

**Offerings:** Traditionally served outside, offerings may be placed under shady trees, inside caves, on the shores of springs, or even tossed inside.

Offer libations of milk, water, olive oil, or wine. Traditional offerings include honey, aromatic herbs, incense, ex-votos (milagros), flowers, fruit, coins, dolls, terra cotta or carved images of Nymphs, pins, mirrors, jewelry, ornaments, masks. Votive offerings also include musical instruments (syrinxes, whistles, double flutes) and divination devices including coins, oil lamps, and dice.

**See also:** *Achelous; Apollo; Aristaeus; Artemis; Dionysus; Fairy; Gello; Hephaestus; Hermes; Kura; Lamia; Naiad; Neraida; Nereid; Oinone; Persephone; Silen; Zeus*

## Nyx

**Also known as:** Nox

**Origin:** Greek

Nyx, Goddess of Night, is the primordial Creatrix. In the beginning, according to one Greek myth, there was Chaos—the Void who brought forth Nyx, her daughter and eldest child. Chaos had more children (no partner necessary; she is a solitary conceiver) including a son Erebus (Darkness or Shadow) with whom Nyx united and conceived a daughter, Hemera (Day). Nyx shares a house with Hemera, although they never see each other: when one comes home through the back door, the other leaves through the front.

That's one myth. In an Orphic myth, Nyx existed from the beginning in the guise of a great black-winged bird hovering in endless darkness. No creation was necessary. Nyx was always here. Eventually this solitary bird laid an egg, which cracked in half: Eros, the beautiful gold-winged Spirit of Love emerged. One half of the eggshell became Gaia, the Earth, while the other half became Uranus, the Sky. Nyx is thus considered the all-powerful ancestress of all. Even Zeus fears her.

Depending on the version of the myth, Nyx may also be the mother of Nemesis, the Moirae (a.k.a. the Fates), the Hesperides, Hypnos (Sleep), Morpheus (Dream), Eris (Discord), Thanatos (Death), and Momus (Ridicule).



**Manifestation:** A woman wearing a black veil studded with stars

**Time:** Night

**Bird:** Owl

**Flowers:** Poppies, especially opium poppies

**Sacred sites:** She was venerated at the sacred walnut tree of Benevento, Italy, alongside Diana and Proserpina.

**See also:** *Diana; Eris; Eros; Fates (1); Gaia; Hesperides; Hypnos; Lampades; Moirae; Morpheus; Nemesis; Proserpina; Thanatos*

# O

## **Oba**

**Also known as:** Obba

**Classification:** Orisha

Oba, beautiful Yoruba river spirit, is overshadowed by other more famous river orishas like Oshun, Oya, and Yemaya, who began her incarnation as the orisha of the Ogun River. Being overshadowed is the central theme of Oba's sole surviving myth.

Oba is Shango's first wife, a position of rank and authority. One woman is never enough for Shango, a situation that was acceptable to Oba providing that his other women were properly subordinate. After all, kings have harems. Shango's passionate love affairs with Oya and Oshun, however, were just too much. Shango treated them like queens. As anyone familiar with those two orishas knows, neither is subordinate to anyone.

Oba was puzzled and frustrated. She saw the passion, desire, and love in Shango's eyes for Oya and Oshun, and she wanted it for herself. One of her rivals played a nasty trick on the sincere, gullible Oba, explaining that the key to Shango's heart was a magical culinary ingredient. Whenever she cooked for Shango, this orisha said, she sliced off one of her ears and fed it to him. Oba was dubious but the orisha insisted that it was true; furthermore, the ears automatically regenerated, she said, pointing at her own two ears.

Oba was desperate and ready to try anything. When Shango finally arrived at her compound, having torn himself away from other lovers to meet his husbandly duties, he noticed the blood-stained bandage around Oba's head but didn't ask questions. When presented with the grisly appetizer, her severed ear, he was so appalled and disgusted, he fled from Oba's embrace, never to return.

Which of Oba's rivals played the trick? No one likes to say and there is much speculation. Perhaps they colluded together. (Of course, only one of those orishas is a famous chef.) Regardless, do not petition or make offerings to Oba simultaneously with Oshun and Oya. All three should be kept separate.

This myth may give the wrong impression: Oba is not submissive, stupid, or passive. She is an extremely competent, independent market woman involved in commerce and politics. Oba is a powerful orisha who can provide for her devotees. She is Shango's first wife because she is beautiful, independently wealthy, and smart. In attempting to assert her rights, she was outfoxed by the more devious Oshun or Oya. Love is Oba's Achilles' heel.

Oba is venerated as a goddess of love in Brazil but considered a guardian of prostitutes in parts of Africa. She is invoked to punish those who exploit loving hearts. Oba is the orisha of lakes and ponds. Offerings may be placed on a home altar or brought to the lakeshore and presented there. Oba is syncretized to Saint Rita.

**Favored people:** Faithful wives, prostitutes, those who would risk everything for love, as well as women married to abusive, neglectful, and/or cheating spouses

**Iconography:** It can be difficult to find images of Oba but they exist, especially in Brazil where she is envisioned as a shapely, bejeweled woman with a bandaged head. She may be represented by images of Saint Rita, although this emphasizes Oba's identity as suffering wife, not sexy love goddess. She may be represented on an altar by a jewelry box or music box.

**Element:** Water

**Colors:** Red, white

**Day:** Saturday

**Sacred site:** The Oba River, Nigeria

**Offerings:** Flowers, candles, wine, water taken from a lake or pond (don't give her spring water or rainwater). If you would cook for her, she

likes beans with onions and shrimp.

**See also:** *Orisha; Oshun; Oya; Shango; Yemaya*

## Obake

**Origin:** Japan

Obake is a ghost but specifically a vengeful or restless ghost. *Obake* literally means “Honorable Transforming Thing.” (*O* is an honorific, a term of respect.) Most Obake either suffered while alive and now thirst for revenge or were dishonored in death and are now angry. They return to haunt scenes of their death or humiliation. An Obake may cause harm to the living because they deserve it or just because the living person was in the wrong place at the wrong time.

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*Obake is also used as a loose blanket term for any kind of supernatural being, not just vengeful ghosts. Thus Yokai, Yurei, and Mononoke may all be considered Obake.*

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Some Obake never received adequate funeral rites and so linger on Earth in a state of hostile frustration rather than transitioning peacefully to the next realm. Some demonstrate individual personalities and names, but many are just anonymous, harmful presences. For example, the sea’s dangers are increased by the vast numbers of drowned sailors’ souls it contains. Not to worry: cats can control these Obake if kept aboard ship. Tricolored cats, traditionally Japanese lucky cats, are especially good at keeping boats free of harmful Obake *and* rats.

**See also:** *Ghost; Goryo; Hone-Onna; Maneki Neko; Mononoke; Neko-Mato; Onryo; Yokai; Yurei*

## Obatala

## *King of the White Cloth*

**Also known as:** Oxala

**Classification:** Orisha

Obatala, orisha of creation and healing, is the calm, cool spirit of serenity—a peacemaker and lawgiver. Obatala is the Just Judge, a spirit of righteous kindness and justice. He is gentle, wise, and incredibly patient.

Obatala was entrusted with crafting human bodies. The Supreme Creator breathes life into the forms Obatala crafts. The central tragedy of Obatala's myth is that once, having drunk too much palm wine, Obatala either became careless or overly creative. He began crafting images that did not exactly correspond to the blueprint the Creator gave him. Obatala invented blindness and various birth defects.

In consequence, Obatala's priests and devotees never drink palm wine. Obatala is responsible for the well-being of those considered his children: albinos, the blind, lame, or mute, and those possessing anything classified as a birth defect, whether visible or not.

Obatala is present in cool, white substances. Obatala owns everything white, including bones. The following contains his essence:

- Cascarilla powder (powdered white eggshell for magical and ritual use)
- Cocoa butter
- Cotton
- Kaolin clay
- Shea butter
- Snail slime, the moisture trail left by snails
- Pure white cloth

Obatala encourages his devotees to maintain their cool, just like he does. He favors those who are calm and collected, or at least striving to be. Bad tempers, rude outbursts, impatience, and unpleasant attitudes tend to distance him. (He won't do anything mean to you; he'll just stay away.) Obatala is invoked to help with anger and rage management by

those who are sincere. (He'll know.) Obatala is also invoked to calm tempers and situations so that clear-headed judgments may be formed or obtained.

- Obatala is invoked for favorable legal judgments and help with legal matters.
- Ask him to encourage others (like judges) to consider you with mercy and compassion.
- He is invoked to calm those who are angry with you, especially dangerous people.
- Obatala is syncretized to Jesus Christ.

**Manifestation:** Obatala is usually envisioned as an androgynous being with long white hair, wearing pure white garments.

**Color:** White

**Animals:** White elephants, snails

**Bird:** White doves

**Metals:** Silver and white metals (white gold, platinum, titanium)

**Day:** Sunday

**Sacred sites:** Obatala lives atop mountain peaks, especially those always dusted with white snow. Offerings may be delivered to him there.

**Offerings:** Obatala drinks water, milk, and coconut milk. Do not give him palm wine. He accepts white rice, coconuts, bananas, white bread, white cornbread, white sugar, and white flowers. Extravagant offerings include charms or jewelry crafted from some of his more expensive metals.

**See also:** *Mami Waters; Ochossi; Orisha; Oxala*

**Oberon**

*King of Shadows*

**Also known as:** Auberon

**Classification:** Fairy, Elf

According to William Shakespeare, Oberon is King of the Fairies. Oberon and his consort Titania star in Shakespeare's romantic comedy *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. Oberon's origins are mysterious. There's debate as to how much is literary invention and how much is based on ancient folklore.

- Oberon may derive from Alberich.
- He may be the son of Morgan le Fay.
- He may derive from now-forgotten English folk traditions that were known in Shakespeare's time.

Regardless of origin, Oberon is now an important spirit, beloved by many, especially because it's rare to find a named male Fairy. He is a trickster and so is a little feared, too: no one really wants to be on the receiving end of practical jokes. Oberon guides those who have a vision and a mission. He is the patron of knights and paladins. *A Midsummer Night's Dream* concludes with Oberon and Titania offering blessings of true love, fidelity, happiness, fertility, and protection.

**Iconography:** Oberon is portrayed as a human-size Fairy or a tiny flower Fairy. Artists who have created his portrait include William Blake, Richard Dadd, Henry Fuseli, and Sir Joseph Noel Paton.

**Offerings:** Oberon would presumably be pleased to receive Bell's Oberon wheat ale; alternatively give him flowers, candles, and other potable spirits.

**See also:** *Alberich; Elf; Fairy; Fairy, Flower; Morgan Le Fay; Titania*

## Obizuth

In The Testament of Solomon, a magical text attributed to the wizard king and dated between the second century BCE and the second century CE, a spirit identifying herself as Obizuth appears to King Solomon. "I

am a fierce spirit of myriad names and shapes,” she tells him. Obizuth explains that she is nocturnal and travels around the world searching for women in childbirth so she can strangle their babies.

She identifies the spirit that controls and defeats her (essentially her antidote) as Afarol, another name for Raphael. Obizuth promises to cause no harm wherever she sees his name. Raphael may also be directly invoked to protect against her. The name Afarol was once popularly engraved on amulets worn by women and children.

**Manifestation:** The Testament of Solomon describes Obizuth as being in darkness although her glance is bright and cheerful. She tosses her long, loose hair wildly.

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*Although she may be a distinct spirit, Obizuth is generally considered to be Lilith, operating under one of her myriad names. If so, The Testament of Solomon contains the oldest known written reference to Lilith as baby slayer.*

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**See also:** *Karina; Lilith; Raphael; Solomon, King; Umm es Subyan*

## Oceanids

**Also known as:** Okeanids

The Oceanids, Nymphs of the Sea, are daughters of Oceanus and Tethys. The ocean is redolent of fertility and so there are at least three thousand Oceanids, although not all their names are familiar or known. They are beautiful women of the sea. The Oceanids or at least some of them were Persephone’s companions prior to her abduction. The Oceanids are *not* vampiric mermaids but benevolent ones who protect mariners. They may be invoked for assistance en masse as needed. The goddess Calypso is sometimes classified as an Oceanid.

**See also:** *Calypso; Circe; Mermaid; Ner eids; Nymphs; Oceanus; Persephone; Tethys; Vampire Mermaid*



## Oceanus

**Also known as:** Okeanos

**Origin:** Greece

**Classification:** Titan

In one Greek creation myth, Oceanus, not Gaia, is the source of life, the origin of *everything*. Even in the more familiar myth with Gaia, Oceanus is the source of *all* waters, salt and sweet: in ancient Greek cosmologies, Earth's fresh water flowed from Oceanus' horn. When Zeus assumed command, he did not banish Oceanus with the rest of the Titans. Oceanus flows around the outermost edge of Earth; he is the boundary and threshold between our world and whatever is beyond.

**Manifestation:** Oceanus is the ocean but also appears in the form of an old man with shaggy white hair and a beard. He has bull's horns, and may have a lobster claw for a hand.

**Iconography:** Oceanus often resembles the Green Man but with a seaweed beard rather than leaves.

**Consort:** Tethys

**Attribute:** Horn

**Creature:** Dolphin

**See also:** *Amphitrite; Green Man; Ocean ids; Tethys; Titans; Zeus*

## Ochossi

**Also known as:** Oxossi (Brazil)

**Classification:** Orisha; Caboclo

Ochossi is Orisha of the Hunt, but like that other hunting deity, Artemis, he is so much more. Ochossi's hunting skills indicate his ability to provide for his devotees. *Hunting* is also interpreted metaphorically. Ochossi is a sentinel, warrior, guardian, and law enforcement officer. As

a spirit of justice, he hunts down malefactors.

Ochossi's name derives from a root word for *secret*. Some translate his name as "Left-Handed Sorcerer." He is a great magician who knows *everything* about the powers of the forest and botanical power in general. Ochossi makes deadly arrow poison *and* its antidote. He is a master healer, when he chooses to be. Ochossi's arrows *never* miss their mark.

Ochossi lives in the forest with his brothers Elegba and Ogun, the divine ironworker who forges and blesses his tools. (Yoruba arrows traditionally have iron heads. 19<sup>th</sup> century British explorers described Yoruba archers as Africa's finest.) Together they are the hard-working magician-spirits classified as Santeria's Warriors. Sometimes Logunedé lives with them, too.

Most Orishas are envisioned as Africans; Ochossi often manifests as a Native American hunter. Because anthropologists were unable to locate branches of his tradition in Nigeria, many assumed incorrectly that Ochossi was an Indian addition to the pantheon. Some *Umbandistas* consider Oxossi to be exclusively a Caboclo, not African.

Ketu, the Yoruba kingdom where Ochossi was first venerated, was totally decimated by the slave trade. His tradition is not found in Africa because it did not survive, not because it didn't exist. Ochossi's priests were enslaved and transported: his tradition ultimately *only* survived in the West. Ochossi is patron of the Maroons, escaped slaves who created communities in remote, heavily wooded areas.

Ochossi is Obatala's scout and spyboy; his chief of surveillance. Ochossi owns prisons, places where people are caught and trapped. He has dominion over confinement, especially solitary. He is petitioned to liberate from prison and to prevent imprisonment. As a spirit of justice, he may be invoked to capture and imprison someone, too.

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*Those who fear incarceration may invite Ochossi's presence with an altar dedicated to him: invite him to please live in your house so that you don't have to live in his (i.e. jail).*

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- Ochossi is syncretized to Saint Sebastian (and also occasionally to Saints George and Onofrio)
- Oxossi is the leader of the Fourth Line of the Seven Lines of Umbanda
- He is the patron of Rio de Janeiro.

**Manifestation:** Ochossi may manifest as a traditional African or Native American hunter. He may also appear in modern dress, but there will be some sort of clue as to his true identity: a necklace of teeth or bow-and-arrow cufflinks, for instance.

**Attribute:** Bow and arrows, handcuffs, antlers

**Spirit allies:** Considering he is a solitary hunter, he has many allies: Ogun, Osain, Obatala, Eshu Elegbara, Erinle, Oshun, Logunedé, Jurema

**Day:** Depending on tradition, Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, or Thursday, as well as the fourth day of each month.

**Numbers:** 3, 4, 7, 11 (again depending upon tradition)

**Feast:** 20 January, Feast of Saint Sebastian

**Month:** January

**Colors:** Usually brown and lilac, but different traditions associate him with other colors, including blue, green, teal, yellow, or red.

**Plants:** Brambles and other thorny, spiky thickets

**Ritual:** Offerings for Ochossi are traditionally left at the thresholds (doors or gates) of police stations, prisons, or any other building perceived as a house of incarceration, but make sure that this action does not contribute to arrest, capture, or incarceration. (The goal of working with spirits is to improve your life, not increase your problems.)

**Altar:** Decorate with antlers, horns, feathers, and animal print fabrics. Antlers may be wrapped in silk. Offerings are sometimes placed on a cloth or mat on the floor.

**Offerings:** Ochossi has simple taste: he likes roasted peanuts, trail mix, honey, jerky, and corn cooked with coconut. Stir honey and cornmeal

into a glass of milk for him; offer anisette or cachaça plus tobacco products, handcuffs, manacles, traps, or bows and arrows. A lavish gift is a ritual bow and arrow made of brass or fine metal.

**See also:** *Artemis; Caboclo; Erinle; Eshu Elegbara; Jurema; Logunedé; Mai Dawa; Obatala; Ogun; Orisha; Osain; Oshun; Seven African Powers*

## Odin

*The All-Father; Glory Bearer; The Raven Lord; Master of the Gallows*

**Also known as:** Odhinn; Wotan; Woden; Old One Eye

Odin is the leader of the Aesir spirits, the Lord of Asgard. Devotion to Odin once spread across the entire Germanic and Norse world. Spirit of war, wisdom, and death, Odin is lord of ecstasy, shamanism, and esoteric wisdom. He is a patron of poetry, magic, and the heroic dead.

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*The word god (in German, Gott) may derive from one of Odin's epithets.*

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He may be a deified hero and ancestor. Myths—for instance the *Volsung Saga*, source material for Richard Wagner's *Ring Cycle*—describe Odin as the ancestor of heroes. He is the progenitor of royal families. England's Saxon kings claimed descent from him.

Odin loves women, knowledge, and hospitality. He is a spiritual seeker himself. His thirst for occult wisdom is endless. He willingly traded one of his eyes for a mouthful of water from the Well of Wisdom and Knowledge.

Freya is described as his first teacher. She taught him charms and spell-casting, but ultimately his quest for occult wisdom is solitary. Freya whispered to him of the runes, lost in the misty realm of the Vanir. Determined to apprehend, comprehend, and master them, Odin pierced himself and then hung for nine days and nights in shamanic ritual on the

World Tree. He died a shamanic death in order to be reborn as the runemaster. The Tarot card *The Hanged Man* may depict this ritual, not a literal hanging.

Odin's curiosity has no bounds and he refuses to be constrained by boundaries of any kind. Following Balder's death, Odin went to live among the Saami. He refuses to be bound by gender restrictions. Odin is curious and respectful toward what was traditionally considered women's magic. He is not ashamed to learn from women.

- Freya taught *seior* to Odin, although men historically did not practice this style of prophesy, considered a woman's art.
- When Odin gathers herbs and roots for healing, he dresses as a woman.

Odin seems to genuinely enjoy Loki's company. He is a trickster, too. Although acknowledged as the All-Father and head of the pantheon, Odin was never the most beloved spirit, not by a long shot. Freyr, Freya, Frigg, and especially Thor were the spirits adored by the masses. Odin was favored by a specialized crowd: he is the patron of occultists, shamans, and poets (skalds).

Odin had too many associations with death to be truly beloved. He was once offered large-scale animal and human sacrifices. As Master of the Gallows, his sacrificial victims were hung from tree branches. Odin as war lord sponsors elite shamanic warriors: berserkers and wolf shirts, not rank-and-file soldiers.

Half the battlefield's dead spend eternity in his hall, Valhalla. (The other half live with Freya.) Odin's dead warriors will fight under his command at the apocalyptic battle of Ragnarok. He may choose which soldiers die on the battlefield specifically in order to induct them into his private ghost army.

Odin is the Divine Rider. He rides where he will, all over Earth but also over the Milky Way and through the sky, often leading a procession of spirits, ghosts, heroes, and heroines. His passing is signaled by storms and powerful winds. This parade of spirits is known as the Wild Hunt. Odin is the primary Wild Hunter. Sometimes he leads the Wild Hunt alone; sometimes with a female co-leader. In the guise of Chief Hunter, Odin was sometimes identified with the devil in Christian medieval

Europe.

Odin bestows wealth and success, when he chooses. He will help find missing treasure. He can heal virtually any disorder or illness—again, *if he* chooses. Odin is extremely generous to those he loves and considers his friends, but terrible, merciless and vindictive toward his enemies.

Odin adores poets and writers and so, appropriately, he inspires many novelists:

- Mr. Odwin is pivotal in Douglas Adams' 1988, *The Long Dark Tea-Time of the Soul*.
- A mastermind called Wednesday stars in Neil Gaiman's 2001 novel, *American Gods*.
- Old One-Eye tutors the heroine of Joanne Harris' 2008 novel, *Runemarks*.

**Favored people:** Travelers, traders, warriors, occultists, shamans, poets, writers, those who capture his fancy

**Manifestation:** Master of disguise and infiltration, Odin wanders Earth incognito dressed as a shabby, dusty traveler. Those who are gracious to him are rewarded. He answers to many names: allegedly over one hundred seventy for his many paths and identities. Odin is a one-eyed bearded, white-haired man, dressed in a wide-brimmed traveler's hat that hides his missing eye. Alternatively, he wears dusty traveler's clothes and a black hooded cloak. The clue to his identity tends to be that missing eye, although it is not always immediately apparent. He may travel in the form of a bird.

**Iconography:** Tarot images of the Magician and Hanged Man are used to represent Odin.

**Attributes:** Magic wand, traveler's staff, a noose, Gungnir is the name of the dwarf-crafted Spear of Odin, which *never* misses its mark and always returns to him.

**Consort:** Frigg is his official wife, but Odin is a sensualist who loves women. He is associated with many female spirits, even Saint Lucy.

**Day:** Wednesday (Woden's Day)

**Numbers:** 3, 9

**Birds:** Ravens—Odin’s own ravens, *Hugin* and *Munin*, “Thought” and “Memory,” fly all over Earth each morning, returning with news, gossip, and secrets to whisper in his ear. Ravens are resolutely diurnal birds: a raven’s cry at night signals the approach of the Wild Hunt.

**Animals:** Wolves, snakes, bear, horses

**Mount:** Sleipnir, his magical eight-legged stallion has teeth engraved with runes.

**Hall:** Odin has three residences. The most famous is his hall Valhalla.

**Runes:** Ansuz and Gar are among the runes associated with Odin.

**Plant:** Many plants associated with Odin have psychoactive and/or potentially dangerous properties. These are but a few:

- *Amanita muscaria*, which allegedly appears wherever his horse’s froth touches Earth
- Elecampane (*Inula helenium*), also known as Elfwort
- Juniper (German folk name: Wotan’s Rod)
- Monkshood (*Aconitum napellus*), also known as: Odin’s hat
- Wotan’s Herb (*Heliotropium europaeum*)

**Time:** In Iceland, the twelve days of Christmas are called Odin’s Yule Host.

**Offerings:** Odin eats only sacred meat: there’s little that’s material that you can give him, perhaps unique and powerful occult tools or something that you’ve handcrafted. He adores poetry and a good story. He has a tendency to set people on quests but *he’ll tell you*. What Odin really craves is knowledge: tell him something he doesn’t know.

**See also:** *Aesir; Angerboda; Balder, Berchta, Dwarf; Freya; Freyr; Frigg; Gaude, Frau; Hel; Herta; Hulda; Loki; Mercury; Mimir; Norns; Rosmerta; Sinnann; Thor; Valkyries; Vanir; Wacholder, Frau; Wild Hunt; and the Glossary entries for Rune and Shaman*

## Ogboinba

**Origin:** Ijaw (Nigeria)

When Woyengi created people, she asked them to name their destiny. Whatever they requested was granted, the downside being that no changes could be made. All must be forever content with their choices.

- Ogboinba's sister sought to have many children.
- Ogboinba wished for magical powers.

Each got *exactly* what they asked for, no more, no less. Ogboinba could heal the sick, foretell the future and communicate with plants and animals. As she grew older, however, she began to long for children. Ogboinba decided to return to Woyengi and ask to be re-created so that she would be fertile and bear children, too.

She passed through seven kingdoms during her unspeakably arduous journey. *Everyone* she encountered warned that her quest would lead to death and disaster. Ogboinba, aware that she needed as much power as possible, stole different powers in each kingdom to add to her own. Yet even this added power was insufficient. Her request to change and expand her destiny was met with a reaction similar to that encountered by Oliver Twist when he dared ask for more.

To say the least, Woyengi was not sympathetic. Perceiving Ogboinba's request as insubordination, Woyengi erupted in rage so frightening that brave, intrepid Ogboinba fled, magically jumping into the eyes of a pregnant woman, which is where she remains.

This Ijaw myth is a cautionary tale: wise, happy, content women choose motherhood, not magic. Ogboinba is goddess of second chances. Although she fled from Woyengi's rage, as long as there are pregnant women on Earth, Ogboinba is present, too. She is traditionally invoked for fertility *and* for assistance acquiring magical skills. She is an ambivalent spirit: if you request help with fertility, simultaneously ask her to protect you and your children. Request that she be your guardian *and* your provider. Regardless of what you ask from her, if there are children or pregnant women in the home, request her blessings and protection specifically for them.



**Offerings:** Build her an altar displaying her desires: magic tools and doll babies.

**See also:** *Woyengi*

## Ogma

*Sun-Face*

**Also known as:** Ogmios; Oghma

**Origin:** Celtic

**Classification:** Tuatha Dé Danaan

Ogma, Lord of Eloquence and Literature, is credited with inventing Ogham script, a system of writing incorporating notches and strokes traditionally cut into wood or stone. It may also be used for divination and to communicate with Ogma. Ogma is a poet and a warrior. He is skilled in warcraft. His name appears on curse tablets intended to provide justice or to enforce curses. The Romans identified Ogma with Hercules.

**Manifestation:** Ogma is described as an old but powerful bald, sunburned man yet he is simultaneously a strong-man akin to Heracles.

**Iconography:** Ogma leads a band of happy men attached to him by golden chains linking their ears to his tongue.

**Spirit allies:** His father, the Dagda. Ogma forms a triad with the Dagda and Lugh.

**Attributes:** Bow, club

**Planet:** Sun

**See also:** *Ailinn; Dagda; Heracles; Lugh; Nuada*

## Ogun

**Also known as:** Ogou; Gu; Ogoun; Ogu; Ogum

**Classification:** Lwa, Orisha

Ogun is the West African spirit of iron. He is iron. Hold a knife or horseshoe in your hand and you hold Ogun. Ogun is the patron of metalworkers who traditionally also serve as shamans, sorcerers, healers, and ritual leaders. Ogun is also the patron of anyone who works with metal in any capacity, including jewelers, surgeons, law enforcement officers, chefs, cab and bus drivers, soldiers ... the list is endless. Veneration of Ogun is at least as old as the Iron Age, which in Africa began approximately 500 BCE.

According to Yoruba creation myth, Ogun led the orishas to Earth and helped them survive and adjust. He cuts paths through all thickets and obstacles with his machete. Ogun is a culture hero: he taught people ironworking as well as magical and spiritual rituals, hunting and warfare. Although not a spirit of agriculture, Ogun is the one who first crafted the tools that make agriculture possible.

Ogun is considered with ambivalence. He is a healer who also causes violent death: knives, guns, swords, guillotines, and tanks are but a few of his tools. He is also a patriarch who protects orphans and houses the homeless. Ogun is venerated throughout Western Africa and appears in virtually every African-Diaspora tradition.

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*Ogun hates liars. Thus there is a Nigerian tradition of swearing oaths on iron in the same manner that oaths are sworn on the Bible elsewhere. Should the oath be broken, Ogun will execute justice. He expresses anger through "accidents" involving metal, including car crashes, train wrecks, guns, knives...*

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Ogun is the spirit of technology: in recent years, he has become associated with computers and any type of technology, no matter how new and innovative, that utilizes metal. Simultaneously, Ogun

epitomizes the solitary forest-dwelling witch-doctor. He knows the magical secrets of metalworking but, living in close proximity with hunters and herbalists, has access to other branches of occult wisdom. In modern Vodou, Ogun is among the spirits most closely identified with transformational magic and loupsgaroux. In his guise as magician, he is often paired with Ezili Dantor.

Ogun is an artist, a master craftsman, a healer, and a workaholic. He epitomizes creativity and terrible destruction. He causes disasters and protects against them. Ogun is the spirit of birth and death. He radiates fertility and creative energy. The knife that kills also cuts the umbilical cord. He is the hoe that opens Earth to bury a body.

- Place two pieces of metal together and anoint with red palm oil to summon Ogun.
- Offerings are traditionally left for him by railroad tracks.
- Tie a red ribbon around the base of a vehicle's rearview mirror to invoke his aid.

Ironworking evolved from spiritual traditions centered on women's menstrual mysteries. Ogun has a complex relationship with blood. *Do not* make offerings to him if you are bleeding, whether from menstruation, because you cut yourself shaving, or any other reason. *Do not* approach him.

Ogun is invoked to heal diseases affecting blood, including AIDS, leukemia, and sickle-cell anemia. He is invoked for safety and success before surgery. He also heals infertility and erectile dysfunction. Request his protection from crime and criminals. He finds employment for devotees.

- Ogun is usually syncretized to Saint James the Greater but may also be associated with Michael Archangel and Saints Andrew, Martin Caballero, and George. Venezuelan Espiritismo identifies Ogun with Saint Peter and John the Baptist.
- He leads the Third Line of the Seven Lines of Umbanda spirits.

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*Ogun is a tireless worker at the forge, in the bedroom, and on behalf of his devotees. He never rests.*

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**Favored people:** Ogun is patron of all those who work with metal, including miners, tattoo artists, circumcisers, construction workers, jewelers, smiths, steelworkers, butchers, surgeons, drivers, pilots, and railroad workers.

**Manifestations:** A big, virile, powerful, handsome, charismatic man with fiery radiant eyes. Ogun is also present in metal. When you touch metal, you touch him. He may wear green or palm fronds or be accompanied by dogs.

**Attributes:** A machete, a three-legged iron cauldron, traditionally wrapped in chains and filled with iron implements, including tools, spikes, nails, and knives

**Emblem:** A sword driven into Earth

**Spirit allies:** Eshu Elegbara, Ochossi, Erinle, Osain. Ogun *adores* Oshun. Relationships with Yemaya, Oya, and Ezili Dantor can be positive or tense. Some, although not all, traditions consider Ogun and Shango to be bitter rivals who should be kept far from each other.

**Colors:** Red, black, sometimes green, sometimes red and white (the colors of heated iron), or blue and red (the colors of the Haitian flag)

**Numbers:** 3, 7

**Day:** Wednesday (sometimes Tuesday)

**Planets:** Mars, Earth (because iron is mined from Earth)

**Creatures:** Dogs, snakes especially black mambas and black-necked cobras, snails (snails' liquid is traditionally used to heal circumcision wounds), crocodiles, and red roosters

**Mount:** He rides a spotted hyena (symbolically indicating his power)

over witchcraft, with which hyenas are closely associated in Africa) or a beautiful white stallion.

**Trees:** Akoko (*Newboldia laevis*), palm, calabash, camwood, eucalyptus

**Plant:** *Cyperus esculentus* called *Espada de Ogum* in Brazil and yellow nutsedge in English, among the earliest cultivated edible plants. Also garlic, rosemary, black pepper, chilé peppers, and many medicinal herbs.

**Spice:** Grains of Paradise (*Aframomum melegueta*) which has culinary and magical uses

**Festival:** 25 July in Plaine du Nord, near Cap Haitien, Haiti

**Altars:** Ogun's altars are usually maintained with discretion in a cabinet or closet. An anvil or cauldron can serve as his altar or a repository for offerings. Make sure it's a three-legged cauldron, not two. Think about it and you'll know why.

**Offerings:** Red candles, cigars, rum, palm wine, whisky, aguardiente, or other alcoholic beverage—especially overproof rum—salt, dragon's blood incense, metal, chains, metal tools, railroad spikes. Fill a cauldron with found pieces of metal, miniature ritual tools, full-size tools, toy cars, planes or other vehicles (make sure they're metal, not plastic). If you cook for him, he likes his food spicy: add *lots* of hot peppers or hot sauce. Dress offerings with red palm oil. Offer roasted yams, red beans, red rice, mangos, and/or meat.

**See also:** *Bahlindjo; Bizango Spirits; Erinle; Ezili Dantor; Ezili Freda Dahomey; Logunedé; Loup-Garou; Lwa; Marinette; Michael; Ochossi; Orisha; Orisha Oko; Oshun; Oya; Padilha, Maria; Petro; Rada; Sarabanda; Seven African Powers; Shango; Yemaya;* and the Glossary entry for *Shaman*

The various paths of Ogun may be understood as different aspects of one Ogun or as several closely related spirits. In Haitian Vodou, the Ogou family of spirits is known as the Nago nation and mediates between Rada and Petro. The following are but a few of his many paths:

**OGUN BALENDJO**

**Also known as:** Balendyo

Ogun Balendjo, sacred physician, epitomizes the healing powers of iron, both in terms of tools but also in terms of the body's iron content. Ogun Balendjo is patron of physicians as warriors against disease. He may also be invoked when battling against the medical industry. Invoke his aid if you are anemic.

Ogun Balendjo is the watery aspect of Ogun, spirit of the Ogun River. Forge steam and water are traditionally used to heal illness and impotence. Ogun Balendjo presides over water heated for healing purposes, like steam baths, especially if intensely heated because he is a very macho spirit even when kind and gentle. (See also: *Bahlindjo*.)

Ogun Balendjo is syncretized to Saint Anthony or Saint George.

**Favored people:** Surgeons, acupuncturists, military physicians, nurses, medics, those who treat veterans

**Offerings:** Iron tablets, surgical tools, acupuncture needles, hypodermic needles, War Water (a magical formula made by soaking iron nails in water)

## OGUN FERRAILLE

**Also known as:** Ogoun Fer; Ogou Feray

Ogoun Ferraille, warrior lwa, is understood as the primary figure in the traditional chromolithograph of Saint James the Greater—the saint himself riding to battle on a white horse. He is the chief of all the warrior paths of Ogun.

Ogou Ferraille is the spirit who was invoked on 14 August 1791 at Bois Caiman initiating the Haitian Revolution. It is rumored that when Jean-Jacques Dessalines (circa 1758–1806) ripped the white fabric from the French tricolor flag, creating the blue and red Haitian flag, he was channeling Ogou Ferraille. (After he died, Dessalines joined the Ogou family becoming Ogou Dessalines.)

Ogun Ferraille is associated with the magical and healing power of magnets. Request that he gird your loins before entering battle, literally or metaphorically.

**Favored people:** Soldiers, warriors in tanks or armored fighting vehicles

(AFVs), armourers

**Manifestation:** Ogoun Ferraille is a knight in shining armor, but he is also envisioned as a metal man or cyber man. *Ferraille* refers to scrap metal.

**Offering:** Overproof rum, toy soldiers—especially old-fashioned metal ones—military medals, and regalia

Ogoun Ferraille is the name of a cocktail, a flaming rum punch:

1. Stir honey to taste into one part passion fruit juice; warm very gently on the stove.
2. Add to three parts dark rum and flambé.
3. Sprinkle with spices like ground cardamom, cinnamon, and coriander.
4. Serve a glass to Ogoun.

**See also:** *Marinette*

**OGUN GÉ ROUGE**

**Also known as:** Ogou Jé Rouge

Ogou Gé Rouge is red-eyed Ogun, a fierce, wrathful lwa filled with rage, classified as a Petro or Bizango lwa. He is the patron of loupsgaroux. Shaman Ogou bestows the point of power enabling the soul to leave the body in the form of a flying werewolf and journey across the sky leaving a phosphorescent trail.

**See also:** *Bizango Spirits; Ezili Gé Rouge; Loup-Garou; Marinette; Petro*

**OGUN LA FLAMBO**

**Also known as:** Ogou La Flambeau

Ogou la Flambo is an ecstatic warrior who exults in battle and bloodshed. He dances and whirls on the battlefield, killing to his left, and slaughtering to his right. He is aflame with passion, bloodlust, and the heat of battle. He is akin to rampaging Anat, Kali or Sekhmet or Odin's shamanic berserk warriors.

Ogou la Flambo is scary Ogun—unless he is fighting for you! (He's

scary then too: stay out of his way until he's done.) *Nothing* can stop him. He is the blind, inexorable force of destruction.

- At his best, Ogou la Flambo destroys injustice, oppression, and tyranny.
- At his worst, Ogou la Flambo is a bloodthirsty, violent force that must exhaust itself, as once activated, it cannot be stopped.

**Offerings:** Flambéed overproof rum, trail of gunpowder set ablaze (be careful!), bullets, weapons, iron

**See also:** *Anat; Ezili Gé Rouge; Ezili La Flambeau; Kali; Odin; Sekhmet*

### OGUN KRIMINEL

**Also known as:** Ogou Kriminel, Ogoun Kriminel

What's that old joke about there being a very thin line between police and thieves? Ogou Kriminel crosses that line. Ogou Kriminel is thug or gangster Ogun invoked by criminals for protection, especially from law enforcement and incarceration. On the other hand, as the biggest, baddest criminal, Ogou Kriminel may be invoked to destroy or remove other criminals when other methods have failed. (Be careful: he's dangerous.) He is identified with Saint Elias.

**See also:** *Baron Kriminel*

### Oinone

**Also known as:** Oenone

**Classification:** Nymph; Naiad

Cassandra wasn't Troy's only prophetess. Helen wasn't Paris' only love. Paris met Oinone, daughter of the Kebren River, when he was just a shepherd on Mount Ida, unaware of his true identity as a Trojan prince. He had yet to preside over the contest between goddesses that would result in his being awarded Helen of Troy.

Oinone is a beautiful Nymph possessing tremendous healing, divinatory, and psychic powers. Paris and Oinone married. She bore his son. Paris swore that he would be eternally faithful to Oinone, but she



could see the future and warned him of his fate. Paris abandoned his wife and child when he was promised Helen. Oinone begged him not to go to Sparta, warning that he would bring death and disaster to Troy, but she had all the credibility of an ex-wife or a jealous, rejected lover. Oinone warned Paris that only she could heal him if he was ever wounded.

He remembered that part of her prophecy. After he was shot by Philoktetes' poison arrow, Paris sought Oinone's help. She may originally have intended to heal him, but at that moment she was so overwhelmed with rage toward him that she refused her help. Her prophecy was true: no one else could heal him and so Paris died. Some myths say that, filled with remorse, she committed suicide by plunging into the sea, but Oinone is an immortal.

Oinone, inconvenient first wife, is omitted from most retellings of the Trojan War. Helen is castigated for abandoning her husband (and possibly child), but there's rarely similar reproach for Paris. Oinone makes a rare literary appearance in German author Christa Wolf's novel *Cassandra*.

Oinone may be invoked for healing and to receive information about the future. Ask her to ensure that someday your ex will need you.

**Favored people:** Scorned women, ignored prophets, and psychics

**See also:** *Aphrodite; Helen of Troy; Thetis*

## Oiwa

**Also known as:** The Yotsuya ghost

**Origin:** Japan

**Classification:** Onryo, Yurei

When Oiwa and Iemon first married, he was a dashing handsome samurai and she was a beautiful lady. A few years later, Oiwa was in delicate health after a difficult pregnancy and childbirth. Iemon, now an unemployed ronin (masterless, unaffiliated samurai), was forced to labor as an umbrella-maker to support his family, something he perceived as

degradingly beneath his dignity. He hated his life and resented his family obligations. The gorgeous granddaughter of a wealthy, successful neighbor was enamored of Iemon and wanted to marry him. There was only one problem and it was named Oiwa. Iemon and the neighbor plotted to eliminate her. Iemon brought Oiwa something he called blood-road medicine, intended to revitalize and rejuvenate her. Really it was poison. He was inept; he gave her the wrong dose. The poison did not kill Oiwa as intended but it made her sick and disfigured her. Her once lustrous hair fell out by the handful. Her face was distorted: one eye drooping and swollen shut, the other gazing perpetually upwards. When Oiwa saw her reflection in the mirror, she died of a broken heart, in despair at Iemon's betrayal and her appearance. (Alternatively she committed suicide.) Her death is usually placed on 22 February 1636.

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*The character of Sadako in the film versions of Koji Suzuki's Ring novels is an amalgam of Okiku (the well) and Oiwa (her face).*

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Iemon was pleased; his new wedding could proceed. He realized, however, that their faithful servant, who had cared for Oiwa in her illness, had figured out the situation. Iemon accused him of theft, a capital offense, and killed him. The two bodies were nailed to either sides of a wooden door and flung into the river. Iemon imagined he was starting a happy, new life.

On his wedding night, Iemon lifted his new bride's veil only to see Oiwa's contorted face staring back at him. Instinctively, he drew his sword and beheaded her. When the illusion passed, Iemon discovered he had killed his new bride. Suddenly confronted by the ghost of his murdered servant, Iemon beheaded him, too, only to discover he had killed his friend/neighbor/father-in-law.

Now a wanted man, Iemon fled, but Oiwa pursued and haunted him wherever he went. She never physically harmed him: her goal was mental torture. She drove him to madness as her unmistakable face appeared when least expected, for instance manifesting in a burning

lantern. (Oiwa is sometimes called the lantern ghost.)

Iemon imagined he could escape by fleeing to the countryside. He took up residence in Hebiyama (Snake Mountain). He was clearly not a man with metaphysical interests or else would have recognized the association of snakes with the Yin world, the realm of ghosts.

Hungry, Iemon went fishing. He hooked a big one, all right: the door with the two rotting bodies still attached.

- At night, ropes and vines around his cabin transformed into snakes.
- Smoke from the hearth fire transformed into Oiwa's hair.

Iemon, absolutely out of his mind, ran out into the night and straight into the path of his pursuing brother-in-law, who killed him.

Oiwa did not rest in peace. She returned to Yotsuya, her old neighborhood, and recalled every grudge she had sublimated while alive, taking violent revenge on anyone who had ever insulted or hurt her. Neighbors decided to pacify her by giving her a proper burial and building her a shrine. More or less, they have been successful.

Oiwa is Japan's most famous ghost. Legends of Oiwa inspired *Yotsuya Kaidan*, a Kabuki play based on her tragedy, written and first produced in 1825. Over thirty filmed versions of *Yotsuya Kaidan* have been produced, although some were lost after World War II. Her story appears on Japanese television annually. Oiwa is a favorite subject of netsuke carvers as well as artists, including Hokusai, Yoshitoshi, and Utagawa Kuniyoshi. *Ayakashi-Samurai Horror Tales: Yotsuya Ghost Story* (2007), an anime version of her tale, includes footage of her shrine.

Oiwa is more than just a literary character. She is a living presence, something between a vengeful ghost and a goddess. Oiwa may manifest her powers benevolently but she still burns with rage and resentment. Oiwa grants wishes to those who respectfully visit her grave to pay homage but she reputedly afflicts visitors who come to gawk or are otherwise disrespectful with a temporarily swollen right eye, that resembles hers.

Oiwa is ambivalent toward the entertainment she has inspired. She allegedly hovers in theaters watching all productions. Productions of

*Yotsuya Kaidan* are often beset with bad luck. Actors and other theatrical participants have frequently suffered accidents and misfortune. In one production alone, an actress died in a car accident, a crew member committed suicide, and a ceiling light inexplicably fell, causing injuries. Coincidence? Many think not.

It is now traditional for anyone involved in dramatizations of Oiwa's life to visit her grave and make offerings, most especially the actress in the starring role. Thinking of staging a backyard production? Make sure you visit her shrine first. A place setting is included for Oiwa at any cast-gathering or party. When honored, Oiwa causes no harm and may even be protective.

**Manifestation:** Oiwa's defining characteristics are her contorted eyes and bald patches amid otherwise long, now unkempt hair. According to witnesses however, sometimes traces of her old beauty peek through her ravaged appearance.

**Iconography:** The image of Oiwa's face in the lantern is particularly popular.

**Creature:** Snake

**Sacred site:** The Oiwa Inari shrine in Yotsuya, Tokyo—her grave is beneath the big tree.

**See also:** *Hannya; Hone-Onna; Mae Nak; Okiku; Onryo; Yurei*

## Okame

**Also known as:** Otafuku; Ofuku; Mrs. Daruma

The dance of Uzume, the shamanic strip-teaser who rescued Earth, is the prototype for Japanese shamanic dance. Daughters of provincial aristocrats were once sent to Kyoto where they were trained to dance and perform sacred rituals. Traveling through Japan in performing troupes, they eventually became the sacred ancestors of Noh, Kyogen, and Kabuki theater. Masks of Uzume were incorporated. Uzume eventually evolved into Okame.

The names Okame and Otafuku are used interchangeably:

- *Okame* means “tortoise”, symbolic of longevity.
- *Otafuku* means “abundant good fortune.”

Okame is a goddess of good fortune:

- She transforms bad luck to the best luck.
- Okame brings victory and success.
- Okame bestows fertility and banishes evil people, spirits, and ghosts.
- Okame protects children and provides domestic happiness.

Her image could be placed beside the dictionary definition of *good*: Okame is good-natured, good-humored, good-hearted, generous, kind, serene, and patient. She doesn't possess a mean bone in her body, although she is smart, strong-willed, and competent. She is not naïve but powerful, capable of shooing away evil spirits as if they were little pesky flies. She is considered the epitome of the ideal wife.

As with Daruma, Nang Kwak, and Maneki Neko, Okame's blessings are accessed via her images. Her face and image are ubiquitous in Japan, ornamenting the sacred and mundane. She appears as masks, statues, and amulets but also on textiles, folk art, clothing, and commercial advertising. There's even candy made in her image. Okame's face is incorporated into Japanese *Kumade* (“Bear Paw”) amulets: bamboo rakes that gather good luck and prosperity. Amy Katoh's *Otafuku: Joy of Japan* (Tuttle Publishing, 2005), a meditation on Okame, contains over one hundred photos of Okame images.

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*Hang three Okame masks in the home to receive blessings of peace, happiness, luck, and the arrival of only welcome guests. Place one by the entrance, one in the living room, and the third in the kitchen.*

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Okame may look like a mundane housewife, but she's the great goddess Uzume in disguise. She's still an erotic spirit. Many sacred

amulets and images depict her in various states of undress. Sometimes she exposes her vulva. Erotic images of Okame may be found at the bottom of sake cups.

**Manifestation:** Friendly, welcoming Okame has a chubby face and body; merry, sparkling eyes; and a tiny, ever-smiling mouth.

**Iconography:** Over the years, Okame masks have become more stylized and, perhaps for comic effect, tend to emphasize that she is not, by modern standards, a beauty queen.

**Consorts:** Hyotoko and Fukusuke are sometimes identified as her partners. Okame is also sometimes paired with a tengu.

**Spirit allies:** Okame is often depicted with Daruma or dressed up as Daruma. Some traditions consider them a married couple: Mr. and Mrs. Daruma. (Of course, these are traditions that have divorced Daruma from his original identity as an ascetic Bodhisattva. Mrs. Daruma, Goddess of Abundance, isn't having any of that.)

**Flower:** Ume (plum blossom: the tree blooms in the dead of winter, providing color, joy, and hope)

**Sacred site:** Her shrine, Senbon Shakado, in Kyoto but also wherever her image appears

**Offerings:** Plum wine, sake, incense, her images, more of her images, anything with her picture on it

**See also:** *Amaterasu; Amida; Bodhisattva; Daruma; Fukusuke; Hyotoko; Maneki Neko; Nang Kwak; Sarutahiko; Tengu; Uzume*

## Okiku

**Origin:** Japan

The wealthy Aoyama family had an extremely valuable set of ten Delft (Dutch pottery) plates. Okiku, working as a maid in their home, was blamed when one plate broke or disappeared. She drowned in a well. Every night, she emerges to count plates. "One, two, three," she intones,

all the way up to nine. She can count no further, and so she dissolves into tears and wails. That's the gist of Okiku's tale, but there are many versions:

- She rejected the head of the family's sexual advances. He hid one of the plates, threatening to accuse her of theft unless she had sex with him. (The accusation would bring the death penalty.) In despair, Okiku threw herself into the well.
- She really does break a plate and is thrown into the well as punishment.
- Aoyama's wife breaks the plate but blames Okiku, who is thrown into the well.
- Okiku spilled the beans about a planned samurai rebellion. When the rebels discover who betrayed them, they torture her before throwing her into the well.

Sometimes the well is an instrument of torture as well as death: Okiku is repeatedly raised and lowered by her killer who sadistically enjoys her torment. The well is now Okiku's home. The story of Okiku, believed to be based on historical events, was first dramatized in 1741 and has become a Ka buki staple. (The traditional Kabuki play is called *Bancho Sarayashiki* or "The Broken Dishes at Bancho Mansion.") Okiku is the subject of several novels and movies. Hokusai and Yoshitoshi Tsukioka are among artists who have created portraits of her.

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*Okiku's ghost is the inspiration for the Ring series of novels and movies (and basically for the whole horror genre of ghost-women climbing out of wells to torment the living.)*

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- Shouting "ten!" after Okiku counts "nine" but before she can start wailing will disarm her. Reports say she will vanish on the spot.
- In 1795, Japan suffered an infestation of worms found in old wells. The worm, naturally covered with thin threads so that it appeared bound,

was nicknamed Okiku Mushi or “Okiku bug.” It was widely considered an incarnation of Okiku or her curse.

**Sacred sites:** Different sites claim to be the location of her well including Himeji Castle, now a tourist destination where apparitions of Okiku are still allegedly witnessed and the garden of the Canadian embassy in Tokyo, which is on land purchased from the Aoyama family.

**See also:** *Obake; Oiwa; Onryo; Yurei*

## Okuninushi

*Great Lord of the Country; Great Land Master; Prince of Plenty; The Great Landlord; The Celestial Matchmaker*

**Also known as:** Onamuchi; Okuni Nushi; O-Kuni-Nushi; Daikoku Sama

**Classification:** Kami

Okuninushi is the Shinto spirit of magic, medicine, and healing. A shamanic deity, he presides over travel between realms and dimensions. He is the son-in-law of Susano’o, married to his daughter. Okuninushi became ruler of Japan and established formal veneration of Susano’o. (According to another myth, Okuninushi is Susano’o’s own son.)

Alarmed by her brother/rival’s increasing power and influence, Amaterasu sent her grandson Ninigi to Earth to reestablish her rule. Rather than battling, Okuninushi and Ninigi struck a deal: in exchange for Okuninushi’s loyalty, Ninigi promised to recognize Okuninushi as perpetual guardian of the imperial family which he, Ninigi, would found.

Okuninushi is the guardian kami of Japan and its emperor. As compensation for surrendering sovereignty of Japan, Okuninushi was given dominion over the great invisible land of spirits and magic. Trickster Okuninushi died twice and was resurrected twice. He rules the unseen, which includes the dead. Okuninushi is petitioned to provide happy marriages and to ensure successful, satisfying negotiations.

**Creature:** White rabbit



**Sacred site:** Okuninushi is enshrined at Izumo, the most significant Shinto shrine, with the exception of Ise.

**See also:** *Amaterasu; Daikoku; Kami; Susano'o*

## Olifat

**Also known as:** Yelofath; Iolafath; Orafat; Wolphat

Olifat, the trickster spirit of the Caroline Islands in the Western Pacific Ocean, is the son of a mortal woman and a divine father, possibly a sky spirit. Like so many other divine children (Hermes, Apollo, Heracles), Olifat was a precocious baby who matured miraculously fast, demonstrating feats of strength:

- He ran as soon as he was born.
- Palm trees are reddish because Olifat wiped the birth blood from his body onto them.

He was an unusual child. Other children sometimes weren't nice to him. They excluded him from games. Olifat got his revenge: he gave stingrays their stingers and shark their teeth, which previously they had lacked. (And yes, Olifat can be a vicious prankster.)

Olifat is an incorrigible and successful seducer. He is invoked to help men seduce women and recover errant wives. Olifat's romantic advice may be sought via visions and dreams. In parts of the Caroline Islands, Olifat is credited with introducing tattooing, considered magical and erotic.

**Plant:** Turmeric

**See also:** *Maui*

## Olokun

**Classification:** Orisha

Olokun, primordial ruler of the sea, bestows fertility, healing,

abundance, and wealth. Olokun's identity, gender, and even function depend upon where his/her myth is told. In Nigeria, Olokun is the rich, powerful king of the sea who presides over a grand royal court. This Olokun did not survive the slave trade's Middle Passage from Africa to the Caribbean and Brazil. In African Diaspora traditions, Olokun resides at the bottom of the sea.

Yemaya emerged as the preeminent Yoruba spirit of the sea in the Western Hemisphere. Olokun is variously understood as Yemaya's mother, sister, or alter ego. Sometimes Yemaya rules the upper part of the sea while Olokun rules the darkest depths. In the context of these Western traditions, Olokun is a silent, solitary, brooding presence on the ocean floor. She is almost inevitably female and venerated alongside Yemaya.

Olokun is a spirit of life and death. The ocean may be understood as the source of all life. Many ancient creation myths correspond to modern scientific theories that living beings first emerged from the sea. Likewise, each individual human being emerges from the womb's amniotic sac of salty fluids. The bottom of the sea is also the realm of death, the proverbial watery graveyard. Olokun controls the spiritual staging area that human souls must cross to be born or to return to the spirit realm at death.

Olokun as spirit of the depths can heal the most profound, primal pain, including psychic or physical abuse that occurred in infancy or even in the womb, prior to birth. Olokun can reach and heal what occurred so early that it is pre-speech and cannot be articulated.

**Manifestation:** Olokun may manifest as a mermaid, merman, giant sea snake, male human, female human, or someone so old it's no longer possible to tell.

**Iconography:** Olokun may be represented by a large mirrored box covered with a white cloth.

**Feast:** From 31 December until 6 January

**Element:** Water

**Sacred sites:** The sea, plus marshes and mangrove swamps where the

sea has intruded. Olokun is also sometimes considered ruler of all rivers, which flow into the sea.

**Offerings:** Seashells, salt water, things that recall the treasures of the sea

**See also:** *Mermaid; Olosa; Ora; Orisha; Yemaya; Yewá*

## Olosa

**Classification:** Orisha

Olosa is the presiding spirit of the Lagos Lagoon in Nigeria. Olosa may be Olokun's sister and/or wife. She may or may not also be Yemaya's child. She is the guardian of fish and marine creatures. Olosa is invoked for abundance, prosperity, and fertility.

Olosa is the spirit of the lagoon, and she *is* the lagoon. When Olosa is angry, the water overflows its banks. Her lagoon is treated as a dump site for industrial and domestic waste and is now very polluted.

**Manifestation:** She has long hair and a body shaped like a woman but covered in fish scales.

**Spirit allies:** Olokun, Yewá, Yemaya

**Colors:** Blue, white

**Number:** 5

**Creature:** Crocodiles are her messengers.

**Sacred site:** Lagos Lagoon: temples were dedicated to her along its shores.

**Altar:** Olosa's domestic altar should reproduce the lagoon aura. Offerings were traditionally brought to the shores of the lagoon where they were collected by crocodiles and brought to Olosa.

**Offerings:** Candles; coral; clean up her lagoon; images of fish, crocodiles, and other marine creatures; hand mirrors; elegant hair combs

**See also:** *Olokun; Orisha; Yemaya; Yewá*

## Olympian Spirits

**Origin:** Greece

When children are asked to name Greek gods, they are almost always really being asked to name the Olympian pantheon. Twelve spirits are officially classified as Olympians. They were considered the official ruling pantheon of Greece. Zeus, head of the pantheon, hand-picked the Olympians. With the possible exception of Aphrodite, all are somehow related to him (brother, sister, spouse, child). Worship of some of the Olympian spirits (Demeter, Hera) predates the establishment of the Olympian pantheon in the region. Other spirits may originally be out-of-towners who either arrived with conquering people (Zeus) or were so popular they had to be incorporated, lest they rival the Olympians (Dionysus, Aphrodite).

Other Greek spirits do exist and continued to be actively worshipped even after establishment of the Olympian pantheon. The Greeks dated the Olympian era as coinciding with the first festival of the Olympiad in 776 BCE.

The original Olympian spirits include:

- Apollo
- Ares
- Artemis
- Athena
- Demeter
- Hades
- Hephaestus
- Hera
- Hermes
- Hestia
- Poseidon
- Zeus

The number twelve is crucial to the Olympians. When Dionysus was

admitted to the inner circle, Hestia resigned her place.

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*To call a council of the entire Olympian pantheon, petition the goddess  
Themis to summon them to convene.*

---

Other spirits live on Mount Olympus but are not considered among the official Olympians (Dionysus and Hermes both brought their mothers to live with them; also Psyche, Heracles, Hebe, and Ganymede just to name a few). Not all the Olympian spirits prefer to live on Mount Olympus. Demeter famously prefers to live on Earth with people. Artemis prefers living in the forest.

Zeus and his brothers reputedly divided the world between them by casting lots, although it's difficult to imagine that Zeus would have been content with any position other than the one he has: head of the pantheon. Athena is second in power to Zeus, followed by Apollo. In the context of the pantheon, Hera, Zeus' queen, is not at the top or even near it.

**Sacred site:** They live atop Mount Olympus between Macedonia and Thessaly.

**See also:** *Amphitrite; Aphrodite; Apollo; Ares; Artemis; Athena; Demeter; Dione; Dionysus; Echidna; Ganymede; Hades; Hebe; Hephaestus; Hera; Heracles; Hermes; Hestia; Hydra; Keto; Maia; Nats, Thirty-Seven; Nymphs; Persephone; Polyboea; Poseidon; Prometheus; Psyche; Semele; Themis; Titans; Zeus;* and the Glossary entry for *Pantheon*

## Omolu

**Classification:** Orixá

Omolu is a Brazilian path of the West African spirit also known as Babalu Ayé. Omolu not only transmits disease but can heal any illness.

**Iconography:** His hair and scepter are adorned with cowrie shells because, like the shells of the deepest sea, he is privy to secrets. (That's the poetic, romantic reason; cowries were also perceived as resembling burst smallpox pustules.)

**Day:** Monday

**See also:** *Babalu Ayé; Olokun*

## Ondine

**Also known as:** Undine; Undina

The legend of Ondine derives from Alsatian folklore but became especially popular as the basis for an 1811 romantic novella by Friedrich de la Motte Fouqué (1777–1843), which George MacDonald, author of *The Princess and the Goblin*, called the most beautiful of fairy tales. A beautiful but mysterious little girl, dripping like a Nixie, appeared on the doorstep of an elderly couple mourning the equally mysterious loss of their own small daughter. They adopted her as their only daughter. She told them her name is Undine, which they disliked as it sounded heathen. The little girl was simultaneously so charming *and* strong-willed that she convinced a priest to baptize her under that name despite his objections. She grew up wild and gorgeous, eventually falling in love with a passing knight who pledged his undying love to her.

Variations on the legend exist. The knight married Ondine. She bore him a child. By marrying a mortal, she may have sacrificed her own immortality. Alternatively, in goddess fashion, Ondine may just demand total devotion. When he was unfaithful to her, she took it very badly, bestowing the kiss of death. According to one version, the knight swore to be faithful to her with every waking breath. When he broke his word, Ondine cursed him to die if he ever fell asleep. Ondine returned to the waters.

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*Whether or not Ondine can or will miraculously heal the fatal illness named*

*after her is subject to speculation. It may be worth asking her to revoke her curse and heal the condition.*

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Ondine the goddess is invoked for true love, to punish unfaithful lovers, and to provide artistic inspiration. The following is but a sampling of works inspired by Ondine and does not include the countless video game references:

- *Undine* is an 1816 opera by E. T. A. Hoffmann (author of *The Tales of Hoffmann* and *The Nutcracker*).
- *Ondine or La Naiade* is an 1843 ballet by Jules Perrot and Cesare Pugni.
- *Undina* is an 1869 opera by Pyotr Tchaikovsky, composer of *The Nutcracker*.
- *Ondine* names an 1872 painting by John William Waterhouse.
- *Ondine* names an 1889 painting by Paul Gauguin.
- *Ondine* names a perfume first introduced in 1954 by Suzanne Thierry.
- *Ondine* is a 1939 play by Jean Giraudoux. (Audrey Hepburn starred in the title role in the 1954 New York City production with music by Virgil Thomson.)
- *Ondine* is a 1958 ballet created by Sir Frederick Ashton for London's Royal Ballet.
- Ondine-sama is the priestess of a holy lake in the popular Japanese anime series, *Kyo Kara Maoh!*
- *Ondinism* is a condition named by English physician Havelock Ellis in which it is impossible to experience sexual pleasure without urinating.
- *Undine's Curse* is a potentially fatal respiratory illness (formal name: Central Alveolar Hypoventilation Syndrome).
- *Undine's Curse* is a rum-based cocktail.

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*Ondine resembles a Nixie far more than she resembles the spirits called Ondines.*

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**Manifestation:** Ondine is described as beautiful with long golden hair and blue eyes.

**Offerings:** Hair ornaments, Ondine perfume, combs, mirrors, pastries

**See also:** *Neraida; Nixie; Ondines*

## Ondines

Swiss alchemist Paracelsus (1493–24 September 1541) organized a system of elemental spirits. He named the elemental spirits of water Ondines. Ondines live in sources of fresh water (pools, springs, waterfalls, lakes) and may be composed of the element. They are described as having lovely voices. They are vague spirits, elemental beings, lacking true personalities. Hans Christian Andersen's concept of mermaids—who lack souls and unless loved by a man are destined to dissolve into foam—is heavily based on Paracelsus. Ondines emerge from foam and dissolve back into foam.

There is also a theory that each human being is assigned a water elemental, an Ondine, at birth, who presides over the individual's bodily fluids including blood, urine, and lymph. These spirits care for us, but we care for them, too. The Ondine is symbiotically attached to the human. If bodily fluids are abused, dangerous substances introduced into the bloodstream, let's say, then the Ondine is weakened. If weakened, it can no longer protect the human's health at its previous full capacity. This type of Ondine communicates with its host person via dreams.

**See also:** *Mermaid; Ondine; Siren*

## Oneiroi

The Oneiroi are spirits of dreams. They live in a cave near the borders of Hades. They sleep during the day but emerge at night like a flock of bats bearing dreams. They must pass through one of two gates:

- The Gate of Horn is the source of sacred, shamanic, or prophetic



dreams.

- The Gate of Ivory is the source of false illusions.

Morpheus is their leader. The other Oneiroi include his brothers Phantasos (“Phantasm”; “Apparition”) and Phobetor (“Frightening,” as in *phobias*). Phobetor has charge of nightmares. A fourth, Icelus, may or may not be identical to Phobetor.

Their parentage is subject to speculation (and version of myth):

- They may be the children of Gaia.
- They may be sons of Nyx and Erebus.
- They may be Nyx’s boys, no father required.
- They may be the sons of Hypnos, Lord of Sleep, and Pasithea, Goddess of Rest, Relaxation, and Hallucinations (she is one of the Charites).

The Oneiroi may be invoked when you need a specific dream or petitioned to stop a plague of nightmares. They may also be requested to interpret dreams or transmit them to others.

**Manifestation:** The Oneiroi are described as having black wings. Morpheus may take the form of a human being when he wishes to speak directly with someone (in dreams, visions, or otherwise).

**See also:** *Charites; Gaia; Hypnos, Morpheus; Nyx*

## Oni

**Origin:** Japan

Oni are raucous, defiant spirits of chaos and mischief. They can cause trouble for people but may also be protective. Some can be persuaded to become allies. Oni frequently enjoy a battle, so they may banish and disperse evil spirits and ghosts just for the fun of it, even without being asked.

*Oni* is frequently translated into English as “devil” or “ogre,” emphasizing their scary, destructive aspects. However unlike classic European ogres, Oni are not stupid or slow but *very* smart and thus

formidable opponents with magical, supernatural powers. Allegedly if an Oni loses a limb, it reconnects and heals *instantly*—another reason why they so enjoy brawling.

Oni are spirits of justice who destroy as well as protect. They are often portrayed as vicious, malevolent, ominous demons up to no good and are featured in many horror tales. Allegedly some enjoy the taste of human flesh. This legend of the human-eating Oni may derive from their origins as spirits of death.

Oni are pre-Buddhist spirits. There were originally both male and female Oni who supervised the frontier between life and death. (The disappearance of female Oni may account for some of the male Oni's famed crankiness.) Oni were incorporated into Buddhism, becoming gate guardians of the various Buddhist hells and death realms. Their role now includes punishing sinners. Although spirits of death are rarely popular, Oni were perceived as fulfilling a spiritual function. Although considered dangerous, they were not evil and could serve as guardian spirits, if so inclined.

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*Without female Oni, reproduction must be otherwise accomplished. Although Oni were originally pure spirits, their ranks are supplemented by men who die while overwhelmed by excessive anger and are then transformed into Oni.*

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The demonization of Oni began during the Kamakura era (circa 1185–1333 CE) with the rise of the new samurai class. Brawling Oni evolved into enemies of the samurai. A frequent theme of legends involves samurai foiling evil Oni. Oni became increasingly masculine and malevolent. True female Oni became rare; the Hannya, a horned female spirit, evolved into the Oni's female counterpart.

**Manifestation:** Oni are shaggy, horned, fanged, tusked, and clawed with vividly red, blue, or black skin. Male Oni who wish to travel incognito may assume the guise of human women.

**Iconography:** *Onigawara* roof tiles (sometimes translated as “gargoyle”

or “demon tiles”) are decorative, amuletic roof tiles, traditionally positioned at a roof’s highest, most prominent points. Onigawara traditionally incorporate images of Oni. By placing them on the roof, Oni are invoked to protect the home and residents. (Alternatively, their image is believed sufficiently ominous to keep malevolent spirits away.) Onigawara are now considered collector’s items; antiques are incredibly valuable.

**Attribute:** Oni carry and wield the *kanabo*, a large spiked iron bar.

**See also:** *Datsueba; Enma; Hannya; Kings of Hell; Tengu; Wanyudo; Yokai*

## Onryo

**Origin:** Japan

Onryo are ghosts who return to haunt the living with vengeance on their minds. Onryo may be male or female, but the most famous tend to be female. Onryo, in general, were people of little or no power while alive. They died tragically at the hands of those more powerful. The Onryo return absolutely suffused with long-repressed rage except that now, as ghosts, they are powerless no longer.

**Manifestation:** Originally, beyond being ghosts, there was no one single uniform manifestation associated with Onryo. When they became popular subjects of stylized Kabuki theater, expectations developed regarding an Onryo’s appearance. If you’ve seen a Japanese horror movie, you are probably familiar with the Onryo’s appearance: she is a pale woman with long, wild, unkempt hair, dressed in white burial clothing. Male Onryo appear similarly.

**See also:** *Goryo; Obake; Oiwa; Okiku; Yurei*

## Oonagh

**Also known as:** Una, Oona

**Origin:** Ireland

**Classification:** Tuatha Dé Danaan, Sidhe

Oonagh the Fairy Queen has golden hair so long it reaches the ground. Oonagh is a goddess of love and protectress of young animals. Oonagh may also have influence over the realm of death. She is Mistress of Illusion and Glamour: her silver gossamer dress appears to shimmer with diamonds, but it's really sparkling dew. Oonagh's blessings are invoked to find true love and to experience romantic happiness.

**Manifestation:** Oonagh is described as so beautiful that no one (at least no mortal) can look at her without being awed and amazed.

**Consort:** Fionnbharr

**Color:** Silver and iridescent, shimmery shades

**Metal:** Silver

**See also:** *Fairy Queens*

## Oosood

**Classification:** Birth Fairy; Vila

**Origin:** Serbia

Oosood are birth Fairies and a subspecies of Vila. There may be one Oosood or a trio. They arrive on the seventh day following birth to bestow the baby's fate but are visible only to the mother.

**Offerings:** In addition to food, they appreciate flowers.

**See also:** *Fairy, Birth; Vila*

## Ops

**Origin:** Italy (Sabine)

Ops is the goddess of abundance and assistance. Her name means "wealth" and derives from the same source as opulence. Ops is

associated with peace, plenty, and an abundant harvest. She was honored and celebrated with Saturn during the Saturnalia. Ops is invoked to extinguish harmful, dangerous fires.

**Consort:** Saturn

**Element:** Earth

**Days:** 25 August; 19 December (the Opalia festival)

**See also:** *Saturn*

## **Ora**

*Queen of the Sea*

**Origin:** Yoruba

**Classification:** Orisha

Ora is so beautiful that Olokun took one look at her and fell madly in love. They married. She remains his favorite of many wives. It is traditional to invoke Ora when making requests of Olokun, as it's believed that mentioning her name softens his heart or makes him inclined to be generous. Tell him that the request honors her. Alternatively petition Ora directly whether for her own help or to intercede with Olokun.

**See also:** *Olokun; Orisha*

## **Orbona**

*The Orphan*

**Origin:** Rome

Following the death of a child, Roman parents made a pilgrimage to Orbona's shrine to offer sacrifices to her. These were not intended as prayers for the deceased but rather as petitions for her protection for

remaining and future children. Parents left childless because of the deaths of their children are believed to be under her protection.

- Parents of endangered children may also beg Orbona's favor.
- Orbona is invoked for fertility but traditionally only after another child has died.

**Favored people:** Orphans

## Orcabella

**Origin:** Celtic

This goddess with the wonderful name is an ancient spirit of Galicia, now in Spain but once an ancient Celtic kingdom. Orcabella is described as a lusty hag with prodigious sexual appetites. She may be a goddess of sovereignty similar to those of Ireland: a king or ruler must make love to the goddess in the form of a dried-up hag. If he is truly the right king and he has pleased her, she will be transformed into a radiantly beautiful, youthful, fertile woman indicating what his rule will do for the kingdom, too.

**Sacred site:** Orcabella is associated with Cape Finisterre (in Galician: *Cabo Fisterra*), part of the *Costa de Morta*, the "Coast of Death." This coastal zone bears that name for two reasons:

- This Atlantic coast is extremely rocky and treacherous, the site of many shipwrecks.
- *Finisterre* means "End of the Earth." Celtic cosmology envisioned it as literally the end of the road, the embarkation point for ferries to the islands of the dead.

The region was home to Celtic spiritual rituals and a pilgrimage route. There are many sacred stones in the area, including one called the Tomb of Orcabella. The region is now associated with the Way of Saint James.

**See also:** *Ankou; Maeve; Orcus*

## Orcus

**Also known as:** Orco

Orcus, Lord of Death, was venerated in Gaul and Rome. He may be of Celtic origin, although others argue that he was originally Etruscan. In other words, did the Romans bring him to Gaul or learn of him in Gaul? It is possible that Orcus may be but another name for other death lords like Hades, Pluto, or Dis Pater. Orcus was a dreaded spirit: people didn't like to talk about him much, hence little information survives.

Oaths were traditionally sworn on his name. If broken or if perjury occurred, Orcus would punish the wrongdoer. Post-Christianity, Orcus evolved into the Italian *orco*, an Italian tusked monster. The roots of the word *ogre* may also derive from his name. J. R. R. Tolkien's Orcs derive their name, if not their nature or appearance, from Orcus. Orcus may be syncretized to Saint Blaise.

**Manifestation:** He appears in the guise of a ferocious dog or wolf

**Sacred sites:**

- France's Orcival Valley may derive from his name (Orcus' Valley).
- Orcus may have had a shrine on Rome's Palatine Hill.
- Orcus (the planet or trans-Neptunian object formerly known as 2004DW) was discovered in February 2004. It shares Pluto's 248 year orbit.

**See also:** *Black Madonna of Orcival; Charun; Hades; Ogun; Orcabella*

## Ördög

**Origin:** Hungary

According to Pagan Hungarian cosmology, the world is divided into three levels connected by a magical world tree.

- Sky spirits live above in the celestial zone amid the foliage.
- People live in the middle world by the tree's roots.
- Chthonic spirits live below ground.

Initially there was no moral judgment attached to the different locations, but after conversion to Christianity, cosmologies combined: good souls were envisioned traveling upwards after death to Heaven while sinners descended to Hell. Ördög, traditional ruler of the realm below, became identified with Satan.

Ördög now literally translates as “devil” in Hungarian. It’s a noun, thus *Tasmanian devil*, for instance, translates as *Tazmán Ördög*. There’s no sense of Ördög as a personal name, but originally it was. Ördög, a horned spirit like Pan or Faunus, may or may not be the same spirit as Krampus who survives in Central European folklore as Santa Claus’ malevolent sidekick. Ördög was originally cocreator of the world and may be a keeper of dead souls.

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*Ördög lives in Pokol, the old Hungarian realm of death, a fiery inferno. He stirs a giant cauldron filled with souls.*

---

Ördög enjoys gambling with people usually by placing bets. He enjoys testing honesty or gauging susceptibility to temptation or corruption. Sometimes he pretends to be a naïve country bumpkin to see who will attempt to exploit him. *Don’t* gamble with him. Even if he lets you win in the beginning, ultimately he *will* win. The safest way to avoid trouble with Ördög is always to be polite, gracious, and honest with strangers.

Ördög can bestow fertility and treasure, no strings attached, when it suits him

**Manifestation:** His true form is a pitch black man with goat’s horns, hooves, and tail, but he has many forms and disguises, including a flame, a fox, and a handsome, possibly seductive, shepherd or goat herd. Dancing, fiery eyes are his identifying trait.

**Iconography:** Images of Black Krampus may be used to represent Ördög (as opposed to the red version of Krampus).

**Color:** Black



**Attribute:** Cauldron

**Creatures:** Fleas, flies, and lice are his servants and messengers.

**See also:** *Boldog Asszony; Chthonic Spirits; Faunus, Pan*

## Orisha

The orishas are the spirits of Yorubaland. Traditional Yoruba religion is monotheistic: there is one supreme creator, Olodumare, who encompasses both male and female. Olodumare created the universe. Among Olodumare's inventions was the concept of delegating. Olodumare created the orishas, intermediary spirits who run the world. Each has specific functions and dominions, very much like angels. Thousands of orishas may exist, but only approximately forty have anything to do with humanity.

The orishas are venerated in Africa as well as in various African Diaspora traditions including Santeria and Candomblé.

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*In Brazil, orisha is spelled orixa but pronounced exactly the same: oh-ree-sha.*

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**See also:** *Babalu Ayé; Bori; Boromu; Erinle; Eshu Elegbara; Lwa; Melk; Obatala; Ochossi; Ogun; Olokun; Olosa; Ora; Orisha Oko; Orunmila; Osain; Oshun; Oya; Seven African Powers; Yemaya; Yewá; Zar*

## Orisha Oko

**Origins:** Yoruba

**Classification:** Orisha

Orisha Oko is most commonly described as a former hunter who decided to farm instead. He is closely associated with rituals of agricultural magic. In standard descriptions of the orishas, Orisha Oko is usually

described as the judge who settles disputes, especially among women. Those aren't just any disputes: they are usually accusations of witchcraft. It takes one to know one: Orisha Oko is the wise sorcerer of Earth magic who protects against witchcraft and heals its effects.

Because accusations of witchcraft were insignificant compared to other issues during the development of African Diaspora faiths, Orisha Oko is most familiar in the Western Hemisphere as an orisha of farming. In Africa, however, Orisha Oko remains a deity very closely associated with witchcraft. Disputes regarding accusations or suspicions of witchcraft were traditionally resolved by rituals in his shrines. His devotees are largely female; devotion to Orisha Oko is hereditary. Accusations of witchcraft forge links to this orisha. Once accused (and presumably if one survives the accusation) then one is expected to form a relationship with Orisha Oko that will continue through generations. Orisha Oko manifests his anger through unyielding infertile Earth and barren women.

- Orisha Oko bestows personal fertility.
- Orisha Oko is syncretized to Saint Isidore the Laborer.

**Manifestation:** Orisha Oko may manifest as female or male but is usually described as male.

**Attribute:** An iron stave made from a hoe blade

**Spirit allies:** He works closely with Ogun, who forges his tools.

**Colors:** Red and white

**Offerings:** Yams

**See also:** *Azaka; Ogun; Orisha*

## Orpheus

**Origin:** Thrace

Orpheus, the spirit of the power of music, has had many incarnations:

- He is an exceptionally powerful Thracian deity.

- He was incorporated into the Greek pantheon as a Muse's son and disciple of Apollo.
- He is the subject of various Mystery traditions.

Orpheus' earliest manifestation is as a deity from the Rhodope Mountains of Thrace, now mostly in modern Bulgaria. An immensely powerful spirit, he is most famous as a magical musician. Accompanying himself on the lyre, Orpheus' singing is so sweet and powerful, he charms wild animals, diverts rivers, and lulls rocks to sleep.

Orpheus is more than a beautiful voice: he is a culture hero, a Thracian king credited with teaching humanity the arts, healing, prophecy, augury, and astrology. He established mystic schools and instituted Mysteries. He formalized worship of his fellow Thracian, Dionysus.

Orpheus was incorporated into the Greek pantheon as the son of Kalliope, one of the Muses. Orpheus was raised by his mother and aunts and, according to Greek myth, *then* went to live in Thrace. He studied with the Cabeiri in Samothrace. Orpheus' incredible musical gifts are ascribed to his relationships with the Muses and Apollo.

Greek myth portrays Orpheus as subordinate to Apollo who is sometimes identified as his father. (Alternative myth: Orpheus' dad is a Thracian river deity.) Another Greek myth suggests that when Orpheus was a child he met Apollo, who was visiting the Muses. Apollo liked the kid and gave him a lyre and some music lessons. Orpheus is portrayed as a faithful disciple of Apollo, with whom he allies himself rather than with Apollo's rival Dionysus, newly arrived in Greece.

Orpheus' most famous myth involves his love for Eurydice and his willingness to enter Hades in an attempt to bring her back to life. This myth may be based on ancient tales regarding Orpheus' powers over death. In the most famous Greek myth, those powers ultimately fail. Orpheus is not able to resurrect Eurydice. Hades remains stronger. However there are other versions of the myth where Orpheus succeeds.

Returning to Earth without Eurydice, Orpheus rejected all women, preferring the love of men. He returned to Thrace where he is described as introducing the Greek tradition of pederasty. Plato claimed that

Orpheus despised women so much he refused to be reborn from a woman's womb. Orpheus died soon after, literally ripped to pieces by women, in the manner of a Dionysian sacrifice. Two, possibly overlapping, mythic versions of his death exist:

- Thracian women killed him for rejecting the love and companionship of women.
- Thracian Maenads killed him for betraying Dionysus and allying with Apollo.

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*Once upon a time, in many traditions, shamans healed by singing. The myth of Orpheus and Eurydice may refer to a tradition of singing victims of snake bite back to life.*

---

Orpheus' lyre floated to the island of Lesbos where it was enshrined as a holy relic in a temple dedicated to him. Although his body was destroyed, his head continued to prophe-size. It was kept in a sea-cave shrine dedicated to Dionysus until Apollo destroyed it. The lyre was placed in the heavens as the constellation Lyra.

After his death, various Mystery and spiritual traditions emerged focusing on veneration of Orpheus sometimes in conjunction with Persephone and Dionysus. (All three descended into Hades and returned. Dionysus, able to liberate Semele, succeeded where Orpheus failed.) Various poems and hymns are attributed to Orpheus.

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*In another contest with Death, Orpheus outsings those other sweet singers, the Sirens.*

---

Orpheus' myths have inspired literally countless artistic, literary, poetic, musical, theatrical, and cinematic interpretations, including:

- Tennessee Williams' play *Orpheus Descending*
- Jean Cocteau's film *Orphée*, starring Jean Marais
- *Black Orpheus*, the 1959 Brazilian film, transports the myth to Rio de Janeiro

**Manifestation:** He is allegedly *extremely* handsome.

**Iconography:** Orpheus is usually portrayed singing and playing his lyre. Classical images depict him wearing Thracian clothes.

**Attribute:** Lyre

**Spirit allies:** He is venerated alongside Eros and the Muses.

**Sacred sites:**

- The Muses gathered Orpheus' body and buried him in Libeithra, near Mount Olympus, where he had a tomb-shrine.
- The House of Orpheus in Volubilis, Morocco: a large circular mosaic portrays Orpheus charming lions and other beasts with his lyre.

**Offerings:** Roses, musical performances, images of assorted animals

**See also:** *Apollo; Cabeiri; Dionysus; Hades; Muses; Persephone; Semele; Sirens;* and the Glossary entries for *Mystery* and *Shaman*

## Orunmila

*The Sky Knows Who Will Prosper*

**Also known as:** Orula; Orunla; Baba Ifa

**Classification:** Orisha

Orunmila is the sacred diviner. He is the master of Ifa, a complex, sacred system of divination. He also taught people cowrie shell divination. Orunmila is a spirit of righteousness and a miracle healer, considered among the most powerful orishas. He was the only orisha permitted to actually witness Creation. Orunmila is traditionally classified among the Seven African Powers. However, he is a remote orisha with specialized

interests who is not involved with the rank-and-file populace in the manner of other orishas. In recent years, Orunmila's place among the Seven African Powers has been popularly bestowed upon either Oya or Ochossi.

Orunmila is syncretized to Saint Francis of Assisi.

**Attributes:** Cowrie shells, palm seeds, and nuts

**Colors:** Green, yellow

**Number:** 16

**Creature:** Leopard

**See also:** *Ochossi; Orisha; Oya; Seven African Powers*

## Osain

**Also known as:** Osanyin

**Origin:** Yoruba

**Classification:** Orisha

Osain has one eye and one arm. He hops around like a bird on one leg. He does have two ears: one is huge, but the other is tiny and shriveled up. The huge ear is deaf, but the little one is so acute it can hear the sound of a single flower crying or the flap of a butterfly's wings. He has a tiny squeaky voice, possibly similar to the voice of plants.

---

*Osain wasn't born of orisha parents. He sprang from Mother Earth just like a plant with beads shining all over his body.*

---

Osain, divine herbalist and powerful sorcerer, knows all Earth's botanical secrets. (He lost those missing limbs and organs when punished by other orishas for attempting magical world domination.

Ogun saved him from being utterly destroyed; they are now close allies.)  
Osain is the guardian of all medicinal plants.

- Osain may be invoked to help identify herbal cures and to enhance the magical and healing powers of plants.
- Osain is syncretized to John the Baptist and Saints Sylvester and Benedict.

**Favored people:** Botanists, herbalists, healers, plant magicians, pharmacists, and chemists

**Attribute:** Wrought-iron staff surmounted by one or more iron birds

**Emblem:** Gourd ornamented with multicolored beads

**Creatures:** Parrots, roosters, turtles, and goats

**Colors:** Green (also red, white, yellow)

**Numbers:** 6, 7

**Days:** Friday, Saturday

**Offerings:** Osain expects offerings like tobacco, coins, and alcoholic beverages like aguardiente from those who harvest forest botanicals. Leave offerings at the harvest site.

**See also:** *Ogun, Ochossi; Orisha; Oshun;*

## Oshumare

**Also known as:** Ochumare; Oxumare; Oxum Maré

Oshumare is a rainbow serpent originally from Benin (Dahomey), now also venerated in African Diaspora traditions. Oshumare may be part of an ancient triad including Nana Buruku and Babalu Ayé. The three are still venerated together in Bahia, Brazil. Oshumare has dominion over cycles and seasons, like rain versus drought and poverty versus wealth. Oshumare is the orisha of the rainbow and the guardian of children.

Oshumare is invoked to win the lottery and prizes.

**Favored people:** Children; artists; those for whom beauty and aesthetics are a primary concern; gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgendered people

**Attribute:** Cowrie shells

**Emblem:** Rainbow

**Day:** Tuesday

**Colors:** Green, pink, yellow

**Altar:** Decorate with snakes crafted from iron or other metals.

**Offerings:** Oshumare's favorite food is boiled white corn with shredded coconut.

**See also:** *Babalu Ayé; Nana Buruku*

## Oshun

*Great Queen; Daughter of the Mountain; Lady of Waterfalls; Mother of the Waters*

**Also known as:** Ochun; Oxum; Mama Cachita

**Origin:** Yoruba

**Classification:** Orisha

Oshun, Spirit of Sweet Water, is the embodiment of love and romance, wealth, beauty, abundance, and magical knowledge. Oshun has dominion over things that flow: water, honey, love, money, mother's milk, and so forth.

Her power extends over various parts of the human anatomy, particularly the reproductive organs. Oshun is petitioned for personal fertility and to heal reproductive disorders. She fulfills devotees' wishes, providing wealth, employment, love, beauty, and protection. Oshun is a powerful witch and an expert at divination.

Oshun may be Yemaya's daughter or sister. They are extremely compatible and are venerated together. Oshun and Oya do not get along.



Although one devotee may venerate both of these powerful, beautiful, warrior orishas, keep some space, time, and distance between them. Do not bring them close together unless you wish to see sparks fly. Oshun has been married to Orunmila, Shango, and Erinle and has had love affairs with Ochossi, Ogun, and Elegba.

Oshun is the youngest, sweetest, and smallest orisha, but she may be the toughest:

- When Ogun was depressed and sulking in the forest, who was the only orisha capable of lifting his spirits and bringing him back to civilization? Oshun.
- When the Islamic jihad threatened Yorubaland, which orisha stopped the warriors in their tracks and sent them back home? Oshun.
- When the orishas needed to get in touch with the remote Supreme Creator, who was the only orisha capable of flying to Heaven? Oshun in her guise as a vulture.

A spirit of incredible generosity, Oshun is very slow to anger. However, once angered she is reputedly the most dangerous of all orishas and extremely difficult to appease. If you make her a promise and do not keep it, expect her to take back whatever she has given.

Oshun's shrine in Oshogbo, Nigeria, is now designated a UNESCO World Heritage site. The town is under Oshun's protection; the Islamic jihad was halted right outside its walls. A complex of shrines was erected in the forest with the central one dedicated to Oshun. Pilgrims travel from around the world to visit, especially during the annual Oshun festival held in August, typically lasting nine days. Sacrifices and requests are made, particularly regarding fertility. It is also traditional for mothers to attend the festival accompanied by their nursing babies as a gesture of gratitude toward Oshun. Women are welcome at the shrine throughout the year to immerse themselves for a fertility boost.

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*If you petition Oshun for children, then eating pumpkins and yellow squash in any form, including the seeds is taboo for you. Many devotees refrain from*

*these foods, anyway, just from respect, even if nothing is asked of her.*

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In Cuba, Oshun is syncretized to La Caridad del Cobre, “Our Lady of Charity”; in Brazil, she is identified with Catherine of Alexandria.

**Manifestations:** She most commonly manifests as a breathtakingly beautiful woman, usually dressed in yellow or gold. She may manifest as a mermaid. She wears five brass bracelets and may carry or wear a mirror at her belt, the better to be able to stop and admire herself whenever she wishes. Oshun is manifest in honey and in cinnamon.

**Attribute:** A pot of river water, representing her gift of healing magic

**Colors:** The spectrum of yellow, gold, and orange

**Creatures:** River fish, especially catfish; crickets; leopards; crocodiles

**Birds:** Parrots, peacocks, vultures

**Botanicals:** Lantana, marigolds, rosemary, pumpkins, and yellow squash

**Metal:** Oshun is traditionally associated with brass and copper but she now claims dominion over gold, too, as it is perceived as more valuable and prestigious.

**Number:** 5

**Jewels:** Amber, coral

**Planet:** Moon, Venus

**Day:** Friday

**Area:** The bedroom and near fresh, flowing water such as rivers, streams, and waterfalls. She likes the kitchen and is a master chef. Offerings, spells, and supplications are most effective if performed in these places. For maximum effect, perform rituals or petitions for Oshun near a river or stream under a full moon.

**Sacred sites:**

- Nigeria's Oshun River
- The shrine of Our Lady of Charity in Cobre near Santiago de Cuba
- The shrine of Our Lady of Caridad de Cobre in Miami, Florida

**Altar:** Decorate her shrine with smooth river pebbles

**Offerings:** Anything having to do with feminine beauty: makeup, mirrors, brushes, perfume, and so forth. She accepts flowers, and fans made from peacock feathers or yellow sandalwood. She drinks chamomile tea. Her favorite cooked dish is spinach with shrimp. Her very favorite offering is honey. You *must* taste any honey that you offer Oshun, each and every time you offer it, not just upon opening the jar. An attempt was once made to poison her through an offering of honey. All offerings of untasted honey will be rejected, and you may be looked upon with suspicion. Oshun likes yellow and orange fruits and vegetables.

Peel a beautiful orange for Oshun. Slice or divide it into five portions. Drizzle it with cinnamon honey or first drizzle with honey and then sprinkle with ground cinnamon. *Remember:* taste the honey! Serve to Oshun.

**See also:** *Abiku; Babalu Ayé; Erinle; Eshu Elegbara; Ibeji; Logunedé; Oba; Ochossi; Ogun; Orisha; Orunmila; Oya; Seven African Powers; Shango; Yemaya*

## Osiris

*Lord of the Far World*

**Also known as:** Auser

**Origin:** Egypt or Libya

Osiris, ancient deity, is a culture hero. He invented agriculture: the sacred rites of grain. He taught people to bake bread and brew beer. Osiris invented wine, built the first temples, and taught the art of sculpting so that the first statues were formed. He taught musical and theatrical arts. After teaching these arts in Egypt, Osiris traveled around

the world, transmitting his knowledge. He left his sister/wife Isis home as regent of Egypt.

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*In addition to being worshipped in Egypt, Osiris was deeply venerated in Libya. Some scholars believe that he may have originated there as a Berber deity. His name may mean “the one enthroned”—Isis is the throne. His name is also interpreted as “throne of the eye” possibly referring to a legend that Osiris’ soul shelters in the Eye of Horus.*

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Osiris is most famous as a central, if passive, figure in a long, complex Egyptian saga. His brother and rival Set killed Osiris. Isis, Mistress of Magic, together with a posse of spirit allies, attempted to resurrect him. Anubis invented embalming, and Osiris became the first mummy.

Osiris has two primary functions:

- He is the lord of grain, the original John Barleycorn, cut down in his prime every year. The death of Osiris was the subject of annual festivals possibly the prototype for modern Christian passion plays.
- Osiris presides over the Egyptian realm of death. Although usually envisioned as a passive figure, Osiris does command an army of ghosts.

Osiris plays such a complex role that the Greeks identified him with three deities:

- Apollo, Lord of Music, Order, and Civilization
- Dionysus, inventor of beer and wine
- Hades, Lord of Death

**Manifestation:** Osiris is not just the spirit of grain; he *is* grain.

**Iconography:** Osiris is portrayed as a crowned mummy. He is sometimes depicted with wheat sprouting from his body

**Attributes:** The crook and flail of kingship— Osiris, Lord of Death, is the only Egyptian deity who does *not* carry the ankh, symbol of life.

**Emblem:** The Djed pillar is usually understood as Osiris' backbone and represents stability but may also represent his lost phallus or the tree trunk that housed him.

**Creature:** Cat, guardian of grain storehouses

**Colors:** Black, green

**Trees:** Acacia, willow

**Constellation:**

- Orion is the home of his soul.
- Egyptian astrology perceived what we call Ursa Major as Osiris' funeral bier.

**Botanicals:** Frankincense

**Sacred sites:** Shrines across Egypt commemorated where parts of Osiris' body were located and buried. Abydos, the sacred city where his head was found, was the center of his veneration. His mysteries were reenacted in Abydos for over two thousand years.

**See also:** *Anubis; Dionysus; Harpocrates; Horus; Isis; Neith; Nephthys; Sati; Serapis; Set; Zar*

## Otafuku

**See:** Okame

## Ouktazaun

**Origin:** Myanmar (Burma)

Ouktazaun are a type of spirit, essentially a special kind of ghost. A dead soul transforms into an Ouktazaun if death occurred while in the throes of greed for material possessions and wealth. The Ouktazaun is then forced to guard wealth, possibly secret buried treasure, possibly the wealth found in Buddhist pagodas. It is an extremely lonely position, and

the Ouktazaun are frustrated, unhappy ghosts. They may be male or female, but scary Ouktazaun stories tend to feature female spirits.

Once condemned to be an Ouktazaun, there are two methods of escaping one's fate.

- The Ouktazaun finds someone tempted by greed and lures them to a secluded spot with the promise of treasure. Then the Ouktazaun kills its victim and switches identities. The victim must take over guardian duties while the Ouktazaun assumes their identity. This is only a temporary solution, as the switch will only last for a limited time—typically about twenty years—after which time, the Ouktazaun must resume its role. Still, it is a respite.
- The Ouktazaun, pretending to be alive, entices someone to fall in love with him or her. (Many Ouktazaun are very attractive and seductive. Plus they have access to wealth.) Those who are seduced by Ouktazaun will die and then join them as partners, sharing guardianship duties. The role is not escaped, but it is no longer lonely. (If the victim is truly in love and does not feel angry or betrayed, they may even be happy.)

Ouktazaun are potentially dangerous spirits even if they haven't targeted someone to become their substitute or partner. Contact with them can cause death. Protection from them may be obtained via amulets or protective tattoos, especially if the Ouktazaun has already been encountered and is exerting a pull on the victim who is trying to resist. Trained shamans and exorcists can also offer protection and healing.

**See also:** *Ghost; Hannyä; Onryo*

## **Our Good Mothers**

**Classification:** Birth Fairies

**Origin:** Breton

The real name of these Breton birth Fairies is a secret or is forgotten: people prefer to use the euphemism Our Good Mothers to stay on their good side. If you call them your good mother, perhaps that is how they

will behave. These birth Fairies typically appear in groups of three to bestow a baby's fate and fortune. Their leader is Béfind.

**Offerings:** Our Good Mothers enjoy lavish multicourse meals complete with whisky, champagne, wine, and pastries as well as the fruits and nuts usually associated with Fairies.

**See also:** *Béfind; Fairy, Birth; Mothers*

## Ox Boy

**Also known as:** Niu Lang

**Origin:** China

Youngest of three brothers, when his parents died, his brothers inherited everything worth anything. Ox Boy inherited only a tiny, poor piece of land and an old ox (hence his name). Unbeknownst to all, that ox was special, just like Puss in Boots. The ox used to be a star in the sky but was transformed into a beast of burden as punishment for disobedience.

The ox told Ox Boy to steal Weaving Maiden's clothing while she was bathing so that she couldn't return to Heaven. Despite this deception, Ox Boy and Weaving Maiden fell in love. They had a son and daughter and expected to live happily ever after. Up in Heaven, however, deities disapproved of their relationship. Weaving Maiden was dragged back to Heaven. Ox Boy tried to follow, but the Jade Emperor created a line in the heavens that Ox Boy and their children could not cross: the Milky Way.

**Manifestation:** Ox Boy appears in the sky as the star Altair in the constellation Aquila.

**Time:** Ox Boy and the Weaving Maiden are permitted to reunite on one night of the year: the seventh night of the seventh lunar month.

**See also:** *Jade Emperor; Weaving Maiden*

## Oxala

**Classification:** Orisha

Oxala (pronounced *oh-shala*) is a Brazilian corruption of the Yoruba Orisha-Nla, another name for Obatala. Oxala and Obatala are the same deity, although details of their veneration may differ depending on location and spiritual tradition.

Oxala owns white substances. He is a calm, cerebral, intellectual spirit who dislikes violence and dissension.

- In Bahian tradition, Oxala is identified with Our Lord of Bonfim.
- In Umbanda, he is syncretized to Jesus Christ.
- Oxala leads the first line of the seven lines of Umbanda spirits.

**Iconography:** Oxala is portrayed wearing sparkling white clothing and a silver crown.

**Day:** Friday or Sunday

**Color:** White

**Ritual:** Place his offerings on a clean, white cloth.

**Offerings:** Spring water, white candles, white flowers, rice cooked with milk or water but no salt

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*If you cook for Oxala, omit all spices. Keep food bland, cool, and white: white rice, white bread, sour cream, milk, shredded coconut, and so forth.*

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**See also:** *Caboclo; Obatala; Orisha*

## Oya

**Also known as:** Iansa; Yansa

**Classification:** Orisha



According to Yoruba legend, Ogun, sacred ironworker, saw a magnificently horned water buffalo emerge from the Niger River and transform into a beautiful woman. He surreptitiously followed this magical woman: she walked like a queen through the marketplace where she bargained intensely and successfully for fine cloth. Ogun was smitten; he approached her and begged to marry her. She first demurred but when he revealed that he knew her secret identity and threatened to expose her, Oya agreed to marry him but only if he *never* told anyone about her true identity. He agreed and brought her home to his forest compound.

He loved her passionately, but his other wives weren't delighted and sensed that there was something *different* about her. One night Ogun and Oya argued; he lost his temper and shouted out something about her true bovine identity. The other wives, eavesdropping by the door, heard all. Oya knew her secret was revealed; she didn't say another word but simply walked out of Ogun's home—never to return—transformed back into her buffalo shape, and entered the Niger River, over which she presides.

That's one version of their divorce, anyway; another suggests that Oya, the most intellectual of the orishas, was bored sick helping Ogun at the forge. When opportunity arose, she eloped with Shango, his dashing brother who made her his chief adviser.

Oya is the woman warrior orisha of storms, winds, and hurricanes. The winds she raises in West Africa manifest as hurricanes in the Caribbean. Oya presides over healing and necromantic divination. In Venezuelan Espiritismo, she has dominion over justice and memory. She is invoked for fertility, especially after chronic miscarriages. Oya may be the true mother of the Abiku, the child born to die.

Oya has become increasingly popular in the past few decades and is now among the most beloved of Santeria's orishas. Oya's devotees traditionally refrain from eating mutton. Never sacrifice to Oshun and Oya simultaneously (except when invoked as members of the Seven African Powers). Both are married to Shango, and theirs is a long enmity. Oya is Shango's trusted adviser who rides to battle by his side. Oshun, however, is reputedly Shango's favorite wife. She modestly attributes this to her culinary skills. Oya may be venerated alongside

Ogun or Shango but *not* both simultaneously on the same altar.

Oya protects against lightning, electrocution, hurricanes, tornadoes, and storms. She heals lung diseases. Oya is syncretized to Saint Barbara, Saint Barbara Africana, and Saint Teresa of Avila.

**Favored people:** Librarians, spirit mediums, female merchants, entrepreneurs and shop keepers, women warriors, equestriennes, meteorologists, cemetery workers, morticians

**Manifestations:** Oya manifests as a woman, an antelope, or a water buffalo. She wears nine copper bracelets.

**Attribute:** Black horsetail switch, lightning bolt

**Elements:** Fire (lightning), air (wind), water (river), and earth (graveyard)

**Color:** Maroon

**Day:** Thursday

**Number:** 9

**Metal:** Copper

**Creatures:** Antelope, Water Buffalo, Sheep, Locust

**Tree:** Akoko (*Newboldia laevis*), Camwood

**Plants:** Camphor, Cypress, Flamboyant, Marigold, Mimosa

**Planet:** Uranus, Dark Moon, Shooting Stars

**Sacred sites:** Oya is the spirit of the Niger River. The island of Jebba in the river is sacred to her.

**Altar:** Place a pair of horns on her altar to represent her. Strike them together to call her. Place two swords on her altar as well as smooth river pebbles.

**Realm:**

- Oya rules the marketplace, considered the magical domain of women.

- She rules the cemetery and is the only orisha willing to have contact with the dead.

**Offerings:** Oya likes starfruit, black-eyed peas, purple plums, and black or purple grapes. Her favorite food is eggplant. Nine eggplants are a traditional offering, but if this is not affordable, slice one eggplant into nine pieces. Special ritual meals include eggplant with rice or nine-bean soup. In Brazil, her ritual offerings include bean fritters called *acaraje*. She drinks red wine. Offerings may be given at a home altar or brought to the cemetery gates for her.

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*Allegedly Oya can prevent hauntings by the recently dead or protect against them. Signal that you need her help via a piecework banner in nine distinct colors.*

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**See also:** *Abiku; Ayao; Ibeji; Muso Koroni; Oba; Ogun; Oshun; Orisha; Seven African Powers; Shango; Yemaya; Yewá*

## P

### **Pachacamac**

*Earth/Time Maker; The One Who Animates the World*

**Also known as:** Pachapapa

**Origin:** Peru

The name *Pachacamac* derives from two Quechua root words:

- *Pacha* indicates time, space, Earth, the universe, and the world.
- *Camac* is a creator, animator, soul, or essence.

Pachacamac is a sky spirit, the soul, essence, and animator of the universe. Pachamama, his consort and co-creatix, is an Earth goddess. Together they create and rule the world. Their religion began on Peru's Pacific coast and spread into the Andes. Most of what is known about historic devotion to Pachacamac derives from Inca and Spanish sources. He predates the Incas in the region.

Veneration of Pachacamac rivaled that of Viracocha. His sacred city, also known as Pachacamac, containing his central shrine and oracle, was the holiest site in coastal Peru during the pre-Incan and Incan eras. Pilgrims journeyed from afar to access his oracle. It was not his only temple—by the sixteenth century, a network of his shrines spread from the Pacific coast to the Andean highlands.

Although conquistadors silenced his oracle, Pachacamac remains revered and venerated. Pacha camac communicates via earthquakes. Every tremor is a message. His anger produces crop failure, huge quakes, or other natural disasters.

**Iconography:** Pachacamac is represented by small wooden idols.

**Attribute:** A wooden staff with a human face carved on each side,

destroyed by Hernando Pizarro, brother of conquistador Francisco Pizarro.

**Consort:** Pachamama

**Sacred site:** The center of his veneration was the pilgrimage city named Pachacamac near modern Lima.

**Offerings:** Cotton, maize corn, dried fish, coca leaves, fabric, ceramic drinking vessels, and sea shells, especially red *Spondylus princeps* shells. He also traditionally receives lavish offerings including gold and silver. The Pachacamac oracle was a storehouse of wealth comparable to the votive offerings housed in great cathedrals. Pachacamac's priests hid this treasure from oncoming conquistadors. The whereabouts remain a mystery and continue to inspire treasure hunters.

**See also:** *Pachamama; Viracocha*

## **Pachamama**

**Also known as:** Mama Pacha

Pachamama is the living Earth, sacred mother and matrix of all life. Mythology books tend to focus on state deities worshipped by rulers, thus attention is paid to Viracocha and Pachacamac. Pachamama was the most beloved goddess of the masses. She is the force that makes agriculture possible. She presides over human, animal, and Earth's fertility. After conversion to Christianity, many of her functions were reassigned to the Virgin Mary.

Veneration of Pachamama was shared by various cultures of the Andes and environs. Depending on tradition and cosmology, she may be partnered with Pachacamac, Inti, or Supay. Pachamama still receives regular offerings, although these are typically considered payments, not offerings. The food on the table, medicinal herbs, the very ground on which we walk, all are gifts from Pachamama.

- Pachamama expresses anger via earthquakes or by withholding abundance.

- Pachamama responds to personal requests from devotees.

**Manifestation:** Pachamama is present in Earth but she also manifests herself in the guise of a beautiful woman typically wearing a long, red dress. She wears a llama wool shawl.

**Iconography:** She is portrayed as an indigenous Peruvian woman. She may carry a child.

**Attribute:** Full bag of some kind of produce

**Feast:** 1 August

**Month:** August

**Day:** Friday

**Creature:** Llama

**Plant:** All botanicals but coca leaves are specifically described as her “host”.

**Ritual:** Offerings are placed on an altar, burned, or given directly to Pachamama by inserting into Earth. Offer libations by spilling liquid onto Earth—on the floor doesn’t count. Solid offerings are buried, usually near the giver’s residence. Burn incense as usual.

**Sacred sites:** Stone altars dedicated to her in the center of fields

**Offerings:** Incense, cooked food, water, beer and other alcoholic beverages, coca leaves, cigarettes, miniature women’s clothing (similar to Barbie doll clothes)

**See also:** *Gaia; Pachacamac; Supay*

## **Padilha, Maria**

**Also known as:** Maria of the Seven Crossroads

**Origin:** Brazil

In the sixteenth century, Portugal was the first nation to deport Gypsies

(Roma), first to its colonies in Africa and then to Brazil. Maria de Padilla traveled with them. (See also: *Padilla, Maria de.*) She underwent a sea change, emerging in Brazil as the foremost Pomba Gira, Maria Padilha. As Exua, she is the bride of Exu, who in Catholic-influenced traditions is identified with Satan. (See also: *Exu; Pomba Gira.*)

Just like her Spanish alter-ego, Maria Padilha evokes powerful reactions:

- Some worship her as a queen and goddess.
- Others identify her as Satan in the guise of a sexy woman and warn that invoking her leads to disaster.
- Other devotees adore this diabolical persona and venerate her even more.

Maria Padilha's behavior may depend on how she is perceived and invoked. If you think she's the devil in disguise, she may have fun living up to expectations. However, she is potentially a protective spirit of tremendous power and generosity. She is volatile and expects to be consistently treated like a queen. Whatever rage the original Maria de Padilla sublimated when denied her proper title is freely and vigorously expressed by her Brazilian alter-ego. Now called *Rainha Maria Padilha* ("Queen Maria Padilha"), she has assumed her rightful place.

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*Padilha is the Portuguese spelling of the Spanish Padilla. They are pronounced identically: pa-DEE-yah.*

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She is a sex goddess, a Tantric goddess, a goddess of sex for pleasure, not procreation, although she is capable of blessing devotees with fertility. Maria Padilha is a crossroads goddess who provides direction and opportunities for devotees. She breaks through obstacles, no matter how challenging, and is invoked for love, sex, money, and protection. She is also invoked to provide protection from pregnancy, venereal disease, and sexual abuse.

She may be venerated at domestic altars but offerings are traditionally brought to three-way crossroads (T or Y shaped) after dark. Most modern crossroads are traffic intersections, so offerings are usually left at the side of the road. Offerings for her may also be left at the foot of the large cross in traditional cemeteries. This is the traditional method of offering:

1. Lay a black cloth on the ground, covered by a red cloth. (Colors may be reversed. It doesn't matter which is on the bottom but these cloths effectively become her altar. Home altars should be draped with fabric, too.)
2. Light seven red taper candles for Maria Padilha while invoking her.
3. Give her a bottle of champagne or anisette. Open it for her. Pour her a glass, ideally a champagne flute or other elegant glass. Leave the rest in the open bottle.
4. Give her cigarettes or cigarillos. Open the pack; pull out one a little bit for her. Make sure you leave her fresh matches (a book, pack, or box—not just a match) or a nice lighter.
5. Give her seven beautiful long-stemmed roses from which *you* have removed the thorns by hand. If the only roses available are dethorned, don't worry about it; but if not, don't let anyone remove them for you. You do it. If roses are beyond your budget, she may accept red carnations.

This ritual traditionally accompanies petitions for Maria Padilha. Tell her exactly what you desire. (She can deliver virtually *anything*.) The standard promise is to return with more lavish offerings when your desire is received. In other words, you will return with better champagne, more expensive cigarettes, or more luxurious gifts. Tell her precisely when to anticipate receipt. She is not patient.

In Brazil, traditionally offerings including burning candles are just left beside the road, but this is not necessarily feasible or socially (or legally) acceptable elsewhere. Either find or create a place where this is possible or stay until candles burn out—use small candles, not long red tapers—or, if necessary, pinch out the candles, deferentially explaining to Maria Padilha why this is necessary. Bring the candles home or to a safe place



and relight them for her.

**Favored people:** Women, crossdressers, prostitutes, sex workers

**Manifestation:** A beautiful, glamorous woman. She may be crowned or in various states of undress.

**Iconography:** Maria Padilha is portrayed as a beautiful Gypsy or a naked, red-horned devil-woman.

**Consort:** Officially Exu, but she is often paired with the orisha Ogun, at least in magic spells.

**Bird:** Black pigeon ideally with red legs

**Days:** Monday, Friday

**Colors:** Black, red

**Incense:** Dragon's blood

**Number:** 7

**Offerings:** Seven red roses, seven red carnations, anisette, champagne, cigarillos, Nat Sherman red or black cigarettes, perfume, ornaments and hand mirrors fit for a queen, sex toys

**See also:** *Exu; Ogun; Orisha; Padilla, Maria de; Pomba Gira*

## **Padilla, Maria de**

**Also known as:** Maria Padilla

**Origin:** Spain

During her lifetime, many considered Maria de Padilla (circa 1334–1363), secret wife of Pedro I, King of Castile and Leon (30 August 1334–23 March 1369), to be a goddess of love. Others were absolutely convinced that she was a wicked witch. After she died, some perceived her as a kind of benevolent, if temperamental, Fairy queen. Others considered her a female devil. Both fans and harsh critics alike invoke her aid from beyond.

Maria de Padilla is a goddess of romance, sex, glamour, witchcraft, prosperity, and dreams come true. She is a primary figure in old Iberian love magic, petitioned for true love, faithful lovers, and revenge. She was born in Spain to a family of *conversos*, Jews who had converted to Catholicism but whose sincerity was often suspected, even after several generations. (Some of Maria's later associations with the devil may stem from these suspicions.)

The English princess to whom Pedro was betrothed died of the plague as she approached Spain. (Maria's long-reaching magic is sometimes blamed for her death.) Pedro responded by secretly marrying Maria. It was a marriage of love and passion, not politically arranged. They had four children: three girls and a boy. By all rights Maria was queen, but she was not a politically advantageous bride. Maria lived like a queen in a luxurious palace. She was the queen of Pedro's heart, but she was never granted the title or official public acknowledgment.

In the summer of 1353, under pressure from his family and the royal court, Pedro denied that Maria was his wife, claiming her as only his mistress, leaving him an eligible bachelor. He wed twice more, to Blanche of Bourbon and to Juana de Castro but abandoned each abruptly after only several days of marriage to publicly return to Maria's side.

His marriage to Blanche was allegedly never consummated. People accused Maria of sorcery, of maintaining her hold on the king via magic. Rumors spread that Maria had enchanted a gold belt that Blanche had given Pedro as a wedding gift. It transformed into a snake when he put it on. Maria allegedly wore a ring in which a Djinn was imprisoned. Solomon's ring enabled him to command Djinn. Maria's ring enabled her to command and bewitch men, subjecting them to her will.

Maria was perceived as the power behind the throne. She was the star of a luxurious court in Seville, filled with the mystic scholars and occultists who once made Spain their home. As documented by the Spanish Inquisition, Maria is invoked in Iberian love magic usually intended to make errant lovers return and obey the spellcaster. (Ironically, Pedro was a man who could not be told what to do. Although he continually returned to Maria, he constantly left her, too. He had a harem of mistresses.) These spells attest to the belief in her

power but also associate her with infernal powers. Traditional Iberian love spells tend to call upon a standard cast of characters. Starring alongside Maria are demons and manifestations of the devil: Satan, Lucifer, Beelzebub, Barabbas. The roots of Brazilian Exu and Maria Padilha are found in these spells.

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*In Prosper Mérimée's 1845 novella, Carmen (source material for Bizet's opera), the gypsy Carmen sings magical songs invoking Maria de Padilla, who is described as Bari Crallisa, "Queen of the Gypsies."*

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She is partnered with Asmodeus in the most famous spell associated with her. The spell requires a tiny bit of lodestone dust and brandy or other alcoholic beverage.

1. Add the powder to the drink just before bedtime and chant:

*To the Mount of Olives one day I did go  
Three little black goats before me I spied  
Those three little goats on three carts I laid  
Three black cheeses from their milk I made  
One I bestow on the Lodestone of Power  
So that it will save me from all ills this very hour  
The second to Maria Padilla I give  
And to her court of ladies about her who live  
The third I fetch for Asmodeus the lame  
That he fetch for me whomever I name!*

2. Name the lover you desire out loud; drink the potion and go to sleep.

**Manifestation:** The historic Maria de Padilla is described as petite, beautiful, and intellectually brilliant.

**Sacred site:** Her presence is palpable in Seville's Alcazar, where her room, bath, and pleasure garden may be viewed; she is buried to Pedro's right in the Cathedral of Seville.

**Offerings:** Roses, champagne, gifts fit for a queen

**See also:** *Ashmodai; Beelzebub; Djinn; Exu; Fairy; Intranquil Spirit; Padilha, Maria; Pomba Gira; Solomon, King*

## **Padmasambhava**

**Also known as:** Guru Rinpoche; Padmakara

**Classification:** Buddha; Yidam

Padmasambhava—scholar, magician, adept, and Buddha—was born from a lotus flower. He traveled widely learning occult secrets. He lived in a charnel field for five years while tutored by Dakinis who taught him mystic, Tantric secrets.

Padmasambhava traveled to Tibet where he battled and subdued Bon spirits one by one, forcing them to agree to become guardians of Tibetan Buddhism. He lived in Tibet for fifty-five years. He left riding a winged blue horse, accompanied by an entourage of spirits. His consort, Yeshe Sogyel, a Dakini and Buddha, remained behind, entrusted to continue his spiritual mission and to hide his books and Buddhist treasures. An unknown number remain hidden in Tibet to be revealed when the time is right. Padmasambhava lives on a copper mountain in the middle of the sea together with devotees, magicians, and spiritual adepts, including those destined to someday recover his books.

**Iconography:** Padmasambhava is a frequent subject of Thangka paintings. He is often portrayed between his two consorts.

**Attributes:** Lightning bolt, skull

**Consorts:** Mandarava, Yeshe Sogyel

**Sacred sites:** Among the many Himalayan locations associated with Padmasambhava:

- His cave in Yerpa, Tibet
- Bhutan's Tiger's Nest Monastery (*Taktshang*), so called because Padmasambhava flew there on the back of Yeshe Sogyel, who transformed into a flying tigress

**Time:** On the tenth day of each waxing moon, Padmasambhava returns to his old hermit's cave on Mount Tise. At this time he will bless anyone who calls out his name.

**Mantra:** *OM AH HUM VAJRA GURU PADMA SIDHI HUM*

**See also:** *Bon Spirits; Buddha; Dakini; Eight Dharma Protectors; Palden Lhamo; Vajra* and the Glossary entry for *Mantra*

## **Palden Lhamo**

*Great Lady; Queen of Armies; The Triumphant Mother*

**Also known as:** Penden Lhamo; Shri Devi (India); Okkin Tungri (Mongolia)

**Origin:** Tibet

Palden Lhamo is the only female amongst the Eight Dharma Protectors. She is deliberately terrifying so that she can fight evil forces and overcome Buddhism's enemies. Palden Lhamo was originally a Bon goddess now sworn to uphold the Dharma. Her associations with divination and Lake Lhamo La-Tso predate Buddhism.

Once upon a time, she was married to a violent, bloodthirsty tyrant king. She begged him to mend his ways but to no avail. Finally she announced that if he wouldn't cease killing, she would personally destroy their child so the king would experience the pain of loss. He called her bluff. It was a mistake. Palden Lhamo killed her son and now carries his body with her as proof that *nothing* will stop her from seeking peace.

In another version, Palden Lhamo married the violent king of Sri Lanka, vowing to either convert him to Buddhism or terminate his dynasty. He had no inclinations toward Buddhism and so she killed their son. She flayed the boy, ate his flesh, and drank his blood from a skull cup, then stole the king's finest stallion and, using her son's skin as a saddle blanket, headed home to the Himalayas. The enraged king shot the horse with a poison arrow but Palden Lhamo magically neutralized

the poison. She transformed the horse's wound into an eye which constantly watches protectively over Buddhists.

Palden Lhamo protects divination and diviners. She presides over a form of Mo, a Tibetan divination system utilizing dice. There are different Mo methods: Palden Lhamo's system utilizes three dice engraved with numbers one through six. Palden Lhamo casts dice to determine people's destinies.

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*Palden Lhamo swallowed all Earth's diseases to prevent them from causing harm, stuffing the leftovers into a black bag. She selectively releases illnesses in order to overcome enemies of the Dharma.*

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Palden Lhamo protects Buddhist governments everywhere. She is the personal protector of Tibet and the Dalai and Panchen Lamas. She protected China beginning with the thirteenth century Yuan Dynasty until the end of the Ching Dynasty in the twentieth century.

In India, Palden Lhamo is identified with Yama's wife Chamundi or as a wrathful path of Sarasvati.

**Manifestation:** Palden Lhamo can take any form in her quest to bring people closer to enlightenment. She has twenty-one different paths.

**Iconography:** Palden Lhamo rides sidesaddle while crossing a sea of blood on her white mule. Her reins are poisonous snakes. Sometimes she rides through flames. She is depicted with red hair to indicate her wrathful nature, she is ornamented by a peacock-feather parasol, and she wears a garland of skulls.

**Attributes:** Dice, bag containing dice, black bag containing disease, ball of magic thread, peacock-feather fan, scepter topped with a skull, hammer

**Sacred allies:** Palden Lhamo may be accompanied by a spirit entourage, including Dakinis and the Five Sisters of Long Life.

**Creatures:** Mule, lion, snake

**Color:** Dark blue

**Planet:** Crescent moon

**Mount:** Palden Lhamo rides sidesaddle on a wild white mule covered with a blanket made of flayed human skin.

**Sacred site:** She presides over Lhamo La-Tso, “Life Spirit Lake of the Goddess,” the holiest lake in Tibet. It is an oracle: visions are received by gazing at the water.

**See also:** *Bon Spirits; Buddha; Dakini; Eight Dharma Protectors; Padmasambhava; Sarasvati; Tenma; Yama;* and the Glossary entries for *Oracle* and *Path*

## Pales

**Origin:** Italy

Pales, among the oldest deities of the Roman region, is extremely mysterious:

- Pales may be male.
- Pales may be female.
- Pales may even be both.

Ancient rumor whispers of a liaison between Pales and Vesta, who may not always have been so virginal. Pales may be the inspiration for the donkey-headed lover of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. Pales provides fertility to people, land, and animals. Pales, a guardian of flocks, protects domestic animals. (Pales should not be confused with Pallas of Greek myth.)

**Iconography:** Pales is usually envisioned in the form of a donkey.

**Sacred site:** Pales had a temple on Rome's Palatine Hill.

**Feast:** 21 April, Pales' festival, the *Parilia*, coincides with the anniversary of the founding of Rome. Pales' revelers jumped over a row of three

burning piles of hay and were sprinkled with water from soaked bay laurel boughs. The Parilia was a raucous, rustic, beloved festival.

**Offering:** Lukewarm milk

**See also:** *Faunus; Pallas; Set; Vesta*

## **Pali Kongju**

*The Rejected Princess; The Seventh Princess*

**Origin:** Korea

Shamans, magicians, and hoodoo doctors brag about being the seventh son. Pali Kongju is the seventh daughter. She is Korea's primal shaman. All others are her spiritual children. Variations on her myth exist depending on location and who's telling the story. The consistent part is her identity as the rejected magical, royal seventh daughter.

An ancient emperor had six daughters but no sons. When his wife conceived again, he was sure this child would be the long-awaited boy. He was devastated by the birth of another daughter. Pali Kongju is lucky number seven, but her father didn't see it that way. He was so enraged at the birth of yet another girl that he had her sealed inside a stone box and thrown into a pond. Luckily the Dragon King rescued her and brought her to his court where she grew up.

What happens next differs, but Pali Kongju mercifully returned to rescue her family.

- Her father became deathly ill (possibly as a consequence of his mistreatment of her).
- Alternatively an eighth child, the long-awaited boy, died in infancy.

Pali Kongju's mother heard that the fabled Water of Life could heal or revive. The six older princesses refused to search for the water. Pali Kongju, age fourteen (twice seven), felt her mother's anguish and vowed to bring her the Water of Life.

She learned that the water was kept in the Western Sky. After a



harrowing journey, she arrived only to discover that the well-keeper (or gate-keeper, depending on the version) expected to be paid for the water (or admittance). Pali Kongju didn't have a dime. She labored for nine years to earn the water, yet this was still insufficient. She married the gate-or well-keeper and bore seven sons before being permitted to leave with the water. In the interim, her father and mother had both died, but the Water of Life resurrected and rejuvenated them. (Alternatively she brought her baby brother back from the realm of death and revived him.)

Pali Kongju is venerated by Korean shamans. She banishes ghosts, soothes restless spirits, and may be invoked to transmit and receive messages from those on the Other Side. She is petitioned to rescue souls stuck in hell dimensions. She leads souls back and forth over the thresholds of life and death.

**Favored people:** Shamans

**Number:** 7

**See also:** *Dragon Kings of the Sea; Ma Zu; Miao Shan; Toyotama-hime*

## Palici

**Also known as:** The Palaci; Palikoi

**Origin:** Sicily

The Palici are sacred twins, indigenous Sicilian deities, venerated before the arrival of Phoenicians or Greeks in Sicily. The Palici were born from the waters of a sulfurous lake or from fissures beside it. They are mentioned in the writings of Ovid and Virgil. Vestiges of their temple beside Lake Naftia were visible as late as the sixteenth century. Their parentage is subject to debate:

- Their mother may be Aetna or Thalia, not the Muse but a Mount Aetna Nymph.
- They may be sons of Adrano, Zeus, or Hephaestus. (To complicate matters, the Thalia from Mount Aetna may be Hephaestus' daughter.)

- The Palici may have no parents—they may have simply sprung from Earth or water.

The Palici are spirits of justice, rebellion and revolution:

- From 460–440 BCE, Sicilians rebelled against Greek invaders. Their capital city was named Palike to honor the Palici.
- In 104 BCE, Salvio, leader of the second War of the Slaves against the Romans, invoked the Palici, considered patrons of slaves.

Vows and oaths were taken before the Palici because no one would dare lie. They administer justice swiftly, punishing liars with blindness. (The modern Sicilian custom of swearing by one's eyes is a vestigial memory of the Palici.) Their primary shrine was at Lake Naftia near the modern towns Mineo and Palagonia. (*Palagonia* derives from *Palici*.) Lake Naftia, called the Cradle of the Palici, was considered their birthplace.

Oaths and verdicts were rendered at their shrines, which were judicial as well as spiritual centers. Decisions rendered by the Palici were final and binding, definitively so. People were immersed in their springs, and:

- If they emerged, the Palici had deemed them innocent.
- Those who died had been punished by the Palici.

Don't envision these springs as serene, still waters. The Palici's waters roil, boil, and can be extremely deep. Levels of sulfuric fumes vary, sometimes reaching dangerously toxic levels. (Birds or small animals tossed in did not survive the poison fumes.) Verdicts could also be rendered via divining tablets that were tossed into the lake's gurgling craters. Guilt or innocence was interpreted based on whether the tablets resurfaced and the manner in which they did.

**Favored people:** Slaves (their shrine was a sanctuary for mistreated slaves who could not be forced to leave), the oppressed, the unjustly accused, fighters for justice

**Sacred site:** The Palici are associated with geysers, sulfurous lakes, and springs. Their sacred lake is now harnessed for industrial use to produce

carbonated beverages.

**See also:** *Adrano; Aetna; Hephaestus; Mephitis; Muse; Zeus*

## Pallas

Pallas is often used as just another name for Athena, who is also frequently called Pallas-Athena. Pallas was, however, originally a distinct deity, the daughter of Triton, Poseidon's son, or Brontes the Cyclops. Greek myth describes how as a child, Athena was sent to live with one of those deities (different versions of the myth assign Pallas different fathers) at his home on the shores of Libya's Lake Tritonis. (There is also another male spirit, a Titan, named Pallas. Although the two spirits share the same name, they are not the same.)

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*A Berber version of this myth suggests that Pallas and Athena were full—not foster—sisters and both daughters of the lake spirit, indigenous Libyan deities, one and all. An alternative Greek version suggests that the girls weren't children and they weren't just playmates. They were lovers, hence Athena's devastation when Pallas died.*

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Pallas, Athena's foster-father's daughter, was not only her foster-sister but her best friend and playmate until one day Athena forged a lance for herself. She challenged Pallas to a game in which Pallas was killed with the brand-new weapon. Athena, distraught and desolate, set up a shrine dedicated to Pallas, hanging her own goatskin shield upon it. Vowing that Pallas would never be forgotten, she adopted her name, referring to herself as Pallas-Athena with Pallas' name placed first. (This is unusual: the primary deity's name is usually first.)

This myth has lent itself to centuries of speculation:

- Was Pallas really Athena's lover?
- Is the reason Athena rejects all other relationships because she still

mourns for Pallas?

- Is Pallas really Athena, her secret identity, shadow self or alter ego, now left for dead?

Was Pallas' death really an accident? Or did Athena, never otherwise known to have accidents, kill Pallas the same way she engineered Medusa's death? Is Athena amputating parts of herself or her past as a metalworking, snake goddess? As she reformed her identity, Athena kept souvenirs: Medusa's head and Pallas' name.

It is now virtually impossible to distinguish between the two spirits. Pallas has become completely subsumed by Athena. The name *Pallas* indicates a robust, young woman. She may be the matron of female martial artists.

Pallas will share altar space with Athena, Metis, Medusa, and lots of snakes.

**Iconography:** Athena atoned for Pallas' death by crafting the Palladium, a statue of Athena in her guise as a warrior with lance and shield. Although the image is dressed as Athena, she used Pallas' likeness as the actual model for the woman. The Palladium is a statue of Pallas dressed as Athena. Pallas and Athena are merged.

The word *palladium* now also means an image on which a city's safety magically depends. Athena's original Palladium ended up in Troy but was stolen at war's conclusion by Diomedes and Odysseus. The Trojan Horse could not have worked until the Palladium was removed from the city. Athena did not reveal this to Odysseus: the secret was revealed by Cassandra's twin, the prophet Hellenus, after he was captured by the Greeks. (Another version claims Helen of Troy whispered the secret to Odysseus.)

**See also:** *Athena; Cyclops; Helen of Troy; Iodama; Medusa; Pales*

## Pan

**Origin:** Greece

“O goat-foot god of Arcady ... This modern world hath need of Thee!” So wrote poet Oscar Wilde. Beginning in the nineteenth century, Pan became a symbol of wild nature, the untamed libido, primal human nature, and also Paganism. It is no coincidence that James M. Barrie’s wild little hero is named Peter *Pan*.

Pan is the spirit of wild, irrepressible life essence. He is sexually voracious, always chasing after Nymphs, always ready for a romantic interlude with men, women, and probably goats, too. People tend to laugh at Pan because they perceive him as bestial and ugly. Many paintings portray Nymphs running from him, but they tend to be the exception. Pan’s erotic talents are legendary. He even seduced Aphrodite. Pan swore to have sex with every Maenad, and he kept his word.

Pan is no trivial woodland sprite. He is a *great* god of tremendous power. His name derives from *Paon*, a “pasturer.” Pan is lord of fertility, wild nature, ecstatic music, wild goats, shepherds, flocks, and hunters. He bestows musical skill. Officially he is the son of Hermes and a Nymph, but other myths suggest that he is older than the Olympic pantheon:

- Pan allegedly taught Apollo the art of prophecy.
- He gave Artemis her first hunting hounds.

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*There are many man-goat spirits, including Faunus, Krampus, and Ördög but references to the goat god usually mean Pan.*

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Pan is the spirit of corners, thresholds, borders, and edges. He is most likely seen at twilight at the edge of the woods from the corner of your eye. The word *panic* derives from *Pan*. It’s the reaction caused by his shout. Pan has no need for conventional weapons as his voice is sufficient to instill panic. The Greeks credited Pan with causing the Persians to flee in absolute terror at the Battle of Marathon.

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*Ancient Greek hunters considered Pan their patron. They offered him trophies of their success, usually heads or skins, but if results were disappointing, they scourged his image, demanding that he provide better luck next time.*

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Pan may be a musician but he inspires authors:

- Arthur Machen's 1890 novella, *The Great God Pan*
- Algernon Blackwood's 1912 book, *Pan's Garden*, and 1917 story "The Touch of Pan"
- Lord Dunsany's 1927 novel, *The Blessing of Pan*
- Dion Fortune's 1936 occult novel, *The Goat Food God*

Pan inspires artists, too, including Rosaleen Norton, Arnold Böcklin, Franz Von Stuck, and Mikhail Vrubel. Pan was among the first deities embraced by Neo-Paganism. He is invoked for vitality, health, fertility, and successful, exciting adventures, romantic or otherwise.

- Pan is among the dancing spirits in Dionysus' entourage.
- Pan is venerated alongside Nymphs, Hermes, Dionysus, and Ariadne.

**Favored people:** Shepherds, hunters, free spirits. He is now a patron of gay love.

**Manifestation:** Pan has a man's head and upper torso and shaggy goat's horns, legs, and hindquarters.

**Iconography:** Images of Pan served as the prototype for the Christian devil.

**Attribute:** Pan-pipes

**Spirit allies:** Pan is venerated alongside Hermes, Dionysus, and Nymphs.

**Creature:** Goats

**Season:** Spring

**Colors:** Purple, brown, green

**Place:** Pan's preferred haunts include fields, groves, caves, and forested mountains.

**Time:** Do *not* petition Pan at noon or anywhere near lunchtime. He likes to nap and is cranky if woken. Twilight or the evening hours are the best time to contact him.

**Date:** October's full moon is called Pan's Moon (alternatively: Lover's Moon), traditionally the night when one's true love is revealed in dreams (and, depending on what is witnessed, possibly cause for panic).

**Sacred site:** Pan had an altar beside Demeter and Despoena's Arcadian shrine.

**Offerings:** Honey, milk, erotic images, musical instruments especially pan-pipes

**See also:** *Apollo; Ariadne; Artemis; Demeter; Despoena; Dionysus; Faunus; Hermes; Nymphs; Olympian Spirits; Ördög; Orpheus*

## **Pandora**

*All Giving; Rich in Gifts*

**Also known as:** Anesidora: "The Sender Forth of Gifts"

**Origin:** Greece

Has any goddess ever been more defamed than Pandora? Hesiod's version of her myth is so famous and familiar that the term *Pandora's box* has entered the cultural vocabulary, but his account is a perversion of an earlier myth.

In the oldest version, Pandora emerged out of Earth as an avatar or emanation of Gaia, not from the workshop of the Olympian spirits. She brought gifts, not curses. Her gifts to humanity are botanical, including fruit, herbs for magical, healing, and culinary use and flax for clothing. Pandora is a plant goddess. She brought humanity another present, too: flint stones with which to make fire. Pandora taught people to make fire: they didn't have to wait for lightning from the sky or another deity to

steal it for them. Perhaps this fire was later hidden, necessitating Prometheus' theft. According to Hesiod's version, Pandora's very existence is the result of that theft. Hesiod tells his story twice:

- In the mythic cycle, the *Theogony*, she is anonymous, only described as “*beautiful evil*.”
- In his *Works and Days*, Hesiod names her.

Zeus was angry at Prometheus for bringing fire to humanity. Having punished Prometheus, he decided to punish people, too. Pandora, described as the first woman, was the vehicle of punishment. The Olympic spirits collaborated on her creation: she is a joint production. Zeus sent her to Earth as a gift for Prometheus' brother, Epimethius. Prometheus warned him not to accept any gifts from Zeus, but Pandora was too luscious to refuse. The deities had sent her to Earth with a closed box, telling her never to open it. She disobeyed, releasing every sort of disease and misery—the gifts that she is now credited with giving.

*Pandora* means “all gifts”: ask her for what you desire.

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*Hesiod calls Pandora the founder of the “deadly race and tribe of women.”*

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**Manifestation:** Pandora is a beautiful woman wearing a golden crown decorated with images of land and marine creatures.

**Iconography:** Pandora is a favorite subject of artists ancient and modern. She appears on the frieze at the base of Athena's votive statue in the Parthenon. Greek vase paintings demonstrate more generous, traditional images of Pandora: she emerges from Earth, arms upraised to greet her viewer. Modern artists inspired to create images of Pandora include John William Water-house, Jules Joseph Lefebvre, Henrietta Rae, and Dante Gabriel Rossetti.

**Attributes:** A box or large storage jar (*pithos*)



**See also:** *Athena; Gaia; Olympian Spirits; Prometheus; Rhea; Zeus*

## **Parcae**

**Origins:** Italy

The Parcae are the Italian Fates. Their name derives from the Latin root *Parere*, “to bear” or “to give birth.” They are spinning goddesses comparable to Moirae or Norns. Originally there were only two Parcae, Decuma and Nona. Later, to correspond with the prototype of the Greek Moirae, they became a triad with the addition of Morta. The Parcae include:

- Nona, who rules the nine months of pregnancy
- Decuma, who rules birth
- Morta, who rules death

**See also:** *Fairy, Birth; Fates (1); Moirae; Norns; Ursitory*

## **Pari-May**

Pari-May is Queen of the Apsaras, or at least the Apsaras of Mauritius. Pari-May is witnessed dancing with her entourage by the shores of Grand Bassin. She may be petitioned independently and is traditionally invoked by women seeking fertility.

**See also:** *Apsaras*

## **Parnashvari**

*The Leaf-Clad Lady*

**Also known as:** Parnashavari; Loma Gyunma; Logyonma

**Origin:** India

Originally a forest goddess, Parnashvari was absorbed into the Tantric Buddhist pantheon, where she is considered an emanation of Buddha

and a manifestation of Avalokiteshvara.

- On her original incarnation, Parnashvari is a goddess of healing leaves.
- As a Buddhist deity, she pacifies negative forces while simultaneously increasing and enhancing the powers of righteousness.

Parnashvari is invoked to make peace with angered Nagas. She is propitiated to prevent, heal, and end epidemics.

**Iconography:** Parnashvari has three faces and six arms. She wears a skirt and a garland made of medicinal leaves. She wears one poisonous snake as a necklace and another as a hair band. (Snake venom is an ingredient in traditional Indian and Tibetan medicine.)

**See also:** *Avalokiteshvara; Buddha; Nagas; Osain*

## Parvati

### *Daughter of the Mountain*

**Origin:** India

Parvati is most famous as Shiva's bride and Shakti, but she is a goddess in her own right. Because so many Hindu goddesses, including Durga and Kali, are now officially identified as avatars or paths of Parvati, they can be very difficult to disentangle.

Her central myth describes how Parvati as a little girl fell in love with Shiva and determined to marry him. It was what she was born to do: Parvati is the reincarnation of Sati, Shiva's first love, although he does not recognize her and still grieves for Sati. Parvati may or may not be the same deity as Uma.

She undergoes tremendous austerities to attract Shiva's attention and win his love. They do not always live happily ever after. Shiva and Parvati have a passionate but sometimes contentious relationship. He is a difficult husband, often more committed to his spiritual path than to his relationships or domestic responsibilities. ("What domestic responsibilities?" he would ask.) Parvati is no wilting violet but a proud,

powerful, defiant goddess of love and fertility. She is truly Shiva's match and not afraid to stand up to him. Parvati works very hard to maintain Shiva's erotic interest. She ornaments herself with henna, which allegedly creates irresistible sexual allure. Karttikeya is their son, but Parvati conceived Ganesha all by herself.

In her earliest incarnation, Parvati is a mountain goddess who presided over a court of Fairy spirits. She reputedly invented rice cultivation. She is now rarely venerated without Shiva but may originally have presided over women's mysteries. Men are still not permitted into the inner sanctums of her shrines.

Parvati is a generous, benevolent goddess invoked for fertility, prosperity, and domestic happiness. She is petitioned to find and win true love and to maintain sexual interest. Parvati is kind but temperamental. She is known to hold a grudge. If angered, she can allegedly only be propitiated by women. Parvati may be invoked alongside Ganesha, who adores her. Ganesha may be requested to mediate with his mother.

**Manifestation:** She is extremely beautiful but can take many forms from the seductive to the terrible. She may appear as a dark-skinned or fair-skinned woman.

**Attributes:** Red cloth, crescent moon, vulva (yoni), mirror, bell, rosary

**Color:** Red

**Fruit:** Citron (*Citrus medica*)

**Plants:** Henna (*Lawsonia inermis*)

**Sacred site:** Mount Kailash, her home

**Flower:** Red lotus, blue lotus, yellow lotus

**Creature:** Lioness

**Mount:** Lion, tiger, or white lioness

**Tree:** Rudraksha (*Elaeocarpus ganitrus*)

**See also:** Anjani; Durga; Fairy; Ganesha; Kali; Karttikeya; Nang Kwak;

*Pashupati; Sati; Shiva; Uma; and the Glossary entries for Avatar and Path*

## **Pashupati**

### *Lord of the Beasts*

The earliest documented appearance of Pashupati is on a seal from Mohenjo-Daro in the Indus Valley, dated circa 3000 BCE. He is portrayed sitting cross-legged in a yogic posture surrounded by animals. Ancient hunting traditions were closely associated with shamanism. Pashupati is the horned, trance-dancing lord of India's shamanic hunters. He is the lord of the beasts, guardian of animals' souls. Pashupati mediates between needs of hunters and animals.

Unlike so many other horned spirits, devotion to Pashupati was never suppressed nor was he demonized. He remains actively venerated but is now identified as a path or manifestation of Shiva. Once upon a time, Shiva, bored and frustrated with life, decided to go live with the animals in the Katmandu Valley's Slesmantak Forest, now in modern Nepal. He lived there anonymously for a while, but eventually other spirits (and his wife) came looking for him and his true identity was revealed. Shiva returned to his home and responsibilities but still assumes the guise of Pashupati when the mood hits him.

**Iconography:** Pashupati, wearing a high-horned headdress and surrounded by animals—including a bull, rhinoceros, and deer—resembles Cernunnos on the Gundestrup Cauldron.

**Sacred site:** The region associated with Pashupati remains the holiest Hindu pilgrimage site in Nepal. A temple dedicated to Shiva existed at this site by 879 CE, although the present temple was erected in 1697. The temple is filled with images of Shiva, especially numerous lingams, representing Shiva in his aspect of the divine phallus.

**See also:** *Cernunnos; Faunus; Ördög; Pan; Parvati; Shiva; Sylvanus*

## **Pasiphae**

## *Wide Shining*

### **Origin:** Crete

An exquisite white bull emerged from the sea—a gift from Poseidon to King Minos of Crete. It was a sign of favor but this gift came with strings attached. Minos was expected to sacrifice this bull to Poseidon. The bull was too beautiful: Minos couldn't bring himself to part with it and so a lesser bull was offered to the sea lord instead.

Angered, Poseidon took his revenge on Minos' wife Pasiphae. She was cursed with an obsessive sexual desire for the white bull. Pasiphae persuaded the master craftsman Daedalus to craft a wooden cow that she could hide within in order to indulge her lust for the beautiful bull. In this manner, she conceived the Minotaur.

Pasiphae is most famous in Greek mythology as the wife of Minos and the mother of their many famous children. Pasiphae's genealogy, however, indicates that she was no mere mortal queen. Her parents are Helios the sun and Perse, eldest of the Oceanid sisters. Pasiphae's sisters include witch goddesses Circe and Hekate. Pasiphae's niece is Medea.

Pasiphae is an ancient Minoan moon goddess who is as skilled in magic as her sisters. One legend suggests that she was raised in Colchis, Hekate's hometown. The myth of Pasiphae hiding inside a wooden cow in order to have sex with a bull may have been intended to humiliate and degrade a powerful and popular goddess, to make her appear grotesque by conquerors who sought to impose a new pantheon on the Minoans. Alternatively, it may have been told by newcomers to Crete who gazed at Minoan sacred images but did not understand them.

The Minoans were bull worshippers. The origins of her Greek myth may recall the mystic marriage and sacred union of a high priestess and a deity, possibly similar to the myth of Zeus and Europa. One theory is that Minos' white bull was really Poseidon in disguise. Alternatively, the myth may commemorate the sacred union of a goddess and her high priest: the "bull" may originally have been a masked high priest.

Pasiphae is a mistress of magic. Another myth records the fidelity spell she cast over her husband causing him to ejaculate venomous snakes and scorpions that killed any of his mortal lovers. Only Pasiphae, as an

immortal (or theoretically any other goddess) was immune.

Pasiphae was venerated outside Crete, too. She was worshipped alongside Helios in Thalamae, Sparta. Their shrine featured two bronze sculptures of the goddess. The sculpture in the courtyard was accessible to all but the one within the shrine was allegedly difficult to see because of the quantity of flower garlands bedecking it.

Pasiphae is a lunar goddess of witchcraft and magic. Invoke her if you seek respect, need to restore your reputation, or to help tame your cheating spouse.

**Manifestation:** Beautiful Pasiphae has the golden glint in her eyes that characterizes the children of Helios.

**Iconography:** Pasiphae has long inspired artists. A Greek vase painting from the fourth century BCE, now in Paris' Bibliothèque Nationale, depicts Pasiphae with the Minotaur lovingly seated on her lap.

**Spirit allies:** Helios, Circe, Hekate, Medea, and Angitia

**Bird:** Goose or swan

**Planet:** Moon; Pasiphae is also the name given to one of Jupiter's moons.

**Sacred site:** Pasiphae presided over an oracular shrine in Thalamae. Devotees slept in this shrine hoping to receive prophetic dreams.

**Offerings:** Flower garlands, spring water, images of bulls and snakes

**See also:** *Akalli; Alcyone (1); Angitia; Ariadne; Asklepios; Circe; Europa; Hekate; Helios; Jupiter; Medea; Oceanids; Olympian Spirits; Poseidon; Zeus*

## **Pattini**

**Also known as:** Patni; Kannaki Amman

Pattini, currently the most prominent, widely venerated female spirit in Sri Lanka, presides over marriage, chastity, and fidelity. Veneration of Pattini dates back to at least the second century CE. and is believed to

have originated in Southern India. Since the fourteenth century, she is considered among the spiritual guardians of Sri Lanka.

Pattini transcends religious boundaries: she is a Hindu *and* Buddhist goddess and has many Muslim devotees, too. Her myth is retold in the Tamil poem “Silappadikaram” but variations exist. Her myth emphasizes the sacred nature of marriage bonds. Although Pattini never complains, it is implicit that her husband’s bad luck and eventual death stem from his disloyalty and infidelity. His actions prevent Pattini from becoming a mother: first he neglects her sexually, and then he dies before she can conceive.

Pattini was once a mortal woman named Kannaki whose husband Kovalan spent all his time, attention, and money on a courtesan. When the money ran out, the courtesan kicked him out. His family refused to help. His friends proved false. Only Kannaki was loyal. Traveling to the city of Madurai to make a fresh start, she gave Kovalan a gold anklet to sell in the market. The goldsmith to whom he brought the anklet was a corrupt thief. He had stolen an anklet that resembled Kannaki’s anklet from the queen. He decided to pin the theft on Kovalan, who was arrested. Kovalan proclaimed his innocence, but the king had him executed on the spot.

When Kannaki found out, she went to the palace and, displaying the matching anklet as proof of Kovalan’s innocence, demanded justice. Nothing offered satisfied her. What she wanted was her husband (or, as with Isis, her opportunity to have his child).

Kannaki transformed into Pattini, wrathful goddess. The power she radiated was so incredible that the king dropped dead instantly. In rage and fury, Pattini ripped off one of her breasts and flung it into the city square, which instantly burst into flames. Everyone who witnessed her husband’s arrest and death was burned alive. Survivors later saw Pattini climbing a hill from whence she entered a chariot that carried her off into the sky. They immediately began worshipping her.

- Pattini is invoked to ward off plagues, malicious spirits, and evil influences.
- She heals and prevents contagious illnesses, including measles and chicken pox.

- She bestows prosperity and personal fertility.

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*It is traditional to make offerings to Pattini after one's wish is fulfilled, not before. When petitioning, tell her clearly and explicitly when offerings will be made: after full recovery from illness or after a baby is born, not just conception confirmed, for example.*

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**Unfavored people:** Pattini despises liars and has no sympathy for women who cheat on their husbands or women who sleep with married men.

**Iconography:** Pattini is portrayed holding one breast aloft or as a glamorous, bejeweled goddess.

**Attribute:** Ankle bracelet

**Number:** 7

**Tree:** Vengai (*Pterocarpus marsupium*)

**Offerings:** Incense, fresh fruit **See also:** *Isis; Ma Zu*

## **Peacock Angel**

*King of the World; The Creator's Angel*

**Also known as:** Malak Taus; Melek Taus; Melekh Taus

**Origin:** Yezidi

Melek Taus or the Peacock Angel is the primary deity of Yezidism, the religion of the Yezidi people. *Yezidi* is related to *Yazata* (See also: *Yazata*) and may be translated as “people of the angels.” The Yezidis are ethnic Kurds who live in the mountains of what is now northern Iraq. Because Islam perceives them as heretics or devil worshippers, they are terrorized and persecuted. The most infamous example occurred on 14



August 2007, when a suicide bomber targeted and killed at least four hundred Yezidis.

Yezidism is a complex religion with what appear to be shamanic, Sufi, Gnostic, Jewish, Mandaean, Zoroastrian, and pre-Zoroastrian influences. This doesn't surprise the Yezidis, as they perceive that they possess Earth's oldest religion, the primeval faith. Everyone else derives from them. The world's major monotheistic faiths (Judaism, Christianity, Islam) claim descent from Abraham. The Yezidis claim to be pre-Abrahamic. By living in isolation in the mountains, they were able to maintain their ancient religion, although it is now heavily influenced by Islam, which surrounds them.

The Yezidis are monotheistic. There is one Supreme Creator who created seven angels, one on each of the seven days of Creation. The Peacock Angel was first. In the beginning, the Peacock Angel emerged as an emanation from the formless Supreme Creator. The Peacock Angel is the Supreme Creator's vehicle to create and administer the world. The Creator then produced six other angels to help the Peacock Angel. They correspond to the seven archangels and the seven colors of the rainbow. These six angels are Dardiel, Israfil (Raphael), Michael, Gabriel, Shammael, and Uriel.

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*Yezidism was organized by twelfth-century Sufi master Sheikh Adi ibn Musafir, although it is much older. He allegedly received their holy book directly from the Peacock Angel. Sheikh Musafir is venerated as an avatar of Melek Taus.*

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When the Peacock Angel descended into the physical dimension, the colors of the rainbow took the form of a peacock, which flew around the world, blessing every spot until landing in Lalish, now in modern Iraq. The Yezidis consider Lalish the most sacred place on Earth. The Peacock Angel is responsible for Earth's beauty, especially flora and fauna. He is the protector and teacher of humanity, although he lives in a different dimension. Someday, in an apocalyptic time of great danger, he will

return, probably as a peacock or rainbow. In the meantime, he is everywhere, all the time, and so devotees can always call upon his help.

At Creation, the Creator ordered the seven angels never to bow down before anyone but Him. When Adam was created, He seemingly rescinded this order, directing the angels to prostrate themselves before a new creation. Six of seven angels obeyed. There are two ways of looking at this:

- It was a test (something like when Abraham was ordered to sacrifice Isaac or like Job's angel-inspired persecution). The Peacock Angel may have failed or alternatively may have been the only angel to pass.
- The Peacock Angel defied the Creator and was punished. Cast into the abyss, he repented and wept so grievously that his tears extinguished the fires of the inferno. (The Peacock Angel may have cried for seven thousand years.) The all-merciful Creator forgave the Peacock Angel, who was reinstated as chief angel. The Peacock Angel now supervises the world on behalf of the Creator.

The Peacock Angel is a title, not a name. It is a direct translation of *Melek Taus*, which translates as "Peacock Angel" or "Peacock King." The names of the assisting angels are familiar (Michael, Gabriel, Raphael). So who is the Peacock Angel?

The Peacock Angel is most often identified as Azazel or Lucifer, leaders of the Rebel and Fallen Angels, respectively. (Lucifer is also a title, not a true name and may be interpreted as "the one who brings light.") Yezidis are labeled devil worshippers because Muslim neighbors consider the Peacock Angel to be the devil. The Yezidis do not agree. Their religion does not possess the same concepts of the devil, hell, or sin as Islam does. Instead, the Peacock Angel is the savior and ruler of the universe, made even more compassionate by time spent in the abyss.

**Manifestation:** He does not always manifest as a peacock but has many forms, including a man, boy, little girl, snake, bright light, or rainbow.

**Iconography:** Melek Taus is usually represented by an image of a peacock.

**Day:** Sunday

**Color:** Blue, but he also encompasses all seven colors of the rainbow. Because blue is so sacred and exclusive to the Peacock Angel, devotees may avoid personal use.

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*An important deity venerated by the Feri spiritual tradition is called Melek Taus, the Peacock Angel or the Blue God. This Melek Taus may or may not be the same deity as that worshipped by the Yezidis.*

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**See also:** *Aradia; Azazel; Gabriel; Melk; Michael; Raphael; Yazata*

## **Pelé**

**Also known as:** Pele-honu-amea (Pelé of the Sacred Land); Pele-‘ai-honua (Pelé Eater of Land)

**Origin:** Polynesia

**Classification:** Akua; Aumakua

Pelé is currently the world’s most famous volcano goddess, but she is also so much more. Pelé is a divine ancestress and a spirit of righteous, if temperamental, justice. She provides for those she considers her people in times of famine, drought, and need. Pelé destroys, but she is also a vigilant guardian. Pelé is a love goddess: much of her mythology focuses on her romantic and erotic adventures. She is incredibly generous and incredibly temperamental. Her fury is akin to a volcano blowing its top. She is a lusty goddess who loves music, dance, food, drink, and handsome men.

Pelé is an ancient goddess and a modern urban legend. She is a living spirit who likes to mingle with people. Pelé makes frequent corporeal appearances. In other words, those who encountered her first thought she was a human being until Pelé somehow revealed her goddess identity. Pelé may be the prototype for the modern urban myth of the vanishing hitchhiker.

Hawaii's most famous goddess, daughter of Haumea and Kanehoalani, was born in the Society Islands in either Tahiti or Bora Bora. When she was born, the image of flames could be seen in her eyes. Her uncle Lonomakua, the island's fire keeper, had been waiting for years for someone to whom he could transmit his knowledge. When he saw Pelé's eyes, he knew she was the one.

Fiery phenomena increased. Island hot spots spontaneously burst into flames. Pelé and her uncle were blamed, accused of stoking fires in subterranean caverns. Pelé and her older sister, the water goddess Namaka fought and Pelé was banished, placed on a canoe with supplies and any siblings who chose to travel with her.

Her arrival in Hawaii was heralded by lightning and volcanic eruptions. She initially had trouble finding a home. Namaka pursued her, dousing Pelé's flames. Finally Pelé burrowed into the volcano Kilauea on the big island of Hawaii, her home base ever since. Pelé likes to travel. There are legends about her throughout the Hawaiian isles. She is not a stay-at-home goddess but likes to get out and see people. Pelé rescues people who are gracious, polite and kind to her (usually by warning of dangers on the road).

On the other hand, she allegedly curses those who remove anything from her volcano (rocks, plants). The curse manifests as bad luck, trouble, unemployment, illness, or accidents. Some claim that this is an invented legend, but over two thousand pounds of rocks are returned to Hawaii Volcanoes National Park annually, accompanied by letters from people describing their misfortune. Even if Pelé didn't originally think of the curse herself, she seems to have adopted it with gusto.

Pelé is an extremely adaptable goddess, very capable of adjusting to modern times. She likes roads. She likes cars. She seems to have fun playing the role of vanishing hitchhiker. She may or may not actually hitchhike. She often stands or walks on a very lonely road after dark. She appears old and fragile, not at all threatening. A kind person would stop and ask if she was all right or if she needed a ride. Those who do *not* pick her up often meet with trouble. Alternatively, she just magically appears in their car anyway.

Pelé protects her descendents and those she loves. She is a mistress of

magic and hula dancing. (The official 2008 poster for the annual Merrie Monarch Festival of Hula and Hawaiian Culture features an image of Pelé.)

In December 1824, Chiefess Kapiolani, an early and fervent convert to Christianity, defied Pelé. She traveled up to the Kilauea fire pit. People followed weeping, convinced that she would die. Kapiolani marched several hundred feet into the crater. Then she threw rocks into the pit, announcing that Jehovah was her god and that he, not Pelé, had kindled the volcano flames. That story is very famous. There's a second half that's less frequently recalled.

In 1881, almost sixty years after Kapiolani's defiance, lava streamed toward the town of Hilo. Princess Ruth Ke\_elik\_lani, a traditionalist who hewed to Hawaiian spiritual traditions, was delegated to propitiate Pelé. She brought her brandy, silk scarves, and offered traditional prayers right in sight of a Christian Church. The lava, which had already reached the outskirts of Hilo, immediately stopped.

**Manifestation:** Pelé manifests in any form she desires: young, old, gorgeous, haggard. Her hair may be black, red, white, or silver. She likes to dress in red. Pelé's skin may be scorching hot or ghost cold to the touch. Theoretically any woman might be Pelé, so all women should be treated with respect.

If she wants to identify herself, she will. The classic example involves a mysterious hitchhiker who after settling herself in the vehicle requests a cigarette. Before the person who gives it to her can offer a light, the hitchhiker manifests fire right out of her naked hands. She lights her cigarette, the flame in her hands vanishes, she has no burns. She may disappear shortly after.

When she hitchhikes, Pelé appears as a solitary old lady, often in traditional Hawaiian dress. She appears on the beach as a beautiful young Hawaiian woman in a scarlet muumuu accompanied by an entourage of dancers. In any guise, her most frequent companion is a little white dog. So-called ghost-lights may signal her presence. (Science suggests these mysterious dancing lights are caused by gas escaping from terrestrial fissures, which sounds like something Pelé would cause.)

**Iconography:** Pelé is a favorite subject of artists. In particular, portraits by Herb Kawainui Kane have achieved iconic status.

**Attributes:** Flames are her primary attribute; she may also leave behind three long silver hairs as her calling card.

**Spirit allies:** Kamapua'a; Pelé has a close relationship with many shark spirits. (She is literally related to many of them.)

**Creatures:** Dog, shark

**Sacred sites:** Active volcano Mount Kilauea (she reputedly lives within Halema'uma'u crater but the whole mountain is her home). The site of her ancient temple is now occupied by the Hawaiian Volcano Observatory and the Thomas A. Jaggar Museum, which features Herb Kawainui Kane's Pelé murals. Mauna Loa also belongs to her.

**Tree:** 'Ohi'a lehua (*Metrosideros collina*)

**Plant:** Sadlaria (red) ferns, ohelo (*Vaccinium reticulatum*). Pelé claims the ohelo berries that grow on her mountain. The ohelo is not just any plant: it grew from the bones of her mortal sister, Ka'ohelo. The mountain berries are reserved for Pelé (and endangered Hawaiian nene geese).

**Color:** Red, orange, flame

**Element:** Fire

**Offerings:** Offerings are traditionally left respectfully at the crater's edge but may be placed on home altars, too: crystals, roast chickens, flowers, ohelo berries, flame-colored silk scarves or other luxurious fabrics. Pelé is frequently given cigarettes, gin, brandy, or other alcoholic beverages. However, this is controversial: many traditional Hawaiians do not approve.

**See also:** *Akua; Haumea; Hi'iaka; Kahoupokane; Kamapua'a; Kamohoali'i; Kane; Kapo; Kihawahine; Laka; Lilinoe; Lono; Namaka; Poliahu; Waiiau*

**Perkunas**

**Also known as:** Perkons

**Origin:** Baltic

Perkunas, Lord of Fire, is the Baltic thunder spirit. Thunder is his voice. Perkunas eventually became the chief Lithuanian deity, protector of the state. (Despite his power, Perkunas is subordinate to Laima and must defer to her.) During the last officially Pagan centuries in Lithuania, Perkunas was the most famous and widely venerated deity. In 1583, Jesuits visiting Lithuania were dismayed to witness active veneration of Perkunas and his oaks.

Perkunas revives Earth's fertility. The first clap of thunder in spring shakes sleeping Earth awake and purifies the waters. People waited for that first thunder of spring, eagerly anticipating Perkunas' blessings. Traditionally soil wasn't tilled in spring until after Perkunas had given the go-ahead, via the first thunder. Perkunas controls rain and thus agricultural fertility and abundance.

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*Perkunas travels through the sky in a fiery, noisy, two-wheeled chariot drawn by goats. He lives in a huge castle on a mountain in the sky.*

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Perkunas protects social order. He is a righteous spirit of justice but is impatient, restless and ruthless. Perkunas is the sworn enemy of wicked people and malicious spirits. He banishes evil spirits and protects people from them. Perkunas transmits healing power via lightning-struck trees and stones. He protects from fever, toothaches, and illnesses caused by fright (what in Latin America would be called *susto*). The thunderstones he drops from the sky radiate fertility power.

Perkunas communicates via thunder. Starting from the vernal equinox, if there is no thunder in spring, this is a bad sign indicating hard times ahead, possibly epidemics, natural disasters, or famine. If the season's first thunder occurs on Saint George's Day (April 23), this is an excellent, auspicious sign.

Perkunas and his priesthood were once major landholders: he marks his territory with lightning. Lightning-struck trees, hills, and forests are sacred to Perkunas and were once dedicated to him. Territory claimed by Perkunas was surrounded by oak groves, fenced, protected by moats, and reserved for sacred use. Sacred fires dedicated to Perkunas were maintained by women described by observers as Vestals.

**Favored people:** Soldiers, warriors, farmers. Those who survive being struck by lightning are consecrated to him.

**Unfavored people:** Perkunas hates liars, thieves, and selfish ungrateful sons.

**Manifestation:** In Lithuania, he is envisioned as a vigorous man with a copper-colored beard. In Prussia, he is an angry middle-aged man with a long, twisted black beard.

**Attributes:** Double axe, lightning bolt

**Birds:** Cuckoo, pigeon

**Element:** Fire

**Sacred site:** His temple in Vilnius was considered the most important pre-Christian Lithuanian shrine.

**Day:** Thursday (honor him by burning a candle or otherwise kindling a flame)

**Dates:** Perkunas is honored throughout the year, especially on the following dates:

- 2 February, Candlemas
- Easter Sunday
- 24 June, Perkunas' Fire
- 29 June, Perkunas' Day
- 1 October, Perkunas Day

**Trees:** Ash, oak

**Plant:** Rue



**See also:** *Amberella; Ausriné; Gabija; Laima; Meness; Shango; Thor; Vesta*

## Persephone

**Also known as:** Kore

**Origin:** Greece

Persephone's modern claim to fame is as Hades' abducted bride. Hades knew Demeter, Persephone's devoted mother, would never agree to their marriage and so went behind her back, made private arrangements with Zeus, Persephone's father, and then just kidnapped the young girl to bring her to his subterranean palace.

They did not figure on Demeter's persistence. She refused to accept Persephone's disappearance but searched for her tirelessly, eventually engaging in a strike that brought people *and* deities to their knees. (Demeter is goddess of agriculture. When she strikes, there is no food. When people starve, they stop making offerings to deities who then, in turn, starve.) Eventually a deal was negotiated. Persephone would have returned to the upper world completely except that she had eaten six pomegranate seeds from Hades' garden. Since she had eaten the fruit of the dead, Persephone spends half the year as Hades' queen and half the year with her mother. Together Demeter and Persephone preside over the Mysteries at Eleusis, the most famous Mysteries of the ancient world.

The myth makes Persephone seem like a pawn fought over by the more experienced Demeter and Hades. However, scholars suspect that Persephone—whose name may be interpreted as “destroying face”—is an ancient goddess of death. Persephone may be the original ruler of Hades. In order to obtain his throne and establish rulership, Hades may have had to kidnap her in the same manner that Poseidon raped Amphitrite and Zeus tricked Hera into marriage. Persephone may actually be more ancient than Demeter or Hades with some scholars placing her origin as early as the Neolithic era.

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*When Persephone returns to Earth from Hades, she is accompanied by a*

*procession of dancing Charites, Horae, and Moirae, three groups of three spirits: nine beautiful dancers.*

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Persephone is invoked to find true, new or lasting love. She owns a box of beauty, which she may lend out to other goddesses and devotees: she is requested to enhance beauty and charisma. Persephone banishes ghosts and facilitates communication with dead souls. She is invoked for painless, peaceful death.

**Favored people:** Widows

**Manifestation:** Persephone manifests as a young beautiful woman.

**Iconography:** Persephone's image reputedly wards off ghosts.

**Attributes:** Pomegranate, horse harness (because according to the Eleusinian Mysteries, Persephone returned to Earth in a horse-drawn wagon or because of her mother's history as a horse goddess)

**Spirit allies:** Demeter, Dionysus, Orpheus. The Sirens are her servants, friends, and companions; Hekate is her handmaiden and messenger; Artemis and Athena are her friends; Aphrodite is her rival.

**Month:** Persephone returns to her mother in May, the month in which grain is expected to emerge from Earth.

**Constellation:** Virgo, interpreted as a solitary woman holding a stalk of wheat or the divine child

**Trees:** Black poplar, willow, pomegranate

**Plant:** Parsley

**Altar:** Decorate her altar with images of Medusa, her protective guardian device.

**Offerings:** Spring flowers, roses, black crystals

**See also:** *Adonis; Amphitrite; Ascalaphus; Cha rites; Demeter; Despoena; Dionysus; Hades; Hekate; Hera; Horae; Kore; Kyane; Maia; Menthe; Moirae;*

*Orpheus; Proserpina; Sirens; Styx; Zeus* and the Glossary entry for *Mystery*

## **Petro**

**Also known as:** Petwo

**Origin:** Haiti

At its simplest, Haitian Vodou consists of two pantheons: Rada and Petro. The Petro spirits or lwa are hot, volatile, powerful, angry, and fast. *Fast* means they tend to deliver petitioner's requests quickly. Ask them for something, and they will likely do it fast or not at all. (There are exceptions.) They expect that speed from others, too: the Petro lwa are fierce, uncompromising spirits. If you make a promise to any of them, keep it. Quickly.

The Petro are tense, alert spirits who crackle with energy. They are not calm or cool-headed. They are spirits who experience the world as a battleground and are ready to fight and win. Many devotees love them because the Petro are vigilant protectors who anticipate the worst so are always on guard. Some, although not all, will fulfill less ethical requests.

Perhaps appropriately for spirits who are willing to travel into shadowy territory, the origins of the Petro pantheon are obscure in comparison to the more documented Rada. The name may refer to the legendary Don Petro. (See also: *Petro, Don*.) Alternatively the Petro pantheon is heavily influenced by Congolese traditions. Africa's Congo region was wracked by civil wars, tribal warfare and conflict stimulated by the early introduction of Christianity even before the slave trade.

Many, although not all, of the Petro spirits are fiery paths of Rada lwa who come from Africa. Others were born in the Western Hemisphere. However the entire pantheon is considered an indigenous Haitian pantheon. The Petro lwa emerged during slavery and their ritual vocabulary evokes remembrance of this time. Tools like whips and gunpowder once associated with oppression are now wielded by the lwa instead.

**Attributes:** Fork and spoon—this has subliminal resonance: Haitian slaves (and later peasants) and Rada spirits eat with their hands. Petro

spirits eat with utensils like French colonials and slave masters.

**Element:** Fire (Petro lwa are considered fiery even if they are water spirits like Simbi La Flambeau or Agwé La Flambeau)

**Color:** Red and black for the pantheon (individual spirits may also have other colors)

**See also:** *Agwé La Flambeau; Bizango; Baron Kriminel; Bossu; Carrefour, Maitre; Damballah; Ezili; Ezili Dantor; Ezili Gé Rouge; Ezili La Flambeau; Lwa; Marinette; Ogun; Petro, Don; Rada; Simbi*

### **Petro, Don**

**Also known as:** Don Pedro; Jean Petro

The historic Don Petro is credited as the founder of the Petro Vodou tradition. Jean-Philippe Pedro was a Vodouiste and leader of Maroons. The word *Maroon* derives from *Cimarron*, “wild one,” and was the name given runaway slaves. These weren’t just rare individuals: Maroons formed communities in remote locations where they formed fierce political resistance movements against slavery and colonial rulers.

Author Moreau St. Méry wrote that Don Petro of Petit Goave founded the Petro tradition in 1768. The sometimes violent ceremonies became infamous. They terrified the colonials. Petro spirits (and by extension devotees) are defiant and will not be condescended to or patronized, let alone ordered about.

After he died, Don Petro returned to the tradition he founded as a lwa. He is considered an ancestor of the tradition and thus of devotees. Don Petro is renowned for resisting oppression on behalf of his devotees.

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*Myth suggests that Ezili Dantor and Don Petro are the parents of the entire Petro pantheon. This may be meant literally but may also indicate that they are the couple who preside over the spiritual tradition. They may be the Petro equivalent of Rada’s Ayizan and Loko.*

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**See also:** *Ayizan; Ezili Dantor; Loko; Ochossi; Petro; Simbi Spirits: Simbi Makaya; Rada*

### **Petro, Ti Jean**

**Also known as:** Ti-Jean Zandor; Prince Zandor; Ti-Jean-Pied-Fin; Petro-e-Rouge

*Ti Jean Petro* literally means “Little Jean Petro.” (*Ti*, pronounced *tee*, is the Kreyol variant of the French *petit*.)

- Ti Jean Petro may be another name for Don Jean Philippe Petro, founder of Petro.
- He may be Don Petro’s biological son or a spiritual heir.
- He may be Ezili Dantor’s son and/or lover.
- He may be a (re-named) African spirit who may have been channeled by Don Petro.

Ti Jean Petro is a passionate, aggressive, and sometimes violent spirit.

**Favored people:** Sorcerers, including those involved with malevolent magic

**Manifestation:** Ti Jean Petro manifests as a one-legged dwarf. Similar small, one-legged spirits roam through the African bush.

**See also:** *Baka; Ezili Dantor; Petro, Don*

### **Phii Krasue**

#### *The Filth Ghost*

**Also known as:** Phii Krasyy

**Origin:** Thailand

The Phii Krasue is a deadly, nocturnal, parasitic spirit who makes her home within living people, typically old, solitary women, usually spinsters or widows. During the day, the Phii Krasue rests within her

host. At night when the woman sleeps, the Phii Krasue slips through her mouth to go hunting. She flies around in search of favorite foods: blood, human excrement, placentas, and the intestines of pregnant women and unborn children. She will also consume raw fish and meat.

Usually the Phii Krasue returns to its host at daybreak but if it can locate and attack a laboring woman, the Phii Krasue will stay away until these victims are totally destroyed, no matter how long it takes. First she kills the baby by eating its intestines. She drinks blood that spills during the birth process. The Phii Krasue enters the mother's body, essentially taking the baby's place. The mother wastes away, growing ever thinner while simultaneously experiencing desperate cravings for raw or fishy foods, the tip-off that the Phii Krasue is present. When the mother finally dies, the Phii Krasue returns to its original host or finds another old woman to dwell within.

The Phii Krasue cannot be killed or destroyed but can be obstructed, banished, or injured. (An injured Phii Krasue will depart to lick its wounds, possibly literally.)

- Yan cloths, Thai fabric amulets, obstruct and banish her.
- Rooms must smell clean. The Phii Krasue is lured by the aroma of blood or decaying flesh. The placenta must be removed and buried immediately.
- Fragrant, protective incense may repel the Phii Krasue.

A trap may be laid for the Filth Ghost during childbirth:

1. Place thorns beneath the building where delivery occurs (easier with traditional, old-fashioned houses built on stilts) or on the floor wherever blood might drip.
2. Phii Krasue is trapped when her trailing viscera catch on the thorns. She must rip them in order to escape and will then fly away, at least temporarily.

Because her primary hosts are old women and favorite victims are laboring women, Phii Krasue is often considered a female phenomenon. Men shouldn't feel too comfortable, though, as they are not immune.

Phii Krasue lurks in bathrooms to attack both men and women, causing hemorrhoids while trying to grab one of her favorite foods.

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*Phii Krasue is sometimes translated as “witch,” referring to the old woman harboring the parasitic ghost. The host generally does not know she is possessed. She is an innocent victim, but legendary associations with the Phii Krasue encourage bias against solitary old women.*

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**Manifestation:** The Phii Krasue is an invisible parasite within a human host. When she emerges, she manifests as a woman’s head atop dangling entrails. She has sharp fangs and a slurping tongue. Flying at night, she may emit blinking or phosphorescent red or green lights. She can make herself invisible but may be heard lapping up blood or making eating noises.

**See also:** *Aswang; Mae Nak*

## **Phii Mae Mai**

### *The Widow Ghost*

**Also known as:** Phi Mae Maai

**Origin:** Thailand

**Classification:** Ghost

Women who suffer abrupt, violent, and untimely deaths are traditionally considered among those most likely to transform into destructive ghosts. The potential life energy contained within women becomes an instrument of wrath. In traditional Thai ghost-lore, some of those women evolve into Phii Mae Mai, literally “widow ghost.” The woman may not literally have been a widow while alive: the Phii Mae Mai manifests voracious sexual hunger, which Thai folklore associates with sex-starved

widows.

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*It would be interesting to know whether dead women who transform into Phii Mae Mai were naturally lusty while alive, sexually exploited, or victims of sex crimes, but there is little traditional interest in the Phii Mae Mai herself Focus is entirely on protecting her male victims.*

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The Phii Mae Mai is blamed for unexplained nocturnal deaths of men, especially vigorous young men. Phii Mae Mai roam around at night, alone or in ghostly girl gangs, searching for men to satisfy sexual cravings. They will ride a man all night, leaving him dead in the morning.

In 1990, Phii Mae Mai became the focus of public panic when they were blamed for an alarming number of deaths. Young men were mysteriously dying in Thailand and overseas, including almost six hundred Thai laborers in Brunei, Malaysia, Saudi Arabia, Singapore, and Taiwan.

Official medical explanation was Sudden Unexpected Nocturnal Death Syndrome attributed to a high-carbohydrate diet consisting almost exclusively of sticky rice. It was explained that insulin overproduction, stress, hard labor, and unsanitary living conditions contributed to death. Syndrome symptoms included extreme fatigue and muscle pain. Death was caused by heart or respiratory failure while asleep. Further investigation indicated that this syndrome dated back at least to 1983.

Villagers subsisting on similar diets weren't sure about that diagnosis. They blamed the Widow Ghost. Phii Mae Mai can't be destroyed but can be tricked, obstructed, and repelled. She is a resolutely heterosexual ghost with virtually no interest in women.

- Men who dress as women at bedtime may foil her attack: super-feminine lingerie and red nail polish (red considered a feminine color) are recommended.
- Really big phallic amulets distract or repel Phii Mae Mai.



Traditionally huge wooden penises were placed on gateposts and household entrances when Phii Mae Mai were reputedly on the prowl. One village placed a twenty-two-pound, three-foot-long phallus at the entrance to the village, much to government officials' displeasure.

**See also:** *Ghosts; Hone-Onna*

## **Phii Ruan**

### *The House Ghost*

**Origin:** Thailand

Not all ghosts are dangerous or troublesome. Some are friendly, helpful, and protective. Phii Ruan are ghosts of deceased family members who reside in the homes of living relatives where they serve as guardian spirits.

The Phii Ruan is usually assigned a special spot in the home, typically atop a high shelf against an inner wall, in the heart of the home. The Phii Ruan moves through the home or wherever it wishes but this is the equivalent of their room or personal space. Offerings are placed here. It is where the Phii Ruan is formally addressed when its help or guidance is needed. The Phii Ruan is responsible for guarding the family's well-being and interests. As the family's representative from the Other Side, it protects against malicious spirits and spiritual attack. Its help may be requested in times of illness, financial difficulty, or stress, such as before marriage proposals or job interviews.

**Offerings:** Fresh flowers, candles, incense, food and beverages your family enjoys, a portion of whatever everyone else is eating

**See also:** *Ghosts; Morts, Les*

## **Phii Tai Hong**

**Origin:** Thailand

**Classification:** Ghost

Phii Tai Hong are souls of those who died violent deaths. In turn, they become violent ghosts. The Phii Tai Hong aren't just wailers or chain-rattlers. These ghosts actually attack, harm, and kill the living.

Phii Tai Hong can possess a living person in similar manner to a Dybbuk. However, possession by Phii Tai Hong is not always negative nor suffered long-term. Murder victims may simply wish to identify their killers or the location of their body so that they can receive burial or be returned to loved ones. Once justice is done, the Phii Tai Hong leaves, never to return. Alternatively, they maintain relations with family members who request that spirit mediums summon and channel the ghost. (Phii Tai Hong are also sometimes requested to enter the bodies of loved ones and to speak through them.)

Those perceived as likely to become Phii Tai Hong are usually buried as opposed to being given a traditional Thai Buddhist cremation, which is perceived as liberating the soul. Interment in Earth attempts to contain the soul or at least delay ghost transformation.

Phii Tai Hong are dangerous but vulnerable, too. They are susceptible to capture by skilled sorcerers who know how to control and direct the Phii Tai Hong's attacks: they become the sorcerer's supernatural slaves. Sorcerers dig up corpses of murder victims, especially anonymous young women. Their graves tend to be unprotected or placed in remote and thus private corners because, in a vicious cycle, people expect them to become ghosts and so fear and shun them.

Not all Phii Tai Hong possess equal amounts of power. Some are more dangerous than others. Among other factors, manner of death determines power as a ghost.

- Those who died suddenly accompanied by tremendous pain and suffering are most feared.
- In general, depending upon the individual, those who died via scheduled execution, suicide, or lingering illness are less powerful because they were able to prepare themselves, make peace with death or because a different kind of energy is produced and expended.
- Thai folklore considers the most powerful ghost to be a woman who died in childbirth with her dead baby still in the womb. (See also: *Phii Tai Tang Klom*.)

- Exceptions include souls of notorious, dangerous criminals, thugs, and gangsters. It's no surprise if their destructive, antisocial behavior continues after death, regardless how they die.

In general, Phii Tai Hong attack victims in the same way they were killed. It's possible that this is an attempt at attaining justice by exposing the way they died. They tend to linger where they died in the process making war zones and bad traffic intersections even worse by their presence. They also like places where people die or where corpses are stored, such as hospitals or morgues.

**See also:** *Dybbuk; Ghosts; Goryo; Mae Nak; Malandros; Oiwa; Okiku; Onryo; Phii Tai Tang Klom; White Lady;* and the Glossary entry for *Possession*

## **Phii Tai Tang Klom**

**Origin:** Thailand

**Classification:** Ghost

Phii Tai Tang Klom are ghosts of women who died during pregnancy or childbirth. In traditional Thai ghost-lore, as elsewhere, they are considered the most ferocious, wrathful, angry, dangerous ghosts. The scariest and fiercest of these ghosts are women and babies who died together in childbirth, the child never emerging from its mother. The two souls combine to create the most formidable ghost of all. Their power isn't just doubled: it's squared. (And a woman with multiple births is exponentially even more powerful.)

The corpse of a woman who died in childbirth must be treated with extra care and respect. Rituals may mitigate her anger and prevent transformation. She must also be guarded because her corpse has traditionally been valuable to Thai sorcerers who seek to melt her chin fat in order to create Magic Oil, an ingredient in potent love spells. The targets of these spells find themselves compulsively and irresistibly attracted to someone whether or not they wish to be. (Magical tattoos antidote these spells.)

**See also:** *Golden Boy; Mae Nak*

## Phoolan Devi

### *The Bandit Queen; Goddess of Flowers*

#### **Origin:** India

Phoolan Devi (10 August 1963–25 July 2001) was born in a tiny village on the Yamuna River to a poor low-caste family. At age eleven, she was married to a man more than twenty years older. Phoolan's family had assumed that her husband would let her stay with her family until she was older. Instead, he insisted on taking the little girl home, where she was raped and beaten repeatedly. She eventually escaped and returned to her family, but as unprotected "damaged goods" she was now at the mercy of every man.

During a family land dispute, she was raped. When she complained to the police, they raped her, too. In the late 1970s, she was kidnapped by a band of dacoits (bandits) but she eventually emerged at the head of the gang. It was payback time for Phoolan. The gang attacked the village that had stood by when she was raped as an eleven-year-old. Phoolan stabbed her husband and left him for dead with a note warning that this was the punishment for old men who married young girls.

She robbed, stole, and killed but also prevented sexual assaults on women. On entering a town, she would ask women to identify their tormentors, and she would have them tortured and killed. Phoolan Devi became the most notorious woman in India. She was a woman attacking men, a low-caste person targeting upper castes. Some compared her to Robin Hood; others loathed and feared her.

In February 1983, she negotiated the terms of her surrender with Indira Gandhi, who guaranteed that she would not receive the death sentence. Phoolan Devi was charged with forty-eight crimes. She later regretted her surrender. Her trial was delayed for eleven years, which she served in prison. While in prison, she was hospitalized with a bleeding ovarian cyst and given an involuntary hysterectomy. When a biographer later asked the operating physician whether this had been necessary, the doctor laughingly said that they didn't want any more Phoolan Devis being bred.

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*Phoolan refused to lay down her arms before anyone except the goddess Durga and Mahatma Gandhi (1869–1948). This was finally accomplished by having an unarmed police officer escort her as she laid down her weapons before portraits of Durga and Gandhi.*

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Paroled in 1994, she began a group to teach self-defense to lower castes and won a Parliamentary seat in 1996. Phoolan Devi did not participate in the making of *Bandit Queen*, Shekhar Kapur's 1995 film inspired by her life and she disliked the movie intensely. Phoolan Devi was assassinated outside her residence after returning from Parliament.

Phoolan Devi was deeply devoted to Durga during her lifetime. While alive, she was perceived as an avatar of Durga and is now venerated in that capacity.

**Manifestation:** She was a tiny, round-faced woman with long hair.

**Iconography:** During her lifetime, dolls of Phoolan Devi dressed as Durga were sold in markets.

**Spirit ally:** Phoolan Devi is worshipped alongside Durga.

**Color:** Red

**Further reading:** Her autobiography, *The Bandit Queen of India* by Phoolan Devi with Marie-Thérèse Cuny and Paul Rambali

**Offerings:** Phoolan Devi accepts whatever would be given Durga as well as toy or miniature weapons.

**See also:** *Durga*; and the Glossary entry for *Avatar*

## Phorkys

*The Old Man of the Sea*

**Also known as:** Phorcys; Phorkos

**Origin:** Greece

Phorkys is among the primordial deities of the sea. Hesiod calls him the son of Gaia and Pontus. The Orphics describe him as among Oceanos' eldest children. He is an extremely powerful spirit capable of resurrecting his daughter Scylla from the dead. Phorkys' other daughters include the Gorgons, including Medusa and the Graiae. Phorkys is a master shape-shifter who manifests as he desires. He travels where he will, but his official addresses include the bay of Ithaca and near Scylla's home in Sicily.

**Manifestation:** Phorkys is a shape-shifter.

**Iconography:** Phorkys is portrayed as a man with scarlet skin and lobster claws, wreathed in seaweed.

**Attributes:** Flaming torch and a closed box (the contents of the box are unknown and may indicate that Phorkys is the master of a Mystery tradition)

**Consort:** Keto

**See also:** *Gaia; Gorgons; Graiae; Keto; Medusa; Oceanos; Scylla* and the Glossary entry for *Mystery*

## Pi Xiu

**Pronounced:** *Pee-shoo*

**Also known as:** Pi Yao

**Origin:** China

Pi Xiu is an ancient spirit and a modern feng shui guardian. Pi Xiu has the head of a three-horned dragon, the body of a horse, and the claws of a lion. What Pi Xiu has is perhaps not as significant as what he *lacks*. Pi Xiu has no anus. What goes in, can't come out. Because of this, Pi Xiu is considered a harbinger and a talisman of wealth.

- Pi Xiu welcomes wealth and then forbids it to leave.

- Pi Xiu amulets dispel bad luck and banish mean spirits.
- These amulets also protect your personal chi, health, and possessions.
- Images of Pi Xiu are placed within the home, facing toward danger.

**Manifestation:** There are male and female Pi Xiu. The male has sharper horns and a sleeker torso. The female has smoother horns and a rounder body. Her posterior is more prominent than the male's.

**Iconography:** Pi Xiu is often portrayed crouching on a bed of coins. The finest Pi Xiu amulets have large heads—the better to swallow luck, wealth, and good fortune—and big posteriors for added storage space.

#### PI XIU RITUAL

1. Rub a Pi Xiu amulet over your naked body, from your head to your posterior.
2. Bring the amulet back over your heart chakra, located in the center of your chest, to retain Pi Xiu's blessings.

#### PI XIU BATH

1. Blend equal parts rainwater and either spring or tap water.
2. Boil the water, and then pour it over pomelo leaves (Chinese grapefruit).
3. Once the water has cooled sufficiently, bathe a Pi Xiu amulet in it.
4. Use the water to cleanse yourself, other people, or an area for luck and good fortune.

**See also:** *Maneki Neko*; *Nang Kwak*

## Pincoya

**Origin:** Mapuche (Chiloé Island)

Pincoya is the ocean goddess of Chiloé, the “Enchanted Island,” located five hundred miles south of Santiago off Chile's Pacific Coast, literally the end of the Earth.

Pincoya rises from the sea to dance on the beach or atop waves.

- If she faces the water while dancing, an abundant harvest of seafood is promised.
- If she faces the land, local people anticipate hunger instead.

Pincoya can be appeased and persuaded to change her prognostication by rituals conducted by local witches. Sometimes Pincoya helps the shipwrecked.

**Manifestation:** A beautiful mermaid or woman dressed in kelp. When she's not dancing, she's usually sitting on ocean rocks, combing her long hair.

**Attribute:** Comb

**Color:** Green

**See also:** *Mermaid*

## **Pinga**

*She Who Is On High*

**Origin:** Inuit

Pinga is a goddess of fertility, healing, and the hunt. She presides over life, death, abundance, and famine. She has dominion over land animals, but unlike fellow Inuit goddess Sedna who presides over the harvest from the sea, Pinga does not withhold animals if she's angry. Pinga watches, observes, and judges.

- Pinga supervises conception and birth.
- Pinga judges human behavior, especially treatment of animals.
- Pinga heals people via shamans who channel her.
- Pinga is a psychopomp who escorts the dead to Adlivun, a transit area where souls are purified before moving to the more pleasant realm of death.

**Creature:** Caribou



**See also:** *Sedna*

## Pipe Fox

**Also known as:** Kudagitsune; Kuda Gitsune (literally “Pipe Fox”)

**Origin:** Japan

The Pipe Fox, a type of shape-shifting fox spirit, serves as a shaman or magician’s spirit familiar. Its usual form is so small that it inhabits pipes and flutes, hence its name. Special bamboo pipes are also created as vehicles for the Pipe Fox, who may be requested to appear in the pipe and answer a shaman’s questions. Unlike genies enslaved in bottles, Pipe Foxes who work with people do so voluntarily: they are shamans’ and magicians’ allies.

Pipe Foxes may appear small and innocuous, but don’t be fooled: they are exceptionally powerful spirits. The Pipe Fox can cast illusions and summon elemental forces, including fire, water, wind, and lightning.

The hero of the Japanese manga/anime series *xxxHolic* earns a Pipe Fox’s friendship.

**Manifestation:** The Pipe Fox is long, thin, and foxy (vulpine) but it is a shape-shifter and can transform.

**See also:** *Fox Spirits; Inari; Yokai*

## Pixies

**Also known as:** Piskies; Pisgies

The name *pixie* is now something of a generic category for nature spirits from England’s Cornwall and Devonshire. Pixies are associated with wells, hills, groves, springs, and rivers. They are mischief makers who like playing tricks on travelers, especially leading them astray.

- They lure people with pixie lights—mysterious dancing, charming, disembodied lights.
- To be pixie-led is to be led on a wild-goose chase, traveling in endless

circles before collapsing in exhaustion and confusion.

How will you know it was the pixies' fault? The sound of their giggling usually gives it away. Hordes of pixies sometimes fall upon lone travelers, forcing them to join in their dance until they drop from exhaustion.

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*Break pixies' spells by turning your clothes inside out. This allegedly foils them, or at least your abject humiliation amuses them so much that they will leave you alone.*

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Although now mainly considered tricky nature spirits, their association with Will o' the Wisps suggests they once played a different role. Will o' the Wisps are disembodied lights blamed for luring people to their deaths. The pretty, hypnotic lights appear after dark, and people follow them, sometimes to their deaths. The lights come and go: sometimes they lead people into deadly swamps or over cliffs. Occasionally they lead people to safety, although this rarely makes as good a story. The names *pixie lights* and *Will o' the Wisps* are sometimes used interchangeably. Pixies may originally have served as psychopomps.

Allegedly only two pixies are known by name: Jack O'Lantern and Joan the Wad, called the King and Queen of Pixies. *Wad* is a local term for "torch," so both Jack and Joan are associated with fire and illumination. They are invoked for protection with a rhyme:

*Jack o' the lantern! Joan the wad,  
Who tickled the maid and made her mad;  
Light me home, the weather's bad!*

A Piskie in Neil Gaiman's novel *American Gods* plays an old-fashioned role.

**Manifestation:** A span is an archaic measurement: stretch your fingers

out as far as you can. The length from your thumb to the smallest finger is a span. Pixies are as tall as the length of one span. They are generally described as resembling very small people, but images of pixies including those intended as good luck charms often depict them in the guise of an imp or little demon. Pixies don't always like to be seen. They are more frequently heard: their irrepressible giggling betrays their presence. "Laugh like a pixie" is an old Cornish saying.

**Color:** Green

**Sacred sites:** Various wells in Cornwall and Devon are known as pixie wells and reputedly possess healing and magical powers.

**Offerings:** Leave dishes of cream outside for them. They also like ale, hard cider, bread, Cornish pasties, and small, pretty things. Be discreet: don't talk to them or make too much of a fuss over them. They are not effusive spirits.

**See also:** *Fairy; Joan the Wad; Psychopomps*

## Pleasant, Mary Ellen

**Also known as:** Mammy Pleasant

The origins of Mary Ellen Pleasant (circa 1814– 4 January 1904) are mysterious and contradictory. She may have been born a slave on an Augusta, Georgia, plantation. She may have been born in Philadelphia. She claimed to be the daughter of an enslaved Vodou priestess, possibly originally from Haiti and the son of the governor of Virginia. She was a fair-skinned black woman who passed as white when she wished.

By the 1820s, Mary Ellen Pleasant was living with and working for a Quaker family in Nantucket, Massachusetts, who introduced her to abolitionism. With her first husband, she became actively involved in the Underground Railroad, rescuing the enslaved and bringing them to freedom and safety. When her husband died, he left her a fortune. She helped finance her friend John Brown's raid on Harper's Ferry. Her work rescuing slaves earned her a reputation: slavers put a price on her head. During this time she studied with Marie Laveau, New Orleans Voodoo

Queen, also active in rescuing people from slavery. (The spelling “Voodoo” distinguishes the unique traditions of New Orleans from those of Haitian Vodou).

Mary Ellen Pleasant escaped to San Francisco in 1852. On board the ship, she met Thomas Bell, Scottish-born director of the Bank of California, with whom she would have a thirty-year business and, many presume personal relationship.

In San Francisco, Mary Ellen emerged as a philanthropist and entrepreneur. She ran restaurants and a boarding house and allegedly a bordello, although this may be an attempt at defamation. She evoked powerful reactions, as she still does. People consider Mary Ellen Pleasant a heroine *or* a wicked, scandalous woman. She was accused of being a poisoner, procuress, and blackmailer. Her reputation as a Voodoo priestess terrified some. In death, some consider her a powerful spirit who grants wishes. Others consider her a creepy ghost.

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*Mary Ellen Pleasant is called the Mother of Civil Rights in California. She sued a San Francisco streetcar company for denying service to African-Americans and won.*

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Mary Ellen Pleasant *hated* being called Mammy Pleasant. If you must call her something, call her Mistress, Madame, or Ms. She remains among San Francisco’s most famous ghosts. She haunts the corner of Bush and Octavia, where her mansion known as the House of Mystery once stood. Allegedly, if you make a polite request at this corner *and* if she is in a good mood, your request will come true.

**Manifestation:** Mary Ellen Pleasant allegedly takes corporeal form to walk beneath her trees at night. Unexpected appearances of a crow may indicate her presence.

**Creature:** Crow, her messenger

**Tree:** Eucalyptus

**Date:** The anniversary of her death. Her birthday is thought to be 19 August, but the year is unknown.

**Sacred site:** The site of the House of Mystery, her mansion in San Francisco. Mary Ellen planted rows of eucalyptus trees with her own hands. Some still survive. She allegedly likes to stroll beneath them

**See also:** *Agousou; Laveau, Marie*

## Pleiades

*The Star Sisters; The Seven Sisters*

**Origin:** Greece

The Seven Star Sisters are goddesses of the seven-starred constellation called the Pleiades. These star goddesses are the daughters of Atlas (a Titan) and Pleione (an Oceanid). As primordial, pre-Olympian goddesses, they were very much in demand by the Olympians. All but one had a relationship with an Olympian:

- Zeus had relationships with Maia, Taygete, and Elektra.
- Poseidon had encounters with Alcyone and Celaeno.
- Ares was intimate with Sterope.

The Pleiades, mothers of deities and heroes, include:

- Maia
- Alcyone
- Taygete
- Elektra
- Celaeno
- Sterope (or Asterope)
- Merope

Maia was ostensibly their leader but was venerated independently (and may have been very busy as Hermes' mother). Alcyone then took over leadership of the remaining six. They were venerated together as a

group throughout Greece and at Samothrace.

**Bird:** Dove

**Constellation:** Pleiades

**See also:** *Alcyone (2); Akalli; Ares; Atlas; Cabeiri; Hermes; Hesperides; Maia; Poseidon; Weaving Maidens; Zeus*

## Poliahu

**Origin:** Hawaii

Poliahu is a snow goddess, presiding spirit of Mauna Kea on the Big Island of Hawaii. Mauna Kea, a dormant volcano, is the tallest mountain in Hawaii's mountain chain; Poliahu lives at the top. (Technically, Mauna Kea is the tallest mountain on Earth if measured from its base on the Pacific Ocean floor.)

Mauna Kea's full Hawaiian name translates to "full of white snow." Mauna Kea is capped by snow, sometimes year-round. Poliahu is a true snow queen, so powerful that she can maintain her identity in the midst of the tropics. Mauna Kea has its own climate: with snow, fog, storms, and hail even in the summer.

Poliahu is a goddess of life, abundance, and fertility. She is the goddess of sacred water. Her pure, pristine, sweet waters flow into Hawaii's rivers. She is now most famous as Pelé's rival and nemesis, but she is a great goddess in her own right. Her romantic adventures rival Pelé's—possibly another reason for tension between them.

Poliahu is the Big Island's water goddess; Pelé is its fire goddess. Do *not* venerate them together or keep their images near each other. If you have images of both goddesses or altars dedicated to both, place Poliahu in the north and Pelé in the south with some distance between them.

Poliahu enjoys sledding down the slopes of Mauna Kea. *Holua*, the ancient Hawaiian sport of sledding on narrow, hardwood sleds, is one of Pelé's favorite pastimes. She once secretly challenged Poliahu to a race, not initially revealing her identity as a fire goddess. Poliahu won the first two races, but the third time, as she gained speed, flaming lava

appeared before her, melting her snow. Immediately recognizing her rival, Poliahu fled to the summit, leaving Pelé to think she had won. Poliahu reemerged with a snow storm so powerful it put out Pelé's flames and doused Mauna Kea forever.

Poliahu is generally friendly toward people. Like Pelé, she enjoys traveling and was historically venerated throughout the Hawaiian Islands, not just on Mauna Kea.

- Poliahu offers devotees health, abundance, and personal fertility.
- Her gifts include clarity of vision and thought.

**Manifestation:** Poliahu is sometimes described as Hawaii's most beautiful goddess. She wears a snowy white mantle.

**Iconography:** Poliahu is often portrayed as a true White Lady, similar to an ice sculpture of a beautiful Hawaiian woman.

**Spirit allies:** Her sisters: Kahoupokane, Lilinoe, and Waiiau

**Element:** Water

**Sacred site:** Mauna Kea; Poliahu Heiau, the largest surviving heiau (traditional stone shrine), on the island of Kauai is on a bluff above the Wailua River near Opaeka'a Falls. Dedicated to Poliahu, it is estimated to have been built in the fourteenth century.

**See also:** *Lilinoe; Kahoupokane; Pelé; Waiiau*

## Poltergeist

Is that bump in the night just the house settling? What caused those books to spontaneously fall from a high shelf and hit you on the head?

Poltergeists manifest as unexplained noises and disturbances. The word *poltergeist* literally means "knocking ghost" or "knocking spirit" in German. The term first appeared in the English language in the mid-nineteenth century. It is unclear and subject to debate as to whether poltergeists are independent spiritual entities (i.e. real ghosts) or whether they are just manifestations of excess psychic energy. In other words, someone in the house is radiating so much psychic power that it

causes weird phenomena.

Poltergeists are identified with adolescent girls whose psychic power may be just emerging or activating. The excess psychic aura they radiate may be similar to hormones which need time to balance. In the meantime, they unknowingly create psychic phenomena. Alternatively, these girls or the energy they radiate attracts low-level, mischievous spirits who produce poltergeist activity. Poltergeist activity ranges from the odd and mildly disturbing to the genuinely dangerous.

**See also:** *Mazzik*; *Mononoke*

## Polyboea

**Also known as:** Polyboia

**Origin:** Greece

Polyboea, Hyacinth's sister, died a young virgin. She is eternally a *Kore*, a young girl who died at the pivotal transitional point from youth to full-fledged woman. The meaning of her name, "Of Many Cows," indicates her beauty and value: many cows were what her father anticipated receiving as her bride-price.

After she died, Polyboea received a divine escort including Aphrodite, Artemis, Athena, the Horae and Moirae to Mount Olympus. There she was deified. Just as her brother is perceived as a mediating spirit and conduit to Apollo, so Polyboea is the conduit to Artemis. She was also held up as a role model for young women. In his epic exploration of myth and religion, *The Golden Bough*, author Sir James George Frazer suggests that these myths of Hyacinth and Polyboea are really based on older, pre-Olympian traditions and that they were initially romantic partners as well as siblings, like Hera and Zeus, for instance.

- Polyboea may be venerated independently or alongside Hyacinth.
- Her image may also be placed on an altar of Artemis.

**Favored people:** Young women

**Sacred site:** Polyboea was enshrined together with her brother.



**Date:** Polyboea was celebrated with her brother at his festival, the Hyacinthia.

**See also:** *Aphrodite; Apollo; Artemis; Athena; Horae; Hyacinth; Morae; Olympian Spirits; Persephone*

## **Pomba Gira**

**Also known as:** Exua (Pronounced: *Eh-shooah* or *Esh-wah*)

Pomba Gira evokes powerful reactions:

- Some considerer her a whore, slut, prostitute, or devil-woman.
- For others she is a goddess of love, sex, success, and abundance.

Pomba Gira is the scarlet woman, the sacred harlot, and the lady of crossroads and street lights. An Afro-Brazilian spirit, Pomba Gira derives from the intersection of Iberian, Gitano, and Central African roots. Pomba Gira is the crossroad where these traditions meet. She is a goddess of power, eroticism, death, and vengeance. She has dominion over sex for pleasure and power, not procreation. (That said, she *can* bestow fertility when and if she desires.) Pomba Gira is an oracular spirit who can reveal the past and future, but she can be a brutally plain-spoken truth-teller. Don't ask her for information unless you are ready to hear unvarnished truths.

Pomba Gira's origins are mysterious. She is not worshipped in African traditions, only in Brazil. (It is possible that devotees did not survive elsewhere. See also: *Ochossi*.) Pomba Gira is sometimes translated as "whirling dove," which is not inappropriate as many Pomba Giras love to dance, but the name really derives from the Kikongo *Mpamba Nzila* or "crossroad."

Sometimes when people refer to Pomba Gira they really mean Maria Padilha (or vice versa). The names are frequently used interchangeably but there are *many* Pomba Giras. These may be multiple paths of one goddess or Pomba Gira may name an entire category of spirits. (See also: *Ezili; Mami Waters; Simbi*.)

Maria Padilha may be the Queen Pomba Gira. It's possible that at least some of the other Pomba Gira are vestiges of the Fairy court of beautiful female spirits who serve as the entourage for Spain's Maria de Padilla. They may have accompanied their queen on her sea voyage to Brazil. As she transformed into Maria Padilha, so they too transformed into Pomba Gira. (See also: *Padilha, Maria; Padilla, Maria de.*)

The names Pomba Gira and Exua are also sometimes used interchangeably. As Exua, Pomba Gira is identified as the wife of Exu, the Brazilian path of Eshu Elegbara.

Depending on her path, Pomba Gira may be hot and passionate or cold and calculating. Some paths of Pomba Gira are associated with vampires. In addition to Maria Padilha, paths of Pomba Gira include:

- Maria Mulambo
- Maria Quiteria
- Pomba Gira Seven Crossroads
- Pomba Gira Queen of the Crossroads
- Pomba Gira of the Souls
- Pomba Gira Tsigana (Gypsy)
- Pomba Gira Queen of Calunga (Queen of the Sea)
- Pomba Gira Bonita
- Sulamita

Pomba Gira is an ally of women. She bestows fertility but is also invoked to cause miscarriage when pregnancy is inconvenient or disastrous.

**Favored people:** Women, crossdressers, sex workers, transvestites

**Manifestation:** Manifestation depends on which Pomba Gira appears or is invoked. Most dress in red (if they're dressed at all). Pomba Gira sometimes manifests as a drag queen.

**Iconography:** Again this depends upon the path, but she may be depicted as a red she-devil complete with pitchfork, horns, and cloven hoof or as a beautiful, scantily clad woman.

**Color:** Red

**Time:** Midnight

**Sacred site:** Pomba Gira haunts crossroads, street corners, and nightclubs. Some paths of Pomba Gira display fondness for seashores and cemeteries, too.

**Offerings:** Perfume, cosmetics, roses, alcoholic beverages, tobacco products

**See also:** *Calunga; Eshu Elegbara; Exu; Fairy; Madama, La; Padilha, Maria; Vampire;* and the Glossary entry for *Path*

## Pomona

### *The Apple Queen*

**Origin:** Rome

**Classification:** Nymph

Pomona is the spirit of fresh fruit and fruit trees, especially apples. Her name derives from the Latin *pomum*, similar to the French *pomme* or “apple.” The Romans were responsible for first domesticating wild apples, transforming sour fruit into today’s sweet, juicy apples. Presumably Pomona taught them the secret.

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*Pomona is not just a gardener or orchard keeper. Apples were considered sacred fruit, associated with love, magic, and death: all are under Pomona’s domain.*

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Pomona is a goddess of the harvest and also of enchantment. The eve of her feast day coincides with Halloween. Many scholars believe that at least some of the harvest-related aspects of the modern holiday are

vestigial remnants of her old Roman feast.

Pomona is a solitary goddess but she is as tempting and desirable as her apples. Many sought after beautiful Pomona, including Pan, but she rejected them all, preferring to remain independent. She was finally wooed and won by Vertumnus, male spirit of the shifting seasons, now her consort. Vertumnus represents the year in its guise as shape-shifter. Pomona initially rejected him, too, until he gained her trust by approaching in the form of an old woman—a classic bit of ancient Halloween masquerading, or was it? Some theorize that Pomona prefers the love of women and Vertumnus prefers to be whomever Pomona desires.

Pomona is petitioned to transform the bitterness of existence into sweetness. She may be invoked to ensure the success of the many love spells utilizing apples.

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*Pomona's namesake, Professor Pomona Sprout, esteemed Professor of Herbology, is the head of Hufflepuff House in J. K. Rowling's series of Harry Potter novels.*

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**Attribute:** Pruning knife

**Spirit allies:** Pomona is often portrayed in the company of goddesses Diana and Flora.

**Day:** 1 November is the Pomonia, the ancient Roman Feast of Pomona.

**Ritual:** Bobbing for apples, now reduced to a Halloween party game, has its roots in divination rituals. Add some sort of fortune to each apple to receive Pomona's messages.

**Offerings:** Baskets of apples, apple pie and pastries, hard cider or apple juice

**See also:** *Aphrodite; Diana; Flora; Hesperides; Nymph; Pan*

## Poreskoro

**Origin:** Transylvanian Romani (Gypsy)

Poreskoro is the last child of Ana, Queen of the Keshalyi: the proverbial icing on the cake. Sweet, beautiful Ana is in absolute despair over her enforced role as mother of horrible, vicious disease demons. The Keshalyi, who are after all fertility Fairies, hatch a desperate plan. They feed her a cake whose ingredients include powdered snake and the hair of cats and hell hounds. The king of the Loçolico has sex with Ana and she conceives, giving birth to Poreskoro, the worst disease demon.

Poreskoro is hermaphroditic and doesn't need a spouse. Poreskoro can fulfill all her/his own needs, including sex and fertility. Poreskoro gives birth to children. Their clan produces the worst epidemics: bubonic plague, cholera, and parasitic disease.

As suspected by the Keshalyi, Poreskoro is even too much for the king of the Loçolico who is appalled by this new child and the dread diseases produced. He releases Ana from her enslavement on the condition that any Keshalyi who achieves 999 years of age must be given to the Loçolico. (Presumably Keshalyi approaching that age begin volunteering for suicide missions.)

**Manifestation:** Poreskoro has four cats' heads, four dogs' heads, and a tail that is a snake (not a snake's tail; the tail actually *is* a snake).

**See also:** *Ana; Keshalyi; Lilyi; Loçolico; Lolmischo; Melalo*

## Poseidon

*The Dark-Haired One*

**Origin:** Greece

Poseidon is the lord of the sea. Whitecaps are his horses. He lives in an underwater palace and owns all the ocean's treasures. Poseidon is a tempestuous spirit who competes aggressively with Athena for veneration and devotees. According to Olympian myth, Poseidon is the oldest son of Rhea and Kronos.

Scholars suggest that he predates the Olympic pantheon. Poseidon was already a local spirit when incorporated, as opposed to out-of-towner Zeus.

- He may be an older Greek deity incorporated into the Olympic pantheon like Hera or Demeter.
- Herodotus thought Poseidon was a Libyan deity adopted by the Greeks, possibly like his frequent rival Athena.
- Poseidon may be associated with the earliest Aryan invaders of Greece who entered the region circa 2000 BCE, conquering with horses and wheeled vehicles.

Waves are described as resembling horses, but Poseidon may have been a horse deity before he was an ocean deity. Poseidon taught people how to bridle horses. Chariot races were held in his honor. (The Isthmian aquatic games were also held in his honor.) Poseidon in the guise of a stallion raped his sister, Demeter, in the guise of a mare. (Demeter may have been his original consort.) Their son Arion is a horse. Pegasus, the winged horse, is the child of Medusa and Poseidon.

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*Poseidon is the ruler, founder, and divine ancestor of the lost continent of Atlantis, whose first king was Poseidon's son Atlas.*

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Poseidon is aggressive with women. His modus operandi is rape and abduction. In addition to his official consort, Amphitrite, those assaulted by Poseidon include Demeter, Salamis, Melantheia, Peirene, and possibly Medusa. (Sex with Medusa may or may not have been consensual, depending on myth.) All bear his children, indicating his powers as a fertility spirit. Poseidon is invoked for fertility, abundance, and protection at sea. He is a powerful deity and can fulfill virtually all desires. Many of Poseidon's functions were reassigned to Saint Nicholas.

**Manifestation:** He may manifest as a vigorous, bearded man, a merman or a horse.

**Attribute:** Trident

**Spirit allies:** Poseidon often travels accompanied by Amphitrite, their son Triton, and an entourage of Nereids and dolphins.

**Tree:** Pine, ash

**Number:** 8

**Creature:** Horse—his personal herd has gold manes and brass hooves—also dolphins, bulls

**Sacred site:** Among others, Poseidon and Amphitrite shared a sanctuary on the Greek island of Tenos famed for its healing miracles. The Church of the Annunciation at Tenos is built over the foundations. The sacred spring within the precinct remains renowned for miracles. The church is filled with ex-votos and testaments to miracles received.

**Rituals:** Bull fights, boxing matches, and horse races were held in Poseidon's honor.

**Mount:** His chariot is pulled by horses or hippocampi; sometimes Poseidon rides a hippocampus (a mer-horse) or a dolphin.

**Altar:** Decorate his altar with marine and equine images.

**See also:** *Amphitrite; Arion; Athena; Atlas; Delphin; Demeter; Despoena; Medusa; Neptune; Nereids; Nereus; Nerites; Olympian Spirits; Pallas; Pasiphae; Persephone; Proteus; Scylla; Telchines; Zeus*

## Postvorta

**Origin:** Etruscan

Postvorta is the spirit of the past, sister of Antevorta, spirit of the future. The two serve in the entourage of Carmenta. They may all be venerated together.

Postvorta literally means “after change.” With a play of words, Postvorta is also known as *Postverta*, indicating “feet first” or the breech birth position. Postvorta is petitioned for assistance with pregnancy,

labor, and women's reproductive ailments. Request her assistance turning a breech baby the right way around.

**Iconography:** The two sisters are depicted together in a portrait image reminiscent of Janus: one looks forward, the other back.

**Planet:** Moon

**Element:** Water

**Feast:** 11 January, 15 January

**See also:** *Antevorta; Carmenta*

## **Prende**

*Queen of Beauty*

**Also known as:** Prenne; Shen Prende

**Origin:** Illyria; Albania

Prende is a goddess and saint. In her earliest incarnation she was venerated by the Illyrians and Albanians as a goddess of love. When Christianity became official in the region, Prende remained venerated but now in the guise of a saint.

**Manifestation:** The rainbow is her belt.

**Consort:** Perendi, Illyrian thunder lord

**Attributes:** Mortar and pestle

**Mount:** Prende rides in a carriage drawn by swallows.

**Day:** Friday

**Feast:** 26 July and/or the nearest Friday

**Sacred site:** Sen Prende, Albania

**See also:** *Brigid*



## **Preta**

### **Classification:** Ghost

*Preta* means “departed” in Sanskrit. The word is used in Sri Lankan folk religion (both Buddhist and Hindu) to indicate dead souls unable to leave the realm of the living because of intense negative emotions or obsessive attachment to living people or material goods. Unhealthy attachment causes them to be grounded on Earth, unable to leave.

The Preta haunts relatives and old friends. It may prey upon new residents of places where the Preta once lived. Instead of behaving like a benevolent ancestral spirit or just going away, the lingering Preta causes illness, trouble, and bad luck. It may torment people via unpleasant involuntary possession or prey upon individuals by vampirically absorbing life-essence and energy, sometimes with fatal results.

Many Pretas are attached to material goods, not people. They may hover around their old home or the things that obsess them. Their very presence, however, may cause trouble for the living, even if this is unintentional.

The Preta can be exorcised. It may be propitiated via offerings in hopes that it will behave and maybe even leave. Depending on cosmology, the Preta is perceived as a malignant spirit or a tortured soul (or both). Buddhist cosmology suggests that merit earned on its behalf may enable the Preta to escape from its purgatory on Earth.

Afflictions caused by Pretas might be medically diagnosed as psychosis.

**Offerings:** Some Pretas enjoy intoxicants like marijuana and alcohol; others desire feces and spit.

**See also:** *Dybbuk; Ghosts; Mae Thoranee*

## **Pretos Velhos**

**Origin:** Brazil

*Pretos Velhos* literally means “Old Blacks.” Pretos Velhos are a category

of spirits central to the Umbanda spiritual tradition and also venerated by independent practitioners. Pretos Velhos are souls of deceased Brazilian slaves. They tend to be elderly, wise, gentle, patient spirits who have a reputation of being consistently kind, compassionate, helpful and benevolent.

In 1886, Brazilian law ordained that all slaves sixty years and older were to be freed. Elderly slaves were given their freedom but no livelihood or compensation for years of service. Some relied on skills as healers, fortune-tellers, or practitioners of magic. A group of elderly former slaves settled together on vacant land in Rio de Janeiro and began offering their abilities in exchange for payment. They were called the Settlement of the Old Blacks. After they died, their souls began appearing to various spirit mediums communicating and performing good works.

That's one theory of their origins. One way of considering the Pretos Velhos is that they are the souls of those brought from Africa who suffered so much to preserve and transmit traditional African religion and spirituality. They are pleased to be contacted by the living because this affirms that their suffering was not in vain. Another theory, however, suggests that reinforcing an image of wise, old, docile, harmless slaves was intended to allay fears of the ruling classes.

The Pretos Velhos are a huge category of spirits. They may be male or female. (Females are called Pretas Velhas.) Different individuals may work with different, unique Pretos Velhos. The most famous have well-known names. Their images may be marketed commercially. (There are also generic Preto Velho and Velha statues.) They communicate via spirit mediums and directly via dreams, divination, and visions.

**Day:** 13 May, Abolition Day, a Brazilian public holiday, is dedicated to Pretos Velhos.

**See also:** *Caboclo; Caboclo of the Seven Crossroads; Madama, La*

## **Priapus**

*The Gardener*

**Origin:** Asia Minor

Priapus, Lord of the Phallus, first emerged as a fertility spirit in Asia Minor. He was venerated in Greek Anatolia, especially at Lampsacus on the Hellespont where he was reputedly born. Priapus was the most important spirit of their local pantheon. He was an important deity in regions near the Black Sea where he was venerated as a spirit of fertility, aggression, and self-defense. This martial aspect may explain why, according to Greek myth, Hera hired Priapus to raise her son, Ares.

The cult of Priapus entered Greece around 400 BCE, but he was never very popular there. (He was officially incorporated into the Greek pantheon as Aphrodite's son by either Adonis or Dionysus.) The Greeks perceived Priapus as ugly and too overtly sexual. Whatever popularity he held was in the Greek countryside, not urban areas. The Romans, however, *loved* him. He became their patron of fishermen, sailors, gardens, and viniculture.

Priapus ensures fertility of women, crops, animals, and gardens. He infuses soil (and women!) with fertility. Priapus protects against the Evil Eye. He protects gardens and small farms from thieves of all kind. (If a bank is threatening to foreclose on a small family farm, Priapus may perceive this as theft and be sympathetic.)

**Favored people:** Women, gardeners, and fishers as well as owners, keepers, and guardians of small farms, vineyards, and orchards

**Manifestation:** Priapus is best recognized by his huge, permanently erect penis.

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*Deities or sculptures featuring erect or exaggerated male members are called Priapic.*

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**Iconography:** The traditional image of Priapus depicts him holding up his robe, which is filled with fruit to display a massive, erect penis. The image isn't subtle; you can't miss it. His images were traditionally carved

from fig wood, associated with sex, fertility, genitalia, and protection from the Evil Eye.

**Attribute:** Pruning knife

**Element:** Earth

**Creatures:** Donkey, goose

**Tree:** Fig

**Altar:** Placing his image in your garden effectively creates a petition. If you don't have a garden, stick his image in a window box or flower pot on an altar. His images are commercially available, but if you can't find one, an image of a phallus, equivalent to a Shiva lingam, may do the trick, too.

**Offerings:** Priapus does not consider his services to be a favor but a transaction. Expected payment is the first fruits or vegetables from your garden. Should you have no garden and, thus, no first fruits, Priapus will accept offerings of honey and milk instead. He will also accept wax, papiermâché, or other renderings of fruit. Traditionally a divinity beloved by the poor, should finances be very tight, Priapus accepts offerings of original verse as long as they are offered with sincerity and a good heart. (He'll know.)

**See also:** *Adonis; Aphrodite; Ares; Dionysus; Hera; Shiva*

### **Primal Woman of the Nine Heavens**

*The Mystic Woman of the Nine Heavens; Jade Woman; The Ultimate Yin;  
Mysterious Woman of the Nine Heavens*

**Also known as:** Jiutian Xuannü

**Origin:** China

The Primal Woman of the Nine Heavens is a Taoist goddess of shamanism, martial arts, warfare, mysticism, esoteric knowledge, and sacred sex. She teaches those arts as one integral, holistic whole, not as

distinct, unconnected skills. The Woman of the Nine Heavens transmits esoteric knowledge, skills and techniques to the worthy, including various divination techniques, mediumship, and the shamanic art of soul journeying, called star-stepping in Chinese Taoist terminology. She supplies magical texts, weapons, and talismans to devotees she deems worthy. She has access to the secrets of the universe and may be persuaded to share some.

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*The Mystic Woman of the Nine Heavens initiated the esoteric arts of warfare when she gave talismans to the Yellow Emperor, culture hero and mythic ancestor of China's Han people.*

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**Favored people:** Female warrior adepts, spirit mediums

**See also:** *Hsi Wang Mu; Padmasambhava*

## **Prometheus**

*The Provider*

**Origin:** Greece

When the Olympic deities battled the Titans, Prometheus, together with his brother Epimethius, was among the very few Titans to join the Olympian spirits.

Prometheus is humanity's ally and provider, even against other deities. There are various legends of his origin, the most famous that he is the son of a Titan and an Oceanid. Alternatively, Themis may be his mother. Atlas is his brother. Another legend says he is Hera's child but not by Zeus. He is her illicit son by Eurymedon, snake-footed lord of the Gigantes. Yet another myth suggests that he was originally one of the Cabeiri (or perhaps the Dactyls), along with his son Aitnaios, who may be Hephaestus. Another myth says that Prometheus, not Hephaestus,

mid-wifed Athena by splitting Zeus' head open.

Prometheus' name is usually translated as "Forethought," but another theory suggests that it is related to the Sanskrit word *pramantha*, meaning "fire sticks." He is a trickster. Prometheus inveigled Zeus to choose the lesser parts of meat for sacrifices, leaving the better tasting, more nutritious parts for people.

Prometheus pitied people who sat cold and shivering in the dark, so he stole fire for us even though, powerful clairvoyant that he is, he knew exactly how he would be punished. Different reports say that he stole fire from Hephaestus' smithy or Zeus' palace or even directly from the sun. Athena may have been his accomplice.

As punishment for this theft, Prometheus was chained to a huge rock on a cliff on the highest peak of the Caucasus Mountains. Zeus bound him with special unbreakable chains, and then drove a huge pillar-sized stake through his middle to hold him down. An eagle was sent to eat his liver every morning. At night the liver regenerated.

Reports say that Prometheus was bound for thirty thousand years or thirteen generations. Eventually Zeus gave Heracles, who pitied Prometheus, permission to free him. This change of heart occurred after Prometheus learned the full prophecy regarding Zeus' succession by another ruler. Zeus released him in exchange for keeping the secret. (Allegedly Prometheus learned this secret from Gaia and Themis. It's unclear how many other deities are also in the know.)

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*Artist Henry Fuseli (1741–1825) illustrated an alternative version of the binding of Prometheus in which Zeus delegates others to perform this task. The goddess Bia holds the stake that Hephaestus drives through Prometheus' heart while Styx's son, Cratus, Lord of Strength, holds Prometheus down. The straightforward title of Fuseli's early nineteenth century illustration is Hephaestus, Bia, and Crato Securing Prometheus on Mount Caucasus.*

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No wonder Prometheus tries to provide for us and protect us—he may

have created us. In some very old myths, Prometheus is a creator deity who crafts people from clay in the form of gods. He creates animals, too. Prometheus crafts bodies, but Athena brings souls in the form of butterflies. Prometheus' son, Deucalion, is the Greek Noah, the only man to survive the global deluge. Deucalion's son, Hellen, is the ancestor of the Greek people (Hellenes), so Prometheus is a primordial ancestor.

**Manifestation:** Presumably he has a big scar in the region of his liver. Prometheus wears an iron ring, a souvenir of his days as a Cabeiri or Dactyl. After his release, he had a bit of stone from the crag on which he was chained set into the ring as another souvenir.

**See also:** *Athena; Atlas; Bia; Cabeiri; Daktyls; Gaia; Hephaestus; Hera; Heracles; Olympian Spirits; Pandora; Psyche; Styx; Themis; Titans; Zeus*

## Proserpina

**Also known as:** Proserpine

**Origin:** Italy

The names *Persephone* and *Proserpina* tend to be used interchangeably. Do they refer to the same goddess? It's not clear. The clue that Proserpina and Persephone may once have had distinct identities lies in their mothers. The Greek goddess Persephone is the star of an epic mythic cycle in which her mother Demeter plays a prominent role. Mother and daughter are traditionally venerated together on home altars and in shrines. Persephone and Demeter presided over the Eleusinian Mysteries together.

Proserpina's mother is Ceres. Although the names Demeter and Ceres are also used interchangeably, historic evidence demonstrates that they are two different goddesses. Ceres is an ancient Italian grain goddess who became intensely identified with Demeter.

Until this identification, Ceres and Proserpina were not venerated together. Instead Ceres' original altar mates were primordial Italian deities Liber and Libera. Demeter and Persephone are constant companions but in her original Italian myth, Ceres' constant companion is Tellus Mater, not Proserpina.. However, as part of the identification

process, Ceres inherited Demeter's myths and so she needed a daughter. Proserpina is that daughter.

All known myths of Proserpina are identical to those of Persephone. Proserpina may be an Italian path of Persephone or she may be a distinct goddess whose original identity is now completely subsumed by Persephone. Although the names *Persephone* and *Proserpina* sound alike, they do not mean the same thing, nor do they derive from the same etymological roots:

- *Persephone* means “*destroying face*” or “*light-bearing face*.”
- *Proserpina* derives from the Latin *serpere*: “to creep” or “to crawl,” and is related to *serpent*. Thus the goddess Angitia's snake priests are the *serpari*. *Proserpere* means “to crawl forward.” Proserpina's name may mean “first serpent.”

If Proserpina was an independent spirit prior to identification with Persephone, she may have been a snake goddess. Although both rule as Queens of Death, Persephone and Proserpina manifest somewhat differently. They also possess different specialties and have traditionally appealed to different devotees:

- Persephone is intensely associated with Mystery traditions, especially those involving death and resurrection.
- Proserpina is closely identified with witchcraft, especially Stregheria.

Proserpina goes to Hades and back annually, traveling back and forth like a shaman. She is the matron of necromancers, the queen of the dead who is herself not dead. Unlike Persephone who is always envisioned as a tragic heroine, Proserpina evolved into a somewhat disreputable goddess, petitioned by independent magical practitioners who honored her as their queen.

Proserpina is a goddess of the masses while Persephone has traditionally been a goddess associated with initiated spiritual adepts. Proserpina is more closely associated with the moon and lunar magic than Persephone. In addition to her associations with death, Proserpina is a goddess of magic and spellcasting who is invoked for fertility and protection.



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*“Entering Proserpina’s gates” is an old Italian euphemism for death.*

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**Favored people:** Witches, necromancers, diviners, fortune-tellers, shamans

**Iconography:** Proserpina is traditionally depicted holding a fish and a key. Even after veneration of Proserpina was suppressed by the Church, she continued to be worshipped in secret. Italian devotees used the image of a fish containing a key as a secret reference to the forbidden goddess. Old French April Fool’s postcards often depict a beautiful woman holding a big, floppy fish. These may be interpreted as a tribute to Proserpina, or they may be used to represent her.

**Attributes:** Keys, torch (attributes shared with Hekate) and a fish, emblematic of fertility

**Spirit allies:** Proserpina is traditionally venerated alongside Diana and Nyx as well as Ceres and Hades (operating under the name Pluto).

**Amulet:** Cimaruta: this Italian amulet is a stylized sprig of rue (*Cima di Ruta*) traditionally crafted in silver, the moon’s metal, with added small images hanging from the rue. Symbols vary but usually include a key, fish, moon, snake, owl, or crow. The Cimaruta draws fertility and banishes the Evil Eye. Although also associated with Diana, for centuries it was a secret symbol for Proserpina and for suppressed, persecuted Italian witchcraft traditions.

**Plants:** Rue, parsley, Mother of Thyme (*Thymus serpyllum*)

**Creatures:** Snakes, fish, bats

**Planet:** Moon

**Day:** 1 April. Proserpina may be the secret deity at the heart of April Fool’s Day. All Fools Day emerged in medieval Europe but is traced back to Roman rituals involving Proserpina and Ceres: Ceres’ fruitless search for Proserpina, commemorated during the Roman festival of Cerealia, is believed to be the mythic origin of fools’ errands popular on 1 April. In

France and Italy, old Proserpina territory, April Fool's Day is called April Fish Day. An old traditional trick involves pinning paper fish to others' backs.

**Sacred sites:**

- One site is the now famous witches' walnut tree in Benevento, Italy, alongside Diana and Nyx.
- She shared a temple in what is now Orcival, France, with Pluto—the votive statues sat on ebony thrones in a subterranean crypt.

**Offerings:** Strega Italian liqueure and cookies shaped like fish, keys, and moons as well as tools of divination and spellcraft.

**See also:** *Angitia; Ceres; Demeter; Diana; Dionysus; Hades; Kore; Liber; Libera; Mercury; Nyx; Orcas; Persephone; Tellus Mater; Venus* and the Glossary entries for *Identification* and *Path*

## Proteus

*Shepherd of the Sea; Old Man of the Sea; The Old Grey Beard Who Tells the Truth*

**Origin:** Greece

Proteus may be an archaic form of *Protogonos*, “First Born.” There is no mention of any parents. Proteus may always have been here. Proteus, an old sea deity, tends Poseidon's flocks of seals. He is a prophet, master of disguise, and the inspiration for the word *protean*.

Proteus possesses the gift of accurate prophecy, but he likes to keep it to himself. He doesn't like to share. There is only one way to receive a straight, honest answer from him. He emerges from the water daily around noon to nap with the seals. Sneak up behind him while he's sleeping, grab him, and hold on. He will frenetically and frantically begin changing shape, going through his entire repertoire of forms. Some may be creepy, scary, or disgusting. One second you're holding onto a snarling tiger; the next you're trying to keep your hands on a slimy bug. You must hold him until he gives up— which he eventually will—and

reveals what you want to know. Don't release him until you're satisfied with the information. You don't have to go to the islands to find him. (Proteus allegedly lives near Pharos, which may be the island near Alexandria, Egypt, or the one now called Hvar in the Adriatic Sea.) He may be accessed via visualization.

**Creatures:** All sea creatures but especially seals

**See also:** *Nereus; Oceanus; Phorkys; Poseidon*

## Psyche

Psyche's myth first appears in Lucius Apuleius' second-century CE novel *The Golden Ass*. It is the prototype for the fairy tale "Beauty and the Beast." (Roman names for Greek spirits are used within the novel, *i.e.* Eros is Cupid, Aphrodite is Venus. The names in this entry correspond to the novel.)

Psyche was a princess so beautiful that people stop worshipping Venus and began worshipping her instead. Angered, Venus sent Cupid to shoot Psyche with arrows of love so that she would fall in love with someone incredibly humiliating and inappropriate. Instead Cupid was so struck by Psyche's beauty that, distracted, he accidentally nicked himself and fell madly in love with her. He went through complicated machinations to have Psyche brought to his home.

Psyche lived in Cupid's palace in solitary luxury. She never actually saw him but at night he joined her under cover of darkness. They were deliriously happy, but eventually she became homesick and received permission to visit home even though Cupid warned that her trip would bring disaster. Her sisters, who assumed that Psyche was dead or tormented by a hideous monster, were dismayed to see her looking more beautiful than ever. When she described her mysterious lover, they advised her to learn his identity lest her doom be ensured.

Her jealous sisters piqued her curiosity. On her return, she lit a candle to gaze at her sleeping lover. Hypnotized by his beauty, she allowed the candle wax to drip on him. He awoke angered by her mistrust. He abandoned Psyche. The elegant palazzo dissolved into mist, and Psyche

was left all alone.

Seeking forgiveness and reunion, she traveled to the one sure to know Cupid's whereabouts: his mother. Venus greeted her cruelly and set impossible tasks for her, culminating in a journey to Hades to borrow Proserpina's box of beauty. Psyche completed all tasks but while returning from Hades, she was tempted to open the box to obtain a little extra beauty before rejoining Cupid. The powers within Proserpina's box are too strong for a mortal.

Psyche died, but Cupid who had been observing all the while, rescued her. Cupid carried her to Olympus where he pleaded his case before Jupiter who gave Psyche a cup of ambrosia that revived her and caused her to become immortal. Psyche and Cupid lived happily ever after. Their daughter is named Pleasure.

*Psyche* means "soul." Her tasks may be understood as an initiation. Her trip to Hades represents death and rebirth. Her story may contain the coded secrets of Lucius' own spiritual initiation.

Psyche was not content to remain on Olympus as Cupid's consort. Instead she became a working goddess who actively fulfills the petitions of devotees. Psyche emerged as a goddess of love whom some consider more compassionate and approachable than her mother-in-law. Psyche has evolved into a tremendously romantic and erotic goddess. Her sole surviving myth is considered one of Earth's great love stories as exemplified by Frederic Leighton's painting, *The Bath of Psyche*, first exhibited in 1890.

**Iconography:** Psyche is traditionally portrayed as a beautiful young woman with butterfly wings but modern images frequently omit the wings. Mariana Mayer and Kinuko Craft's 1996 children's book, *Cupid and Psyche* (HarperCollins) provides detailed illustrations of the entire myth.

**Consort:** Cupid

**Creature:** Butterfly

**Offerings:** Luxurious food and drink as well as images of hearts and butterflies.

**See also:** *Aphrodite; Eros; Olympian Spirits; Pandora; Proserpina; Venus; Zeus* and the Glossary entry for *Identification*

## **Psychopomp**

**Origin:** Everywhere

After death, how does one arrive at the next realm? Spirits, known as psychopomps, literally “conductors of souls,” serve as our guides. Psychopomps are spirits who travel back and forth between realms of death and life. Psychopomps come in all different forms (kind and beautiful, fierce, frightening or mean). Virtually all spiritual traditions acknowledge some sort of psychopomp.

Psychopomps don’t only serve the dead; sometimes they assist the living:

- They may be petitioned for mercy if death is prolonged and painful.
- If dead souls refuse to leave, manifesting in ghostly hauntings, psychopomps may be petitioned to remove them and escort them to more appropriate destinations.

See the Appendix for a list of Psychopomps.

**See also:** *Dybbuk; Ghosts*

## **Ptah**

*Lord of the Sky; Lord of the Two Lands; Lord of Truths; Lord of Sunrise;  
Father of Fathers; Power of Powers*

**Origin:** Egypt

*In the beginning was the word.* That phrase is now familiar as the first line of the Gospel of John, but is also familiar to devotees of Ptah, Creator of the World. He is the architect of the universe whose first building blocks were thought and speech. He is a primordial deity from the earliest epochs.

*Ptah* means the “opener” but not only in the literal sense of opening a window or door. The word was used in the context of carving, chiseling, or engraving, which the Egyptians perceived as opening up the powers of stone or metal. Ptah is the patron of stone and metalworkers. Ptah is the craftsman of the universe. He fashions new bodies for souls in the Next Realm. Ptah was credited with inventing the Opening of the Mouth Ceremony, the ritual expected to reanimate the deceased.

The Greeks and Romans identified Ptah with Hephaestus and Vulcan respectively

**Favored people:** Masons, stonecutters, metalworkers, architects, artisans, craftspeople, sculptors, ceramic artists, potters, boat builders

**Iconography:** Ptah is portrayed as a bearded man shrouded in a close-fitting garment or as a bearded mummy. He is entirely bound: only his hands project from a front opening. He may wear a menat amulet symbolic of joy, pleasure, and fertility.

**Attributes:** A scepter that combines several amuletic forms, including an ankh and djed pillar (See also: *Osiris*); builder’s tools

**Consorts:** Bastet, Sekhmet, and/or Wadjet.

**Jewel:** Lapis lazuli

**Planet:** Sun

**Sacred site:** Memphis, Egypt

**Creatures:** Rats

**See also:** *Anubis; Bastet; Hephaestus; Nefertem; Osiris; Sekhmet; Vulcan; Wadjet*

## Q

### Qarin

**Pronounced:** *Kah-reen*

In folk tradition common throughout North Africa and the Middle East, every human being has a spirit double or alter ego. The modern Arabic term for this double is *Qarin* (male) or *Qarina* (female). The Qarin is a doppelganger, shadow, or reflection. Sometimes it's an evil twin. Spirit and human are born and die at the same moment and share an intense psychic bond, although they may be unaware of it.

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*Qarin may derive or be related to the Egyptian ka, an aspect of the soul or life-force, sometimes depicted as a person's double. Although their names may be pronounced identically and sometimes even spelled identically, the spirit double Qarina is not the same as the demon Karina who manifested to King Solomon. However some of the fears regarding Qarins may derive from conflating them with Karina.*

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Variations on this theme exist throughout the Semitic world:

- In Jewish folklore, human and spirit share the same gender. Human and spirit are born, marry, and die simultaneously. If you have children, they have children. When your life is tragic, so is theirs. This spirit reflection lives on the other side of the mirror.
- In Egyptian and some Arabic folklore, a man possesses a female Qarina while women have a male Qarin. Very complex relationships form. If you marry someone, their Qarin and Qarina marry, too. If you divorce and remarry, there are repercussions on the other side of the mirror, too.

- In Moroccan folklore, relationships are even more complex. Each individual possesses a star double up in the sky and a leaf on the Tree of Paradise as well as the standard spirit double. All four—human, spirit, leaf, and star—are cosmically linked. If we get sick, so do our spirits. The star pales; the leaf withers. When we die, the spirit dies too. The star becomes a shooting star and falls from the sky. The leaf falls from the tree.

As long as Qarin and human lead parallel lives with no interaction, there's rarely any trouble, but sometimes the Qarin becomes fixated or jealous of its human counterpart, in which case those evil twin tendencies may start to manifest. Trouble develops when the Qarin is infertile but the human counterpart has children or if the Qarin lusts after its human twin. Sometimes Qarins sabotage human relationships from jealousy or because they wish to keep their humans all to themselves. Qarins visit their humans in dreams for sex. (If you compulsively dream of having sex with yourself or someone who looks just like you, this may be more than narcissism.)

In some parts of the Semitic world, the Qarin is just a fact of life, something that exists but which one rarely, if ever, has contact with. Sometimes Qarins behave like allies, especially those whose health and well-being is linked to yours. In other places, however, Qarins are feared. The Qarin may threaten the child of its human counterpart. The Qarin is a formidable opponent if it's angry with you because it knows you like it knows itself. A Qarin will not kill you because it will die with you, but a Qarin with no children may threaten your children because it will suffer no corresponding loss.

Amulets are used to protect against the Qarin, especially:

- Fish-shaped amulets
- The Seven Covenants of Solomon (See also: *Umm es Subyan*.)
- Put seven grains each of seven different kinds of grain in a charm bag. Hang near a cradle, carry, or wear.

**Manifestation:** The Qarin is generally invisible, but the psychically gifted may sense or see them. Qarins are doppelgangers. Looking at your Qarin is like looking into a mirror. Some Qarins are also able to assume



the form of cats or dogs.

**Creatures:** Cats and, to a lesser extent, dogs. These animals may be the Qarins in disguise or some Qarins may just be inordinately fond of them. (Odds are if you're crazy about cats, so is your Qarin.) Cats and dogs may also serve as messengers of the Qarin.

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*Qarin folklore includes all kinds of admonitions against harming or even offending cats. The cat may be the Qarin or these may be vestiges of ancient traditions that considered cats holy.*

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**See also:** *Bastet; Karina*

## Qebhut

**Also known as:** Qeb-Hwt; Qébéhout; Kebehet; Kabachet; Kebhut; Kebechet

**Origin:** Egypt

Qebhut is the goddess of the mystical Water of Life. She presides over the magical, reviving powers of water. The daughter of funerary deity Anubis, Qebhut serves as her father's assistant. She blesses and empowers water; then carries it to him so that this water may be used in funeral rites.

Qebhut is actively involved in the traditional, sacred mummification process that Anubis pioneered. She personally bathes the entrails of the deceased during the mummification process. The souls of the deceased were envisioned as being essentially on "stand-by" during the traditional seventy-day embalming process. During this period, Qebhut brings refreshing, purifying water to these souls, keeping them "alive" until the process is complete and rituals of reanimation are conducted.

Invoke Qebhut to preside over cleansing rituals. She has the power to

purify any atmosphere or situation and may be able to oppose or reverse any sort of decay or contamination, physical or spiritual.

**Favored people:** Funeral workers; those who cleanse or detoxify water; those actively engaged in sacred cleansing rituals

**Iconography:** Qebhut is portrayed carrying water in the guise of a snake or ostrich.

**Spirit allies:** Her father Anubis and grandmother Nephthys

**Element:** Water

**Bird:** Ostrich

**Creature:** Snake

**Offerings:** Incense; pure spring water and/or the alcoholic beverages known as eaux-de-vie (“waters of life”)

**See also:** *Anubis; Nephthys; Satis*

## Quetzalcoatl

### *Lord of the Dawn*

*Quetzalcoatl* means “the plumed or feathered serpent.”

Although often described as an Aztec deity, Quetzalcoatl predates the Aztecs in the Valley of Mexico by centuries. A plumed water serpent spirit recognizable as Quetzalcoatl was venerated in the region from at least 1200 BCE.

Quetzalcoatl was a Toltec deity, the mysterious civilization who dominated the Valley of Mexico between approximately 1200 and 950 BCE. According to Toltec myth, Quetzalcoatl with his brother Tezcatlipoca—his sometime partner, rival, and alter ego—created this world. After the Fourth Age was destroyed by floods, Quetzalcoatl and Tezcatlipoca helped Cihuacoatl create a brand-new Earth. They separated land and sky and repopulated Earth by stealing human bones from Mictlan, Realm of Death. Quetzalcoatl ground up those bones like

corn, mixing the flour-like powder with his own blood to harvest a new crop of people.

Quetzalcoatl invented the calendar, metal-working, and agriculture. He gave people maize corn, their staff of life: it had previously been hidden away. Quetzalcoatl taught people science, architecture, and art and established government and spiritual rituals. He discouraged human sacrifice, recommending flower offerings instead. Unlike many other deities, Quetzalcoatl was consistently benevolent and caring toward people.

His people lived well. Quetzalcoatl became placid. Tezcatlipoca, force of chaos, arrived to shake things up. He showed Quetzalcoatl his reflection in an obsidian mirror. Quetzalcoatl was shocked at his appearance: truly he did not look well. Tezcatlipoca produced what he called medicine—the elixir of life, an alchemical longevity, vitality potion. Really it was just alcohol, something which the ascetic, celibate Quetzalcoatl had never tasted. One sip led to another; Tezcatlipoca got Quetzalcoatl *very* drunk. At some point, Quetzalcoatl's sister Quetzalpetlatl or Xochiquetzal arrived. (Different versions feature different names. It's possible that both names refer to the same spirit.) Depending on the version of the myth, this sister may be a celibate priestess. Quetzalcoatl gave her some of the medicine.

In the morning, they woke up together in bed. Different myths posit different versions of what happened.

- Maybe they really did commit incest.
- Alternatively, too drunk to actually engage in sex, they were also too drunk to recall their actions: Tezcatlipoca told them they had sex and they believed him.
- Yet another version says rival priests raped Quetzalpetlatl but blamed Quetzalcoatl.

Regardless, Quetzalcoatl was ashamed and devastated. He suffered a crisis of faith and felt he must leave. He traveled to the sea and sailed away to the east, maybe on a boat with sails, maybe on a raft of snakes. He vowed to return someday.

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*As their power waned, some Toltecs moved to the Yucatan where they exerted strong influence on Mayan culture. They brought spirits with them: Toltec Quetzalcoatl became Mayan Kukulcan. Quetzalcoatl and Kukulcan are generally considered two names for one deity.*

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Quetzalcoatl's significance and place in the Aztec pantheon is now unclear. Some insist that he is the most important Aztec deity, others that he is comparatively marginal. However sixteenth-century Franciscan missionaries were very taken with him. Aspects of his myth were perceived as Christ-like. He became a tool for evangelists who identified his second-coming from the east with the arrival of the conquistadors. They may have encouraged the still-popular legend that Moctezuma mistook Cortes for Quetzalcoatl.

**Manifestation:** Quetzalcoatl is a pale, bearded man who wears a conical hat and a robe decorated with flowers and crosses.

**Iconography:** Quetzalcoatl is portrayed as a snake covered with quetzal plumes.

**Attributes:** Quetzalcoatl wears a cross-section (slice) of a conch shell as a pendant or chest ornament.

**Element:** Water

**Bird:** Quetzal (*Pharomachus mocinno*)

**Creatures:** Snakes, especially rattlesnakes; also now Quetzalcoatlus, the pterosaur named in his honor

**Planet:** Venus, the Morning Star

**Sacred sites:**

- His temple at Teotihuacán dates to the third century CE.
- Cholula was the center of his veneration and an important pilgrimage site.

**Offerings:** Flowers especially hyacinths, copal incense, seashells,

chocolate

**See also:** *Cihuacoatl; Kolowisi; Oiwa; Malinalxochitl; Mictlantecuhtli; Tezcatlipoca; Xochiquetzal; Xolotl*

## R

### Rachel

Rachel, best-loved of Biblical patriarch Jacob's wives, is also the most beloved matriarch in Jewish folk religion, although she is controversial. When Jacob and his family return to Canaan following his sojourn with Rachel's brother Laban, it's Rachel who secretly absconds with the mysterious *teraphim*, much to her brother's dismay and displeasure, possibly drawing down his curse. (The identity of the *teraphim* remains mysterious: they may be divination devices, idols, fetishes containing ancestral spirits, some or all of the above.)

Rachel died tragically young. After suffering from infertility for years, she died in childbirth. Rachel is the mother-defender of the Jewish people, envisioned weeping for their travails. Although she may be petitioned and invoked for anything because of her own personal circumstances, her specialties are fertility and safe childbirth.

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*Rachel the weeping, wailing mother who is unable to hide or protect her children may be among La Llorona's secret identities. This theory is not far-fetched. Spanish law prohibited anyone suspected of being a potential agent of religious heresy from settling in Mexico. The Inquisition in Mexico was extremely aggressive. From 1528 until 1659, a substantial number of convicted Crypto-Jews were burned in a series of public auto-da-fés in Mexico City. It was unsafe for hidden sympathizers to invoke Rachel, who is too obviously Jewish. Instead, weeping, heartbroken Rachel may hide behind the mask of a weeping, heartbroken Aztec goddess.*

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**Favored people:** Exiles, infertile women, women in travail, motherless

children

**Iconography:** A sixteenth-century French card game identifies the Queen of Diamonds as Rachel. The playing card may be used to represent her.

**Creature:** Sheep

**Sacred site:** Rachel died some three thousand years ago on the road to Efrat near Bethlehem and was immediately buried by Jacob and her family. She is buried alone, the only one of the patriarchs and matriarchs not buried in the Cave of Machpelah in Hebron.

**Ritual:** The red Rachel cords worn as bracelets are now so popular that not only devotees wear them. Those unfamiliar with the concept of amulets may see these bracelets as fashion or mere lucky charms. However, threads imbued with the blessings and *baraka* (“personal power”) of holy people are ancient, treasured Jewish talismans. Although Rachel’s red thread is most famous, this technique may be used to tap into any shrine’s power:

1. Wind a red cotton string around Rachel’s tomb while praying, petitioning, invoking her blessings, and/or chanting Psalms.
2. Wrap it around your left wrist to receive Rachel’s blessings of protection and fertility.
3. Once created, this thread will retain its power and may be given to another.
4. In addition to being worn as a bracelet, Rachel’s thread is tied around sickbeds to transmit healing. It may be tied around the belly to ensure marriage or fertility (take it off once pregnant and wrap it around the wrist instead).

The most powerful amulets, hands down, are those made at Rachel’s tomb. Provided you can make the journey, the amulet itself is inexpensive: all it requires is red string, prayer, and petition. In the wake of popular Kabbalah, red cord bracelets are readily commercially available, but their provenance is not always known. (In other words, is it a genuine amulet or just an overpriced red string?) There is a

traditional method of creating one's own Rachel amulet without making the pilgrimage:

#### RACHEL'S RED CORD BRACELET

1. Light a candle for Rachel's soul and invoke her blessings. Tell her what you need.
2. Wrap a red cotton string around your left wrist seven times, tying it with a knot.
3. Repeat Psalm 33 and then the second-century mystical Kabbalistic poem "*Ana B'Koach*."

**Time:** Personal invocations of Rachel or pilgrimages to her tomb may be made at any time but are considered especially beneficial during new moons, the Hebrew month of Elul (last month of the Jewish year), and the anniversary of her death, the eleventh day of Cheshvan (corresponding in time to the zodiac sign Scorpio).

**Color:** Red

**Offerings:** Candles, oil lamps, kind deeds, charitable donations, donations toward upkeep of her shrine, pilgrimage

**See also:** *Cihuacoatl; Llorona, La*

## Rada Spirits

**Classification:** Lwa

The Rada lwa are among the two primary Haitian Vodou pantheons. (The other is the Petro lwa.) Most Rada spirits hail directly from Africa, mostly from Dahomey, now called Benin. Different ethnic groups resided in Dahomey. Individual spirits may reflect these differences. The Dahomey connection is emphasized in names of specific lwa, like Ezili Freda Dahomey and Damballah.

The name *Rada* derives from the sacred Dahomean coastal city called Arada or Allada, which became a major slave port. A high percentage of slaves arriving in what is now Haiti departed from Allada. It was also the point of disembarkation for the Rada lwa who accompanied their



enslaved devotees.

Other names for the Rada include:

- *Lwa Rasin* meaning “root lwa”—they are the original and oldest Haitian lwa.
- *Lwa Ginen* meaning “African lwa”—*Ginen* has a double meaning indicating literal Africa but also the realm of spirits and ancestors located beneath the sea.

In general, the Rada are calm, patient, benevolent, accessible spirits. In general, they are the safest lwa for beginners and independent practitioners attracted to Vodou to approach. The Rada may be stern and strict, some more so than others but are also renowned for their compassion. Theoretically, if you can't deliver a promised offering on schedule because you genuinely don't have the funds or are otherwise *truly* unable, you can request mercy and more time or possibly even renegotiate an offering. (This will not work with Petro lwa, who have no patience with excuses.)

**Element:** Water (Individual members of the pantheon may be affiliated with other elements, too, but the Rada pantheon as a whole is associated with water.)

**See also:** *Agasou; Agwé; Barons; Bizango; Damballah; Ezili Freda Dahomey; Gédés; Petro;* and the Glossary entry for *Pantheon*

## Ragana

**Also known as:** Rage (Pronounced: *Rah-gay*)

**Origin:** Baltic (Latvia and Lithuania)

Ragana's name derives from a root word meaning “horn” or “crescent.” Alternatively her name derives from a root verb meaning “to see.” Ragana is an ancient, pre-Indo-European spirit, a powerful prophetess who reveals the future. She's familiar with the past, too: devotion to Ragana dates back to the Neolithic era, the New Stone Age.

Ragana rules over night, winter, birth, death, destruction, rebirth, and

regeneration. She is a goddess of fertility, abundance, and menopause, which begins with the touch of her red wand. Ragana the prophetess sees all, knows all, and is all powerful. She is a goddess of death *and* a master healer who can allegedly cure any illness or ailment.

Ragana can bless or curse. She controls fertility and the milk supply of women and animals. She causes and cures infertility and impotence. Ragana controls weather, raising and allaying storms, and wind. She is the guardian of nature's cycles: creation, growth, decline, and destruction. Ragana may be understood as a spirit of balance. Even her negative powers may be understood as a blessing. Ragana halts the sun's ascent after the Summer Solstice. What would happen if the sun's power was left unchecked? If after the Summer Solstice, the sun's power only increased?

- There may be one goddess Ragana.
- There may be a family of closely related spirits all called Ragana.
- There may be one goddess Ragana plus her entourage of handmaidens, lesser but still formidable spirits who are called Raganas.
- Ragana's mortal priestesses and devotees are also known as Ragana.

In modern Latvia and Lithuania, the word *ragana* literally means "witch" (and not in the most positive sense of that word!). According to Lithuanian folklore, witches fly off to hilltops to rendezvous with Ragana on her holy night, the Winter Solstice.

Ragana cuts ice holes in frozen lakes to bathe in icy water. Ragana rarely walks. She flies by transforming into a bird or riding a stick, branch, or tree stump. Ragana is a seer. She doesn't necessarily wish to be seen. Woe to men who surprise her and her handmaidens, especially if caught bathing, dancing, cavorting, celebrating, or otherwise in ritual. First Ragana and Raganas devour men sexually; *then* they literally devour them. (This myth of Ragana raises questions regarding the true identity of the hounds who consumed Actaeon after he interrupted Artemis and her Nymphs bathing.)

Ragana was demonized long before the arrival of Christianity in the region. Venerated prior to the arrival of Indo-Europeans, she was never assimilated or incorporated into their pantheon in which male deities

like Perkunas play dominant roles. Pre-Indo-European goddesses were assimilated by marriage to these deities. Ragana, apparently not ideal wife material, was not married to any of them. Author Vilija Vytė in the book *Of Gods and Holidays: The Baltic Heritage* describes Ragana as the “patriarchy’s nightmare.”

Following the arrival of Christianity, her image only got worse: Ragana was demoted to a witch who allegedly brings misfortune to humans and animals, a warning perhaps intended to make devotees stop venerating her. Fairy tales often portray Ragana as grotesque. Stories simultaneously celebrate and warn against her. Like her Russian soul sister, Baba Yaga, Ragana may be portrayed as a cannibal, yet her spiritual appeal and hold remain powerful. Ragana is invoked in positive and malevolent magic. Spells and incantations attempt to focus (or redirect!) her legendary destructive powers against the spell caster’s enemies. She is an increasingly popular Neo-Pagan goddess.

**Favored people:** Witches, menopausal women

**Manifestation:** Ragana may manifest as a beautiful woman, bird, fish, hedgehog, poison toad or snake, sow, female dog, goat, or some nightmare creature.

**Attributes:** Broadsword, chalice, comb, red magic wand

**Animals:** Goat, hedgehog, mare, venomous snakes and toads

**Birds:** Crow, magpie, owl

**Fish:** Carp, pike

**Colors:** Red, white

**Planet:** Crescent moon (horned moon)

**Number:** 3

**Tree:** Birch

**Plants:** Ragana’s power manifests in plants that heal, poison, or kill.

**Time:** Winter Solstice and Summer Solstice— at the peak of Saulė’s

power, Ragana begins the waning of the year: it is Ragana's moment of glory, too.

**Offerings:** Ragana is traditionally given the first eggs of spring, a hunter's first catch in spring, butter, cheese, hair, sheep's wool, and menstrual blood.

**See also:** *Baba Yaga; Ezili; Laumès; Perkunas; Pomba Gira; Saulé* and the Glossary entry for *Pantheon*.

## Ragaraja

*King of Love*

**Origin:** India

Ragaraja, Buddhist Lord of Passion, helps transform sexual energy into enlightenment. His incarnation as Aizen Myo'o is not known in India. In other words, although Aizen Myo'o may be Ragaraja, Ragaraja isn't necessarily Aizen Myo'o.

**Attribute:** Dorje (thunderbolt), bow and arrows

**Color:** Red

**Mount:** Lion

**See also:** *Aizen Myo'o*

## Raijin

**Also known as:** Raiden

**Origin:** Japan

Raijin is a Shinto spirit of thunder, lightning, and their accompanying noise and electricity. Thunder is the sound of Raijin beating his drums. Buddhist cosmology classifies Raijin as a demon who now protects the Dharma. Raijin is credited with saving Japan from Mongolian invasion in 1274. He sat on a cloud and directed endless lightning bolts at the

Mongolian ships. Raijin's constant companions include Fujin, an ancient wind spirit, and Raiju, the thunder beast, essence of electricity.

Raijin's other name, Raiden, is evoked by the electricity-channeling character Gwen Raiden on the television series, *Angel*.

**Manifestation:** Raijin is a huge, powerful, horned spirit who resembles an oni.

**Iconography:** Raijin is typically portrayed as a fierce spirit beating drums.

**Symbol:** Tomoe, a geometric symbol related to the yin-yang symbol and indicating Earth's energies; the Tomoe is formed by interlocked flames.

**Color:** Red

**See also:** *Eight Dharma Protectors; Oni; Raiju; Ryujin*

## **Raiju**

### *Thunder Animal*

**Origin:** *Japan*

Raiju, the thunder animal, is Raijin's companion or possibly his pet. Raiju is usually calm, peaceful, and docile but he gets electrified during thunderstorms, leaping about wildly. Lightning damage to trees, buildings, or monuments may be ascribed to his claws. Raiju may be the essence and spirit of electricity.

Raiju's true form is believed to be a fireball or ball of electricity, but he is a shape-shifter. Raiju manifests in the guise of animals like cats, weasels, or tanuki. Sometimes Raiju flies in the form of a blue wolf. Although he may physically resemble a loup-garou, the flying wolf associated with lightning balls, Raiju doesn't demonstrate any of its antisocial tendencies. With the exception of lightning damage, the worst thing Raiju does is make himself tiny enough to sleep in people's navels, a favorite napping spot. He does little damage himself, but his absence may attract Raijin's attention. Raijin, who knows all Raiju's favorite

spots to nap, shoots arrows at belly buttons to rouse him from slumber—in the process injuring the human host. The traditional solution? Keep your belly button covered while you sleep.

- Raiju's descendents include electric Pokemon Raikou and Raichu.
- He is the inspiration for the Clow Card called The Thunder in the manga/anime series *Cardcaptor Sakura*.

**Manifestation:** Raiju's cry, which resembles thunder, is his identifying characteristic.

**Spirit ally:** Raijin

**Element:** Fire

**See also:** *Loup-garou; Raijin; Tanuki*

## Rakshasa

### *Night Wanderers*

**Origin:** India

Rakshasas, a type of Ashura, are wild forest spirits who cling to the primal law of the jungle rather than rules of civilization and religion. Needless to say, as myths tend to be filtered through religion, Rakshasas have a bad reputation. Hinduism and Buddhism frequently classify them as demons. Lord Ravana, villain of the epic Ramayana, is king of Rakshasas. His Rakshasa army battled Hanuman's monkeys.

Rakshasas are not trivial spirits but very powerful, capable of reanimating corpses and inhabiting them. Rakshasas have profound occult powers and knowledge. Although they tend to be hostile spirits, they can theoretically heal illnesses and bestow fertility to men and women. Male Rakshasas are lusty spirits who crave sex with human women. They are accused of eating people, too. These stories may originally have been intended to defame an earlier pantheon and discourage veneration.

**Manifestation:** Rakshasas are shape-shifters who take many forms.

Favorites include dogs, owls, and vultures. They can disguise themselves in the form of specific individuals. They take the forms of men in order to trick wives into having sex with them. Identifying characteristics tend to be matted hair (a sign of ascetism, spirit possession, or spirit alliance in India) and multiple legs. A Rakshasa may have five or six legs instead of the anticipated two or four.

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*A half-demon werepanther named  
Rakshasa appears in the comic book series  
Purgatori, (Chaos! Comics).*

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**Iconography:** Rakshasas are frequently portrayed with horned, fanged animal heads atop a potbellied human body. They have exceptionally wide mouths, sporting an ear-to-ear grin, the better to display their fangs.

**See also:** *Ashura; Demon; Hanuman; Kubera; Neko-Mata; Sita;* and the Glossary entry for *Pantheon*

## **Rán**

*Robber; Goddess of the Drowned*

**Origin:** Norse

Rán, a primordial Norse sea spirit lives in a golden hall in the deepest depths of the sea where those who drown spend eternity. Rán is not a benevolent sea goddess, although she is allegedly a wonderful hostess. She is a death goddess, blamed for shipwrecks, drownings, and disappearances at sea. Rán's signature possession is a special fishing net, which she uses to catch ships and drag them down to her home. (Loki borrowed Rán's net to capture Andvari.) Rán casts her net to fish for permanent guests at her luxurious hall.

Once upon a time, Rán was allegedly offered human sacrifices. She was fed, so she wouldn't serve herself. Saxon pirates tithed to Rán, allegedly casting one in ten captives overboard in hopes of ensuring safe passage. Rán and her husband, Aegir, are the proud parents of nine daughters who manifest as beautiful women and as waves. Sometimes they help their mom capture ships. Rán's hall on the ocean floor is among the Norse realms of death. She receives those who drown, whether or not she is responsible for their deaths.

Aegir, Lord of the Sea, is her husband and brother. They are primordial spirits, older than the Norse pantheon. They predate and defy classification and thus are neither Aesir nor Vanir, although they socialize with both. Rán is an oracular spirit. It is safer to request her assistance on land.

**Iconography:** Despite her fierce reputation, Rán is often visualized as being very beautiful. Her portrait on a 2004 Faeroe Island postage stamp depicts her as a sexy sea goddess clad in nothing but her net.

**Attribute:** Net

**Element:** Water

**Sacred site:** The seven seas; in Old Norse kennings (wordplay), *Rán's Road* is another name for the sea.

**See also:** *Aegir; Aesir; Andvari; Jotun; Loki; Vanir*

## Rangda

*The Witch Queen; The Widow; The Demon Queen*

**Origin:** Bali

Rangda is Bali's Queen of Witches and Lady of the Night. She is a goddess of occult power, fertility, menstruation, menopause, and death. She is a spirit of chaos, both in its negative sense and as a force that shakes up stagnation, allowing something new to be born.

Rangda plays a prominent part in Balinese barong dance theatre,



where she appears as the personification of wickedness. Just like the evil witch-queens in Disney cartoons, Rangda typically steals the show and is the source of much amusement. She is a troublemaker, for instance causing menopausal women to become pregnant. Menopausal women who would like to become pregnant should take note. Rangda is the spirit to approach, although she can be fierce and terrifying. She is not sweet and cuddly, even to those she favors.

Rangda is an angry spirit: she was defamed and oppressed even when alive. After death, she became a queen of witches and the butt of shivery amusement in Barong. Rangda is the mother of Erlangga, tenth century King of Bali. Her husband, Erlangga's father, ostracized and condemned her because of his disapproval of her occult, shamanic practices.

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*Rangda has a strong sense of humor and a taste for the absurd. She enjoys overturning conventional wisdom. She is the matron of defiant, unconventional older women and a teacher of the occult arts.*

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Upon her husband's death, Rangda amassed an army of spirits against Erlangga. She cast a spell causing his soldiers to kill themselves, not their enemies by stabbing their own bodies with their poisoned daggers. Rangda lost the war, as she always loses in Barong dance. Nevertheless, her spell remains so powerful that even today a weak dancer may injure himself with his dagger.

In Barong, Rangda is *always* impersonated by a man. Although the performances are also major tourist attractions, they remain sacred dances and an element of spiritual possession is involved. Balinese tradition suggests that if a woman danced Rangda, so much power would be transmitted it could potentially lead to the destruction of Bali.

Because Rangda is potentially dangerous, *Cepuk* (pronounced "cheh-poo") cloth is traditionally associated with her. These sacred handmade *ikat* ritual cloths serve various purposes, including exorcism:

- They keep dangerous forces at bay.

- They purify the participants in magic and healing ceremonies.
- *Cepuk* protects and empowers individuals during their dealings with the supernatural.

Rangda is a pre-Hindu spirit of Bali, incorporated into the Hindu pantheon as a path of Durga and Kali.

**Favored people:** Occult practitioners, widows, crones

**Manifestation:** Rangda has tusks; big, prominent teeth; and long, pendulous striped breasts. Fire spews from her tongue. She has wild, disheveled hair and long claws.

**Iconography:** Rangda's image is among the most popular Balinese carved masks.

**Time:** Night

**See also:** *Durga*; *Kali* and the Glossary entry for *Path*

## Raphael

*The Lord's Healer*

**Also known as:** Rafael; Israfael; Afarol; Afarof; Afriel

Raphael, Regent of the Sun, is the archangel of healing. He is the star of the apocryphal Book of Tobit, in which he performs miraculous cures and explains how to vanquish powerful demons. Raphael is the angel of joy, love, and compassion. He vies with Michael and Gabriel for title of Most Loved Angel.

- Raphael is among the seven angels who surround the Throne of Glory.
- Raphael is the Guardian of the Tree of Life.
- He may be the angel with the flaming sword who guards the gates of Eden.
- He may be the Guardian of the Holy Grail.
- Raphael is guardian of those born under astrological air signs—Gemini,

Libra, and Aquarius.

Although his ally Michael is the warrior angel who routs Lucifer, Raphael is an acclaimed demon-banisher, too. He commands, compels, and banishes even the most formidable spirits.

- Raphael terminates Ashmodai's reign of terror in the Book of Tobit.
- Raphael is the angel delegated by the Creator to restrain and chain Azazel.

Raphael possesses the power of the Ineffable Name. He is invoked to banish wicked spirits and to break malignant spells. Raphael allegedly protects anyone who calls upon him and invokes his name. As the archangel of healing, he can potentially heal any illness, ailment, or condition. His specialties include vision problems (literally or metaphorically). Raphael soothes and heals mental illness. He banishes nightmares.

**Favored people:** Lovers, pharmacists, physicians, healers, health inspectors, travelers— especially young people leaving home for the first time

**Manifestation:** Raphael is a being of blinding light, but in the Book of Tobit, he is able to make himself appear sufficiently innocuous so that Tobit, the central character, is unaware that Raphael is an angel despite close contact.

**Iconography:** Raphael is portrayed as a handsome young androgynous man with a traveler's staff and a fish.

**Attribute:** Fish, traveler's staff, flask

**Element:** Usually identified with air, sometimes with water

**Planet:** Sun, Mercury

**Direction:** East or west, depending on opinion and tradition

**Color:** Usually blue and gold, but some southern Italian traditions recommend pink and purple.

**Jewel:** Emerald

**Day:** Tuesday (Yezidi tradition)

**Feast:** 24 October, but in 1969, Vatican reforms reassigned feast days so that archangels Gabriel and Raphael now share Michael's feast: 29 September.

**Offerings:** Frankincense and myrrh; fish-shaped amulets and fish made of silver

**See also:** *Ashmodai; Azazel; Gabriel; Michael; Obizuth; Peacock Angel; Prometheus*

## Ratatosk

**Origin:** Norse

The name *Ratatosk* means “swift teeth” or “gnawing teeth.” He is the divine squirrel who runs up and down Ygdrasil, the World Tree. He eats the bark and gnaws on the tree, absorbing all kinds of power, wisdom, and knowledge.

Ratatosk is a trickster and a gossip. He enjoys transmitting insults between the eagle at the top of the tree and the serpent Nidhog below. He has all the qualities of a squirrel taken to an exponential degree. Ratatosk is a messenger who travels between realms and dimensions. He has access to the entire Norse pantheon and probably beyond, too. As a squirrel, he is an independent practitioner who is not bound by classifications: Ratatosk communicates with Aesir, Vanir, Elves, Jotuns, and every other type of spirit. He can communicate with animal and plant spirits, too. Ratatosk may be petitioned to provide information and deliver petitions. Those who have a rapport with squirrels will know methods of communication.

**Manifestation:** Ratatosk is a spirit in the guise of a squirrel.

**Offerings:** Nuts, water, fruit, and other food squirrels like, small shiny pretty things, images of squirrels

**See also:** *Aesir; Elves; Jotun; Mimir; Morrigan, The; Norns; Vanir*

## **Rati**

*Voluptuousness*

**Also known as:** Ragalata, the Vine of Love

**Origin:** Bali, India

**Classification:** Apsara

The night time is the right time to be with the one you love. Rati is the spirit of night as the time for lovers. In India, she is considered an Apsara, a shape-shifting water spirit. As the Balinese spirit of love, desire, fertility, maternity, and erotic delights, she manifests as a woman with big, milk-filled breasts and a large, ever-pregnant belly. She is a spirit of abundance and is usually understood to be pregnant with twins. She is an aggressively sexual spirit. Rati teaches romantic and sexual secrets. She is invoked for pleasurable sex, fulfilled love, romance, and fertility.

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*The Ratirahasya or “The Secrets of Love” is a twelfth-century erotic manual comparable to the Kama Sutra, the sacred erotic text named for Rati’s husband.*

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According to Hindu myth, originally Rati was plain, not beautiful or sexy, and no one wished to marry her. Rati sought Lakshmi’s help. Lakshmi gave her sixteen love charms, which made her so irresistible that Kama Deva, Lord of Love, himself fell in love with her.

### **THE LOVE CHARMS OF RATI**

- Earrings
- Nose ring

- Toe ring
- Finger rings
- Bracelet
- Armlet
- Anklet
- Belt
- Necklace
- Hairpins
- Flowers
- Perfume
- Kohl
- Red sari
- Vermilion mark on forehead
- Lips stained red by fragrant nuts

In addition to providing love, Rati protects against thieves, wolves, nocturnal creatures, and malicious spirits, possibly because she also reputedly controls all of them.

**Manifestation:** A beautiful, sexy, pregnant woman

**Husband:** Kama Deva

**Flower:** Queen of the Night (*Cestrum nocturnum*), also known as Night Blooming Jessamine.

**Color:** Red

**Time:** Night

**Offerings:** Incense, perfume, and luxurious, erotic gifts.

**See also:** *Apsara; Chinnamasta; Kama; Lakshmi*

**Rauni**

**Origin:** Finland

Rauni, the rowan tree goddess, embodies all inherent powers of this beloved sacred tree, which is integral to Northern magical and spiritual traditions. The rowan, also known as the Witch Tree or Rune Tree, is a small, tough tree able to thrive in very poor soil. Among other metaphysical properties, rowan trees provide spiritual protection.

According to one Finnish creation myth, the rowan (really Rauni in disguise), is Earth's first tree. In the beginning, Rauni came to Earth and saw that there were no plants. She assumed the form of a rowan tree. Her husband, thunder spirit Ukko, struck her with lightning and she conceived. Rauni and Ukko are the parents of all plants.

- Rauni presides over fertility and childbirth.
- She is the anodyne goddess invoked to heal, minimize, and eliminate pain of all kinds.

**Favored people:** Herbalists, botanists, rune casters

**Sacred site:** The forest

**Tree:** Rowan

**Day:** 1 May

**Offerings:** Water, plant, and maintain rowans.

**See also:** *Loki*; and the Glossary entry for *Rune*

## Renenet

*She Who Rears; The Nourishing Snake; Lady of the Double Granary*

**Also known as:** Renenutet

**Origin:** Egypt

Renenet is an Egyptian goddess of childbirth. Her name derives from the root word *ren*, indicating the soul name, the secret name that the Egyptians believed helped animate the baby and bring it to life outside

the womb. (Alternatively the name provides protection and keeps the baby alive.)

Renenet is invoked to instill a baby's survival instincts and to create the desire to nurse. She may be invoked to guard and empower premature babies. She is also petitioned to help reveal the true name of a newborn or any other person. Renenet protects the secret name after death—necessary, according to the Egyptians, to enable eternal survival of the soul.

**Favored people:** Babies, vintners

**Manifestation:** Renenet is a fire-breathing, sacred cobra.

**Iconography:** Renenet is portrayed as a woman with a snake or lioness head. She sometimes nurses a baby.

**Spirit allies:** Meskhenet, Sobek, Horus

**Creatures:** Snakes, lions

**Sacred sites:** Renenet was also a guardian of the grain and grape harvest. Ancient Egypt had a flourishing wine industry. Her shrines were placed beside vats or wine presses.

**Offerings:** Milk, grain, grapes, wine

**See also:** *Horus, Meskhenet, Sobek*

## **Reshef**

*Lord of the Arrow*

**Also known as:** Resheph; Reshpu; Rashshaf

Reshef is a fierce, aggressive ancient Semitic spirit of warfare and epidemics. He holds power over life and death. Reshef was worshipped throughout the Hittite Empire as well as in Egypt, Aram (original home of the Aramaic language), and Phoenicia, and its colonies.

Reshef is sometimes described as a deer deity, and there is some debate as to whether he should be considered a horned god. Reshef



wears an gazelle's entire head on his headdress, not just the horns.

**Attribute:** Bow

**Consort:** Kadesh

**Creature:** Gazelle, deer

**See also:** *Anat; Astarte; Kadesh*

## **Rhea**

*The Great Mother; Mother of the Gods*

**Origin:** Greece

**Classification:** Titan

Rhea, Greek Earth Goddess, is an avatar of Gaia. Her name derives from an archaic word for Earth. Gaia created Rhea as an emanation of herself in the form of a beautiful woman. Rhea was sent to Earth to mingle with people and to teach them spirituality and the proper way to receive Earth's abundance.

Rhea is the only Greek goddess given the title Mother of the Gods. She married her brother, Kronos. Their children include Hestia, Poseidon, Demeter, Hades, Hera, and Zeus. Because a prophecy foretold that one of his sons would overthrow him just as he had overthrown his own father, Kronos swallowed his children as they were born. Super-fertile Rhea kept conceiving and giving birth only to lose her babies. Like Isis, Rhea is a prototypical holy mother who must save and protect her divine child so that he survives to mature into his full power.

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*According to myth, the Milky Way spurted from Rhea's full breasts when, secretly nursing Zeus, she abruptly moved him to hide him from his murderous father.*

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Rhea is the inventor of dancing. She is a great goddess of virtually unlimited powers who may be invoked for all needs. She is extremely sympathetic to women and children who must be protected from other family members. Rhea presided over Mystery Traditions and may be invoked to reveal secrets of the Earth.

The Romans identified Rhea with Kybele. Their names are often used interchangeably and it can now be very difficult to disentangle their respective myths.

**Manifestation:** Rhea appears as a beautiful, sexy, regal woman and as a snake.

**Spirit allies:** She is accompanied by an entourage of Dactyls and Nymphs.

**Creature:** Snake

**Mount:** Rhea's speedy chariot is pulled by Atalanta and her husband transformed into lions.

**Offerings:** Wine, water, milk, menstrual blood, beautiful crystals

**See also:** *Cabeiro; Dactyl; Demeter; Gaia; Hades; Hera; Hestia; Kronos; Kybele; Nymph; Olympian Spirits; Pandora; Persephone; Poseidon; Proserpina; Titan; Zeus* and the Glossary entries for *Avatar, Identification, and Mystery*.

## Rhiannon

**Origin:** Wales

Pwyll, Lord of the Welsh kingdom of Dyfed, was riding when he saw before him a gorgeous woman dressed in gold, slowly and regally riding a big, beautiful white mare. He tried to catch up with her, but no matter how fast he and his minions rode, they could never reach the beautiful rider, although she never appeared to increase her slow, dignified pace. Finally Pwyll called to her, and she stopped and let him catch up. When he asked why he couldn't reach her before, she said it was because he hadn't asked. She introduced herself as Rhiannon and stated her

intention to marry him.

Rhiannon married Pwyll and came to live at his court, bringing precious gifts for all his nobles. For three years they had no children, and people began to whisper against her. Rhiannon was rumored to be a sorceress. Local people exhorted Pwyll to choose a new wife, but he refused. Finally Rhiannon gave birth to a son.

Three nights later, on May Eve, servants appointed to keep watch over the newborn fell asleep. They awoke to find the baby missing. They panicked. Rather than be blamed, they killed a puppy and smeared its blood around sleeping Rhiannon's mouth to make it look like she had not only killed but eaten her child, a doubly heinous crime. Rhiannon was found guilty of infanticide. Pwyll imposed a strange punishment: he ordered Rhiannon to spend seven years seated near the horseblock by his gate, retelling her story to all who approached, and then carrying them to court on her back like a horse.

Meanwhile, strange things were happening over at the house of Teyrnnon. Every May Eve (the night of 30 April), his beautiful mare gave birth to a foal that instantly vanished. He decided to solve the mystery by keeping watch inside the stable. Just as the mare gave birth, a huge clawed hand reached in the window to grab the foal. Teyrnnon hacked off the hand with his broadsword. The foal was saved. Screams were heard, but when Teyrnnon ran outside there was nothing there. He returned to the stable and discovered a beautiful baby boy on the threshold.

Teyrnnon and his wife adopted the baby, who quickly began demonstrating supernatural powers and an affinity for horses. He also began resembling Pwyll. Teyrnnon put two and two together and realized that his mysterious child was Pwyll's son, not dead at all. He brought him to court, told his story and reunited him with his parents. Rhiannon was exonerated and returned to the palace as queen. She named her son Pryderi ("Worry"). After Pwyll's death, Rhiannon married Manawydan to whom she was very happily wed.

Mysterious legends of Rhiannon derive mainly from the Welsh epic, the *Mabinogi*. Although she is disguised as a queen and never openly called a goddess, she is clearly a supernatural being. Rhiannon's name resembles *Rigantona*, meaning "Great Queen" or "Divine Queen." It may

also derive from two Welsh words:

- *Rhiain* (“a maiden”)
- *Annwn* (the name of a Welsh Otherworld)

Some speculate that she is the daughter of Arawn, Lord of Annwn, friend and ally of Pwyll. Rhiannon’s powerful associations with horses have led to associations with Epona, a Celtic horse goddess, none of whose mythology currently survives. Rhiannon also resembles Macha, another beautiful queen, humiliated and forced to assume a horse’s role. (Horses were worshipped in the ancient British Isles. These myths may also protest degradation of horses, no longer treated as sacred oracles but forced to labor.)

Rhiannon is an increasingly popular Neo-Pagan goddess. She is a love goddess invoked for beauty, domestic happiness, and true love. She is petitioned to protect against disaster and humiliation. Rhiannon is a goddess of prosperity and abundance. She also heals and may have associations with divination.

**Favored people:** The wrongfully accused

**Animal:** Horse

**Bird:** Rhiannon has three magic singing birds who can wake the dead and lull the living to sleep.

**See also:** *Arawn; Branwen; Cliodna; Epona; Mabon; Macha; Manawydan;*

## **Rigpay Lhamo**

*The Red-Faced One*

**Also known as:** Rikpay Lhamo

**Origin:** Mongolia

Rigpay Lhamo is a fierce pre-Buddhist Mongolian spirit who now rides to the defense of the Dharma in the entourage of her brother/consort, Begtse. She is his constant companion and ally and is usually depicted

riding on his right side.

**Iconography:** Rigpay Lhamo is traditionally depicted with a red face and a naked blue body featuring pendulous breasts. Her ornaments are made of bone. The animal on which she rides may be depicted leisurely chewing on the corpses of her enemies.

**Attributes:** Flaming sword and an iron *phurpa* (ritual dagger or stake)

**Mount:** A bear or a lion

**Metal:** Copper

**Colors:** Red and blue

**See also:** *Begtse; Eight Dharma Protectors; Palden Lhamo*

## **Rosmerta**

### *The Great Provider*

**Origin:** Celtic

Rosmerta is a goddess of abundance, well-being, prosperity, peace, and plenty. She is a love goddess who bestows fertility. No myths involving Rosmerta currently survive but she is a great goddess who was once incredibly popular. Rosmerta was venerated over a *huge* swathe of Celtic Europe. She had shrines throughout Gaul, on both sides of the Rhineland, and in the British Isles where her veneration was centered in Gloucester. Her shrines were usually connected with therapeutic spring sanctuaries, as for instance at Wiesbaden.

Rosmerta is considered the deity who bridges Celtic, Roman, and Germanic cultures as indicated by her marriages. She was partnered with different male deities depending on region. Among her consorts are Mercury, Wotan, and the Celtic deity Esus. In Lyon, she was paired with Lugh. However, Rosmerta was also venerated independently, all by herself, no consort needed.

Post-Christianity many of Rosmerta's functions were reassigned to Mary. In 994 CE, Saint Gerard of Toul replaced the statue of Rosmerta in

her shrine on Mount Sion-Vaudémont in Lorraine with a statue of Mary.

- Rosmerta may hide beneath the mask of the Black Madonna of Avioth.
- Madame Rosmerta, great provider, owns the pub the Three Broomsticks in J. K. Rowling's Harry Potter novels.

**Iconography:** She is a beautiful woman portrayed with arms outstretched to her viewer. An image from Wiesbaden shows her sitting on her throne while Mercury offers her the contents of his purse.

**Attributes:** Cornucopia, *patera* (offering plate), wooden ironbound bucket, ladle, torch, double-axe, scepter. Rosmerta also sometimes shares Mercury's attributes, the caduceus and purse.

**Spirit allies:** Fortuna, Mercury; she is accompanied by an entourage of ghosts of dead children.

**Creatures:** Snake, horse

**Sacred site:** Mount Sion-Vaudémont her holy mountain where she was venerated alongside Wotan. (*Vaudémont* derives from his name.)

**Offerings:** Spring water, bowls of fresh fruit, and gifts fit for a queen.

**See also:** *Berchta; Black Madonna; Black Madonna of Avioth; Fortuna; Hulda; Lugh; Mercury; Odin*

## Rudra

### *The Howler*

**Origin:** Himalayas

Rudra, forest spirit, wanders naked, covered by nothing but white cremation ashes except for his perpetually erect penis, which is painted with red, black, and white chalk. His bright red hair is matted; his teeth are sharp and jagged. His eyes are always red, variously attributed to weeping, smoke irritation, and intoxication. Rudra leads a procession of howling dogs, ghosts, and goblins. He howls, laughs, and juggles flaming sticks. He makes his home in caves.

Rudra, Lord of Thieves, is a hunter, healer, shaman, metalworker, and is himself a master thief. He has dominion over plants and animals. He is a master of spirits and may be requested to banish malicious spirits who are bothering you.

Rudra is the Vedic spirit of storms, pine forests, and ascetic sages. Three hymns in the Rig Veda are dedicated to him. Some scholars believe that he is an indigenous Himalayan spirit who was encountered by Aryans as they traveled through India. He is a sacred, holy, dangerous, volatile, and potentially violent spirit who is now identified with Shiva.

**Favored people:** Shamans, magicians, witches, conjurers, fire walkers, swindlers, thieves

**Iconography:** Rudra is venerated in the form of an erect phallus.

**Attribute:** Upward pointing triangle, axe, drum

**Elements:** Fire, water

**Constellation:** Rudra and his hunting hound are manifest in the constellations Orion and Sirius.

**Color:** Red

**Animal:** Dog

**Plant:** *Amanita muscaria* (fly agaric; toadstool)

**Trees:** Pine; Rudraksha (*Elaeocarpus ganitrus*)

**See also:** *Bagalamukhi*; *Shiva*; and the Glossary entry for *Identification*

## Rusalka

**Origin:** Russia

Rusalka are female nature spirits associated with water, fields, forests, and healing wells. Although sometimes dreaded, Rusalka are also petitioned for healing, fertility, and true love. There are fierce debates as to their true identity, nature, and origin. Be careful: the Rusalka are

tricksters and shape-shifters with a wicked sense of humor. They may be willing to conform to expectations. In other words, they can be benevolent goddesses or seductive killers as you choose. Here are some theories of their origins:

- *Rusalka* derives from the same roots as *Rus* and *Russia*. They are primal ancestors who annually bless the land with fertility and abundance.
- Rusalka are ghosts, transformed souls of young women who died by drowning, whether as accidents (perhaps lured in by spirits, including other Rusalka), suicide, or murder.
- Christian-oriented explanations suggest that Rusalka are damned souls of girls who died without being baptized, possibly Pagan girls. Rusalka stories were traditionally told to girls and so the added inference is that if they're not baptized, they'll end up as Rusalka, too.

Rusalka serve as Baba Yaga's attendants and guard her rye fields. In the Ukraine, they perch in birch trees like birds, washing, and combing their hair and weaving linen garments, which they wash and hang from branches to dry. They may live in beautiful underwater palaces during winter but move to the trees when the weather turns nice.

Rusalka come down from the trees at night to circle-dance in the moonlight. Allegedly if caught in the act, they drown observers. Water is the Rusalka's natural element and home but also their weapon: stories describe Rusalka luring people to water, then drowning them, although whether this was always part of their identity or whether this is a Christian attempt to discourage communication with them is unknown.

**Manifestation:** Rusalka tend to travel in packs: girl gangs of marauding spirits. They are shape-shifters who may appear benevolent and beautiful or scary and fierce. They are described as beautiful, wild-haired, and big-breasted, quite apparent as they're usually naked when encountered. Sometimes they wear white linen shifts with no belts (in Russian cosmology, belts are a sign of civilization as is braided or bound hair. The Rusalka's hair is always loose.) Rusalka may appear as incredibly beautiful mermaids or as animated pale, bloated, drowned corpses, essentially zombies of the water.



**Spirit ally:** Baba Yaga, Bereginny

**Element:** Water

**Color:** White

**Tree:** Birch

**Animal:** Wolf

**Plants:** Rye, poppies, flax

**Ritual:** Rusalka ornament trees with beautiful handiwork as an example of what they expect from women. Traditionally, women weave and embroider special cloths which are draped on birch trees as gifts to the Rusalka and the trees.

**Altar:** Although Rusalka may accept offerings on home altars, offerings are traditionally draped onto tree branches for them, especially birch trees. A temporary altar erected in a forest or beside a source of fresh water is ideal. If you would rather venerate the Rusalka closer to home, an altar in the backyard is generally more effective than one constructed indoors. Incorporate tree imagery into indoor altars and maintain them with a steady supply of clean fresh water in order to encourage the Rusalka to venture within.

**Offerings:** Rusalka expect veneration and offerings from women as their due. Rusalka perched in trees call out to girls passing by to give them gifts. Traditional offerings include ribbons, flower garlands, hand-embroidered ritual cloths, and tea towels.

**See also:** *Baba Yaga; Bereginny; Fairy; Jezibaba; Ragana; Samovili; Vila*

## **Ryujin**

*Luminous Being*

**Also known as:** Riujin; Rinjin

**Origin:** Japan

Ryujin, Japanese Dragon King of the Sea, rules an underwater realm from his luxurious palace at the bottom of the sea. He is known as a gracious host who welcomes guests to his home. His palace, known as Ryugu and constructed from crystal and coral, is rumored to be located near Japan's Ryuku Islands.

Ryujin is served by an entourage of sea creatures, including octopi, jellyfish, and turtles. He is incredibly wealthy, bestowing fertility, good health, and prosperity to those he favors. Ryujin rules the tides and controls storms and is invoked for safety on land and sea.

**Manifestation:** Ryujin is a shape-shifter who can appear as a man or a dragon.

**Iconography:** Ryujin is portrayed as a dragon or as an old bearded man. A dragon coils around his neck or back.

**Attributes:** The tide jewels, which magically control the tide's ebb and flow.

**Spirit allies:** His daughter Toyotama-hime and Raijin

**Element:** Water

**See also:** *Dragon Kings of the Sea; Raijin; Tamatori-hime; Toyotama-hime*

## S

### **Saalah**

**Also known as:** Sealah

Saalah are believed to be the offspring of humans and Djinn. Although theoretically half-human, they are generally considered a sub-set of Djinn. Saalah prefer to live in forests. They dance—that's their defining characteristic. Allegedly if Saalah capture humans, they force them to dance, reminiscent of what may be another sub-set of Djinn, Zar spirits. Wolves are their nemesis. They devour and destroy Saalah. Images of wolves will allegedly repel the Saalah.

**See also:** *Djinn; Nemesis; Vila; Zar*

### **Sacha Huarmi**

*Sacha Huarmi* literally means “forest woman” or “jungle woman.” She lives in the Ecuadorian Amazon rainforest near the base of the Andes. Sacha Huarmi is the Green Woman who protects and nurtures wild forest animals. She is the initiatrix of shamans.

Sacha Huarmi is the female counterpart of Sacha Runa, the forest man. They serve as intermediaries between plant spirits and people. In addition, they train, educate, and initiate shamans. Sacha Huarmi will on occasion meet and guide women, but her relationships are generally with men. Sacha Huarmi may greet those who visit her in her forest home but she also visits devotees in dreams and visions.

Popular entertainment is filled with tales of people who can magically assume the form and identity of other people. Examples include episodes of the television shows *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* and *Supernatural*. These shape-shifters can fool most people, but every once in a while someone sees through the illusion (and on television, saves the day). Sacha Huarmi is such a shape-shifter. She may not display her true form but

manifests in a form familiar to her viewer, such as an old friend, relative, or acquaintance.

What appears to be a trick is really a test: a person may realize the deception or be fooled. Sacha Huarmi is assessing your psychic eye: fail to recognize her and she will depart without revealing her true identity. Unlike on television, nothing disastrous will happen, but the opportunity for spiritual guidance and initiation is lost and may not come again.

**Manifestation:** She is described by author Dale Pendell in his book *Pharmako/Poeia* as a “beautiful green-skinned, green-eyed, green-haired woman” who wears a woven bark skirt, a brilliant macaw headdress, and nine necklaces of toucan feathers.

**Attributes:** Feathered lance, iron pot

**Creature:** All of them but especially anacondas

**Color:** Green

**See also:** *Green Man; Sacha Runa; Sachamama*

## Sacha Runa

*Sacha Runa* literally means “forest being.” He lives in the Ecuadorian Amazon near the Andes Mountains (but he’s a highly mobile spirit and can travel). Sacha Runa’s domain is the jungle. Destroying the rain forest minimizes his territory. Sacha Runa’s name is now used by various organizations, including a conglomeration of indigenous people, who share the goal of protecting the Amazon rain forest.

The spirit Sacha Runa protects the forest’s animals. He may protect people in the forest, too, presuming their intentions are good. He serves as the intermediary between humans and plant spirits. Sacha Runa’s special relationship is with shamans. *Vegetalistas* are Amazonian shamans who learn directly from the plant spirits. To become a true *vegetalista* with full powers, one must eventually encounter Sacha Runa, who may or may not initiate the encounter. Seeking Sacha Runa involves rituals and time. Cleansing rituals, including fasting and purging, are performed. While one waits for him, no salt or domestic meat may be

consumed or he will not appear. He appears when he is ready and when he deems you ready; people have been known to wait a very long time.

Sacha Runa is a male spirit. In general, he greets and guides women. He will sometimes enter relationships with men, too, but they are more likely to encounter his female counterpart, Sacha Huarmi.

**See also:** *Sacha Huarmi; Sachamama*

## Sachamama

Sachamama is the jungle mother, Goddess of the Ecuadorian Amazon. She is a snake spirit—a gigantic, primeval, eared boa. Sachamama rose up from the underworld in the form of a two-headed snake, transforming into the Tree of Life. Now she patrols and controls the jungle.

Just like any ordinary snake, Sachamama can stay very still for very long, except in her case, exponentially so. Sachamama may stay in one position for centuries so that she begins to resemble landscape. Foliage, vines, and leaves grow over her, camouflaging her. She impregnates these botanicals with her power. When Sachamama finally moves, she has the effect of an earthquake: the ground splits open and trees topple.

Sachamama can bless, protect, and sponsor a shaman. She can also hypnotize and devour those who aggravate her. In the twenty-first century, the pendulum of renown has swung both ways for Sachamama. Amazonian shamanism and the ayahuasca rituals with which she is associated are no longer isolated and local but attract international attention. Shamanic-oriented tourism is a growth industry in the Amazon; in this context, Sachamama is acknowledged as a great goddess and venerated worldwide. Where traditional religion is suppressed, however, Sachamama is reduced to a huge scary snake monster, subject of horror tales. Cryptid-hunters search for sightings of this giant snake.

**Manifestation:** Sachamama manifests as a huge two-headed snake with glowing eyes. But if her eyes are closed, she's covered with foliage and she's not moving, it's very easy to overlook her presence.

**Iconography:** Sachamama is a favored topic of shamanic ayahuasca paintings.

**See also:** *Jurema; Pachamama; Sacha Huarmi; Sacha Runa*

## **Samovila**

*Queen of the Forest*

**Also known as:** Samodiva

Samovila, leader of the Samovili and Vilas, is venerated throughout the Balkans, especially in Bulgaria and Macedonia but also elsewhere in Eastern Europe. She may be of Scythian origin. Samovila is a potent shaman, witch, healer, and shape-shifter. She will teach and advise those humans she favors—usually but not always women. However those who have harmed animals, who have hunted without spiritual license, and especially those who have hunted deer—Samovila’s personal cattle—should stay away from her, approaching at their own risk. Samovila also serves as a psychopomp, leading human souls to their next home.

**Manifestation:** Samovila can transform into any shape she desires. Her most common manifestations include a swan, snake, horse, and whirlwind. She may appear as a beautiful woman, a swan-woman, or a woman with hooved feet.

**Time:** The best time to approach Samovila is just before dawn during a full moon.

**See also:** *Artemis; Fairy; Ildiko; Samovili; Swan Goddesses; Tabiti; Vila*

## **Samovili**

**Also known as:** Samodivi

Samovili are the Macedonian branch of the Vila family—Fairies of lakes and forests. *Samovili* is plural; the singular, *Samovila*, usually but not always refers to their leader. Some Samovili may also serve the great moon goddess Bendis.

Samovili are goddesses of thresholds. They serve as Birth Fairies and psychopomps. Once venerated as healing, shamanic spirits who

bestowed beauty, fertility, and health, post-Christianity they developed a malevolent reputation. Samovili are accused of luring men to their doom and causing havoc, harm, and mayhem. Samovili are sometimes accused of causing illness or even death. This may be defamation but possibly reflects their traditional role as psychopomps, providing escort service for the dead.

Samovili dance in the forest. Those who maintain lush, aromatic flower gardens may discover Samovili dancing there, too. They are loyal and protective towards those humans who treat them with respect or who have done them a good turn, but may otherwise be temperamental and volatile.

**Manifestation:** At night, Samovili manifest as beautiful women. They may appear completely human or as winged and/or hooped women. Samovili who wish to move about during the daytime may manifest as weather formations like violent storms or whirlwinds.

**See also:** *Bendis; Fairy; Fairy, Birth; Rusalka; Samovila; Vila*

## **Sanni Yakka**

**Origin:** Sri Lanka

The Sanni Yakka are pre-Buddhist spirits from Sri Lanka. They were vanquished and banished by Buddha so that they are now unable to physically manifest on Earth. However, they still retain the power and ability to afflict people with illnesses and to heal them. Disease may be their way of maintaining contact with people and also retaining a modicum of veneration. Healing ceremonies involve masking and invocation of the Sanni Yakka. *Yakka* is now frequently translated as “demons” or “devils.”

Kola Sanniya is chief of the Sanni Yakka. The number of Sanni Yakka are unlimited but some are more active or frequently invoked than others. The most popular (or dreaded) Sanni Yakka and their illnesses include:

- Amuku sanniya: vomiting

- Avulun sanniya: breathing difficulties, chest pains
- Biri-sanniya: deafness
- Demala-sanniya: nightmares
- Deva-sanniya: epidemic disease, *i.e.* typhoid, cholera
- Gini-jala-sanniya: malaria
- Golu-sanniya: muteness
- Gulma-sanniya: parasitic worms
- Kala-sanniya: Black Death
- Kana-sanniya: blindness
- Kapala-sanniya: insanity
- Kola-sanniya or Kola Sanni Yakka: lameness/ paralysis
- Maru-sanniya: delirium
- Murta-sanniya: swooning, loss of consciousness
- Naga-sanniya: evil dreams particularly featuring snakes
- Olmada sanniya: babbling
- Pita-sanniya: diseases related to bile
- Slesma-sanniya: secretions, epilepsy, seizure disorders
- Vata-sanniya: shaking, palsy, and burning sensations especially of limbs
- Vedda-sanniya: bubonic plague

**See also:** *Buddha; Demon; Kola Sanni Yakka*

## **Santissima Muerte, La**

### *The White Girl*

**Also known as:** *La Madrina* (“The Godmother”); *La Comadre* (“The Other Mother”); *Querida Muerte* (“Beloved Death”); *Santa Muerte* (“Saint Death”); *La Flaquita* (“The Skinny Girl”)

**Origin:** Mexico

La Santissima Muerte, “Blessed Death,” or “The Most Holy Death,” is the



goddess in the form of a skeleton. She is a spirit of death, but she is also Death itself, the Grim Reaper in sometimes glamorous robes but holding her hourglass and scythe nonetheless. La Santissima Muerte is loved *and* feared. La Santissima Muerte began her ascent to popularity in her modern form in approximately the 1950s or early 1960s but she also falls squarely into an ancient Latin American tradition of venerating sacred bones.

Who is La Santissima Muerte?

- She may be a modern manifestation of the Aztec deity, Mictlancihuatl, “*Lady of Death.*”
- She may be a Mexican manifestation of the European Grim Reaper.
- She may be a spirit who appeared in a dream to a nineteenth-century *brujo* (shaman, sorcerer) in Veracruz, identifying herself and demanding veneration.
- She may be all or any combination of the above.

La Santissima Muerte is beloved precisely because many feel comfortable asking her for *anything*, including requests that other saints or spirits will automatically reject either because they are not in harmony with Church doctrine or because they are clearly not ethical. La Santissima Muerte is not petitioned lightly or casually; after all, you are literally conjuring death. It is dangerous to invoke her, but she can do everything, has access to all knowledge, and fears *nothing*. (After all, she *is* Death.)

La Santissima Muerte is petitioned for matters of life and death:

- She protects those in life-threatening situations or occupations, including those who work with scary people or who must come into close proximity to them.
- Santissima Muerte is invoked for anything having to do with death, for instance mercy killings or suicides. She may be petitioned for a quick, painless, happy death.
- She may be petitioned for assistance with the dead and with the ancestral realm. La Santissima Muerte can obtain information from beyond and can banish ghosts.

- La Santísima Muerte is particularly popular amongst prostitutes, fortune-tellers, psychics, and magical practitioners of all kinds.
- She is traditionally petitioned by women seeking the return of errant husbands or lovers.
- She is invoked by women to make men behave.

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*La Santísima Muerte is sometimes confused with Doña Sebastiana, another skeleton saint traditionally venerated by penitential brotherhoods in New Mexico. Doña Sebastiana's traditional iconic image is a female skeleton standing in a wagon, reminiscent of the Breton psychopomp Ankou.*

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Although now entering the mainstream, for decades veneration of La Santísima Muerte was discouraged and even outlawed by local authorities. Strong attempts were made to sensationalize her—the rumor that if Santísima Muerte grants your request, she'll take the life of a loved-one in exchange is blatantly untrue, a scare tactic intended to discourage veneration. (That said, it is always wise with La Santísima Muerte, as with every other spirit, for you to specify beforehand exactly what form your payment will take and when it will be given. See also: *Introduction.*)

**Manifestation:** La Santísima Muerte manifests as a robed, sometimes crowned, skeleton.

**Iconography:** La Santísima Muerte is traditionally represented by a very distinctive image (the Grim Reaper bedecked in finery), but if one wished to work with her without resorting to a literal figurative image, she is easily represented by a miniature coffin or grave digger's tools. Some use a skull to represent her or even a skull and crossbones flag.

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*In August 2007, La Santísima Muerte received a makeover: a new statue was unveiled in Mexico City displaying a brand new look for Saint Death. No*

*longer skeletal, this image depicts her as a more conventional goddess, saint, or Madonna with a porcelain face, long flowing brown hair, and a beautiful gown and veil—her extreme pallor the only clue to her true identity. La Santissima Muerte allegedly appeared to a woman in December 2006 requesting this image, but many older devotees have responded cynically, perceiving that her image is being softened.*

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La Santissima Muerte and her traditional images are easily available. Statues are color-coded:

- Dressed in black, she is petitioned for protection and revenge.
- Dressed in red, petitions are incorporated into love spells.
- Dressed in white, she is petitioned for good fortune, to break bad luck, and for healing.
- Dressed in yellow or gold, she is invoked for economic success.

Color-coordinated candles may be lit to reinforce requests and spells.

**Attributes:** Scythe, scales, crystal ball, hourglass

**Spirit allies:** Santissima Muerte generally resents having to share altar space but because she is hard to handle, it's traditional to invoke her simultaneously with powerful but benevolent spirits like Saints Anthony or Elena or Archangel Michael so they'll keep her in line if necessary. They are complementary spirits: she tolerates them and will allow their images to be placed on or near her altar.

**Bird:** Owl

**Sacred sites:** La Santissima Muerte has at least one dozen shrines in Mexico City, the epicenter of her veneration, plus innumerable public and private shrines elsewhere. A traditional offering involves vowing to light a pair of candles at a set number of her shrines.

**Offerings:** Bread, water, incense, candles, prayers and veneration, a tattoo of her image, candy, fruit, flowers (usually white roses: her

flowers must *always* be fresh, not withered), rum, sherry, tequila, whisky, shiny red apples, chocolate, sugar skulls. Cigars and cigarettes are traditionally lit and the smoke blown over her image.

**See also:** *Ankou; Guadalupe; Lechusa, La; Mict lancihuatl*

## **Santoshi Ma**

### *Mother of Contentment*

**Also known as:** Santoshi Mata; Santoshi Maa

**Origin:** India

New spirits are forever being born. Santoshi Ma, now one of India's most beloved goddesses, appeared sometime between the late 1950s and early 1960s, seemingly out of nowhere. Five temples in different locations in Northern India were dedicated to her in the early 1960s. Her reputation grew, mainly via word of mouth, until in 1975 she was the subject of a low-budget but blockbuster hit movie, *Jai Santoshi Maa*, and she catapulted to fame and first national then international recognition.

Since 1975, shrines to Santoshi Ma have proliferated. She has been incorporated into the Hindu pantheon as Ganesha's daughter and may be considered an avatar of Durga. Although many devotees are women seeking domestic happiness and social mobility, Santoshi Ma is venerated by both men and women.

Santoshi Ma bestows health, wealth, happiness, and successful marriages. Her gift is social mobility. For millennia, people's identities and social status were determined by their ancestry. Santoshi Ma cuts through these restrictions: she offers economic success and good luck. She is a spirit of joy and contentment. In reflection of her sweet nature and the sweet life they desire, Santoshi Ma's devotees eat only sweet foods, not sour.

**Day:** Friday

**Color:** Red

**Ritual:** Fast and pray to her on sixteen consecutive Fridays for prosperity and peace in the family. Break the fast with white foods like yogurt or milk. When she fulfills your petition, it's traditional to serve a feast of sweet foods to eight boys in her honor.

**Offerings:** Candles, incense, jaggery (a kind of unrefined sugar), flowers, roasted chickpeas. *Never* offer Santoshi Ma anything sour—it enrages her.

**See also:** *Durga, Ganesha, Lakshmi, Phoolan Devi* and the Glossary entries for *Avatar* and *Pantheon*

## Sara La Kali

### *The Black Queen*

**Also known as:** Saint Sarah; Sarah Kali; Sara the Egyptian

Every May, the mysterious Sara La Kali is the subject of the largest annual Romani (Gypsy) pilgrimage. She is the single most significant sacred being venerated by the Roma, who flock to her shrine from around the world. Her identity is subject to strenuous debate:

- She may be the Egyptian servant who accompanied the three Marys (Mary Magdalen, Mary Jacobe, and Mary Salomé) to France.
- She may be a Romani priestess who greeted them upon their arrival in Provence.
- She may be the daughter of Mary Magdalen and Jesus Christ.
- She may be the Black Madonna.
- She may be the goddess Isis.
- She may be the goddess Kali, who accompanied the Romani from their origins in India.

Sara La Kali (*Sara e Kali* in Romani) literally means “Sara the Black”. Her name is spelled “Sarah” and “Sara” interchangeably, although the addition of the “h” may serve to obliquely indicate Semitic roots and hint at her secret identity as the daughter of Jesus.

Although commonly addressed as “Saint Sarah”, in fact she is *not* a canonized saint. Her remains are in the crypt, not in the church itself. For centuries she was publicly venerated only by the Romani. In recent years, however, she has emerged as an international goddess.

An ancient rumor suggests that the three Marys, Sara, Saint Martha, and Joseph of Arimathea escaped the fall of Judea by traveling together to France. King René of Anjou (1409–1480) decided to investigate. He ordered excavations: the supposed relics of Saints Mary Jacobe and Mary Salomé were discovered beneath the choir of a primitive church. Human remains identified as belonging to Sara were found in a bronze chest. Pilgrimages began in the fifteenth century (coinciding with Romani migrations through Western Europe).

Sara La Kali may be petitioned for anything, but her specialties are healing and fertility. Author Isabel Fonseca describes her as the Romani goddess of fate.

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*During her festival, the statue is carried in procession to the sea where it is immersed and bathed. Once brought back to her shrine, she is dressed in finery.*

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**Iconography:** Sara’s statue is carved from dark brown wood. She is crowned and has long black hair and powerfully expressive eyes. In some Romani fortune-telling systems, the Justice Tarot card indicates the influence of Sara and may be used to represent her as may a black queen chess piece.

**Spirit allies:** Sara La Kali may be venerated alongside Mary Magdalen and *les Maries de la Mer*.

**Sacred site:** Her shrine in the French town of Les-Saintes-Maries-de-la-Mer.

**Dates:** Her feast is held 13 July; she shares a pilgrimage at the end of May with Mary Salomé and Mary Jacobe

**Offerings:** It is traditional to place clothing belonging to those suffering from illness or in need of healing on Sara's statue. As the fabric absorbs the deity's power, healing is transmitted to the petitioner, who may have attended the festival or who may be far away. Sara La Kali is also offered milagros (ex-votos) and valuable gifts.

**See also:** *Black Madonna; Hygeia; Isis; Kali; Macarena, La; Maries de la Mer; Mary Magdalen* and the Glossary entry for *Milagros*

## Sarasvati

*The Flowing One; The Flowering One*

**Also known as:** Medha ("Wisdom")

**Origin:** India

In her earliest incarnations, Sarasvati was a river spirit with dominion over fertility, procreation, and purification. She retains those powers but has evolved into a matron of literature and wisdom, too. Sarasvati sponsors learning and creative sciences. She is the goddess of music and credited with inventing Sanskrit. A generous, bountiful spirit, she places the fetus in the womb and is the giver of all beautiful things. Sarasvati is invoked frequently in the Rig Veda, the oldest surviving Indian writings, sacred hymns composed approximately 1200 BCE. She was born from a golden egg from the sea.

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*Sarasvati's answers to petitions may come in the form of artistic inspiration.*

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**Favored people:** Musicians, writers, students; she loves librarians and archivists. Students invoke her assistance prior to academic exams.

**Manifestations:** Sarasvati wears the crescent moon upon her forehead and may be recognized by her dazzling white skin and vivid clothing. Her four arms show that her power extends in all directions.

**Iconography:** Sarasvati is usually depicted seated upon her lotus blossom throne accompanied by her white swan, the bird that in Hindu mythology is able to distinguish between substance and illusion, truth and falsehood. She may also be venerated in the form of books, inkwells, pens, and musical instruments.

**Attributes:** Sarasvati holds a book formed from palm leaves in one hand and either a string of prayer beads or pearls in another. Her other two hands play the veena, an Indian stringed musical instrument.

**Bird:** Swan, her sacred creature and vehicle

**Creature:** Lizard

**Element:** Fresh Water

**Planet:** Moon

**Day:** Sunday

**Place:** Sarasvati is the presiding spirit of the Sarasvati River.

**Time:** The Vasant Panchami is the festival honoring Sarasvati. Consult a Hindu calendar for dates.

**Offerings:** Fruit, flowers, incense

**See also:** *Benten; Lakshmi; Metis; Sophia; Swan Goddesses; Vishnu*

### **Sarkin Aljan Biddarene**

Sarkin Aljan Biddarene, the head of the second house of Bori spirits, is the younger brother of Sarkin Aljan Suleimanu. Although subordinate to his brother, he is still very much a ruler. His wife is Magajiyar Jangare.

**See also:** *Bori; Magajiyar Jangare*

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*Sarkin means “chief or “prince.” The Bori spirits are subdivided into houses. The heads of these houses are addressed by the honorific title Sarkin, also*



*known as Sarikin.*

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## **Sarkin Aljan Shekaratafe**

*Son of Water*

**Also known as:** Sarkin Fagan

Sarkin Aljan Shekaratafe is the head of the seventh house of Bori spirits, the house of water spirits. He has but one wife and at least eight children. He lives in water.

**Creatures:** Frog, turtle, amphibians in general

**See also:** *Bori*

## **Sarkin Aljan Suleimanu**

Sarkin Aljan Suleimanu translates as “Solomon, King of the Djinn.” He is the ruler of Jangare, the invisible city where the Bori spirits dwell. All of the other Bori spirits are subordinate to him. He is the ruler of the Bori but also specifically head of the first house of Bori spirits, which incorporates the House of Blind Spirits, the chief’s bodyguard, and his smiths (all spirits). Sarkin Aljan Suleimanu is the adopted son of two now inactive spirits—pre-Islamic spirits who did not make the transition to an Islamic society. His queen is Bakar Doguwa, “the black, tall woman,” also known as Inna. Speculation is that if Sarkin Aljan Suleimanu is the biblical King Solomon, then Bakar Doguwa is the Queen of Sheba. Bakar Doguwa is sometimes identified with the snake charmer image now most frequently associated with Mami Waters.

Sarkin Aljan Suleimanu causes and heals headaches.

**Attribute:** Ostrich feather fan

**Offerings:** He is a king and expects only the finest offerings. He likes gifts that are extravagant or unique whether because of cost, quality or scarcity.

**See also:** *Aljan; Bori; Djinn; Inna; Lilith; Mami Waters; Solomon, King*

### **Sarkin Aljan Zurkalene**

Sarkin Aljan Zurkalene is the chief of the sixth house of Bori spirits, which incorporates the House of Butchers and the House of Musicians. Zurkalene is a terrifying spirit with one horn in the middle of his head. He is not a possessing spirit. His wife, Kasa (“Puff Adder”), is Sarkin Fagan’s sister. Kwakiya is his daughter.

**See also:** *Bori; Kwakiya; Sarkin Aljan Shekaratafe*

### **Sarkin Arna**

Sarkin Arna is the chief of the ninth house of the Bori spirits, which comprises Pagan Bori spirits. (Some Bori spirits are Muslim; others still practice the traditional Hausa religion from which Bori derives.) He has at least three wives, and the affliction that he bestows and heals is alcoholism.

**Color:** Black

**Offering:** Beer

**See also:** *Bori; Mai Gizo; Sarkin Fulani*

### **Sarkin Fulani**

**Also known as:** Filani

Sarkin Fulani is chief of the fifth house of Bori spirits, the House of Fulani Spirits. The Fulani are a neighboring ethnic group. It is important to note that these spirits may not actually be Fulani spirits. They are spirits that the Hausa perceive as being akin to the Fulani. The Fulani people were traditionally nomadic cattle-herders, and the Bori spirits called Fulani are also associated with cattle and nomadism.

Sarkin Fulani is responsible for the well-being and fertility of cattle.

He has four wives and ten children. His sons include the powerful, Mai Gizo, Owner of Matted Hair, who was raised by Sarkin Arna after his father disowned him.

Sarkin Fulani causes and heals scrotal hernias. He also causes a mental state which causes the victim to abandon the sedentary life (culturally characteristic of the Hausa) and roam, ramble and wander compulsively, unable to settle down.

**See also:** *Bori; Mai Gizo; Sarkin Arna;*

### **Sarkin Gwari**

Sarkin Gwari is the head of the tenth house of Bori Spirits, the Gwari Spirits. The Gwari are a Pagan Nigerian people. His sister Bagwariya is married to the important Bori spirit, Malam Alhaji. Gwari spirits reject peppers. When making food offerings, make sure not to include peppers.

**Color:** Black

**See also:** *Bori; Malam Alhaji*

### **Sarkin Rafi**

*Chief of Well-Watered Lands*

Sarkin Rafi is the son of Sarkin Aljan Suleimanu, but he lives in the Second House of Bori Spirits, not the first. He is a violent, irrational spirit and his ritual possessions are characterized by violence, too. Sarkin Rafi causes and alleviates droughts. The afflictions he causes (and potentially heals) include madness and serious mental disorders, especially those characterized by violent behavior.

**Attributes:** Arrow, pestle

**See also:** *Bori; Sarkin Aljan Suleimanu*

### **Sarutahiko**

**Also known as:** Sarutahiko

**Origin:** Japan

**Classification:** Kami

Amaterasu, chief of the celestial kami, sent her grandson Ninigi to Earth to rule over Japan. All the earthly kami submitted to Ninigi's rule with the sole exception of Sarutahiko who refused to submit. It was an important exception: Sarutahiko guards the Bridge of Heaven that connects Earth to the celestial regions and so without his cooperation, Ninigi was unable to reach Earth. Sarutahiko, leader of the earthly kami, did not desire a change in hierarchy.

The celestial kami called a council and decided *someone* must go subdue Sarutahiko. None of the male kami volunteered and so, once again, Uzume, Goddess of Mirth, came to the rescue. As she began to cross the bridge and approached Sarutahiko, she let her robe slip, exposing her breasts. Sarutahiko was surprised and impressed. He allowed her to approach. Uzume put it to him plainly: she insisted that he submit to Amaterasu and Ninigi. This time, Sarutahiko was more amenable, agreeing to submit but only if Uzume would marry him. They have lived happily ever after ever since. Their marriage symbolizes the merger of the celestial and earthly kami.

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*Sarutahiko is the only earthly kami to bear the title Okami, "Great Kami."*

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Sarutahiko is characterized by courage and strength (and may be invoked to bolster yours). Lord of Crossways and Crossroads, both literal and metaphoric, he is petitioned to remove obstacles from one's path. Sarutahiko is the patron of the Japanese martial art, Aikido.

**Manifestation:** He is a giant with a long nose and a longer beard. Light shines from Sarutahiko's eyes and mouth.

**Iconography:** Sarutahiko may be represented by tengu masks. (They

both have long noses.)

**Attribute:** Jeweled spear

**Sacred site:** Sarutahiko's shrine at Tsubaki Dai Jinja in Mie Prefecture has been in continuous operation for over two thousand years.

**See also:** *Amaterasu; Kami; Okuninushi; Tengu; Uzume*

## Sati

**Origin:** India

Sati, Shiva's first wife, is the first incarnation of Parvati. The youngest of Daksha's sixteen daughters, Sati fell in love with Shiva, although he was not her father's idea of the perfect husband (or son-in-law). Hidden within her myth is a description of tensions between the new Vedic religion and the older indigenous traditions of Shiva.

Sati and Shiva married and were very happy. They have an intensely erotic relationship. She lured him away from ascetism and encouraged him to use his powers creatively. Sati was infuriated when her father insulted Shiva (and by extension, her) by snubbing him and not inviting him to a major sacrifice. She attended alone, arguing that a daughter doesn't require an invitation to her father's house. At the ceremony, Daksha's insults toward the missing Shiva continued. Sati killed herself in protest via an act of spontaneous combustion.

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*Sati, the essence of the ideal wife and mother, is petitioned by women seeking longevity, good health, and good fortune for their husbands (and by extension, themselves).*

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Shiva, fearing the worst, came anyway, leading a small army of ghosts and spirits but arrived too late to save her. Mad with grief, Shiva flew into the air with her corpse, caressing her, making love to her. The

deities tried to stop him but were powerless. Shiva's dance of destruction had been activated; the other deities feared for the survival of Earth. Finally Vishnu threw his discus at Sati's corpse repeatedly, slicing her to fifty-one pieces, which fell to Earth, many at locations Shiva and Sati had visited together or where they had made love.

Sati is associated with fire—the avenue of her death. The practice of ritual suicide by a widow either on her husband's funeral pyre or later on a pyre lit from embers taken from his pyre is named sati, anglicized as *suttee*, in honor of the goddess, although this is not why she chose to immolate herself. Shiva was very much alive. Rather than burning herself to join him, Sati's actions led to separation: *she* left *him* to his complete devastation. Sati was avenging an insult. The practice of suttee has always been controversial: some Tantric scholars condemned it as sinful. Whether “suicide” is voluntary or physically or psychologically forced is questionable. Suttee was outlawed in 1829 but still sometimes occurs.

Sati is the epitome of Shakti, divine feminine power. She is associated with fire-walking rituals.

**Sacred sites:** Temples were erected where Sati's body parts fell. Called Shakti Pithas, these shrines, scattered throughout Pakistan, India, Bangladesh and Sri Lanka, are important Hindu pilgrimage sites. Sati is also associated with Satisar, the lake of the goddess Sati in Kashmir

**See also:** *Bagalamukhi; Kamakhya; Kunti; Parvati; Savitri; Shiva; Uma; Vishnu*

## Satis

*She Who Shoots Forth; She Who Runs Like an Arrow; She Who Pours*

**Also known as:** Sati; Satet

Satis, Lady of the Frontier, is a Nile River spirit entrusted to maintain balance and peace at the Nile's first cataract, the traditional border between Egypt and Nubia. She maintains balance and harmony between the two lands. She is a beautiful, erotic goddess as well as a warrior.

Satis may be Anuket's mother, daughter, or sister. She is associated with the annual Nile floods. It was believed that every year, on the Night of the Teardrop, Isis shed one single tear, which Satis caught in a water pot. This tear began the Nile deluge.

Because of her associations with sacred waters, Satis is also identified with funerary rites. She provides the water that cleanses the deceased, enabling them to transition to their next incarnation. The living may invoke Satis for spiritual cleansing and to wash away shame, humiliation, feelings of degradation, and sin. If petitioned, Satis also pours out blessings of protection, security, love, romance, happy sex, and fertility.

**Iconography:** Satis wears the crown of Upper Egypt flanked by gazelle horns.

**Attributes:** Ankh, scepter, arrows, vessels of water

**Element:** Water

**Creatures:** Antelope, gazelle

**Star:** Sirius

**Sacred sites:**

- The ancient frontier city of Swenet, now called Aswan
- Satis had a shrine on Elephantine Island.
- Her name may be related to Setet Island (Sehel Island).

**See also:** *Anuket; Isis; Khnum; Qebhut*

## **Saturn**

*Father Time; The Sower*

**Also known as:** Saturnus

It was said that Saturn, Roman spirit of agriculture, once reigned over a lost golden age, a time without sorrow. He is the lord of wealth and seed-sowing. He may have been the first to introduce people to the arts

of agriculture and cultivation.

One version of Saturn's origins suggests that he is Kronos. After Zeus expelled him from the celestial realm, he wandered Earth, an old man in a robe until Janus extended Rome's hospitality to him, opening the doors of welcome. Together Janus and Saturn served as door guardians of Rome's state treasury.

Saturn and his Roman consort, Ops, presided over Rome's most beloved annual festival—December's Saturnalia, a time for gift-giving, holiday cheer, and making merry. When Rome's Pagan religions were abolished, aspects of the Saturnalia were merged into the new holiday of Christmas. Saturn may survive under the guise of Santa Claus, not so much the red-suited, reindeer-driving jolly fellow but in older, nineteenth-century depictions of Santa as an elderly white-bearded, robed wanderer bearing gifts.

It wasn't all fun and games, though: Saturn may also be a prototype for the Grim Reaper. At least one man was sacrificed to him annually. After the Romans annexed northwestern Africa, Saturn was popularly worshipped there. Author Tertullian (circa 160-circa 225 CE), an early Christian but raised in North Africa as a Pagan, writes that children were sacrificed to Saturn in Africa.

**Favored people:** Capricorns and Aquarians, farmers, those who work with seeds

**Attribute:** Sickle, indicating that he is ready to harvest; his sickle survives in the glyph representing his planet, Saturn:

**Consort:** Ops

**Planet:** Saturn

**Day:** Saturday

**Mount:** Donkey

**Color:** Black

**Botanicals:** Aconite, hellebore, hemlock, hemp, henbane, holly, juniper savin, mandrake, pine



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*Many of the plants associated with Saturn have strong psychoactive properties indicating his shamanic roots. Some of his plants are deadly poisons and must be handled with care, if at all.*

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**Feast:** The Saturnalia, originally celebrated from 17 December through 19 December, was later extended to seven days beginning on 17 December. On the 19th, masters and slaves exchanged roles for the day.

**Offerings:** Incense, wine

**See also:** *Janus; Kronos; Odin; Ops; Zeus*

## Saulé

**Pronounced:** *SOW-lay*

**Origin:** Latvia; Lithuania

Saulé, Sun Goddess and Matriarch of the Cosmos, is among the most beloved and popular Baltic goddesses. Her name means “the sun.” Saulé is the female head of the Baltic celestial pantheon. She is the mother of the planets. Her daughters include:

- Vaivora (Mercury)
- Ausriné (Venus; Morning Star)
- Zemyna (Earth)
- Ziezdra (Mars)
- Indraja (Jupiter)
- Selija (Saturn)

Saulé and her daughters live in a castle with silver gates. She drives a chariot with copper wheels across the sky pulled by a pair of fiery white steeds with golden manes called the Asviniai. Sometimes Saulé travels via nine chariots drawn by one hundred horses. Her horses never sweat, tire, or rest. Every night Saulé sinks into the sea to bathe her horses

following her daily journey. The she crosses the Underworld in a golden boat.

Saulé's strength waxes and wanes with the sun. As days grow shorter in winter, she weakens in her annual battle against the forces of darkness. People perform rituals and spells to strengthen her so that light triumphs over darkness.

Saulé was married to Meness the Moon, but she divorced him, scarring his face in anger because of his infidelity with her daughter, Ausriné. Saulé is also associated with Kalvis, the divine smith who may or may not have created her. Although Saulé is the subject of myths that focus on her love life with male Baltic spirits, she consistently remains a potently *independent* goddess. Her power is her own and not dependent on her relationship with any other spirit.

Saulé is a benevolent, responsible, fair, good mother. Evil spirits flee from her presence. Thus, day was considered spiritually safer than night. Saulé has dominion over fertility, healing, and anything to do with women and what were once considered traditional women's tasks and roles. Prayers and petitions for Saulé must be offered with uncovered heads (no hats, scarves, and so forth, just your head bared beneath the sun).

**Favored people:** Saulé loves everyone. The sun shines on everyone equally. Saulé is also the matron of single mothers.

**Manifestation:** Look up in the sky and see the sun: There's Saulé! When manifesting as a woman, her hair is golden as are her clothes. Saulé wears a golden crown and a gold silk shawl. Her shoes are silver.

**Attribute:** Red apple. Saulé plays the *kanklès*, a traditional Lithuanian instrument akin to a zither. First developed in the Iron Age, the *kanklès*, now typically considered nothing more than a musical instrument, was originally a magical ritual instrument that allegedly protects against evil. It was played during Pagan feasts, weddings, and funerals.

**Emblem:** Wheel (Solar wheel)

**Planet:** Sun

**Metal:** Copper

**Creatures:** Horse, grass snake

**Flowers:** Daisies and roses

**Trees:** Apple and linden trees

**Feast:** Solstices, equinoxes. Festivals honoring her coincide with the modern winter solstice and continue until 6 January (corresponding in time with Christmas and Epiphany). On 13 December, the Feast of Saint Lucy and the pre-calendar-reform winter solstice, Saulé dances with her daughters.

**Sacred site:** Saulé was venerated in a sacred apple orchard, an apple grove.

**See also:** *Ashvins; Ausriné; Indra; Kalvis; Meness; Zemyna*

## Savitri

**Also known as:** Sabitri

**Origin:** India

A childless king prayed fervently to the goddess Savitri, Daughter of the Sun, who answered his prayers. In gratitude, the resulting baby girl was named in the goddess' honor, but the infant bore more than the goddess' name. The king's wife had given birth to an avatar of Savitri who would one day outwit Death and become the star of one of India's most beloved myths.

Savitri was an extraordinary girl: so beautiful, brilliant, and charismatic that she intimidated all potential suitors. When no one asked for her hand in marriage, the king told her to find her own husband. Savitri searched and fell in love with Satyavan, the son of a blind king living in exile in the forest. Although discouraged from marrying him, she insisted, making a sacred vow that she would only ever choose one husband and Satyavan was that one. It was him or no one.

For almost a year, Savitri and Satyavan lived happily together in the

forest. In some versions, an oracle had warned that Satyavan would die exactly one year after his marriage, and so Savitri was forewarned and prepared. In others Savitri, possessing the powers of a goddess, recognized ominous portents and her actions were spontaneous. She begged her husband not to go into the forest and chop wood, but he insisted so she accompanied him. He died before her eyes.

Lord Yama came to carry Satyavan to the Realm of Death. Savitri spoke directly to the Death Lord, begging him to allow her husband to live. Shocked that she could see him when he should be invisible to mortal eyes, Yama comforted her but advised that Death is irrefutable: it was Satyavan's time to go. Yama departed with Satyavan, but Savitri followed, beseeching him, talking with him, arguing sophisticated metaphysical points with him. Yama ordered her to go back home, but Savitri persevered, following him over the River of Fire separating the realms of death and life. Finally Yama stopped, shocked that a living being had come so far (and finally realizing that Savitri was more than a woman).

Savitri's actions threatened world order:

- If she burned in the flames and died before her allotted time, she would throw the Akashic records out of whack.
- If she survived to enter the Realm of Death while alive, the entire order of the universe would be threatened.

Yama stopped ordering her to return and began to negotiate. He offered her three wishes if she would turn back, *anything* but the resurrection of her husband. She accepted his offer. Her first wish was that her elderly parents would bear sons. Her second was that her father-in-law regain his vision, and her third and final wish was to bear sons worthy of her dead husband. The first two wishes seemed so innocuous that Yama agreed to the third without paying attention to the nuances embedded in her words. How, Savitri asked him, now smiling, can she bear those sons without the participation of her living husband? Foiled and bound by his oath, Yama told her that Satyavan's life was now irrevocably tied to hers: he could live but only for the exact length of Savitri's life. They lived happily ever after until they died together.

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*Savitri's tale can be interpreted as an affirmation or a rejection of sati, the tradition of a living wife accompanying her dead husband on his funeral pyre. On one hand, a couple dying together is presented as the ideal; on the other, Yama rejects Savitri's attempt to enter the River of Flames as against the natural order.*

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The earliest documented rendition of this story is in the epic Mahabharata, which dates back two thousand years although based on even earlier oral traditions. Savitri's story remains incredibly popular in India: the subject of books, films, and comic books. Savitri is the embodiment of the perfect wife. When offered *anything* in the world, her wishes are unselfish and intended to bring joy to both her birth family and that of her husband.

Savitri is the guardian spirit of devoted wives. Her story begins and ends with fertility miracles: Savitri still assists the reproductively challenged. Women invoke her for the safety of their husbands. The Savitri prayer, the prayer to the sun, which her father repeated for years in hopes of a child, is found in the Rig Veda and is recited at dawn while facing east and at sunset while facing west.

**Manifestation:** Savitri the goddess is described as having golden eyes and golden hands.

**Planet:** Sun

**See also:** *Sati; Yama*

**Sayona, La**

*The Executioner*

**Origin:** Venezuela

Gentlemen, are you considering good reasons not to cheat on your wives? Add La Sayona to the list. La Sayona is a wandering ghost who

administers fatal justice to errant, cheating husbands. La Sayona wanders highways and streets at night dressed in white. She may flag down a car for a ride or stop someone to request a cigarette. It may look like a random encounter, but it's not: La Sayona chooses her victims carefully. She only preys on cheating men. If you're faithful, you have nothing to fear. (Unless she makes a mistake ...)

At first glance, especially in dim light, La Sayona seems shapely and beautiful; those who stop for her may have lecherous thoughts. A closer look at her face, however, reveals that there really is no face: just a skull and a mouth full of rotting teeth. Once one has made contact with La Sayona, she's difficult to shake. Her attacks are deadly.

According to legend, La Sayona was once a beautiful young woman who thought she was happily married. When she learned her husband was cheating on her (some versions say with her mother), she went mad and killed him. It wasn't sufficient: La Sayona now roams around punishing other women's husbands (whether the women want them punished or not).

La Sayona is sometimes confused or merged with La Llorona. Like La Llorona, people report actually seeing and encountering La Sayona. She is the subject of modern urban myth, not dusty stories from the days of yore. She and La Llorona superficially resemble each other: their wardrobes often appear to be a cross between a wedding gown and a shroud. Both wail and cry, but their targeted victims are different. Reports of La Llorona pursuing men in South America may actually be La Sayona.

She has an interesting relationship with tobacco. Allegedly, keeping a bit of tobacco in your pocket serves as an amulet against La Sayona. She won't attack. Yet in other cases, she does ask for cigarettes. Make sure the tobacco in your pocket is loose, more closely resembling the sacred tobacco associated with Native American tradition.

La Sayona's name derives from a medieval word for an executioner. Her primary stomping grounds are on or near Mount Avila, a national park near Caracas, but she gets around.

**See also:** *Hone-Onna; Kuchisake-Onna; Llorona, La; Maria Lionza; Oiwa; Pelé*

## Scatach

**Origin:** Scotland

Scatach is a warrior goddess who appears in the Irish epic, the Ulster Cycle. She runs a martial arts academy where she trains only the finest heroes, offering spiritual and magical instruction as well as physical. She also distributes magical weapons. One must pass a series of tests before she will train you. Her most famous student is Cu Chulain.

Among the arts she teaches Cu Chulain is something called the mighty salmon leap. She also gives him a weapon called the Gae Bulga—a type of barbed spear launched through water— and instructs him in its use. Its aim is true; it *cannot* miss its target. No adequate defense against it exists. Once it enters the victim's body, its thirty barbed points expand; they cannot be removed without excruciatingly cutting away flesh.

Scatach is the shadowy one. The Gaelic word *Scath* means “a shadow or phantom” (although it may once also have had further implications, now lost). It may also be related to the word *scathe*. Scatach is a prophetic goddess: as Cu Chulain leaves her island, she foretells his future.

**Realm:** Scatach lives in Dun Scaith, the Fort of Shadows, described as being on the Isle of Skye. The portal may be on Skye but her home is beyond the Veil in the Otherworld. It is a difficult journey; one must cross a bridge to reach it.

**See also:** *Aife; Maeve; Morrigan, The*

## Schilalyi

**Origin:** Romani (Transylvania)

Schilalyi, the cold one, is the fifth child of Ana, Queen of the Keshalyi, and the king of the Loçolico. Their son Melalo advises the king to spit on a mouse and then cook it into soup for Ana. Unsurprisingly, she gets sick. Perhaps more surprisingly, she conceives: Schilalyi, their new child, emerges from her mouth in the form of a white mouse with lots of tiny

feet. Like the rest of the siblings, Schilalyi is a disease spirit. When Schilalyi creeps over you with all those little feet, the result is chills or illnesses characterized by the sensation of being cold.

**See also:** *Ana; Keshalyi; Lilyi; Loçolico; Lolmischo; Melalo*

## Scorpion Guardians

Sacred scorpion guardians appear in ancient myths from Egypt, Mesopotamia, and Greece. They serve as escorts, attendants, and servants to some of the most powerful goddesses. Many Scorpion Guardians are female. They are envisioned either as monstrously huge scorpions (big enough to hold their own in a Godzilla movie) or as hybrid scorpion-people (in the way that a mermaid is a fish-woman).

- In the epic of Gilgamesh, scorpion spirits patrol the border at the end of the human realm.
- When Orion threatens to exterminate all Earth's creatures, either Artemis or Gaia dispatched a scorpion to stop him. It stung the mighty hunter and then followed him into the sky, where the pursuit continues eternally.
- The most famous Scorpion Guardians are the Scorpion Girls who serve as Isis' entourage and bodyguards when, pregnant and as a new mother, she is in hiding from her brother Set. The Scorpion Girls travel with her and protect her. When human beings are mean and rude to Isis, the goddess is forgiving but the Scorpion Girls are not. When Horus, Isis' son, grew up, he married one of the Scorpion Girls. Selket is their leader.

Scorpion Guardians may be invoked for protection when you are truly in need *if* you have an affinity with scorpions; if you are a Scorpio, if the sign Scorpio is prominent in your natal chart, or if you have a close alliance with the goddesses whom the Scorpion Guardians serve. One must be very brave to summon them; they are extremely powerful, extremely fierce, and forbidding. Don't bother them for trifles. Call on them when it's a matter of life and death.



**See also:** *Artemis; Gaia; Horus; Ishhara; Isis; Selket; Siduri*

## Scylla

Scylla is a great sea goddess often dismissed as a mere sea monster. She is the subject of many often contradictory myths. Scylla is most famous from her appearance in Homer's *Odyssey*. She dwells in the Straits of Messina, the narrow channel that divides Sicily from Italy. Although Scylla is the subject of Greek mythology, she is sometimes called "the Etruscan" and may originally derive from Etruria or Sicily.

Scylla's father is Phorkys. Her mother may be Hekate, Lamia, or Keto. Scylla's appearance includes human, canine, and marine components. Unlike the Egyptians, classical Greeks did not find hybrid creatures attractive; they did not respect deities in the form of animals or partial animals, among the reasons why Scylla is considered a monster. (Her bad temper and inclination to cause ship wrecks is another.)

The problem is not that Scylla appears to be a monster: it is that she *always* appears to be a monster. She lacks the power to change form. That said, various descriptions of her exist, some more horrific than others. Part of this may derive from the inclination of storytellers to improve their stories with enhanced detail. Greek myths and images tend to depict Scylla as more grotesque than Sicilian variations.

Various versions of how she gained her appearance and apparently lost the shape-shifting powers common to so many water spirits, including members of her family, exist:

- Circe, Queen of Transformation, is usually held responsible. In the most famous version, Scylla is a beautiful Nymph loved by Glaucus, a fisherman. Unfortunately Circe had her eye on him and decided to eliminate her competition by permanently adding canine and fish components to Scylla's body.
- Alternatively Amphitrite, sick of Scylla's relationship with Poseidon, caused the transformation.
- Scylla is Lamia's sole surviving child, transformed into a monster by Hera.

- It's also possible that this is just her true form, that legends of transformation by jealous goddesses may be attempts to explain what was incomprehensible to the Greeks: that this hybrid goddess was worshipped. If indeed Hekate is Scylla's mother, that would explain her intense identification with dogs.

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*Scylla is a spirit of erotic power. Myths attempting to explain her perplexing appearance involve other goddesses feeling sexually threatened.*

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From the waist up, Scylla resembles a beautiful woman. She lurks in waist-deep water in a cave. She seems innocuous, but her hands reach out to grab passing mariners. She's no vegetarian, devouring people as well as land and sea creatures, or at least so goes the Greek version. Homer describes her as having twelve feet and six long necks, each neck ending in a grisly head with three rows of teeth. Alternatively, she has six heads on one long neck, each with those three rows of sharp teeth. She is also portrayed in much less gruesome form:

- Scylla has the head and bosom of a beautiful woman, a canine torso, and a dolphin's tail.
- Scylla is a mermaid with six dog heads growing out of her waist.

When she attempted to steal (and eat) Heracles' red oxen, he killed her. Her father, Phorkys, magically resurrected Scylla via fire and water, burning and boiling her so that she would be reborn without fear. Scylla fears *nothing*.

**Iconography:** Scylla appears on many ancient coins. She is depicted in Etruscan carvings with wings, wielding a sword. She sometimes brandishes a steering paddle as a weapon.

**Attribute:** Trident, sword

**Home:** Scylla lives in a cave between two high cliffs by the Straits of Messina.

**Creatures:** Seals, dogs, dolphins, wolves, fish. Scylla has a pack of sea-hounds—mer-dogs with canine heads and teeth but fish tails.

**See also:** *Amphitrite; Circe; Hekate; Hera; Heracles; Keto; Lamia; Phorkys; Poseidon*

## **Sedna**

**Also known as:** Samna (Siberian Yupik)

**Origin:** Inuit

Sedna lives at the bottom of the sea, her chief companion her dog. She controls the balance between the sea creatures who wish to live and the people ashore who also wish to live and thus must hunt and eat those sea creatures. Sedna, like the sea, is volatile and moody: she manifests anger and depression by withholding the ocean's bounty.

Sedna has reasons to be angry: she wasn't always queen of the deep. There are various versions of how she ended up as goddess of the sea but this is the gist: Once upon a time, Sedna was a beautiful young woman who rejected all her suitors—and there were many! Finally one arrived who pleased her. (In some versions of her myth, this man had long been haunting her dreams, hence her rejection of the others.) He claimed to be wealthy; he promised her a life of comfort; he insisted they marry right away. Sedna ran away with him, bringing only the dog that would not leave her, no matter what.

When they arrived at his distant home, everything he told her turned out to be false. He wasn't a man; he was a bird spirit. He lived in isolation in a desolate landscape under very primitive conditions and was abusive to Sedna, keeping her prisoner. Eventually her father, concerned about Sedna, came after her. He agreed to bring her home, but he did not really understand the nature of his son-in-law nor was he prepared for the situation. They put out to sea in rough waters in his little boat.

Sedna's spirit husband flew after them in the form of a gigantic bird. He demanded Sedna's return. Sedna refused, and he threatened to capsize the boat. In terror, her father pushed her overboard. Desperately,

she clung to the sides of the boat, so her father chopped off her fingers. Sedna sank to the bottom of the sea and transformed into a goddess. Her dog jumped in after her. Sedna's severed fingers transformed into sea mammals like seals and walruses.

Sedna's realm is at the bottom of the sea. She was eventually reconciled with her father, who lives with her now, but hers is a solitary, moody existence. Sedna prefers darkness; she can't stand bright lights. When Sedna is depressed or raging, game becomes scarce; the only way to restore balance is to soothe, comfort and appease Sedna. The hero of this story is the intrepid shaman who must soul-journey to Sedna's watery abode. Intrepid, indeed: Sedna is no little mermaid but, as befitting the harsh, Arctic north, a fierce, frightening, scary woman.

A survivor of violent assault, romantic deception, and psychological abuse, Sedna's depths of depression and fonts of rage and mistrust are as profound as the sea in which she lives. Soaked with salt water, her long, thick hair becomes badly matted. To soothe Sedna, to coax her to release that life-saving harvest of sea animals, the shaman must approach her and calmly, gently comb out those painful knots and tangles. Only when this is accomplished will Sedna's anger, frustration and deadly agitation pass.

In addition to her role as marine goddess, Sedna may also rule a realm of death, possibly those souls who died at sea.

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*Sedna is the name given to the mysterious tenth planet, the most distant known body that orbits our sun.*

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**Manifestation:** Sedna has long, thick, wet hair that tangles and mats easily. She's fierce and will most likely be in the company of a dog (a Malamute or similar breed).

**Iconography:** Sedna is now frequently portrayed as a traditional mermaid, but before whalers came to the Arctic, she was consistently described as a woman.

**See also:** *Mermaid; Pinga*

## **Se'irim**

**Origin:** West Semitic

Se'irim (singular: se'ir) are goat-shaped Semitic spirits. Their name derives from *sai'ir* meaning “hairy” or “shaggy.” In Leviticus 17:7, Jews are forbidden to sacrifice to them, which of course indicates that some were following this practice, necessitating legislation against it. Information about them has been almost totally suppressed. It is possible that the medieval image of the goat-shaped devil derives from the Se'irim. The word is translated as “devil” but also as “goat.” Se'irim and Shedim are *not* synonymous.

**See also:** *Azazel; Shedim*

## **Seishi**

*He Who Has Obtained Great Strength*

**Also known as:** Tokudaisei; Tokudaiseishi; Daiseishi

**Classification:** Bodhisattva; Bosatsu

Seishi is the primary attendant of Amida Buddha. In the same manner that Kannon epitomizes compassion, so Seishi is the epitome of wisdom. Seishi sows the seeds of wisdom and saves people from hell realms via his gift of enlightenment. He presides over the traditional Japanese first year memorial service after death. His Sanskrit name is Mahasthamaprapta.

**Favored people:** Seishi is the guardian of those born in the Year of the Horse.

**Spirit allies:** Seishi is frequently depicted in the company of Amida and Kannon.

**Direction:** South

**Attribute:** Lotus

**See also:** *Amidha; Bodhisattva; Bosatsu; Kannon; Kings of Hell*

## **Sekhmet**

*The Mighty One; Great of Magic; Lady of Terror; Lady of Action; The One Before Whom Evil Flees; Mistress Dread; Lady of Flame; The Scarlet Woman*

**Origin:** Upper Egypt

Sekhmet, lioness goddess, epitomizes the blazing, scorching power of the sun. She is a goddess of war, justice, destruction, and healing. Her name may derive from a root word meaning “to be strong, powerful, mighty, or violent.” Sekhmet is among the fiery manifestations of the Eye of Ra.

She is a fierce guardian goddess of Upper Egypt. Her hot breath created the desert. Sekhmet was associated with plagues and pestilential diseases: illnesses that blew in on desert winds. Sensational descriptions of Sekhmet tend to emphasize her destructive aspects, but she was also among Egypt’s most significant healing deities and remains an active healer today.

Most spirits must be asked before they will openly intervene in someone’s life. (It’s possible that many perform acts of rescue anonymously). Sekhmet, however, is renowned for appearing in dreams and visions in order to perform successful healings. No one summoned her, at least not consciously. Instead, Sekhmet recognized a need and personally took the initiative. (Sekhmet appears when invoked too.) If Sekhmet heals you without first being asked, offerings are in order. Sometimes this is a one-time favor but it may also be her way of extending matronage. If you wish to accept her offer, then create an altar or make some other gesture of acknowledgement.

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*Pharaoh Amenhotep III placed some six hundred statues of Sekhmet in the Karnak temple complex in hopes of improving his ill health. Sekhmet’s priests were considered Egypt’s finest physicians.*

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Sekhmet heals all illnesses except those of the eyes. She is associated with blood ailments. She has dominion over the menstrual cycle and women's reproductive systems. Sekhmet should not be bothered for trifles, but she is an intensely powerful and proactive healer. She is the matron goddess of reiki. Some theorize that Sekhmet is an emanation of the primordial goddess Hathor who first emerged in a time of crisis and took on a life of her own, similar to the relationship between Indian goddesses Kali and Durga. Just as Shiva is able to halt Kali's dance of destruction, so Lord Thoth is able to pacify Sekhmet, something to keep in mind, just in case.

**Manifestation:** Sekhmet manifests as a woman with a lion's head or as a lioness.

**Iconography:** Sekhmet is depicted crowned with a solar disc encircled by a uraeus (upright cobra, symbolic of divine authority). Many Sekhmet statues survive perhaps because there were so many to begin with. Temple priestesses allegedly made offerings before a different statue each day of the year. Legend suggests that her statues were especially protected because of the aggressive nature of the deity and also because they were coated with anthrax or other highly infectious bacterial powder to ensure that they were not disturbed.

**Attribute:** A two headed snake; Sekhmet holds one head in each hand. Also arrows

**Consort:** Ptah

**Son:** Nefertem

**Element:** Fire

**Color:** Red

**Offerings:** Beer by itself or blended with pomegranate juice; arrows; silver medical tools; incense.

**See also:** *Anat; Bastet; Durga; Hathor; Kali; Nefertem; Ptah; Shiva; Thoth*

## Selene

**Also known as:** Mene (as in month or menstruation)

**Origin:** Greece

**Classification:** Titan

Selene is an ancient goddess of the moon. Comparatively little information regarding Selene's veneration and rituals survives although she is described as "great in magic" and was apparently invoked in magic spells. Her parents are Titans, Hyperion and Theia. Helios, the sun, is her brother. Many of her functions were later transferred to Artemis as Helios' were to Apollo.

Selene bathes in the ocean before riding up to the sky in her chariot every night, variously driven by a pair of white horses, bulls, or mules. She pulls the full moon across the sky. Alternatively she rides a horse sidesaddle. Sometimes Selene has to hide from a dragon, indicated by a lunar eclipse or absent moon. Or perhaps Selene is just making time with that dragon. Selene is an amorous goddess with many lovers including Pan and Zeus, with whom she had several children. Her most famous love affair is with the young shepherd Endymion, the male sleeping beauty. Selene placed him under an eternal sleep spell so that his entire existence consisted of sleeping and making love to her. Selene spends her days in the Anatolian cave in which Endymion sleeps.

Selene's name is etymologically related to a word meaning "light." In her guise as the full moon, Selene sheds light on problems and mysteries.

**Favored people:** She is the matron of magicians, sorcerers, witches, and moon-gazers.

**Manifestation:** Selene is the goddess of the moon, but she also *is* the moon. Selene may manifest as a woman or a cow, but you can also gaze at the moon and see her. As a woman, she is described as being very beautiful. She has wings and wears a diadem.

**Iconography:** Early depictions of Selene envisioned her as a cow. Her horns are the crescent moon.



**Crystals:** Moonstones and Selenite (literally “moon rock”); Selenite is often found in the form of wands and is used to heal sleep disorders, among other uses.

**See also:** *Apollo; Artemis; Endymion; Eos; Helios; Pan; Pasiphae; Titan; Zeus*

## **Selket**

*Mistress of the Beautiful House*

**Also known as:** Serket; Serquet; Serqet

**Origin:** Egypt

Selket is Egypt’s fierce but benevolent scorpion goddess. The “beautiful house” over which she presides is the funeral parlor; the term is an ancient Egyptian euphemism. She is a goddess of life, death, and life after death. Selket travels in Isis’ entourage. She is a protective spirit who is among the four primary deities (alongside Neith, Isis, and Nephthys) who guard entombed coffins. Selket is invoked in many spells to protect and to heal poisonous bites. She is the matron of healers who specialize in such cases.

**Favored people:** Morticians, those involved in any aspect of the funeral trade, Scorpios

**Manifestation:** Selket may manifest as a woman, a woman with a scorpion’s head, or a woman wearing a scorpion headdress. She may manifest as a scorpion, too, either a normal sized one or one the size of a human that can walk erect. Selket may also manifest in the form of a crocodile, cobra, and lion.

**Iconography:** Selket is usually depicted as a beautiful woman wearing a scorpion on her head.

**See also:** *Ishhara; Isis; Neith; Nephthys; Scorpion Guardians*

## **Semele**

**Also known as:** Simula; Stimula

Semele, Dionysus' mother, was Zeus' lover. He came to her in the form of an invisible erotic presence, and she soon conceived. Hera, discovering their affair, visited Semele in disguise and convinced her that she really needed to see her lover's true form, aware that this was more than mortal Semele could handle.

When Zeus next appeared, Semele begged a promise from him. Without stipulation, he promised her anything. She insisted on seeing his true form and would not be dissuaded. Bound by his promise, Zeus manifested in his full fiery glory. Semele died, but Zeus rescued Dionysus from her womb, sewing him into his thigh until he was ready to be born.

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*Stimula is the Roman name for Semele, Dionysus' mother, the goddess of female sexual (and other) passion. She was venerated by the Bacchanals, whose rituals were initially restricted to women and conducted secretly three days a year in the Grove of Stimula near the Aventine Hill.*

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Another version suggests that Semele, as Zeus' priestess, engaged in a sacred marriage with the deity. She was fully aware of his identity and Hera, threatened by her pregnancy, killed her outright. Either way, when Dionysus was received into the Olympian pantheon, his first act was to bring Semele up from Hades to be with him, bestowing the name Thyone upon her. (See also: *Thyone*.)

That's the Greek myth, but *Semele* is not a Greek name. It's Phrygian or possibly Thracian or even Phoenician. Before Semele was a tragic Greek heroine, she was a powerful Phrygian goddess. *Semele* derives from *Zemele*, Phrygian Earth goddess, venerated independently as well as alongside her son. As Thyone, Semele continued to be venerated alongside her son, presiding over his mysteries. She became an important though secret goddess in Italy with the rise of the Bacchanalia, celebrated in her grove. Semele is the spirit of sacred ecstasy, the goddess of the sacred rite. Known in Italy as Stimula, she is

the erotic goddess who arouses women's passions.

**Sacred site:** Under the name *Stimula*, she had a sacred forest on the slopes of Rome's Aventine Hill, the *lucus Stimulae*, where the Bacchanalia was celebrated until outlawed.

**See also:** *Bacchus; Dionysus; Hera; Leto; Thyone; Zemele; Zeus* and the Glossary entry for *Mystery*

## Semiramis

### *The Gift of the Sea*

**Also known as:** Sannuramat (Assyrian); Shamiram (Armenian)

Semiramis, daughter of the mermaid goddess Atargatis, survived abandonment by her mother and thrived, eventually marrying King Nimrod and ruling the city of Nineveh (present day Iraq) as a kind of living goddess. She is credited with founding the city of Babylon. Some legends also give her credit for building the famous Hanging Gardens, one of the ancient world's Seven Wonders. Although Semiramis lived as a human, she never died. Instead she left Earth in the form of a dove after assuring her devotees that she will listen and respond to their petitions.

Semiramis is invoked for prosperity, safety, and fertility.

**Iconography:** Semiramis is depicted with a golden dove on her head. A coin minted in Roman-era Ashkelon, now modern Israel, depicts Semiramis holding a lance and a dove (phallic and vulvic symbols, respectively) and standing on a mermaid: her mother, Atargatis.

**Bird:** Doves raised her and serve as her messengers.

**Sacred site:** Babylon

**See also:** *Atargatis; Mermaid*

## Sequana

**Origin:** Celtic

Sequana, Goddess of France's Seine River, held court at a healing shrine at the river's source, established in the second or first century BCE, although a more rustic shrine may have existed earlier. The Romans later expanded it into a major sanctuary, building two temples and other structures centered on the springs and pools. Documented evidence dating back at least as far as the first century BCE indicates that her springs were considered to have healing properties. Modern research has failed to identify any therapeutic minerals, so either the water has changed, there's something we're not recognizing, or the healing properties derive completely from spiritual sources.

Sequana heals all ailments, but her specialties are eye disorders and respiratory problems.

**Iconography:** A beautiful, regal woman wearing robes and a diadem stands alone in a duck-shaped boat.

**Creatures:** Bull, dog

**Bird:** Duck

**Sacred site:** *Fontes Sequanae*, meaning "Fountains of Sequana," at the source of the Seine near Dijon, was apparently first established in the Iron Age. Physicians, priests, and priestesses were in residence. Healing dreams were incubated and hydrotherapy practiced.

**Offerings:** Ex-votos in the form of body parts (milagros), coins, fruit, jewelry, financial offerings on behalf of clean water.

**See also:** *Sirona*; *Sulis*

## Serapis

**Origin:** Alexandria

When the Macedonian Greeks conquered Egypt, they were faced with a tremendous spiritual divide between themselves and the Egyptians they now ruled. In an attempt to bridge this chasm, Ptolemy I, the first

Ptolemaic pharaoh, instituted the cult of Serapis, an attempt to merge Greek and Egyptian religious traditions.

*Serapis* derives from *Osirapis*, which combines the names of Egyptian deities Osiris and Apis. The two already had spiritual links, so the basis of Serapis' nature was Egyptian but the iconography used to represent him was Greek. The Greeks preferred deities in their own image and mocked deities in the form of animals or hybrid creatures. (Apis is a bull.) Serapis conformed to the image of a Greek god, closely resembling Hades.

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*A local spirit called Osirapis may already have been worshipped at Rhakotis prior to Greek rule. Rhakotis was the Egyptian village, later renamed Alexandria, which became the capital of Ptolemaic Egypt.*

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Although the cult of Serapis was initially artificial, the spirit soon took on a life and personality of his own. He became extremely popular. Serapis is a spirit of birth and death; his concerns are fertility and the afterlife. His temples were healing shrines, and miracle cures were attributed to him. He was worshipped in conjunction with Isis.

Veneration of Serapis was not limited to Egypt. The Roman army carried veneration of Serapis as far away as Britain. Ironically, the one group who did not embrace Serapis was the indigenous Egyptian population. Alexandria was a Greek city within Egypt. Serapis' main shrine, the Serapeum, was the center of spirituality in that city. It was a lavish, gilded temple and housed a magnificent library, an annex of the Great Library of Alexandria. Serapis was the focal point of a Mystery Tradition. The Neo-Platonist, Olympius, servant of Serapis, declared that devotion to the deity brought bliss. (He foretold the fall of the Temple of Serapis but participated in its defense.)

In June 391, Emperor Theodosius I banned Pagan practice. Alexandria was notorious for civil disobedience: a substantial body of Pagans barricaded themselves inside the Serapeum, aggressively defending it

against besieging Christians. The emperor ordered the Pagans to leave; declared Christians killed in the altercation to be martyrs, and donated the Serapeum to the Church.

**Iconography:** Serapis is depicted as a large man with a Greek hairstyle and full beard. He may wear Greek robes or nothing at all. Statues resemble Hades. He may be accompanied by Cerberus. He was also sometimes envisioned as a snake with a bearded human head. In his guise as Time Lord, Serapis was depicted with the beasts of time: the wolf of the past, the lion of the present, and the dog of the future.

**Attribute:** He holds a scepter and is crowned with a grain measure.

**Consort:** Isis

**Son:** Harpocrates

**Sacred sites:** A Serapeum is a temple of Serapis. The primary Serapeum was in Alexandria, but there were others. The Serapeum of Canopus, Egypt, destroyed in 391 evolved into the Shrine of Saints Cyrus and John, most popular of the Silverless Physicians. Others shrines were in Memphis, Pergamon, Delos, and York in England.

**See also:** *Hades; Harpocrates; Isis; Osiris* and the Glossary entry for *Mystery*

## Serapis Bey

**Classification:** Ascended Master

Serapis Bey is the *Chohan* or Lord of the Fourth Ray and a member of the Great White Brotherhood. He reputedly trained Henry Steel Olcott (1832–1907), who along with Helena Blavatsky founded the mystical-spiritual system of Theosophy. Olcott was the first president of the Theosophical Society.

As far as is known, Serapis Bey's first incarnation was as a high priest in Atlantis. Following the violent destruction of the lost continent, he traveled to Egypt where he incarnated as Pharaoh Amenhotep III, responsible for Ammon's temple complex at Luxor. Other incarnations

included Leonidas, King of Sparta, and the Greek master sculptor Phidias. He is identified with the Alexandrian deity Serapis. Serapis Bey is associated with Muladhara the root chakra, also known as the base-of-the-spine chakra.

**Iconography:** Serapis Bey is usually depicted as a man wearing a white turban or headdress.

**Color:** White

**See also:** *Ammon; Ascended Masters; Blavatsky, Helena; Great White Brotherhood; Morya; Poseidon; Serapis*

## Seshet

*Lady of the Builder's Measure; The Great One; Lady of the House of Books*

**Also known as:** Seshat; Sesheta

**Origin:** Egypt

Seshet, Queen of Construction and Goddess of Writing, competes with Ptah for title of founder of architecture. Seshet supervises the construction of residences in the afterlife. She also works closely in conjunction with Thoth, her brother, lover, and husband. He invented writing, but Seshet invented letters. She records the names of dead souls, which Thoth declares before Osiris. Seshet is the spirit of literature and libraries.

**Favored people:** Architects, archivists, librarians, authors, linguists

**Manifestation:** Seshet wears a tight-fitting, spotted leopard-skin garment.

**Emblem:** A seven-rayed star or seven-petaled flower beneath a pair of inverted horns

**Attribute:** Writing reeds, scribe's palette

**Number:** 7

**See also:** *Ptah*; *Thoth*



## Set

### *Great of Strength*

**Also known as:** Seth; Sutekh; Setesh

**Origin:** Egypt

Set, Lord of the Desert, Chaos, and Disorder, is among the set of quadruplets born to Earth and Sky, Geb and Nut. His siblings are Osiris, Isis, and Nephthys. Both Osiris and Set loved their sister Isis, but she chose Osiris. Set married Nephthys, but she too loved Osiris, so theirs was not a happy marriage.

Osiris was assigned to be the Ruler of the Black Land, the fertile belt of civilization around the Nile River. The Egyptian name for their country was Kemet, “Black Land,” so Osiris is the first pharaoh, king of Egypt. Set was assigned dominion over the Red Land, as the Egyptians called the harsh, barren desert. Appeals are made to Set to keep bad weather far away; he has dominion over rain, sand, and wind storms. Residents and travelers in the desert may request Set’s favor.

Set is a powerful magician, second only to Isis. He is a master of love and sex magic and is petitioned for assistance with contraception and abortion. Set appears on many ancient uterine amulets:

- Some were employed to “open” the womb, requesting assistance with menstruation, conception, or birth.
- Set is also featured on amulets to “close” the womb, intended to procure contraception or abortion.

Sometimes a hero, sometimes a controversial figure, Set is now typically portrayed as the villain of Egyptian mythology, although this was not initially so. Set was considered a balancing force. When Set and Horus, his opposing force, are in harmony, life on Earth proceeds smoothly. Set is also among the most powerful guardian spirits. He rides in Ra’s solar barque and protects him from all evil.

Set is responsible for killing Osiris—not once, but twice. (This myth

serves to remind how vulnerable Egyptian agricultural civilization was to the encroaching desert.) He is now most famous for his rivalry with Horus, his nephew. Although frequently described as the loser in that battle, it actually was a stalemate finally resolved when Set brought the case before a Heavenly Tribunal. Ra favored Set, arguing that he was the more experienced ruler. The case was finally resolved by Neith, whose judgment was accepted by all. (Despite rumors that he is sterile, Set is sometimes described as the father of Neith's son Sobek.) Horus was awarded the throne of Egypt, but Set was compensated for his loss by receiving twice his existing property and two new wives—the Semitic love, sex, and war spirits Anat and Astarte.

Set was profoundly associated with the Hyksos, the Shepherd Kings, the Western Semitic invaders who ruled Egypt. They adored Set and built temples for him, including one in their capital city of Avaris. Some of the hostility displayed toward Set in Egyptian mythology may stem from these associations. Set is also associated with YHWH, the Jewish god. (Notably both are married to Anat. See also: *Anat*.) The epic battle between Set and Horus may be a metaphoric retelling of the expulsion of the Hyksos or even of the Biblical story of Exodus.

Set's devotees traditionally refrain from eating pork.

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*Pugnacious, scheming Set is the only one of the old Egyptian deities to resist and combat Islam in Walter S. Crane's comic book series Sheba.*

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**Favored people:** Redheaded people or those with ruddy complexions are considered under Set's dominion (redheads faced discrimination in ancient Egypt).

**Iconography:** He appears as a man with the head of a Set beast, a creature which has not been definitively identified but bears resemblances to aardvarks, anteaters, and jackals, or some hybrid of all of these creatures.

**Color:** Red

**Creatures:** Crocodiles, jackals, hippopotami, donkeys, gazelles, and pigs as well as the unidentified Set beast. The Set beast may now be extinct, a creature who exists only in the spirit realm, or an anteater.

Set is also associated with the *salawa* (or *salaawa*), a mysterious canine allegedly responsible for eating livestock and attacking people. The *salawa* is a cryptid, meaning a creature for whom no scientific evidence currently exists. *Salawa* attacks and sightings have been reported from the Luxor region. It reputedly has square ears and a forked tail like the Set beast.

**Constellation:** The Egyptians called Ursa Minor the Jackal of Set

**Sacred sites:** Set rules the desert. His main cult centers were at Tanis, Ombos, and Naqada.

**Offerings:** Beer, incense

**See also:** *Anat; Anubis; Astarte; Ba Neb Tetet; Horus; Isis; Neith; Nephthys; Nut; Osiris; Sobek*

## Seven African Powers

**Origin:** Yoruba

The specific orishas who are most involved in human everyday matters may be invoked together as a group known as the Seven African Powers. By petitioning these orishas en masse rather than individually, one is assured that all bases are covered. The Seven African Powers provide all Earth's potential blessings and protections.

1. Eshu Elegbara (a.k.a. Elegba, Ellegua, Legba)
2. Ogun
3. Obatala
4. Yemaya
5. Oshun
6. Shango
7. Orunmila, Oya, or Ochossi

Because the magic number seven cannot be changed, a new orisha cannot be added unless another is removed. Orunmila is the traditional seventh African Power but over the years he has become less popular than Oya and Ochossi. Either of the two is now frequently substituted for him.

**Iconography:** Commercially produced Seven African Powers products (incense, candles, soap, and so forth) frequently depict them in the guise of the Catholic saints to which they are syncretized.

**See also:** *Eight Immortals*; *Shichi Fukujin* and the individual entries for each of the *African Powers*

### Seven Stars Spirits

**Also known as:** Chilsong

**Origin:** Korea

In Korean cosmology, the constellation known in the West as the Big Dipper or the Great Bear is instead understood as seven brothers, known as the Seven Stars Spirits. The Seven Stars are petitioned for:

- Fertility
- Easy childbirth
- Healthy babies and children
- The birth of sons
- Prosperity
- Abundance
- Wealth
- Longevity and good health
- Virility

The Seven Stars Spirits are always worshipped together. Although there are seven of them, corresponding to the seven stars, they may be understood as embodying the force of one collective spirit. Unlike, say,

Japan's Seven Spirits of Good Luck, who may each also be venerated independently, the Seven Stars Spirits are *not* depicted or worshipped alone or in separate smaller groups.

The Seven Stars are possessing spirits. Using a shaman's body as a vehicle, the Seven Stars are able to offer prophesies.

**Iconography:** The Seven Stars are depicted as seven bearded men usually dressed in traditional Chinese clothing. Icons of the Seven Stars are used in rituals to summon rain or to restore Earth's fertility.

**See also:** *Shichi Fukujin*; and the Glossary entry for *Possession*

## Shango

**Also known as:** Chango; Xango; Oba Koso ("The King Does Not Hang")

**Origin:** Yoruba

**Classification:** Orisha

Shango is the immensely powerful Lord of Thunder, Lightning, and Fire. Lover boy supreme, Shango epitomizes virility, male beauty, and procreative energy. Petition him to share a little of his essence: he provides fertility, luck in love, and male sexual prowess. Shango is invoked for courage and justice. In Yoruba cosmology, lightning is understood as an instrument of divine justice, retribution, and protection. As the wielder of lightning, Shango provides victory over enemies and protects from all evil. Shango breaks hexes, curses, and evil spells.

Shango exults in warfare, competitive sports, martial arts, and dancing. He is a ladies' man and a musician. Legend has it that he created the very first set of bata drums. Shango is proud, temperamental, volatile, a womanizer, amazingly generous, compassionate, and tireless on behalf of those he loves.

Shango is among the most beloved of all orishas. Two distinct African Diaspora religions bear his name: Trinidad's Shango, and Xango of Recife, Brazil. In the Brazilian spiritual tradition, Umbanda, Xango

(Brazilian spelling) leads the second of Seven Lines. The exception is Haiti where Shango plays second fiddle to his great rival, Ogun.

Shango's consorts include Oba, Oshun, and Oya. Yemaya may or may not be his mother. He has a tense relationship with Ogun. Some, although not all, traditions consider them to be mortal enemies: it is usually considered advisable to keep some distance between these two alpha male spirits. (They are, however, invoked together as members of the Seven African Powers.)

The orisha Shango has had at least one human incarnation. The historical Shango was the fifteenth-century fourth king of Oyo, now part of eastern Nigeria. Depending on the version of the myth, the king was an avatar of the preexisting orisha *or* Shango became an orisha after the king's tragic death.

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*The Nigerian government placed a statue of Shango at Kainji Dam to celebrate the power lines.*

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King Shango, a master of psychological warfare, was a beloved military commander. He was also a magical adept who had access to powers of fire and lightning. There are different versions of how his reign and life ended. His associations with magic may have cost him his throne: exiled by the elders of Oyo, friends, and sycophants alike deserted him. When even Oya, his most faithful supporter, doubted him, he killed himself. Alternatively, while experimenting with the powers of lightning, Shango accidentally burned down his palace with all his wives and children inside. Grief stricken, he killed himself, sometimes as a double-suicide with Oya (who may have provided the firepower).

In Africa, Shango once disguised himself as Oya to escape his enemies. In Cuba, Shango disguised himself as Saint Barbara in order to make himself accessible to his devotees and preserve his power. Shango is syncretized to the virgin martyr, with whom he shares associations with lightning. (To confuse matters more, Oya sometimes wears the mask of Saint Barbara as well.) Shango is also syncretized to Saint Jerome as well

as to John the Baptist in some Haitian traditions.

- Shango is associated with the Afro-Brazilian spiritual-martial art, Capoeira.
- Place thunderstones or Neolithic axes on Shango's altars to activate them.

**Favored people:** Dancers, drummers, twins. Shango is patron of Trinidad and Tobago.

**Manifestation:** Shango typically appears as an incredibly handsome, charismatic man. He often wears a red coat covered with cowrie shells.

**Attributes:** Lightning, double-ax (labrys), club, mortar. Shango divines via a magic pestle.

**Emblems:** Thunderstones, meteorites

**Color:** Red and white—in Yoruba cosmology, this indicates the balance between aggression and compassion, respectively.

**Metal:** Copper

**Animals:** Horse, ram, turtle, lizard, leopard, crocodile

**Bird:** Pheasant, rooster

**Mount:** Shango rides a magical white stallion named Eshinla.

**Trees:** Royal palm; banyan; ironwood; banana

**Plants:** Mugwort (*Artemisia vulgaris*); *Ipomoea jalapa*, also known as High John the Conqueror

**Day:** Wednesday, Friday, or Saturday depending upon the tradition

**Number:** 6

**Elements:** Fire, wood

**Planets:** Sun, Mars

**Petitions:** Those made during a thunderstorm are most effective.

**Altar:** His special place in the home is the fireplace or hearth.

**Offerings:** Shango likes his food spicy and his portions large. Offer red foods, like red apples and red palm oil. His favorite meals include yams, corn, and peppers as well as cooked crab. He drinks red wine, rum, and cachaça. Other offerings include cascarilla powder (powdered eggshell) and sugarcane.

**See also:** *Babalu Ayé; Ibeji; Oba; Ogun; Orisha; Oshun; Oya; Seven African Powers; Siete Rayos; Yemaya* and the Glossary entry for *Avatar*

## Shasthi

### *Sixth*

**Also known as:** Skandamata

**Origin:** India

Shasthi is a goddess of fertility, childbirth, fate, and good fortune. She is the personification of the sixth day following childbirth. She enters the home on the sixth day and writes the baby's fate on his or her forehead using invisible ink. Shasthi vows that since she is an auspicious goddess, nothing inauspicious can occur in homes where she resides. She protects babies from fever and danger in the manner of a fierce mother cat. Shasthi protects children against tetanus. She guards children in general and is petitioned by women for fertility, easy labor, and healthy babies.

- When a child reaches its sixth day, its father makes offerings to Shasthi.
- Women whose children have died venerate Shasthi monthly.

**Manifestation:** She is envisioned as a fair woman holding a child; she may be accompanied by, or riding a cat.

**Iconography:** Various images are used to represent Shasthi, most popularly as a stylized woman attached to six babies. Among items traditionally used to represent Shasthi are millstones, bamboo churning sticks, and a cow skull.

**Creature:** Cat

**Number:** 6



**Offering:** Feed stray cats. Shasthi once resurrected seven stillborn infants when their grandmother vowed to feed all the cats in her village.

## Shedim

**Also known as:** Sheydim (Yiddish)

**Origin:** Jewish

*Shedim* is a Hebrew word that has become a catch-all term for supernatural beings. It is variously translated as “spirits,” “ghosts,” “demons,” or “supernatural beings.” *Shedim* is plural; the singular form is *shed* or *sheyd*. That root word, *sheyd*, entered the Yiddish language where it takes many forms:

- *Sheydish* is an adjective meaning “ghostly” or “supernatural.”
- A *sheydl* is an imp.
- *Sheydim-tanz*, literally “dance of the Sheydim” may be a ghost dance, the *danse macabre*, Walpurgis night revels, or just kids running around really crazy.

Despite modern nebulous definitions, *Shedim* originally indicated specific types of spirits. According to Jewish folklore, after the expulsion from Eden, Adam left Eve and was temporarily reunited with Lilith. Their many spirit children are the *Shedim*. Alternatively the *Shedim* are the children of Naamah and the rebel angels Azazel and Shemhazai. The *Shedim* are neither wholly benevolent nor malevolent. They may bring illness or torment, but individually can also be friendly, helpful spirits.

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*The word and the spirits may derive from the Sedim, Assyrian guardian spirits. Alternatively, the word may derive from Shaddai, among the names of the Jewish god.*

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Highly influential Biblical commentator Rashi (1040–1105) wrote that

Shedim have human form and consume food and drink like humans. They are found congregating in cemeteries.

**See also:** *Azazel; Ghost; Imps; Lilith; Mazzik; Naamah*

## **Shekhina**

*The Bride of God; The Sabbath Queen; Mother Zion*

In traditional Judaism, God is not male; instead the Creator encompasses a male and a female side. The name *Shekhina* derives from a root word meaning “to dwell.” The Shekhina is the indwelling divine presence. She may be simultaneously understood in several ways:

- She is the female aspect of the Creator.
- She is the bride of God.
- She is an independent Goddess.

In esoteric Judaism, the Shekhina was the bride of YHWH. The Jerusalem Temple was their home, the Holy of Holies their bedroom. The union of the male and female principles sparks and fuels a continuous Creation. The Shekhina put motherhood before marriage. After the Roman destruction of the Jerusalem Temple, the Shekhina separated from her husband and went into exile with her children, the Jews expelled from Judea. She intends to remain in exile until the coming of the Messiah. Thus the destruction of the Temple did more than destroy a building: it severed the unification of the divine female and male, throwing the world out of balance and hindering Creation. The Shekhina is the compassionate, nurturing side of the Creator, and she is not in Heaven; she is in exile in the world.

The Shekhina is now present in the human realm and may be invoked for blessings and protection. She understands all languages. Sometimes she makes herself visible. The famed Kabbalists of Safed reported visions of her. She is a healer and may serve as a psychopomp. The Shekhina hovers at the head of the bed of one who is sick. Don't stand or sit there because you obstruct her. If you pray on behalf of an ailing person at

their bedside, then you pray directly to the Shekhina because she is there.

**Manifestations:** The Shekhina generally appears in several basic manifestations:

- As a mourning dove
- As a bride dressed in white (especially on Friday nights)
- As a bereft woman dressed in black who mourns the destruction of her home (the Jerusalem Temple) and the scattering and persecution of her children. A veritable ocean of grief emanates from her. She weeps, moans, and wails or is sunken in silent grief.
- As a joyful, ecstatic woman cloaked in robes woven from light; she is more vivid than the sun.

**See also:** *Anat-Bethel; Anat-Yaho; Asherah of the Sea; Hochma; Lilith; Llorona, La; Silibo; Sophia*

## Shichi Fukujin

**Origin:** Japan

Shichi Fukujin is usually translated as “Seven Spirits of Good Fortune,” but literally means “Seven Happiness Beings.” Six are male and one is female (Benten). Each is an important, powerful spirit. They hail from different traditions. Unlike the comparable Seven African Powers, they do not all derive from the same spiritual base. Some are Shinto, some Buddhist; Hotei originally derives from Chinese Taoist traditions, but wherever they came from, all are now significant to Japanese folk religion.

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*The seven sail into our realm during New Year’s festivities to distribute gifts to the worthy. Place an image of the treasure ship complete with all Shichi Fukujin under your pillow on New Year’s Eve to receive a lucky dream.*

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Each of the Shichi Fukujin is venerated independently. Some are also venerated in smaller groupings. (Daikoku and Ebisu are frequently paired.) They are most frequently depicted all together sailing on their treasure ship, the Takarabune. The Seven Spirits provide blessings of health, happiness, protection, and longevity and everything that is good and desirable in life. If invoked together, they are able to provide all blessings.

The Shichi Fukujin are:

1. Benten
2. Bishamon
3. Daikoku
4. Ebisu
5. Fukurokuju
6. Hotei
7. Jurojin

Their imagery is ubiquitous in Japan, extending even as far as on children's underwear. Next time you're in a Japanese restaurant, look around: it's likely that you'll find the Shichi Fukujin in residence. Envision yourself cruising along with them, and beseech their blessings.

Shichi Fukujin sushi is a bountiful roll containing seven smaller rolls.

**Iconography:** Many prints and sculptures depict the seven sailing on their treasure ship on the Sea of Good Fortune. Individual altar images are also available.

**Sacred sites:** A pilgrimage route in Kamakura, Japan, involves visiting seven shrines, each associated with one of the Shichi Fukujin.

**See also:** *Eight Immortals; Fukusuke; Inari; Seven African Powers; Shoojoo* and the entries for each of the individual *Shichi Fukujin*

## Shikigami

**Also known as:** Shikijin

**Origin:** Japan

Shikigami are spirits summoned to serve Onmyoji, Japanese shamanic yin-yang magicians, and are similar to the Western concept of a wizard's familiar. They are shape-shifting spirits. Many take the form of a bird or small animal; more powerful Shikigami can even possess a person. Examples of Shikigami may be found in the CLAMP manga and anime series *Tokyo Babylon*.

## Shiva

*The Howler*

**Also known as:** Siva

**Origin:** India

Shiva, Lord of Creation, Destruction and Death, destroys pain and sorrow. He is the lord of fertility and a great healer, described as the greatest of all physicians. Deity of the forest, hunting, and fishing, he is patron and ruler of untouchables and demons.

Shiva is an indigenous, pre-Aryan deity of India. In his earliest manifestation, he may have been a horned god: an image, identifiable as him, found among the ruins of Mohenjo Daro (circa 2000 BCE) shows a spirit seated in yoga position with erect phallus, his head crowned with bull's horns. Horned masks were found nearby.

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*According to myth, Shiva is the world creator. He manifested at the beginning of time in the form of a pillar of fire from which the entire world eventually sprang.*

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Aryan conquerors of India initially disliked Shiva, but his popularity was such that he was eventually integrated into their pantheon although still considered chaotic, dangerous, and unpredictable. Shiva is called the destroyer of rites and social barriers. He is a knowledge sharer,

accused of teaching sacred texts to the low-born who were previously denied access. Shiva haunts cemeteries in the company of ghosts, witches, spirits, and gnomes. He is the protector of trees, animals, and wild nature and is among the world's most beloved deities.

Shiva has various paths or aspects. He is, for instance:

- An extreme, dedicated ascetic
- A loving, devoted husband
- The cosmic dancer
- Lord of destruction

Shiva may or may not be another name for Dionysus, whose myth also places him in India. Like Dionysus, Shiva is identified with intoxicating substances and sex magic. He is often portrayed in the form of a phallus (the Shiva lingam), as is Dionysus. Both lead parades of dancing witches and spirits. Shiva, like Dionysus, is patron of theater as shamanic or magical performance, and like Dionysus, Shiva is happily wed: he and his consort, Parvati, symbolize the perfect union of complementary powers. Shiva is also wed to the various goddesses who may be paths or emanations of Parvati including Uma, Durga, and Kali.

**Manifestation:** Shiva is an ascetic and a *sadhu*: one who has renounced normal existence to devote himself entirely to spirituality and contemplation of the sacred. Shiva wears animal skins or no clothes but is adorned with snakes, scorpions, and a necklace of skulls. His hair is hopelessly tangled and matted. His face is covered with cremation ashes.

**Iconography:** Shiva is represented by phallic images. Standard iconography portrays Shiva with blue skin, four arms, and four faces with three eyes each. His third eye located in the center of his forehead possesses the powers of creation and destruction. He may have two, four, eight, ten, or thirty-two hands. He wears the crescent moon in his hair.

**Attributes:** Ax, damaru (hand drum, formed from human skulls), trident, staff, bow and arrow, spear, noose, sling, divining rod, *rudrak-shamala* (bead necklace)

**Emblem:** Upward-facing triangle, pointing up like a mountain or an erect phallus, symbol of the active male principle

**Mount:** Nandi, the sacred white bull

**Creatures:** Bulls, snakes, deer, and tigers

**Element:** Fire

**Planet:** Moon

**Plant:** Cannabis

**Colors:** Blue, crimson, red ochre, saffron, olive green

**Realm:** Shiva lives on Mount Kailash in the Himalayas.

**Time:** The Hindu month of Sravana is dedicated to Shiva.

**Sacred sites:** The city of Benares (Varanasi); Shiva has a shrine at the Tarakeshwar Dream Temple in West Bengal: people fast, pray, and sleep in the temple until they receive the dream they need. Shiva frequently appears in dreams to answer questions or to address petitions.

**Offerings:** Flowers, nuts, fruits, coconuts, beautiful things; Shiva is propitiated by performances of mythic theatrical plays and productions.

**See also:** *Anjani; Dionysus; Durga; Gajasura; Ganesha; Ganga; Hanuman; Kali; Kamakhya; Kartikeya; Manassa; Nandi; Parvati; Pashupati; Rudra; Sati; Sekhmet; Silibo; Uma; Vishnu;* and the Glossary entry for *Path*

Shiva has many paths and one thousand eight names. Each may be understood as an aspect of the one Shiva, or one particular path may be venerated independently. The following are among his most popular manifestations:

- **Shiva Ardhanari** or “Shiva the Half-Woman” encompasses the union of male and female energies in one single body. Thus Shiva Ardhanari is envisioned with one female breast and both male and female genitalia. (See also: *Shekhina*.)
- **Shiva Bhuteshvara**, Lord of Ghosts and Goblins, is the master of shades and spirits. He leads an entourage of all sorts of spirits,

benevolent, and disreputable alike.

- **Shiva Mahayogi** is a master spiritual adept, Lord of Self-Discipline. He possesses the shamanic ability to walk through worlds at will.
- **Shiva Nataraja**, Lord of the Dance, is the master of ecstasy, dance, and shamanic trance. He dances the dance of creation and destruction. Shiva Nataraja holds fire in one hand and a drum in the other. He wears the crescent moon on his head. The earrings in his ears don't match, indicating his androgynous nature. With one foot raised, he exists in liminal space. This iconic image originated over one thousand years ago in southern India and is a visual rendering of Shiva's five functions:
  - Creation (from the sound of the drum)
  - Protection (his raised hand)
  - Destruction (the fire)
  - Salvation (raised foot)
  - Refuge (foot firmly planted)

## **Shoki**

### *The Demon Queller*

**Also known as:** Chung K'uei

**Origin:** China

Although his primary modern fame is in Japan (Shoki is the Japanese version of his name), before he became the immortal Demon Queller, he was Chung K'uei, a Chinese scholar and physician. When he flunked his imperial service exams, he fell into such despair that he dashed his head against the palace steps, killing himself. The emperor was moved. He awarded Shoki his degree posthumously and arranged an official burial for the suicidal scholar. In gratitude for this honor and kindness, Chung K'uei vowed to spend his afterlife ridding the world of demons.

His first act was to save the emperor, lying in bed and wasting away from illness. The emperor suffered a nightmare: he saw a small demon



steal his treasures. Suddenly, Shoki, in the guise of a bigger demon, appeared in the dream, violently quelled the little demon, and returned the emperor's valuables. The emperor made a full recovery and Shoki's reputation was set. Although venerated in China, Shoki is especially beloved in Japan, where he is traditionally considered a trusted spirit ally and his image is ubiquitous. Shoki dispels all kinds of Yokai as well as demons.

Shoki's image is a talisman against evil. His job is to keep trouble, misfortune, and evil spirits away from your home. He is a spirit of intense yang energy and can drive away ghosts and spirits who emanate from the yin world. Shoki protects against fire and illness. The Demon Queller is also the Plague Queller. He drives away smallpox and other disease demons and so his image is featured on Japanese talismanic disease prevention prints. Shoki's image is placed outside the home to keep it safe as well as inside, especially near the stove, for fire prevention. He is a vigilant guardian. Position his image so that he has a good view of anywhere where danger may emanate.

Shoki's images are associated with ceremonies for the Boy's Festival. This holiday for boys under age seven takes place on the fifth day of the fifth lunar month, a day when venomous creatures and malefic spirits are allegedly at their peak and on the prowl. Boys of this age are considered especially vulnerable to spiritual attack: these malevolent spirits are attracted by the purity of the boys' yang energy (and also by the opportunity to cause trouble and heartache). Shoki drives them away. By the Kansei Era (1789–1800) it was customary to place banners displaying images of Shoki both inside and outside homes with boys under age seven.

There's a looser, more relaxed side to Shoki, too. He's frequently depicted in the company of courtesans, either rescuing them or submitting to their whims. The inherent joke is that these gentle courtesans quell the fierce demon queller.

**Manifestation:** Shoki appears as a huge man with a big black bushy beard wearing the traditional cap and robes of a Chinese scholar and big black boots (the equivalent of stomper boots).

**Iconography:** Talismanic paintings and prints featuring Shoki are often

colored red, as this color is believed to be especially effective in warding off disaster. Surround Shoki's image with other symbols of aggressive, righteous power, such as warrior dolls and suits of armor, so as to give the Demon Queller a little reinforcement. In addition to prints, banners, scrolls, and talismans, Shoki is a frequent subject of netsuke carvings.

**Attribute:** Sword

**Color:** Red, black

**See also:** *Daruma; Demons; Ghosts; Hone-Onna; Kitchen God; Yokai*

## Shoojoo

**Also known as:** Drinking Monkey Daruma

**Origin:** Japan

*Shoojoo* literally means "orangutan," but the spirit known as Shoojoo received his name from people unfamiliar with that great ape. Although fossilized orangutans have been discovered in China, in old Chinese and Japanese folklore the word *orangutan* was used to describe mythic monkeys with human faces who love wine and are thus envisioned with a heavy drinker's crimson complexion. Thus the Japanese name for scarlet fever, *shoojoo netsu*, can be literally translated as "orangutan fever." Shoojoo is the drinking monkey god.

Shoojoo is the red deity who encompasses all this color's possible implications: in East Asian cosmology, as elsewhere, the color red has ambiguous meanings. Symbolic of life, fertility, and good health, red wards off evil and banishes bad spirits, the equivalent of a magical stop sign. Hence red is often considered the most auspicious color. Red is also dreaded as emblematic of dangerous, potentially fatal diseases.

Shoojoo was once included among the Shichi Fukujin, the Seven Spirits of Good Fortune, but he is an ambivalent spirit: sometimes benevolent, sometimes not. On the plus side, Shoojoo bestows wealth and immortality and also prevents disasters and accidents. He also bestows red illnesses like scarlet fever and smallpox. He can heal them, too.

**Iconography:** Shoojoo dolls similar to modern Daruma dolls were once venerated and propitiated in houses struck by smallpox or by those hoping to avoid the disease.

**Attribute:** A ladle, wine flask, or cup that is never empty no matter how much he drinks

**Spirit allies:** Shoojoo, Daruma, and Okame (Mrs. Daruma) complement each other and often share altar space.

**Color:** Red

**See also:** *Daruma; Okame; Shichi Fukujin; Tanuki*

## Sibilla

**Also known as:** Sibillia; Sibylla

**Origin:** Italy

According to Italian legend, after vanishing from Rome, the Cumaean Sybil took refuge in a cavern in the Apennines. Her underground paradise was reached through a grotto filled with snakes in the mountains of Norcia, an Italian region renowned for witches and mushrooms. She's allegedly still in this cavern, teaching the magical arts to those who wish to learn. (See also: *Sybil*.)

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*A Christian rendition of Sibilla's legend acknowledges her powers of prophecy but claims that the Sybil didn't enter her cave voluntarily but was instead locked in as punishment for her arrogance in believing that she, not the Virgin Mary, was destined to bear the Messiah. It's possible that this refers to now-suppressed claims that the Sybil would bear a holy child who would be a savior.*

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This is no fairy tale. A real life shrine, the Ridge of the Sibillini, once

existed below Mount Vettore. During the fifteenth century, visitors from throughout Europe traveled to Norcia to see the cave. As her acclaim and reputation grew, the ancient prophetess transformed into a goddess of witches. Sibilla, her craft name, allegedly presides over witches' flight and witches' balls.

By the end of the fifteenth century, the Church had a standing order to excommunicate anyone who made the pilgrimage to Sibilla's shrine. (On the other hand, those who defied the decree and visited were reputedly blessed by Sibilla with a lifetime of joy.) Should you stay in Sibilla's cavern for over a year, you would allegedly never be able to leave, but on the plus side, you would remain eternally youthful, living amid abundance and revelry in a witch's paradise.

Of course those are the positive legends: witch-goddesses usually weren't permitted such good press, and so other stories exist, too, although even these may be interpreted in various ways:

- Sibilla sprouts a snake's tail every Saturday.
- The legendary Wandering Jew finally settled down, transformed into a snake, and serves as Sibilla's door guardian.
- At night, all the inhabitants of Sibilla's paradise turn into snakes.
- To gain admission to Sibilla's Cave, one must copulate with snakes.

**Favored people:** Christian legend describes Sibilla as the ancestress of all witches, magicians, and occultists.

**Spirit allies:** Diana and Fata Morgana sometimes reside with Sibilla. The three may be venerated together.

**Creature:** Snake

**See also:** *Diana; Fata Morgana; Sybil*

## **Sidhe**

*The Good People; The People Who Go Widdershins*

**Pronounced and sometimes spelled:** *Shee*

## **Origin:** Ireland; Scottish Highlands

The Gaelic word *Sidhe* has three meanings:

- “*Barrow*” or “*tumulus*”: ancient burial mounds often filled with treasure
- “Fairy” or “Fairies” (the word is singular and plural)
- As the sidhe that are Fairies often live within the sidhe that are barrows, sidhe also means “Fairy mound.”

When the Gaels successfully invaded Ireland, their predecessors, the divine Tuatha Dé Danaan were literally driven underground. They established their own parallel realms beneath the Earth. Fairy mounds are their portals. The Dagda, among the leaders of the Tuatha Dé Danaan assigned each member of the Tuatha Dé residence in a sidhe or mound. The Tuatha Dé Danaan became known as the Sidhe.

The key word regarding the Sidhe is *beauty*. They are magnificent, passionate, proud spirits who perceive themselves as worthy of veneration and intense respect: they accept (and perhaps expect!) small but consistent offerings such as dishes of milk placed out overnight on the windowsill or doorstep. There are male and female sidhe. They have an elaborately structured society that parallels that of humans.

The sidhe have an intense relationship with people, characterized by love *and* hostility. Once upon a time, they were the subject of passionate human veneration: hidden within fairy tales and legends are suggestions of Pagan devotion and voluntary channeling of spirits, similar to modern spiritual traditions such as African Diaspora faiths and Zar.

The Sidhe are master healers and may bestow this medical knowledge on those people they favor. So-called Fairy doctors combined herbal and shamanic healing and were trained directly by the Sidhe. On the other hand, the Sidhe also inflict illnesses like sudden tumors, stroke, and paralysis.

Sidhe stand accused of stealing humans, especially babies, children, midwives, and wet-nurses. The milk they expect as offerings may not always have been bovine; legends tell of Fairies accosting women and begging for a sip of human milk. They are generally not industrious spirits: their passions are dancing, music, poetry, and pleasure. They do raise cattle, which they sell or trade at fairs.

A ritual from the Scottish Highlands encourages bribing the Sidhe to save lives:

1. Sit on a three-legged stool at a three-way crossroads at midnight on Halloween.
2. Listen: voices will intone the names of those destined to die during the next twelve months.
3. This destiny may be avoided by returning to the spot with gifts for the Sidhe: one gift for each person whose destiny needs amending.

**Color:** Green

**Time:** Most Sidhe are active from dawn until noon and then from dusk until after midnight.

**Days:** The Sidhe are particularly active at Beltane (May Eve), Midsummer's Eve, and Samhain (Halloween).

**Sacred sites:** Barrow mounds associated with individual sidhe are well-known. Fairy forts, also known as ring forts or stone forts, are circular earthen banks or stone walls. There were once as many as sixty thousand of these circular earthworks in Ireland. Local names for them include *cashel*, *forth*, *rath*, or *rusheen*. Ring forts became known as Fairy forts because they are allegedly among the favorite haunts of Fairies. Ring forts can be physically and spiritually perilous, as many contain underground passages.

**See also:** *Amadan; Banshee; Baobhan Sith; Dagda, The; Fairy; Fairy Queen; Lanan Sidhe; Leprechaun; Tuatha Dé Danaan; Zar*

## Siduri

### *The Woman of the Vine*

**Origin:** Mesopotamia

Siduri appears in the saga of Gilgamesh. She is the barmaid at the end of the world. According to Mesopotamian cosmology, there is a sea at the

end of the human realm. Siduri's wine bar is situated in a garden at the edge of this sea: she's literally the last stop. The epic refers to her as "the young woman" but Siduri is a goddess. Some perceive Siduri to be another name for Inanna-Ishtar, Kybele, or Gestinana. Alternatively she may be an independent goddess of wine or one who serves in the retinue of Ishtar.

Siduri first flees from Gilgamesh and attempts to bolt her door. The despair she perceives in his heart makes her think he's a criminal (and probably an unpleasant drunk!). But he has no desire to tarry with her; he seeks only the secret of immortality that lies beyond the human realm. Siduri tries to dissuade him from his pursuit, advising him to turn back and find happiness in normalcy, telling him to feast, rejoice, dance, and be merry to fill his belly with good things, to bathe in water, to "cherish the little child that holds your hand and make your wife happy in your embrace."

Tavern keepers and their employees in the time of Hammurabi were mostly female and may have been priestesses. (Priestesses were eventually forbidden from operating taverns.) Wine had sacred properties as well as profane. It is now believed that the desire to brew beer (rather than bake bread) was the stimulus for the agricultural revolution that occurred in Mesopotamia's Fertile Crescent. Alcoholic beverages may have been laced with other psychoactive substances and were associated with shamanic rituals as well as plain drinking and pleasure. The archetype of the wise bartender who's seen and heard it all, Siduri gives good advice. The directions to her tavern given in Gilgamesh may be followed in visualization.

**Manifestation:** Siduri is described as covered with a veil.

**Attributes:** Golden vats, golden bowl, golden chalice

**See also:** *Gestinana; Inanna-Ishtar; Kybele*

## Siete Rayos

**Also known as:** Nsasi (Bantu)

**Origin:** Congo

**Classification:** Nkisi

Siete Rayos means “Seven Lightning Bolts.” He is the spirit of lightning and fire: divine justice and righteousness. He is a volatile, highly masculine spirit and aggressively protective of his devotees. He may or may not be the same spirit as Shango (regardless, they are often identified with each other). Like Shango, he is a beloved, highly popular deity. Siete Rayos is venerated in Palo spiritual traditions.

**Favored people:** Those who have been struck with lightning and survive may consider themselves his children.

**Element:** Fire

**Colors:** Red and white

**Tree:** Royal palm—a tree that’s frequently lightning struck: thus, it’s seen as attracting the spirit, drawing his energy to Earth or containing reservoirs of his power.

**Altar:** Gather stones from the forest and use them to create an altar at the base of a royal palm or anywhere that has been struck by lightning.

**Offerings:** Red wine, rum, bananas

**See also:** *Mpungu; Nkisi; Shango*

## Sif

**Origin:** Norse

Sif is most famous in Norse myth as Thor’s wife. Her name literally means “wife.” She is the central figure in a myth in which Loki secretly severs her long blonde braids. As reparations, Loki gets dwarves to construct a golden headdress for her as well as treasures for the other deities. Items are crafted for Odin, Thor, and Freyr. Sif is the only female deity to receive a treasure and is the impetus for their creation.

Sif is no peripheral goddess but an extremely powerful spirit. Scholars



speculate that she is ancient and may predate the Aesir in the region. Among Thor's epithets is "Sif's Husband"; she may once have been an highly significant goddess. Sif's yellow hair is central to her myth. She may originally have been a grain goddess, her long flowing locks resembling fields of wheat. *Sif's hair* is an old Norse kenning for gold. (A kenning is a traditional metaphor, riddle or circumlocution.) Sif is described as a prophetess and is the mother of Thor's daughter, Thrud. She may also be Holler's mother; his father, if there is one, is unknown.

**See also:** *Aesir; Angerboda; Dwarves; Freyr; Holler; Loki; Odin; Thor*

## Silen

**Origin:** Greek

Silens are a sub-species of centaur:

- Centaurs are four-legged horse-men hybrids.
- Silens typically have only two equine legs attached to a man's head and upper body. They usually also sport equine ears and a horse tail.

Silens are generally considered to be pleasure-seeking but lazy spirits. Like satyrs, they are sexually insatiable: the terms *satyr* and *silen* are sometimes used interchangeably. They are big, lusty stallions but with the mind and voice of a man. Silens are closely associated with Nymphs, who are their consorts, companions, friends, and possibly mothers. Silens are described as being the children of Nymphs. Some theorize that they are the children of Silenus and various Nymphs. Like Silenus, they drink a lot.

**Manifestation:** Silens may appear as hybrid equine-men or as horned men or just plain naked, drunk men.

**Offerings:** Wine, wine, wine (and then some more wine)

**See also:** *Kallikantzari; Nymph; Silenus*

## Silenus

## *The Ecstatic One; The Stamping Foot Dancer*

**Also known as:** Silenos; Seilenos

**Classification:** Silen

Silenus is unusual for a Silen or centaur. He is a wise, learned prophet although usually found in some advanced state of intoxication. (Allegedly the drunker he is, the more accurate his oracles.) Silenus travels the world with Dionysus, his constant companion. Silenus is the younger spirit's tutor and friend, sometimes described as his foster father. Silenus came from Phrygia and may possibly have been Dionysus' actual father before Dionysus' arrival in Greece and his incorporation into the Olympian pantheon as Zeus' son. Silenus is also sometimes described as the father of Apollo. He is believed originally to have been a water spirit associated with sacred springs. (As Zemele, Dionysus' Phrygian mother, is an Earth goddess, this would make Dionysus the child of Earth and water.)

Silenus is usually venerated together with Dionysus, but he was also independently venerated. He was venerated in Israel and Phoenicia where he was considered a native Semitic spirit. (There is allegedly a grave-shrine dedicated to Silenus somewhere in what is now Israel.)

**Manifestation:** A drunk bearded man, centaur, or silen; he may or may not have shed his clothing.

**Attribute:** A large wine skin slung over his shoulder (Some see the roots of Santa Claus in bearded Silenus with his gift bag.)

**Mount:** Silenus rides a donkey.

**Feast:** In ancient Rome, Silenus was honored at the Liberalia on 17 March together with Bacchus (Dionysus).

**Sacred sites:** The inhabitants of Pyrrhichos on the southern coast of Laconia considered him their founder, building their town and bestowing their freshwater spring. Pyrrhichos was associated with ecstatic dances and trance rituals

**Offerings:** WINE! In Rome, a *fritelle* made of flour, cheese, eggs, sliced

apples, and grated lemon rind was traditionally offered to Silenus and Bacchus.

**See also:** *Apollo; Chiron; Dionysus; Liber; Olympian Spirits; Zemele; Zeus* and the Glossary entry for *Pantheon*

## **Sili Kenwa**

**Also known as:** Sili Quenua

**Classification:** Lwa, Metresa

**Origin:** Dominican Republic

Sili Kenwa is a Dominican manifestation of the lwa known in Haiti as Ezili Coeur Noir, or “Black Hearted Ezili”. Sili Kenwa is syncretized to Saint Martha. In accordance with Iberian customs, the Dominican spiritual tradition known as the Twenty-One Divisions, distinguishes between Saint Martha and her alter ego, Martha the Dominator whom they identify with the snake spirit Lubana. In recent years, however, Sili Kenwa has come to be associated with Martha the Dominator, too.

In Twenty-One Divisions cosmology, Martha the Dominator is associated with the image identified elsewhere as Mami Waters. This image depicts a beautiful snake charmer with her snake. Sometimes Lubana is envisioned as the woman with the snake, but sometimes Sili Kenwa is identified as that woman and Lubana is the snake she holds. The two spirits often work together. Petitioners invoke the two to work in conjunction when casting magic spells whose goal is domination. Kenwa is associated with the head, while Lubana is associated with feet, so when allied together, the two spirits offer control from top to toe.

Sili Kenwa is a persuasive spirit, invoked by petitioners to help communicate with or convince others. Sili Kenwa can encourage someone to listen to our perspective (and to adopt it). Dedicate a green skull candle to her and request her assistance.

**Iconography:** She is associated with the traditional image of Saint Martha holding a torch and leading a dragon as well as the modern snake charmer image.

**Color:** Green

**Number:** 7

**Offering:** Unripe coconuts (because they are perceived as resembling human heads)

**See also:** *Ezili; Lubana; Lwa; Mami Waters; Metresa; Twenty-One Divisions* and the Glossary entries for *Identification* and *Syncretism*

## Silibo

**Also known as:** Grande Silibo; Silibo Nouva-vou; Grande Shi-lih-bo; Maman Silibo; Silibo Nou Mawou; Silibo Vavou

**Classification:** Lwa

In his book, *Ecstatic Voyage*, seventeenth-century German scholar Athanasius Kircher describes the sun as populated “with angels of fire swimming in seas of light around a volcano.” He may have been describing Silibo who bathes in the fires of the sun. Silibo is a spirit of wells, springs, streams, ponds, *and* fire. She is a spirit of fresh water *and* the feminine aspect of the sun.

Silibo is an esoteric lwa of magic and sacred sexuality. In her book, *Vodou Visions*, author, artist, and Vodou priestess Sallie Ann Glassman compares Silibo to Shakti and the Shekhina. Silibo is not syncretized to a saint; instead the biblical image to which she is compared is from the Book of Revelation: the woman cloaked in the sun.

Silibo is a spirit of purification. She is a fiery wanton virgin in the tradition of Astarte or Inanna-Ishtar. She is virginal in the old, traditional, nonliteral sense: an independent, shame-free woman who is beholden to no one. The Scarlet Woman is not crimson from shame but because of her burning, fiery nature.

Sacred sexuality is the most primal root religion. Vestiges survive today. The hexagram, also known as a Jewish star or Solomon’s seal, consists of two interlocking triangles: one facing upward, the other down. It is a sign of tremendous magical protective power:

- The upward-facing triangle symbolizes fire and male energy.
- The downward-facing triangle symbolizes water and female energy.
- Their union is the point of creation, the magical meeting of fire and water, and the source of ecstatic sexual energy.

Silibo dances on this point. She is the embodiment of creative energy and sacred sexual energy. Sex may serve as an instrument of humiliation and degradation, but sex also potentially serves as the fires of purification. Silibo *cannot* be debased because she bathes in the purifying waters of the sun. She *is* those purifying flames. Silibo burns away shame. She is an alchemical spirit whose magical fires burn away dross, leaving what is pure and powerful.

- Silibo is invoked to heal sexual abuse, violation, degradation, and humiliation.
- She burns away guilt and shame and leaves you free and clean.
- Silibo is petitioned to awaken sexuality and to discover, or rediscover, ecstasy.

Silibo presides over spiritual cleansing rituals, especially cleansing baths. Invoke her presence to empower any magical bath. She is a spirit of enchantment and clairvoyance who bestows spiritual and magical power. Silibo teaches candle magic, crystal ball gazing, and how to divine using nothing more than a pan of water. Silibo may or may not have a relationship with Lord Agwé.

**Favored people:** Silibo is a guardian of young women.

**Manifestation:** Silibo is a shape-shifter. In her guise as Grand Silibo she is the majestic woman cloaked in the sun, but she also sometimes appears as a small girl indicating the purity of her nature.

**Iconography:** Silibo is not one of the most famous lwa. Images are not as easily available as of other lwa like the Ezilis and La Sirène. Silibo appears on a card from the New Orleans Voodoo Tarot as well as in Haitian paintings.

**Planet:** Sun

**Elements:** Fire, water

**Offerings:** Spring and pond water, solar images, lit candles floating in water (especially little sun or star candles, but tea lights in a basin or the bath tub will do, too), rhinestones, sparkly gems, a crown of stars

**See also:** *Agwé; Astarte; Ezili; Kamakhya; Inanna-Ishtar; Lwa; Sati; Shekhina; Sirène, La*

## **Simbi**

**Also known as:** Simbie

**Origin:** Congo

**Classification:** Lwa

You don't have to be human to be a magician. Simbi, among the greatest of all magicians, is a water snake spirit who rules all aspects of magic. He protects magical practitioners and offers them his tutelage. Legends describe children who go missing, having been stolen or "borrowed" by Simbi, only to return home years later, now masters of magic.

Simbi is master of all magicians. He can bestow magical ability and clairvoyance. Simbi is also a master healer and botanist. Among the gifts he bestows on healers is the ability to accurately diagnose. Simbi will speak to you: envision a snake winding around your body and whispering in your ear.

Simbi ranks among the highest of Vodou spirits. He is part of Ogou's army; he holds the rank of chief of the Coast Guard. Although associated with both Petro and Rada rites, Simbi's origins are in the Congo. Simbi may be understood as a Congo lwa who navigates between the other Vodou nations. Simbi travels wherever he likes and is at home wherever he wishes to be. He is a very patient but assertive spirit. He is a specialized lwa whose devotees tend to have esoteric interests. Simbi is also among those spirits invoked by secret societies.

Simbi is a freshwater spirit with dominion over moisture, rain, springs, ponds, wells, marshes, waterfalls, fountains, and drinking water. Simbi controls river currents and running freshwater (including the water running in your pipes). Simbi rules things that flow like water—

electricity, tears, and words. He oversees the flow of electromagnetic energy. Simbi is a conductor of souls: he controls the flow of spirits into humans during ritual possessions. He has charge of the vulnerable threshold moments before and after possession. Many cosmologies describe rivers separating the realms of the living and the dead. Simbi controls those waters, too. He sometimes serves as a psychopomp, especially for deceased shamans and occultists.

In addition to water and the esoteric arts, Simbi has dominion over communications, crossroads, and currents:

- As ruler of currents, Simbi controls the flow of information and energy. This ancient magician has emerged as the patron of cutting-edge technology, including computers, the Internet, and telephone transmissions.
- As a crossroads spirit, Simbi is a road-opener, removing obstacles from the paths of his devotees. Simbi can circumvent all manner of red tape; he breaks stalemates.
- Request his assistance when communication is challenging or crucial.

Placing an image of a snake on your computer (or as a screen saver) allegedly protects it and reinforces its power. Offerings to Simbi may be placed beside computers or whatever you wish him to protect.

Simbi is also a master healer and can bestow knowledge of medicinal herbs to his devotees. Simbi's venom is poison and its antidote. He knows everything about spirit-derived diseases or magical diseases. Simbi can heal illnesses caused by hexes, curses, or disease demons. Simbi is syncretized to Moses, another great magician associated with snakes, Archangel Raphael and also to the Three Kings (the Magi).

**Favored people:** Occultists, astrologers, diviners, healers, herbalists. Simbi's human children may display particularly precocious psychic skills or interest in the occult. They may be born with a caul or a head full of snaky curls. In Haiti, locked hair is known as "Simbi's hair". Simbi's snake locks may be the equivalent of Medusa hair.

**Manifestation:** Simbi is usually a snake, but he is a great magician and shape-shifter, so prepare to be surprised. (Simbi tends to be a small-to-medium-sized, slim snake, not a huge snake like Damballah.)

**Realm:** Simbi lives in the water but also likes to perch in trees.

**Metal:** Mercury (quicksilver)

**Mineral:** Quartz crystal

**Colors:** Green, white, gray (That said, Simbi is a master of transformation and may advise you that he prefers different colors.)

**Trees:** Calabash, elm, mango

**Creatures:** Snakes, turtles

**Days:** Monday, Tuesday, Thursday, Friday, or Saturday (Simbi will negotiate terms and days with you.)

**Altar:** Decorate his altar with images of snakes, magical tools, and divination devices.

**Offerings:** Simbi is a water snake and needs to stay moist. He accepts milk or water, especially spring water, rainwater, or pond water. He drinks alcoholic beverages like whisky or rum. He may wish to have access to multiple beverages simultaneously.

Not every Simbi spirit is the same, so you may have to experiment to discover what yours prefers. Many like fire-water: liquor that physically resembles water such as white rum, vodka, mahia, cachaça, and aguardiente. Offer Liqueur Saint-Raphaël, a quinquina liqueur (aperitif containing quinine).

Simbi is a master of arcana and thus master of detail: he can be fussy. Snakes don't like the cold. He may prefer beverages served at room temperature. (You'll know when he's not pleased: if he's protecting some sort of technology for you, it may start to malfunction.) In addition to beverages, Simbi accepts mangos, yams, river rocks, quartz crystals, ribbons, and shed snakeskins.

**See also:** *Cymbee; Damballah; Dandalunda; Lwa; Mami Waters; Medusa; Ogun; Petro; Psychopomp; Rada; Raphael; Rusalka; Simbi Spirits; Sirène, La*

## **Simbi Spirits**



The Simbi spirits are a family of Congolese water spirits. They are a large diverse family. *Simbi* is a Kikongo word; the plural form is *Basimbi*. Simbi, the powerful lwa, is the head of this family. Most known Simbis are male, but female Simbis exist, too. Among its members are:

- **Gran Simba** is Lady Simbi, matron of the Simbi family. She is the wife of Simbi and mother of their forty daughters. Gran Simba protects and saves those caught in perilous river currents and those who accidentally fall into swift-flowing waters.
- **Simbi Andezo** is the Kreyol spelling of the French *Simbi en Deux Eaux* or “Simbi in Two Waters.” He is a lord of freshwater, including rivers, streams, and water holes. There are different ways of interpreting “two waters”: this Simbi may be a spirit of fresh and salt waters or a spirit of mangrove swamps where fresh and salt waters merge. The two waters may be the Water of Life and the Water of Oblivion or Death. Simbi Andezo is syncretized to Saint Andrew. Give him two kinds of liquids when you make offerings, not just one. In other words, give him water *and* whisky, salt water *and* freshwater, pond water *and* rainwater, and so forth. **Colors:** Red and white or red and green (but two at a time)
- **Simbi Anpaka** is Herb Master Simbi, lwa of botanicals, leaves, poison, and medicinals. **Colors:** White and green
- **Simbi Dlo** is the Kreyol spelling of the French *Simbi de l’Eau*, guardian of fresh water. He is a powerful ally if you seek assistance defending a source of freshwater. He is syncretized to Archangel Raphael. **Colors:** Red and blue or green and blue
- **Simbi Ganga** is military Simbi, a commander in chief. He is a warrior and guardian spirit. *Ganga* derives from a Kikongo word variously interpreted as “chieftain” or “healer-priest.” **Colors:** Red or red and blue
- **Simbi La Flambeau** (Also spelled *La Flambo*) is fiery Simbi. Most Simbi spirits belong to the Rada family of Vodou spirits, but Simbi La Flambeau belongs to the more volatile Petro family. He is the spirit of electrical fires. He controls the flow of kundalini energy through the body, envisioned as a snake coiled at the base of the spine. Regular Simbi is a master of folk or Earth magic, but Simbi La Flambeau is a magus and master ceremonial magician. **Offerings:** Rainwater

collected during lightning storms, water from a source struck by lightning, snakeskins soaked in arak, rum, or other alcoholic beverage; Add hot sauce to his food; tie offerings with red ribbons. **Color:** Red (See also: *Damballah La Flambeau*.)

- **Simbi Makaya** is a great sorcerer and shaman, and among the spirits served by Haitian secret societies. Makaya is also the name given to a specific Vodou tradition. The historic Makaya was a powerful shaman and Haitian revolutionary leader who was extremely prominent and influential at the beginning of the revolution. Before the revolution, he was a leader of Haiti's Maroons (escaped slaves), and he led them into battle. Makaya's spiritual and political orientation was more traditionally African than that of the leaders who eventually seized power (like Toussaint L'Ouverture). His name is recalled in the Haitian mountain Pik Makaya and the national park Parc Macaya, which are what remain of Haiti's once extensive rain forests. Plant trees and replenish forests in Haiti as offerings to him. **Colors:** Black, green, and/or red

## **Simhamukha**

*Mother of All Buddhas; The Lion-Faced Dakini; Mother of All Conquerors*

**Classification:** Buddha and Dakini

Simhamukha, Queen of Dakinis, is a Buddha, yogini, and initiatory spirit who fearlessly combats malevolent spiritual forces, destroying them instantly when necessary. Yoga techniques associated with her empower the practitioner to reverse negative energy and evil spells, directing it back where it came from.

**Manifestation:** Simhamukha has a lion's face with three eyes, indicating her power to see in all worlds. Her mouth gapes open to devour evil.

**Iconography:** She wears a tiara of five skulls, bone ornaments, and a necklace of fifty freshly-severed heads.

**Attributes:** Curved knife, skull cup containing blood

**Colors:** Maroon, wine, dark blue

**See also:** *Buddha; Dakini*

## **Sin**

*The Illuminator; Lord of Wisdom*

**Also known as:** Nanna

**Origin:** Mesopotamia

*Sin*, as in “venal” or “deadly,” does not derive from the lunar deity Sin’s name, but Mount Sinai does. Sin is his Akkadian (Semitic) name; his Sumerian name is Nanna. Sin is the Sumerian spirit of the moon and the father of Inanna-Ishtar. He was a major deity whose cult was long lasting: the mother of the last king of Babylon (556–539 BCE) served as his priestess.

Sin was chief deity of the city of Ur, birthplace of the patriarch Abraham. During the era when Ur was in political ascendance, Sin was considered head of Mesopotamia’s spiritual pantheon. His other primary cult center was the biblical city of Harran, where Abraham settled with his clan after leaving Ur. It is theorized that ancient Hebrew tribes carried devotion to Sin with them from Mesopotamia to the Sinai Desert.

**Favored people:** Astrologers

**Iconography:** He was envisioned as an old man with a long, flowing lapis lazuli beard.

**Attribute:** A tripod (possibly for incense or for divination purposes)

**Emblem:** Crescent Moon

**Creature:** Bull

**Mineral:** Lapis lazuli

**Sacred site:** Mount Sinai (literally the “Mountain of the Moon”) and the Sinai Desert

**Number:** 30

**Offerings:** Butter, honey, wine

**See also:** *Inanna-Ishtar*

## Sinnann

**Origin:** Ireland

Sinnann is the spirit of the Shannon River. The surviving vestiges of her myth are similar to that of Boann and the birth of the Boyne River. Sinnann—granddaughter of Lir, King of the Sea, and Manannan’s niece—is described as the most accomplished maiden of her time, but she wanted more. Like Odin, Sinnann wished for wisdom. Whereas Odin only had to sacrifice an eye to drink from the Well of Mimir, Sinnann lost her life.

It is unclear exactly what Sinnann sought from the Well of Connla, whether to sip from the water, to eat a hazelnut from the nine trees that grew beside the well, or to eat the salmon that fed on the nuts. Any or all of these would allegedly grant extraordinary knowledge, wisdom, insight, and eloquence. Unfortunately, the precinct around the well was forbidden to women. Sinnann sneaked in, but the water responded to her approach by rising up violently and bursting its banks. (An alternative version suggests that the great salmon of the well commanded the waters to rise and engulf Sinnann.) She was swept away and drowned but became the spirit of the river.

That’s the most well-known version of her myth. It’s possible that Sinnann’s presence at the well preexists the legend and the ban on women. She may be the original goddess of the river and the story serves to explain the undeniable female presence at the well after it was officially forbidden to that sex. Sinnann is the Shannon River. She is the ancestral spirit of Clan O’Shaughnessy

**See also:** *Boann; Lir; Manannan Mac Lir; Mimir; Odin*

## Siren

The word *Siren* refers to two distinct types of spirits:

- True Sirens, the Sirens of classical Greek mythology, are bird-women, related to the Harpies or Lilith. See *Sirens*; *Sirin*
- Siren has evolved into a synonym for mermaid, a fish-woman. The Spanish and French words for mermaid are *sirena* and *sirène* respectively. See *La Sirène*, *Syrena*

What these two types of spirits share in common are associations with sex, eroticism, oracles, and death. Both are also famous for their beautiful, alluring voices.

## Sirens

A Siren song is irresistible. Sirens are singing goddesses whose alluring voices can neither be resisted nor ignored. Their most famous appearance is in Homer's *Odyssey* where they are categorized among dangers of the sea like Scylla and Charybdis. (They show up in the saga of Jason and the Argonauts, too.)

The Sirens sing while perched on rocks in the rough sea. Odysseus is warned that anyone who hears the Siren song will feel compelled to draw close to them with the end result that they are dashed on the rocks. Odysseus puts wax in his crew's ears so that they can row past the Sirens without being tempted and has himself lashed to a post so that he can hear their song *and* resist the impulse to join them. He is allegedly the only man to have heard their song and lived.

The Sirens are more than minor figures of mythic horror. They were significant, not trivial, goddesses. Among those who venerated Sirens was Roman Emperor Tiberias.

The Sirens are bird spirits who manifest as part woman, part bird. What distinguishes them from other bird-women spirits like Lilith or the Harpies is the power of their song, the allure of the Sirens' voices. However, the Sirens do more than sing:

- They are oracular goddesses, telling Odysseus that they know all that happens on Earth, everywhere, all the time.
- Sirens are erotic goddesses of love and desire.

Sirens are friends and servants of Persephone who assigned them their role as psychopomps and death goddesses. Their function is to escort souls to the Queen of the Dead. It may not just be random unlucky seamen whom the Sirens lure to their deaths. They may collect souls already destined to die. The Sirens appear to those already doomed, so perhaps the true reason Odysseus escaped death was that it was just not his time to go. Allegedly, the Sirens' sweet, magnetic song causes those who hear them to approach death joyfully, peacefully, and without fear. Some Greek vase paintings depict bearded male Sirens. Mythologist Karl Kerényi theorizes in his book *Gods of the Greeks* that male Sirens may have sweetened the experience of death for women as female Sirens did for men.

It is unclear exactly how many Sirens there are. Some are identified by name, but there may be more. The most famous Sirens include:

- Aglaope (also known as Aglaophonos), “She of the Glorious Voice” or “Shrill Voice”
- Leucosia or Leucotheia, “The White Goddess”
- Ligeia, “She of the Bright Voice” or “She of the Clear Voice”
- Parthenope, “The Virginal”
- Peisinoe (also known as Pasinoe), “The Seductive” or “The Persuasive”
- Thelxiepeia (also known as Thelxinoe or Thelxiope), “The Enchantress,” “She of the Soothing Song”

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*Individual Sirens like Parthenope were sometimes venerated independently. The town of Parthenope, dedicated to that Siren, was founded in the eighth century BCE but was eventually renamed Naples. Greek historian Strabo, who died in approximately 25 CE, describes travelers visiting her shrine. In the Roman era, a temple of Apollo was built over Parthenope's shrine, followed in the Christian era by the Church of San Giovanni Maggiore.*

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Other Sirens include Eumolpe (“She Who Sings Well”), Himeropa

("Voice that Provokes Desire"), Kyane ("The Blue"), and Moeolpe ("The Harmonious"). The Sirens' ancestry is in dispute. They may be daughters of Nereus and thus related to the Nereids. Their mother may be a Hesperid or one of the Muses, or they may be the Muses' step-sisters. Their parents may be Phorkys and Keto. Achelous may be their father. According to myth, Heracles broke one of Achelous' horns: the Sirens were born of his blood seeping onto Earth, similar to the births of Aphrodite and the Erinyes. They may always have been bird spirits or may originally have been Nymphs whom Demeter transformed into bird-women as punishment for not searching harder for their friend, Persephone. Alternatively, they begged for wings so they could fly and better search for her.

In addition to attending Persephone, the Sirens also have close associations with Hera. A statue of Hera depicts her holding tiny Sirens in her hands. Hera encouraged the Sirens to engage in musical competition with the Muses, allies of Apollo. The victorious Muses made themselves crowns with feathers that they plucked from the Sirens. Although the Sirens do not live in the water, they are sea spirits (hence their later reinterpretation as fishtailed women). Myths where Muses and/or Orpheus rout them may be interpreted as the victory of terrestrial spirits over the aquatic (or the victory of one pantheon over another).

**Manifestation:** Sirens have a bird's body with a woman's head and sometimes a woman's breasts and arms, too. Their feet are taloned, sometimes with a lion's paw at the end of each bird foot.

**Iconography:** Sirens are usually depicted in groups of three: one holds a flute, one holds a lyre, and the third sings. Sirens, usually depicted as if mourning, are among the two most frequent mythic symbols carved into Athenian tombs. (The other is Charon.)

**Sacred sites:** The Sirens inhabit an island called Anthemoessa, "rich in flowers"; its location is subject to debate but is generally believed to be near Sicily or somewhere off the Italian coast. The Sirenuse Islands off the Amalfi Coast near Positano, which may or may not be the same as Anthemoessa, are named after the Sirens and are allegedly their residence (or one of them). They may also live on the nearby Isle of

Capri.

**Number:** 8, the number of eternity.

**See also:** *Achelous; Aphrodite; Apollo; Charon; Demeter; Erinyes; Harpies; Hera; Heracles; Hesperides; Keto; Kyane; Leto; Leucotheia; Lilith; Muses; Nereid; Nereus; Nymph; Orpheus; Persephone; Phorkys; Psychopomp; Scylla; Sirène, La; Sirin* and the Glossary entry for *Pantheon*

## Sirène, La

**Also known as:** La Sirenn (Kreyol)

**Origin:** Haiti

**Classification:** Lwa

La Sirène is a beautiful, classical mermaid with long flowing hair. Her name literally means “the mermaid.” She holds a mirror, which serves as a threshold or portal between realms. La Sirène is Mistress of Mysticism and a repository of sacred information. She appears in dreams, carrying people down to her kingdom beneath the sea, where she offers magical instruction.

La Sirène is la Reine Chanterelle, “Queen of the Choir.” She epitomizes the mermaid as alluring singer. La Sirène owns a golden trumpet with which she summons the lwa and other spirits. If you find her trumpet, you’re allegedly guaranteed a lifetime of wealth. La Sirène is associated with the largesse of the sea. Her image allegedly attracts wealth and treasure and is thus frequently found in lottery parlors. La Sirène helps your ships come in. Her image in your home may possess the same effect.

In addition to wealth, La Sirène brings love, romance, and success, but she does possess the capacity for violence and is not a spirit to be trifled with. Like her namesakes, the Sirens, La Sirène has associations with death. She lures those who offend her (like those who fail to pay their debts to her!) and drags them to a watery death. Like Fairies, La Sirène has a bit of a reputation as a baby snatcher, taking them to live with her in her undersea palace—an ominous image as in Vodou cosmology the



realm of death is beneath the sea. La Sirène may rule a children's realm of death.

Her husband is usually considered to be Lord Agwé, although she is sometimes depicted in romantic embrace with Simbi. La Sirène may be a path of Ezili or one of the family of Ezili spirits, in which context she is known as Ezili of the Sea. On the spectrum of Ezilis, she falls between Ezili Freda and Ezili Dantor: La Sirène is generally benevolent but the threat of danger remains. Some legends suggest that la Sirène has a daughter named Ursule (an alternative spelling for Erzulie or Ezili).

She is syncretized to Saints Martha and Philomène and the Stella Maris. Invoke La Sirène for protection and safe passage over the sea and for wealth, joy, and psychic ability. If you seek occult secrets, La Sirène can provide them.

**Favored people:** Musicians, singers

**Manifestation:** La Sirène is a beautiful, longhaired mermaid. She may be unable to walk (the fishtail hobbles her) or alternatively, if she sprouts human legs, then she walks on her toes.

**Iconography:** La Sirène in classic mermaid form is a favored subject of Haitian sequined flags. The image of the Stella Maris is also used to represent her.

**Attribute:** Hand mirror, comb, golden trumpet, bell, cup, candle, rattle

**Colors:** Shades of blue and green and intermingled colors of the sea, like teal or aquamarine. Other traditions suggest her colors are pink and white.

**Bird:** Dove

**Number:** 7

**Day:** Thursday

**Altar:** Decorate with marine and mermaid images.

**Offerings:** La Sirène drinks champagne (preferably pink!), white wine, or Kir cocktails like Kir Royale: Kir with champagne. Give her drinks

made with orgeat syrup. She likes melons and desserts, especially French pastries. Offer her seashells, hair ornaments, perfume, cigarettes, cosmetics, perfume, and hand mirrors.

**See also:** *Agwé; Baleine, La; Ezili; Ezili Dantor; Ezili Freda Dahomey; Lwa; Mermaid; Simbi; Sirens; Stella Maris; Syrena*

## Sirin

**Origin:** Russia

Sirin, a spirit of beauty, joy, and happiness, manifests as a bird with a woman's face. Her name derives from the Greek *Siren*. (She may be a Siren who flew off to Russia and found new friends and myths.) Like the Sirens, she is a psychopomp. Sirin serenades the dying, her songs so beautiful and compelling that those who hear her are oblivious to everything else and die happily and peacefully. Sirin does not kill randomly; she is an escort spirit similar to an angel of death.

Sirin also protects the living, together with her sister spirit and alter ego, Alkonost. Originally, they were venerated together as spirits of good fortune and guardians of the home. Sirin kept watch at night, while Alkonost patrolled during daylight hours. Post-Christianity, all the sisters' positive aspects were assigned to Alkonost while Sirin's associations with death and night caused her to be considered an evil or at least inauspicious spirit.

**See also:** *Alkonost; Psychopomp; Sirens*

## Sirona

**Also known as:** Sarana (Hungary); Tsirona (Brittany)

**Origin:** Celtic

Sirona's name seems to be etymologically related to "star." This ancient goddess was truly a star of the Celtic spiritual firmament. Sirona, among the most prominent Celtic goddesses, was venerated throughout the

continental Celtic world. Her images have been found from Brittany to Hungary. She is a goddess of fertility, healing, renewal, and regeneration associated with thermal springs. She had shrines throughout Europe, many affiliated with what are still highly significant therapeutic mineral springs.

Sirona was venerated independently but also had various male consorts and partners, including prominent Celtic deities like Belenus and Grannus. After the Roman occupation of Gaul, Sirona was partnered there with Apollo, their arranged marriage indicating the union of Romans and Celts.

Sirona's images usually depict her with a snake or a small dog or both. She holds the dog lovingly. Sirona is traditionally invoked to heal humans, but it's possible that she may assist dogs, too.

**Iconography:** A second-century CE image from the Moselle Basin renders Sirona as a robed woman wearing a diadem with a snake entwined around one arm. She holds a bowl of eggs in the other. Many small votive images depict Sirona holding a little dog either in her lap or in her arms.

**Creatures:** Snake and lapdog (both symbolic of healing)

**Plants:** Grapes, wheat

**Sacred sites:** Her sanctuaries included those in Bitburg, Hochscheid, Mainz, Nietaldorf, and Wiesbaden (now in Germany); Luexeuil, Mâlain, Metz, and Sainte-Fontaine (now in France); Brigetio (now in Hungary); and in the ancient Celtic kingdom of Noricum, corresponding to parts of modern Austria and Slovenia.

**Dates:** In modern Dianic witchcraft, 6 January is the Feast of Sirona, a time for blessing of the waters.

**Offerings:** Serve her mineral water and wine; offer coins, milagros (ex-votos), eggs (real, marble, crystal), images of snakes, snakeskins.

**See also:** *Apollo; Belenus; Grannus; Sequana; Sulis*

## Sita

### Origin: India

Sita, the wife of King Rama, accompanied her husband to his exile in the forest, together with a small entourage. She was once left alone in the woods; this was the moment for which Ravana, King of the Rakshasas, had been waiting. He kidnapped her, imprisoning her in his palace in Sri Lanka. Although Sita was forced to live in his house, she never succumbed to Ravana's considerable charms. (And for what it's worth, he may have been a kidnapper, but he wasn't a rapist.) In one version, she refuses to live under Ravana's roof and so is installed in a little house in his garden where she pines for Rama and considers suicide.

The kidnapping of Sita is the basis for the Sanskrit epic the *Ramayana*, named after her husband, Rama, seventh avatar of Vishnu. (Sita may be an avatar of Lakshmi.) The *Ramayana* tells the tale of Rama and Hanuman's happy rescue of Sita and its not-quite-so-happy aftermath.

Although Sita was rescued, there was doubt as to whether she was still a suitable wife for Rama or whether she had been tainted by sexual contact with her kidnapper. She was forced to prove her virtue by undergoing a fire ordeal from which she emerged unscathed. Rama, Sita, and their entourage returned to his kingdom where he assumed the crown.

Although his constituents loved Rama, they did not embrace his queen but considered her with suspicion. Although Rama knew that Sita had been utterly faithful and even though she had already passed trial by fire, the public had doubts. Gossip and innuendo ensued. Two myths provide two different resolutions for this situation:

- Rama placed the greater good above his own happiness and banished Sita from the kingdom. She went back to the forest with their two sons, who she raised single-handedly.
- The kingdom was attacked by a one-thousand-headed Rakshasa who could only be killed by a completely chaste woman. Other women having tried and failed, the people begged Sita to make an attempt. Sita took a bow and arrow and slew that Rakshasa *instantly*. This was still not sufficient to quell gossip. The people demanded that she undergo

yet another fire ordeal. Finally Sita had enough. Enraged and humiliated, she demanded that Earth swallow her, if she's pure enough. Earth gaped open, a golden throne emerged on which Sita sat and, as if in an elevator, descended into Earth. The sky rained flowers as the Earth closed over her. She never returned to Earth. Rama never saw her again.

He never remarried; Sita is his one true love. When, as a king, he was obliged to perform sacred rituals in conjunction with a queen, Rama created a golden image of Sita and placed it on the queen's throne, the statue substituting for the goddess herself.

Before there was *Ramayana*, there was a goddess of fertility and abundance named Sita, daughter of Bhudevi, the Earth goddess, although she may be an avatar of Bhudevi herself. (According to the *Ramayana*, baby Sita was discovered in a furrow in the Earth.) Women still pay private homage to Sita. She is the goddess in exile, forced to leave the palace, her husband, and her rightful throne. Sita always maintains her dignity.

She is the goddess of women who must bear humiliation. She is the goddess of those who seek to maintain grace despite suspicion, slander, and abuse. Sita is considered the epitome of the ideal wife because she sacrificed herself to save her husband's reputation.

Many versions of the *Ramayana* exist. It remains a favorite story in India, Indonesia, Cambodia and elsewhere. It has been retold in countless ways and interpretations and is the subject of movies, dances, novels, comic books, and puppet shows, among many other media.

Alternative versions of Sita's myth exist:

- Like Isis and Osiris, Rama and Sita are siblings, possibly even twins.
- Sita is Ravana's daughter compounding the sin of his lust for her (although he is unaware of their relationship).
- In a Tamil version, Sita vanquishes Ravana herself. The Tamil epic the *Catakantaravanan* resembles the *Ramayana* but stars Sita as the main character.

**Manifestation:** In all descriptions, Sita is radiantly beautiful, whether dressed in elegant finery or in the bark clothing she wears when exiled

in the forest.

**Iconography:** Sita, a beautiful queen, is usually depicted at Rama's side. They are often accompanied by Hanuman, who usually sits at Rama's feet. Because the *Ramayana* is so popular, it's possible to obtain images depicting every scene.

**See also:** *Fauna; Hanuman; Isis; Konohana; Kunti; Lakshmi; Osiris; Rakshasa; Savitri; Shekhina; Vishnu;* and the Glossary entry for *Avatar*

## Sitala

### *The Cool One*

**Also known as:** Sitlamata (literally "Mother Sitala"); Shitala

**Origin:** India

Sitala was the youngest of her many spirit sisters, born considerably later, and so human beings paid little attention to her. Frustrated and determined to force humans to create rituals in her honor, Sitala invented smallpox. The tactic worked. She is among India's most popular spirits, internationally as well.

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*A modern legend suggests that as incidence of smallpox declined, people stopped venerating Sitala so she upped the ante and produced AIDS. Sitala is now as closely identified with AIDS as with smallpox and is credited with causing, preventing, and healing that disease.*

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Sitala and her sisters preside over pustular diseases. Sitala's specialty is smallpox: she both causes and prevents the disease. But like that other renowned smallpox spirit, Babalu Ayé, Sitala transcends being only a disease spirit. She protects and provides for devotees in all facets of life and is particularly invoked to make sterile women fertile.

Disease spirits are among the scariest and most difficult to understand. Those whom she favors find Sitala benevolent.

- If you have survived smallpox, you may consider yourself already under her protection.
- If your family has a history of smallpox or the disease holds some personal significance to you, you may consider your first connection made.

Sitala's devotees consider smallpox to be akin to spiritual possession. They are literally touched and inhabited by Sitala. Vaccinations do not offend her: Sitala's priests performed primitive forms of smallpox vaccination prior to the advent of the modern vaccine.

Sitala is dangerous when she heats up (as with fever). The goal when working with her is to keep her cool. During festivals and rituals in her honor, heating food is forbidden. This includes both foods that intrinsically possess a heating effect upon the body such as hot peppers as well as food that has been warmed up. Rice must be eaten cold. Cooling foods are consumed by people *and* offered to Sitala. One abstains from all activities that heat up the body. Sexual activity is minimal during the festivities but may be resumed at your pleasure afterwards.

**Manifestations:** Her most famous manifestation is as smallpox. But smallpox is only a manifestation of Sitala, not an essential characteristic. She also appears as a woman dressed in red. Sitala roams the countryside, riding a donkey, searching out victims.

**Attribute:** Broom (sometimes a silver broom), winnowing fan, pot of water

**Color:** Red

**Tree:** Neem

**Time:** An annual festival is held around March.

**Sacred site:** She has several shrines and temples throughout northern India where she is served by a female priesthood. Her true home is the body of the patient for the duration of the disease. Position her altar

toward the northeast.

**Offerings:** Flowers and cooling foods such as cold rice, coconuts, cucumbers, plantains, and yogurt.

**See also:** *Babalu Ayé; Jari-Mari; Mariamman; T'ou Chen Niang Niang*

## Skadi

**Also known as:** Ondurgud; Ondurdis

**Origin:** Norse

**Classification:** Jotun

Skadi, an ice goddess, is the daughter of the Jotun Thiazi, who died in a fatal altercation with the Aesir. In Skadi's first appearance on the stage of surviving Norse myth, she girds herself in armor and travels to the Aesir, demanding reparations (*weregild*) for her father's death. She demands two things: that the Aesir make her laugh, despite her grim mood, and that they provide her with a husband. Both terms are met.

Skadi really wants to marry the handsome Balder but she winds up wed to the sea spirit Njord. They attempt to make a go of the marriage, but their natures are too different and they amicably separate. Skadi later finds Holler to be a more compatible match. Skadi allies herself with the Aesir. It's Skadi who fastens the venomous snake over Loki's head after Balder's death. (Loki's bragging about being present at her father's death accounts for her enmity.)

Based on these myths, Skadi might seem to be a peripheral goddess, but nothing could be farther from the truth. She was an extremely significant goddess, worshipped in Norway and Sweden. Her name is echoed in Scandinavia, which can be translated as "Skadi's Land." She predates the Aesir in the region and was also one of the last Norse deities to be actively venerated post-Christianity.

Her name is translated as "Shade"; this may indicate the dim winter sun but also shades of the dead. In addition to other functions, Skadi is a death goddess with dominion over hunting. Legend has it that she first



taught men to hunt with bows and arrows. Legend also has it that a man was sacrificed to her annually and that this sacrifice lasted in remote regions until possibly as late as the seventeenth century. Among the reasons why Skadi is the spirit who actually hangs the poisonous snake over Loki is that she *can*; she is able to wield an instrument of death that would be fatal to others.

Skadi can also be an extremely helpful goddess. Called the Snowshoe Goddess, she rescues winter travelers lost in storms or snow. Should you find yourself stuck on a snowy slope or in icebound weather, Skadi would be among the spirits of first appeal.

**Manifestation:** Skadi is a tall, strong, beautiful, athletic woman. She travels through the snow on her skates, ski, and snowshoes, hunting with a bow and arrows. She may be accompanied by wolves.

**Attributes:** Ice skates, skis, snowshoes

**Creatures:** Wolves, snakes

**Color:** White

**Realm:** Skadi lives in Thrymheimr (“Noise Home”), her father’s home. She is also described as living in remote, high, snowy peaks.

**Offerings:** Icy-cold Swedish vodka, traditional Scandinavian food, charms evoking her favorite pastimes, images of snakes and wolves

**See also:** *Aesir; Balder; Holler; Jotun; Loki; Njord*

## Skogsfruar

**Origin:** Sweden

Skogsfruar, the “Forest Wives,” are guardians of the woods. They have dominion over hunting, assisting those whom they love but obstructing those who do not ask for their permission. The Skogsfruar protect forest animals; they are the spiritual regulatory board determining who can hunt and who can be hunted. Hunters who run afoul of the Skogsfruar have no luck and find no prey but may find trouble instead.

Skogsfruar manifest in the form of beautiful, naked women who mysteriously appear in the forest, often joining men at campgrounds, luring them deeper into the woods, from whence they never return (whether because they've met with foul play or because they're too happy to leave is unknown). *Forest wife* is also sometimes a euphemism for "witch," and it is not entirely clear if all these Skogsfruar are spirits or whether some are human forest dwellers.

**Flower:** *Epipogium aphyllum*, known as Ghost Orchid in English, is called Skogsfru ("Forest Wife") in Swedish

**Offerings:** The Skogsfruar accept silver. It's traditional to make offerings to them before entering the woods and before hunting; it's always advisable to beg their permission.

**See also:** *Artemis; Baobhan Sith; Ildiko; Vila*

## **Smertrios**

### *The Provider*

**Also known as:** Smertrius

**Origin:** Celtic

Smertrios is a Celtic deity, venerated in Gaul. Very little information about him survives. It is not even conclusive that Smertrios was his name (although it is now). Smertrios may be a title, meaning "The Provider." Smertrios' primary consort was Rosmerta, whose name derives from the same root word (*smert*), referring to the providing of abundance. Smertrios also shared a shrine with the goddess Ancamna. The Romans identified him with Mars.

Based on archaeological evidence, Smertrios seems to have been widely venerated throughout Gaul as well as in the ancient Celtic kingdom of Noricum (corresponding to parts of what are now modern Slovenia and Austria). An image of Smertrios is on a pillar dedicated by first century C.E. Parisian sailors, discovered in the eighteenth-century beneath the Cathedral of Notre Dame. The pillar is covered with carvings

of spirits. Smertrios is at the top of this pillar in the company of Cernunnos and the Dioscuri. (Rosmerta appears on one of the pillar's lower tiers).

**Iconography:** On the Pillar of the Boatmen, Smertrios is depicted as a bearded, muscular man who confronts a snake, which rears up before him.

**Attributes:** Club, torch

**See also:** *Cernunnos; Dioscuri; Mars; Rosmerta* and the Glossary entry for *Identification*

## **Sobek**

*Lord of Dark Water*

**Also known as:** Suchos; Sebek

**Origin:** Egypt

Sobek is a crocodile god. His name literally means “crocodile.” Sobek is a crocodile and hence something of an ambivalent spirit. How you feel about him will derive from your feelings toward crocodiles. Sobek is a particularly ancient Egyptian deity. Active veneration of Sobek continued until the forced abolition of traditional Egyptian religion. Sobek was adored and beloved by some people but feared by others. Crocodiles, after all, are killers. They were *the* primary danger lurking in the Nile. Sobek rules the most powerful and dangerous aspects of water. Sobek protects those he loves or for whom he feels responsible, but he menaces others.

Sobek is the son of Neith, who may have self-generated him with no need for a father. Alternatively, Sobek's father is Set. Yet another myth suggests that Sobek emerged alone from the primordial dark waters of chaos and that he himself created and ordered the world. His oldest shrine was at Shedet in the swamps of the Fayoum, an oasis west of the Nile. The Greeks who later ruled Egypt renamed Shedet, Crocodilopolis: “Crocodile City.”

During the Middle Kingdom, the pharaohs began to pay more attention to the Fayoum region, and Sobek was brought to national attention. He was particularly revered during the twelfth and thirteenth dynasties. Sobek became the personal protector of pharaohs, serving to protect against dangers deriving from the human and spirit realms. Eight pharaohs were named Sobekhotep. Sobekneferu (1799–1795 BCE), last ruler of the twelfth dynasty, is the first documented female pharaoh.

Sobek is a multifaceted spirit who performs various functions. He is an aggressive guardian who repels and devours malevolent spirits who threaten his devotees. Sobek is generous with his power; contact with him allegedly enhances one's own personal power.

As Lord of the Dark Waters, Sobek rules the dangers of the deep. Thus he protects against danger emanating from the Nile River. According to one myth, the Nile River emanates from Sobek's sweat. In one version of the saga of Isis and Osiris, Sobek personally retrieves Osiris' dead body from the river and carries it to shore on his back.

He is a deity of both personal and vegetative fertility, an erotic spirit who is the epitome of virility. Sobek bestows sexual prowess to men and fertility to women. He is invoked to help women in childbirth. Bringing his image into the birthing room allegedly eases labor pains and keeps predatory spirits at bay. If an image of Sobek is unavailable, the image of any crocodile or even the Egyptian hieroglyph representing *crocodile* is sufficient substitute.

Sobek is intensely associated with crocodiles. He protects some people but he is also the guardian of crocodiles. If you have harmed crocodiles or if you hunt them, eat them, or have a closet full of crocodile belts, handbags, or boots, it might be best to avoid contacting Sobek or otherwise drawing his attention to you. (And conversely, just because Sobek protects someone doesn't mean that it's safe to approach living crocodiles. *Always* use common sense and caution.)

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*Cleopatra has a bit of an encounter with Sobek's sacred temple crocodiles in Margaret George's 1998 novel, The Memoirs of Cleopatra.*

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**Manifestation:** Sobek is a Nile crocodile or a man with a crocodile head.

**Attributes:** Egyptian was-scepter and ankh

**Consorts:** Sobek is associated with various female deities including Hathor, Renenet, and Taweret. He may be Khnum's father.

**Sacred sites:** Sobek's primary shrine was in the Fayoum, but he was venerated throughout Egypt. He had a large sanctuary at Kom Ombo, near Aswan, now a prime tourist attraction. Sobek's temples were tourist attractions way back when, too. Sacred bejeweled crocodiles lived in pools where they were hand-fed by Sobek's priests. In the Fayoum, a crocodile was enshrined as a living manifestation of Sobek. Known as Petsuchos (literally "Son of Sobek"), it lived a life of luxury and was replaced by another when it died. The Petsuchoi (plural) were mummified and preserved after death in the manner of pharaohs or high priests.

**Offerings:** Incense, images of crocodiles, treasure

**See also:** *Hathor; Isis; Khnum; Neith; Osiris; Renenet; Set; Taweret*

## Sojobo

**Origin:** Japan

**Classification:** Tengu

Sojobo is the King of the Tengu. His abode is Mount Kurama, birthplace of reiki healing, north of Kyoto. Sojobo is especially famous because of his tutelage of the hero Yoshitsune of Minamoto. Yoshitsune's life was spared by rival clan leader Kiyomori of Taira following the Heiji rebellion of 1159 on the condition that he become a Buddhist priest at Kuramadera Temple in the mountains north of Kyoto. This condition was met, resulting in Yoshitsune's encounter with Sojobo, in residence nearby.

Sojobo took Yoshitsune under his wing, teaching him martial arts including swordsmanship, and tactical and military strategies as well as magical skills. Yoshitsune fulfilled his priestly duties during the day but

spent his nights engaged in practice bouts with Sojobo and his tengu friends. Yoshitsune's exile had been intended to weaken him and the Minamoto clan. Instead, Yoshitsune emerged as one of Japan's greatest warriors. He attributed his success and skills to Sojobo.

**Manifestation:** Sojobo has the long nose characteristic of tengu. He is an elderly white-haired *yamabushi-tengu* ("mountain priest-tengu") with a long white beard and dark wings.

**Iconography:** Sojobo is a favored subject of Japanese woodblock prints

**Attribute:** Seven-feather fan

**See also:** *Tengu*

## Solomon, King

**Also known as:** Suleiman; Suleimanu

The Biblical King Solomon (died circa 925 BCE), son of David and Bathsheba was the last ruler of the united kingdom of Israel and Judah, but he was more than a political, administrative, or warrior king. King Solomon is Master of Magic and the world's wisest man. As builder of the original Jerusalem Temple, commonly called Solomon's Temple, he is God's own architect. Much of Freemason lore derives from the building of this temple: Solomon is the original initiate who received secrets directly from God and the spirits.

Solomon is the subject of an immense body of Islamic and Jewish folklore, most of it centering on his role as magician. One could argue that Freemasonry as well as ceremonial magic was inspired by Solomon. King Solomon is Master of Djinn. He commanded and compelled an army of Djinn to complete his building projects, including the Jerusalem Temple. In addition to his extraordinary magical wisdom, Solomon also possessed a magical ring, which gave him power over spirits. This brass and iron seal ring, is engraved with the Ineffable Name of the Creator.

In addition to close, personal knowledge of spirits, Solomon was also an expert folk magician. He was a root doctor, shaman, high priest, and ceremonial magician all rolled into one. He spoke to spirits; he spoke to

birds. With the help of the Djinn, Solomon constructed a magical ritual bath (*mikvah*). He cast a spell over its waters so that they healed all those who submerged themselves. The waters also had a rejuvenating effect, painlessly removing scars and wrinkles. This bath was destroyed along with the Jerusalem Temple.

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*North African folk traditions advise against leaving cooked food out all night, as it may attract Djinn. The fear is that they will somehow poison the food or use it for their own purposes, and then put it back seemingly untouched. A magical remedy exists: place a small stick over the dish, saying aloud, "This is the stick of Solomon." Allegedly his name alone is sufficient to ward off Djinn. (On the other hand, allegedly hearing his nemesis Ashmodai's name is sufficient to make Solomon himself nervous!)*

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Solomon loved women, and women loved him. He had seven hundred wives, including Hittite and Sidonian princesses, the Queen of Sheba, and Pharaoh's daughter. (This is unusual; pharaohs rarely let their daughters marry foreigners and leave Egypt.) Many of his marriages to foreign brides were made at the beginning of his reign as a method of establishing and strengthening alliances. He had an additional three hundred concubines in his harem. Solomon is unique in that he respected his wives' religions. He allowed them to practice whatever they chose, and he sought to learn from them, sometimes worshipping alongside them.

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*Solomon is credited with writing the mysterious Song of Songs. A multitude of grimoires and apocryphal texts are attributed to him, including*

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The Testament of Solomon, The Greater Key of Solomon, and The Lesser Key of Solomon. *The powerful amuletic symbol of two intersecting*

*triangles, the hexagram, is known as the Seal of Solomon.*

A true occultist, he was a man of insatiable curiosity. This tolerance and open-minded attitude did not please everyone. Solomon was accused of backsliding and even of being a Djinn. His relations with Djinn and other spirits were intimate. If the Queen of Sheba was truly an avatar of Lilith as sometimes reputed, then the relationship was intimate, indeed.

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*The famous story of the Judgment of Solomon describes how two women came before King Solomon, both claiming to be the mother of a single child.*

*The women are often described as prostitutes, but exactly what kind of prostitute is not really clear. Mundane? Sacred? Angelic? Jewish folklore identifies one of the women as Lilith and the other as either Agrat or Naamah. All three are classified among the Angels of Prostitution.*

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**Bird:** Hoopoe, which taught him the language of birds. Birds serve as Solomon's spies and messengers.

**See also:** *Agrat bat Mahalat; Asherah; Ashmodai; Djinn; Genie; Karina; Lilith; Naamah; Sarkin Aljan Suleimanu; Silibo; Solomon's Seventy-Two Spirits; Umm Es Subyan*

### **Solomon's Seventy-Two Spirits**

Ancient folklore describes how Solomon commanded Djinn. One legend describes how he sealed seventy-two particularly recalcitrant spirits in a brass vessel and flung it into the sea. The goal was to isolate these spirits and to prevent them from doing harm. Various sequel legends describe how the spirits were eventually liberated.

In medieval Europe, the legend evolved further: Solomon sealed these seventy-two dangerous spirits inside a brazen vessel so they were always available to labor for him. Medieval magicians cast themselves in the role of Solomon and sought to command and compel these seventy-two



spirits.

Spirits identified as being among the seventy-two are the subject of the various books of the Lemegeton and other grimoires. Many of them are clearly distortions of ancient Pagan deities—like “Marquis” Ammon, “Duke” Ashtaroth, or King Baal, now redefined as demons. It is not always clear whether these distortions were deliberate, whether the authors were unfamiliar with the original spirits, or whether the spirits did indeed manifest in hostile fashion. Information is written from the perspective of Christian magicians who sought to command dangerous spirits but did not love or respect them (or at least did not wish to appear to love and respect them).

Many spirits reclassified as demons were originally very beloved; their original devotees would be shocked and dismayed at their portrayal. In some cases, as with Ashtaroth (formerly known as Astarte), even the original gender has been changed. Ranks given the spirits (marquis, duke, count, knight) are European and may not have existed in the spirits’ original home or heyday. It is probably fair to assume that all seventy-two spirits are victims of such distortions. Those who would like to attempt to command them will find lots of instruction in the Lesser Key of Solomon and other grimoires.

**See also:** *Ammon; Ashmodai; Astarte; Ba’al (1); Ba’al (2); Demon; Djinn; Genie; Solomon, King*

## Somnus

**Also known as:** Somnos; Sopor

**Origin:** Italy

Somnus. Lord of Sleep, is the insomniac’s spirit. The word *insomnia* derives from his name. *Soporific*, meaning “something that causes sleep,” derives from another of his names, Sopor. He is identified with Hypnos, Greek Lord of Sleep.

**See also:** *Hypnos; Morpheus; Oneiroi*

## Sophia

### *Lady Wisdom*

The name *Sophia* may refer to more than one goddess or different human perceptions of one goddess. Sophia is literally the Greek translation of the Hebrew *Hochma* or “Wisdom.” Alexandria, Egypt, was the home of a large unconventional Jewish population, many of whom exclusively spoke and read Greek. The name *Sophia* may first appear in print in the apocryphal text *The Wisdom of Solomon* written in Greek by an Alexandrian Jew in approximately 30 BCE. Sophia is described as YHWH’s throne companion—present at Creation—humanity’s guardian and guide, comparable to the Shekhina or Asherah. (A recent theory suggests that at least some of *The Wisdom of Solomon* was written by women, possibly from a religious community described by Philo as the *Therapeutae*.)

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*According to The Wisdom of Solomon, Sophia will not enter a fraudulent mind nor make her home in a body “mortgaged to sin.”*

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Alexandria was a melting pot, especially when it came to spirituality and mysticism. The different schools of Gnosticism developed here; Sophia evolved into an independent Gnostic goddess, the Lady of Divine Wisdom, possibly distinct from Hochma. There isn’t one school of Gnosticism: there are many and thus many visions of Sophia. Here’s one basic version of her myth: Sophia and the Creator are partners in Creation. Somehow Creation is flawed and Sophia’s desire to live with people on Earth is stymied. She retreats to a celestial realm to hide. Only the Creator knows where she is and visits her, but pure-hearted spiritual seekers can find her if they search diligently.

In other versions, she echoes the Shekhina: separated from her male counterpart and her celestial origins, she is in exile in this world. Her tears are the source of Earth’s waters: the sea, rivers, and springs from

which life and healing stem. She gives birth to light.

Sophia is sometimes associated with the goddesses Ma'at and Athena and with the serpent of wisdom. Modern magical traditions sometimes invoke Sophia for academic success.

**Iconography:** Statues of Sophia depict her with a book in her left arm. A dove emerges from her heart. She may wear a bay laurel wreath. Sophia is sometimes represented as an angelic figure painted red.

**Color:** White, red

**Bird:** Dove

**See also:** *Asherah; Athena; Hokhma; Ma'at; Solomon, King*

## **Soranus**

*Lord of Death*

**Origin:** Italy

Soranus, an ancient deity worshipped in Italy before the arrival of the Romans, was venerated by the Etruscans, Sabines, and Falisci as well as other local tribes and nations. Relatively little is now known about him. The center of his veneration was Mount Soracte, near Rome. The mountain ridge is allegedly named in his honor. Soranus was an Underworld deity, associated with Death. His priests were known as the *Hirpi Sorani* or "Wolves of Soranus." His rites included fire-walking over live coals. After the Romans defeated those who worshipped him, Soranus was identified with Apollo, who took over his shrine under the guise of Apollo Soranus, although Soranus' female partner, Ferronia, was incorporated into the Roman pantheon on her own.

**Consort:** Ferronia

**See also:** *Apollo; Ferronia* and the Glossary entry for *Identification*

## **Sphinx**

The sphinx has the body of a lion but the head of another species, usually but not always a human. Sphinxes may be male or female. They are aggressive, mysterious guardian spirits. *Sphinx* is a Greek word derived from a root meaning “strangler,” which may refer to the manner in which lions kill their prey. Whatever the Egyptians called the sphinx in their own language is now unknown.

The most famous sphinx in the world is Egypt’s sixty-five-foot-high Great Sphinx, known in Arabic as the Father of Fear. Many theories exist regarding the purpose, age, and even identity of the Great Sphinx. Sphinxes also appear in Greece from an early date. Greek sphinxes are winged. The second most famous sphinx in the world is the one that posed riddles on the road to Greek Thebes. The Greek sphinx is described as originally deriving from Ethiopia.

Sphinxes are ancient primeval spirits who guard and protect. They are a repository of secrets. (Big, mystical secrets; don’t bother the sphinx about mundane secrets.) Their powers are activated via their image. A personal sphinx may be requested to post guard over a home, building, store, or object. The request may be made via dreams, visualization, or shamanic journey. Alternatively or in addition, activate the image by speaking to it and making offerings of candles, water, and incense. Point the sphinx’s head in the direction from which danger threatens to arrive.

Sphinxes are beings of incredible might and power. They can transmit some of this power to their devotees, hence the age-old desire to place one’s own head on the sphinx’s body. Pharaohs, including Hatshepsut commissioned images of themselves as sphinxes. Sarah Bernhardt, famed French actress but also a sculptor, created a self-portrait in the form of a sphinx.

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Although many sphinxes are male, the sphinx is also identified with a kind of profoundly erotic female power. German Symbolist painter Franz Von Stuck’s 1901 painting “Sphinx” portrays a nude woman reclining in sphinx position. In addition to Sarah Bernhardt, other fin-de-siècle women who posed as sphinxes include author Colette and dancer Ida Rubenstein.

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*Perhaps inspired by his poem “The Sphinx,” the memorial marking Oscar Wilde’s grave in Paris’ Père Lachaise cemetery resembles a sphinx. It’s also been described as a “demonangel”, which may reveal something about the reactions evoked by the sphinx. The monument’s sculptor, Jacob Epstein, described it as a “Messenger of Beauty.”*

**Iconography:** Ancient images of sphinxes, Egyptian and Greek, abound. Among the *many* modern artists inspired by the sphinx are Gustave Moreau, Gustave Doré, Odilon Redon, Louis Welden Hawkins, Elihu Vedder, Fernand Khnopff, Leonor Fini, and Franz von Stuck.

**Sacred site:** The Great Sphinx at Giza, Egypt

**See also:** *Echidna; Lilith; Sekhmet*

## **Spirit Guides**

*Spirit Guide* is a modern term associated with Spiritualism, Spiritism, and Theosophy to describe the ancient concept that each person is attached to one or more spiritual beings. These beings serve as counselors and attempt to further the individual’s spiritual progression.

Based on this concept, every individual has spirit guides, whether or not they are aware of them. Those who believe in reincarnation perceive that the same guides accompany the individual through each incarnation. These guides come in all forms: they may be angels, animal allies, ancient root ancestors, deceased relatives, saints, spirits, or Biblical figures. They may or may not identify themselves to you. Spirit-volunteered identification usually occurs in dreams, but identities may also be ascertained through visualization, divination, or trance mediums. Spiritual churches advise that fasting and prayer will encourage spirit guides to identify themselves to you.

One may also accumulate additional spirit guides who may or may not be beneficial. Kindness, generosity, and loving behavior attract benevolent spirits. Fear, anger, violence, and envy can attract malevolent spirits who feed on these emotions and thus encourage them.

They can be banished by calling in more powerful spirits to drive them off, but it's also important to modify whatever emotions or conditions attracted them in the first place.

**See also:** *Ascended Masters; Caboclos; Hidden Company; Madama, La;*

## **Stella Maris**

### *Star of the Sea*

Stella Maris guards those who travel over the sea. She miraculously emerges when people are in trouble:

- She rises from the depths of the ocean.
- She hovers on a low cloud over the sea.
- She manifests on a rock amidst tempest-tossed waves.

The Stella Maris comforts those who are lost or frightened. She guides and protects sailors, mariners, and travelers. She prevents shipwrecks and drowning. For centuries, she has been the favorite goddess of sailors and frequent sea travelers.

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*Stella Maris guards against the literal dangers of sea travel, but she is also invoked to guide and protect travelers who navigate the stormy, tempestuous waters of life.*

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Exactly who is the Stella Maris? Good question. Stella Maris is not a name but an epithet belonging to various goddesses as well as the Virgin Mary. *Stella Maris* is Latin for “Star of the Sea,” but the same words are used as epithets for goddesses in many languages. Among those considered Stars of the Sea are Lady Asherah of the Sea, Isis, Kwan Yin, and Ma Zu.

**Iconography:** Stella Maris refers to Marian images depicting a serene, beautiful woman dressed in blue and white either emerging from the

sea, standing on a cloud that hovers over the sea, or mysteriously standing on a rock in the middle of a storm tossed sea. This image appears on chromolithographs, icons, religious medals, and on rosaries and statues. In addition to Mary, this same image is also used to represent Yemaya, Janaina, and La Sirène.

**Attribute:** A crescent moon-shaped anchor on which she stands.

**Planet:** Moon

**Colors:** Blue, white, crystal clear, and the colors of the sea

**Altar:** Decorate her altar with seashells, vessels of salt water, and marine and nautical imagery.

**See also:** *Asherah; Black Madonna; Isis; Janaina; Kwan Yin; Ma Zu; Sirène, La; Yemaya*

## **Strenia**

**Origin:** Italy (Sabine)

**Day:** 1 January

Strenia is the goddess of prosperity, abundance, pleasure, and new beginnings. Goddess of the New Year, Strenia presided over the gift-giving incorporated into Roman New Year's festivities. (This tradition of gift-giving was eventually transferred to Christmas.) Strenia is associated with sticks, boughs, and branches. The laurel boughs which are her emblem were known as *strenne*, but the word eventually came to mean all New Year's gifts. The sacred twigs carried in procession on the Via Sacra on the first day of January, Janus' month, were obtained from Strenia's grove.

Vestiges of rituals associated with Strenia survive in the Italian tradition of giving a New Year's gift of a calendar and some mistletoe: these gifts are called *strenne*. In France, New Year's gifts are called *etrennes*.

**Emblem:** Bay laurel boughs

**Tree:** Bay laurel

**Altar:** Decorate with bay laurel and palm branches hung with dates, figs, and gilded fruit. Don't forget the mistletoe!

**Offerings:** Give her nicely wrapped gifts.

**See also:** *Daphne; Janus; Saturn*

## Styx

**Origin:** Greece

In Greek mythology, the River Styx forms the boundary between the realms of the living and the dead, encircling Hades nine times. The goddess Styx is the spirit of that river. Styx, the eldest daughter of Oceanos and Tethy, is a goddess of death, oblivion, justice, and honesty. According to classical myth, Styx was among those gathering flowers with Persephone just before her abduction. According to an alternative myth, Styx and Zeus are Persephone's parents.

Styx is the guardian of oaths, an honor bestowed upon her because she and her children were the first spirits to support Zeus' reign. She is his loyal ally. If the Olympians fight or if one is suspected of lying, Iris is sent to fetch Styx. Iris alerts Styx when Olympian oaths are sworn by filling a vessel with cold water and letting it rain down on her rocky roof. Oaths were sworn on water drawn from the River Styx. Spirits who perjure themselves on Styx water fall into a coma that lasts a year, Sleeping Beauty style. Even after awakening, nine years of punishment follows. Only in the tenth year can their old position be reclaimed.

**Spirit allies:** Zeus and her children Bia, Nike, Cratos, and Zelos.

**Realm:** Styx, a solitary spirit, dwells in Hades in her own beautiful, private home set apart from those of the other residents of Hades. Her roof is formed of huge rocks.

**See also:** *Bia; Hades; Iris; Nike, Oceanid; Oceanos; Olympian Spirits; Persephone; Prometheus; Tethys; Titans; Zeus*



## Suijin

**Also known as:** Suiten; Mizu no Kamisama; Ame no Minakanushi

**Classification:** Kami

Suijin is the goddess of water and ruler of all spirits associated with water. She also has dominion over creatures that live in water, including fish, snakes, and eels. Like the rice deity, Inari, Suijin may manifest in female or male forms, although the female seems to be the older or original version. Suijin and Inari are often invoked together to provide and guard an abundant rice harvest. Suijin is also an agricultural goddess, as it's crucial to have just enough water. Suijin is invoked against storms, floods, and mudslides.

Suijin is involved with all forms of water, from oceans to ponds, rivers, and even stagnant pools on your lawn. She has dominion over water in your tap and the water in the sewer. Suijin is a gracious, benevolent spirit, invoked for safety when traveling on or in water. She protects against drowning and offers children special protection. Amulets bearing her name allegedly protect against shipwreck.

Water spirits are traditionally linked with human fertility, and Suijin is no exception. She has dominion over conception, pregnancy, and childbirth. Her blessings are invoked for easy, pain-free labor. Although many shrines are dedicated to Suijin, she is also a popular household spirit; the focal point of home altars.

**Favored people:** Those who catch or sell fish, farmers, women, children

**Festival:** 5 May

**Sacred site:** Shrines include Suitengu Shrine in Tokyo, where she is venerated alongside Benten.

**See also:** *Benten; Inari*

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*Suijin is also a blanket term referring to Japanese water spirits—benevolent, ambivalent, and otherwise. Suijin as a class includes any type of spirit*

*associated with water, including dragons, mermaids, and Kappa.*

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## **Sukunahiko**

*The Small Man of Renown; Short Man Spirit*

**Also known as:** Sukunahikona; Sukunahikona no Kami; Sukunahikona-no-mikota

**Classification:** Kami

One of the most powerful Japanese deities is about the size of Tom Thumb. Sukunahiko is the tiny kami who helped Okuninushi build Japan and create protections for people against illness and danger. Sukunahiko is a culture hero: he taught the arts of growing rice and brewing sake. He is the divine brewer. Those who manufacture or sell sake may consider themselves under his dominion. Sukunahiko created sewing and medicine. Beyond botanical herbalism, Sukunahiko invented the concept of manufacturing medications.

When Sukunahiko was ill, he was cured by treatment in healing hot springs. Now Sukunahiko rules *onsen*, Japan's many natural hot springs. (Japan is dotted with over one thousand of these natural thermal baths.) Sukunahiko is a healing deity but he also specifically has dominion over recuperation and recovery from illness.

Although originally a general healer, Sukunahiko has emerged as the gynecologist god. His specialties include:

- Fertility and conception
- Healing infertility
- Healing and preventing sexually transmitted diseases
- Healing illnesses of the reproductive region, including endometriosis
- Easy, uncomplicated childbirth
- Healthy babies

His medical specialty is reflected in the unique offerings made to him. Women first began offering him their underwear during the Edo period

(1603–1867) as part of their petition process. Women’s panties are attached to traditional wooden offering boards (ema boards) at his shrine in Awashima. The shrine also displays a huge collection of dolls, phallic symbols, and amuletic statues.

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*Sukunahiko is credited with saving Empress Jingu from shipwreck. He was enshrined on the island on which she landed. In gratitude, she enlarged his shrine. The two are now frequently venerated together.*

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**Favored people:** Women

**Manifestation:** Sukunahiko is so small, he slipped between his mother’s fingers. His clothes are made from the feathers of a wren.

**Attribute:** A boat made from a flowering vine pod, possibly either a type of *Ipomoea* (morning glory, sweet potato) or *Metaplexis japonica*, a type of twining milkweed

**Spirit ally:** Sukunahiko is frequently venerated alongside Empress Jingu; Okuninushi is his partner in creation.

**Offerings:** Underwear, Hina and other dolls, sewing needles, fine sake, incense, pilgrimage to his shrines

**See also:** *Awashima; Jingu, Empress; Kami; Okuninushi*

## Sulis

**Origin:** Celtic

Sulis is the presiding goddess of the natural hot springs of Bath, England. The springs and town were formerly known as Aquae Sulis: “the waters of Sulis.” Her name is related to a Celtic word for “sun” and in fact the waters are naturally very hot as if powered by the sun. Sulis’ waters are therapeutic. She is a goddess of healing as well as a spirit of justice and vengeance. Devotees invoked Sulis to punish those who had

done them wrong, especially thieves.

Sulis was resident at Bath long before the arrival of the Romans. Pigs are credited with discovering her healing waters. People found them lolling in the warm mud. Celts preferred to worship in natural settings and Sulis' first shrine was rustic. The Romans loved thermal baths. When they arrived in Britain, they embraced Sulis and her waters wholeheartedly. The Romans identified her with Minerva and, maybe as early as 65 CE, replaced her small shrine with a massive one featuring a Mediterranean-style temple. The natural springs were converted into an enormous enclosed pool.

Sulis' new shrine was patronized by an international clientele. It became an ancient pilgrimage and tourist destination. Over sixteen thousand coins have been found on-site, testifying to the varied origins of devotees including Celts, Greeks, Romans, and Romanized Britons.

Coins and other offerings were given to Sulis by throwing them into her reservoir, akin to the modern tradition of dropping coins in a wishing well. In addition to offerings, curse tablets were also commonly deposited in her waters. Curse tablets (Latin: *Defixiones*, from a verb meaning "to fix" as in the ominous threat, "I'm going to fix you!") are small sheets of lead or other soft, inexpensive metal inscribed with a message detailing the petitioner's desires and addressed to the spirit expected to fulfill them. The inscribed metal sheet was rolled up like a little scroll and thrown into watery depths from which they could not be retrieved. (Hence the spell could not be broken; the petition could not be revoked.) Sulis apparently provided justice for those who perceived themselves wronged or disenfranchised.

Other offerings included ex-votos. Amulets were created at the shrine and provided to the faithful. Molds for making amulets, including some resembling solar wheels, were found in her sanctuary.

**Planet:** Sun

**Element:** Water

**Animal:** Pig

**Sacred site:** Sulis' sacred spring at Bath is not merely a source of hot

water and healing but also a sacred portal where humans and spirits may communicate, hence its associations with curse tablets.

**Offerings:** She was offered ex-votos in the shape of parts of the body, especially breasts. It's believed that these amulets were worn during pregnancy, birth, and lactation and then donated to Sulis once the process had been successfully concluded. Offerings discovered at Bath also include *lots* of coins plus a pair of loaded dice.

**See also:** Coventina; Minerva; Sequana; Sirona

## Supay

**Origin:** Bolivia

**Also known as:** El Tio (“The Uncle”)

Supay is the spirit of Bolivia’s mines and patron of miners. He is the master of mineral seams and can bestow or withhold wealth and success. He gives minerals as gifts or hides them. He can provide safety or cause accidents; he can lead someone out of the mine or cause them to become hopelessly lost. Supay causes and prevents mine tunnel collapse.

He is an ancient, local deity who has been displaced above ground by Christianity. Miners do not invoke other deities or saints, at least not while in the mine, to avoid offending Supay and raising his wrath. Supay lives underground and resembles a red devil. Those who would like to suppress folk religion identify him as the devil, but his devotees do not consider him to be so. He is either referred to by name or as El Tio, “the uncle below ground.” (*El Tío* literally means “the uncle” in Spanish.)

Supay guards the mines and miners—providing they pay him his due. Supay considers what are called offerings to be payments. As landlord of the mines, Supay expects to be paid by those who hope to profit from them or who labor within. He protects those who make offerings but punishes those who do not. Supay is given daily offerings with larger, more lavish payments offered on the first and last Friday of each month. El Tio’s image is placed within a niche in a passageway within a mine so he can accept offerings directly. Supay must be honored in order to

escape his wrath and receive his protection.

Supay emerges from the mine to dance at the famous Carnival celebrations in Oruro, Bolivia. Supay's associations with Carnival began in the late eighteenth century, and he is now its star and main symbol. According to legend, El Tio lives underground in mines and caves. He only ventures out one day a year on Carnival Sunday, the day of temptation.

**Iconography:** Supay is envisioned as a red horned spirit with an erect phallus. Statues are crafted so that arms, hands, and mouth are open to directly accept offerings. Sometimes mouth and penis are linked by an inner tube so that liquids poured into Supay's mouth exit via his penis as if he's truly urinating.

**Consort:** China Supay

**Animals:** Alpaca, llama (beasts of burden that carry what's been removed from his mines)

**Time:** August, the month when miners traditionally buy their annual supplies and equipment. Supay is also celebrated at the Oruro Carnival, which begins the Saturday before Ash Wednesday and features a masked procession. Archangel Michael leads the opening parade, followed by Lucifer, who is accompanied by Supay.

**Offerings:** Candles, cigarettes, coca leaves, liquor

**See also:** *Michael; Pachamama; Supay, China*

## **Supay, China**

**Also known as:** Tía ("Auntie") and Awicha

**Origin:** Bolivia

China Supay is Supay's female counterpart and consort. She sometimes shares altars with her husband. They may be invoked together on behalf of the safety of miners. China Supay is considered with ambivalence. On one hand, like her husband, she is identified with the devil, on the other

she is also identified with the Virgin of the Assumption.

The term *China* (pronounced Chee-na) has different implications in different parts of Latin America. Although it may literally refer to a Chinese woman, China Supay is not Chinese; she's a local spirit. In Bolivia, *China* indicates a female or a servant woman but also has somewhat derogatory sexual implications. These implications are on full display during Carnival, where dancers don China Supay masks. China Supay was originally danced almost exclusively by transvestites until they were banned.

**Planet:** Moon

**Metal:** Silver (considered the moon's metal but also the metal actually extracted from these mines)

**Time:** The month of August (also associated with the Virgin Mary)

**Offerings:** Lumps of sugar (try absinthe sugar, crafted into the form of card suit symbols)

**See also:** *Malinche; Supay*

## Surem

**Origin:** Yaqui

The Surem are ancestral spirits of the Yaqui people, who are native to the Yaqui River Valley of Sonora, Mexico, but now also live in great numbers in Arizona. The Surem are small, peaceful, quiet beings who dislike noise, violence, and disharmony.

According to myth, one day a tree began speaking in a strange language. No one could communicate with the tree except for one very little girl who became the tree's translator. The tree warned of the coming of Europeans and foretold that in the future, a new, repressive religion would be imposed. The tree offered the people a choice: to stay and meet the future or to leave and avoid it. Those who chose to leave became the Surem, immortal spirits who live within hills or beneath the sea. Those who stayed behind became the Yaqui who, forewarned,

became bigger, stronger, and tougher in order to fight the anticipated Spanish invaders. In fact, the conquistador Diego de Guzman arrived in Yaquiland in 1533, exactly as the tree had foretold.

**Manifestation:** The Surem are ancestral spirits and allegedly can only be seen by the Yaqui or those of Yaqui ancestry. They are benevolent spirits who offer assistance when requested. They ride between realms on dragonflies.

**See also:** *Ancestors; Cihuacoatl*

## Susano'o

*The Raging Male; The Courageous Impetuous Male*

**Also known as:** Susanoo

**Origin:** Japan

**Classification:** Kami

Susano'o, Lord of Water, Storms, and Thunder, is Amaterasu's wild brother. It was his violence that sent Amaterasu fleeing to her cave. (See also: *Amaterasu*.) Simplified mythology books paint Susano'o as a "bad" spirit who creates havoc from sheer malice, but his actions stem from a commonly overlooked root reason. Susano'o is Amaterasu's rival for dominion over Japan and rulership of the kami.

There are different versions of exactly what precipitated the crisis: although Susano'o had dominion over the sea, he was jealous of Amaterasu and challenged her authority. An alternative version suggests a friendly competition gone wrong. The two had a contest to see which possessed greater fertility power. Although technically Susano'o won in terms of numbers, Amaterasu claimed victory based on interpretation of the value of what was created.

Outraged, Susano'o went on the rampage that led to Amaterasu retreating from the world. After Amaterasu emerged from her cave, her victory was confirmed. Susano'o was punished by being banished from the celestial regions. He came to live on Earth where, in another famous



myth, he rescues a young girl from an eight-headed dragon, then marries her and founds a dynasty. Susano'o pulled a sword from out of the dragon's belly or tail, which he eventually presented to Amaterasu as a reconciliation gift. That sword is one of the three treasures of Japan.

Susano'o is volatile, emotional, passionate, and prone to temper tantrums, but he is also generous, courageous, clever, and afraid of nothing. He is a great magician and a repository of occult knowledge. Susano'o is credited with inventing fermentation and alcoholic beverages (initially in order to sedate that dragon!). He is a powerful spirit and, as his legend testifies, invoked for fertility and abundance. Susano'o protects against epidemics, but he can also send them. Susano'o has access to the realm of death and some influence in that area.

**Spirit ally:** Susano'o is venerated alongside his son, Okuninushi.

**Sacred sites:** Susano'o is enshrined in Izumo, where he descended to Earth after being banished from Heaven. Izumo is the oldest shrine in Japan, second in importance only to Ise, where Amaterasu is enshrined. (He is enshrined elsewhere, too. It was traditional to build shrines to Susano'o to stave off epidemics.)

**See also:** *Amaterasu; Izanagi; Izanami; Kami; Lady Horsehead; Okuninushi; Tengu; Uzume*

## **Svantovit**

*Strong Lord*

**Origin:** Slavic

Svantovit, spirit of war and victory, was revered by Balts and Slavs alike and petitioned for abundance, protection, and military success. He is a spirit of prophecy. A sacred white horse, kept in his temple, served as Svantovit's oracle. The horse was led through lanes of upright spears. If he did not knock over any spears, the oracle was favorable. Svantovit also delivers oracles via divination dice. Post-Christianity, Svantovit was identified with Saint Vitus.

**Manifestation:** Svantovit has four faces, gazing in different directions.

**Attributes:** Drinking horn, bow and arrows, sword

**Sacred site:** Rügen Island in the Baltic Sea—Svantovit was venerated in the beech groves on the island.

**Offerings:** Beverages including mead and foods, including a special honey cake the size of a man

**See also:** *Herta*

## Svarog

**Also known as:** Swarog

**Origin:** Slavic

Svarog, Ruler of the Sun and Spirit of Fire, once headed the Slavic pantheon. A divine smith, Svarog forged the sun. He is literally a patriarch, considered the father of other Slavic deities. Svarog invented the concept of marriage. Post-Christianity, he was demoted to the status of fire demon, sometimes equated with Satan. Some of his old functions were assigned to Saint George.

**Favored people:** Smiths, metalworkers

**Manifestation:** Svarog is the fire in the forge and hearth. He is a shape-shifter who can assume any form. He's been known to appear with three heads. Favorite manifestations include his sacred creatures: bull, horse, gray wolf, and especially a falcon.

## Swan Goddesses

In *Swan Lake*, one of the world's most beloved ballets, women are transformed into swans by an evil, manipulative sorcerer. The story draws on distorted legends of Swan Goddesses, among the most primeval of all deities. They are spirits of northern climates and may have first emerged among the Finno-Ugric peoples (Finns, Saami, Hungarians) as

well as various indigenous Siberian groups. Swans fly and these goddesses may have migrated to play prominent roles in Russian, Scandinavian, Balkan, and Celtic mythology, among others. (Alternatively, Swan Goddesses are innately an international phenomeon.)

As in that ballet, Swan Goddesses shape-shift, sometimes appearing as beautiful women clothed in white or black and sometimes appearing in the form of swans. Even as women, they may wear sleeves evoking swans' wings. Abundance, good fortune, and fertility spill from these sleeves. (Priestesses perhaps channeling these goddesses did indeed wear dresses with sleeves like this. Sleeves were normally kept pinned up, but during ritual dances, these excessively long sleeves were released to billow and fall beneath the women's fingers.) Any swan might be a Swan Goddess in disguise, so tremendous taboos existed regarding killing swans. Alternatively any woman might be a Swan Goddess in disguise. In many Siberian cultures, swans traditionally represent women. In the mythology of the Northern Voguls, swans were originally human but even in avian form, still menstruate like women.

Swan Goddesses are spirits of life and death. They are the original White Ladies. Many are psychopomps, death goddesses, traveling between realms of the living and the dead. They control the migration of birds and provide abundance and good fortune. They are mistresses of transformation who can help devotees become who they wish to be. Among those spirits classified among the Swan Goddesses are Valkyries, Vila, and Tündér.

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*Swan Goddesses may also be Goose Goddesses. The ancients didn't necessarily distinguish between these two large, aggressive water birds. The origins of Mother Goose may lie among Swan Goddesses.*

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Swan maidens are subject of legend, lore, and ballads. The English ballad "Polly Von" may recall vestigial memories of transforming swan maidens. (There is a recording by the folk trio Peter, Paul and Mary.)

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*According to Yakut mythology, swans are the sacred birds and messengers of a very beautiful goddess named White Bird who lives in a stone house at the top of the world. White Bird dresses in white. Every spring, she travels to a cliff opposite the Yenisei River and shakes dust out of her long sleeves, which then transforms into migratory birds. Every fall, the birds return to her and transform back into dust for safekeeping.*

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**See also:** *Aphrodite; Caer Ibormeith; Graeae; Kaltes; Laimos; Norns; Psychopomp; Sirens; Tündér; Valkyrie; Vila; White Lady*

## Sybil

**Also known as:** Sibyl

Sybil is a title used to designate a lineage of prophetesses, venerated for centuries. At least two Sybils are traditionally venerated as goddesses. Others serve as spirit guides. They may also be approached in dreams and visualizations in order to obtain specific information not available from other sources or standard channels.

The Sybils were seers whose prophecies were written down and stored. Sybils lived in different locations and prophesied in different languages, although they seem to have been part of a linked international sisterhood. Predictions were written in Greek, Hebrew, Latin, and hieroglyphics—and possibly other languages, too. Sometimes prophecies were written in real books; sometimes they were written on palm leaves, which would be blown about by winds. The Sybils' prophecies were oblique, sometimes featuring word games.

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*The name Sybil is etymologically related to Kybele, an oracular goddess whose name is sometimes pronounced Sib-ill-ee. The earliest Sybils may have been her priestesses. The names Sybil and Kybele both refer to caves or caverns. The Cumaean Sybil, most famous of the Sybils, did, in fact, inhabit a*

*cave.*

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Very little information survives regarding the Sybils. We know what they did, but we don't know what they believed or even whether Sybils in different locations shared the same spiritual orientation. The earliest reference to a Sybil dates from approximately 1200 BCE from what is now modern Turkey. Their prophetic texts are now almost entirely lost: Rome's *Sibylline Books* were deliberately destroyed during the transition to Christianity as state religion.

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*Michelangelo included five Sybils among the figures he painted on the Sistine Chapel ceiling, although he used men as models for their bodies.*

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At least ten historical Sybils and their locations have been identified, among them:

- The Apennine Sybil
- The Cimmerian Sybil
- The Cumaean Sybil
- The Eritrean Sybil
- The Sybil of the Hellespont
- The Libyan Sybil
- The Persian Sybil
- The Samian Sybil
- The Tiburtine Sybil

#### **THE CUMAEAN SYBIL**

The Cumaean Sybil is the only one for whom archaeological evidence currently exists and also the one with the most mythic information. In approximately 525 BCE, an elderly woman appeared in Rome requesting

to see King Tarquin. She offered to sell him nine books containing the world's destiny for three hundred pieces of silver. He dismissed her as a crank. She returned later, offering to sell him six books for the same price. Again, he dismissed her. When she returned the third time, offering three books for three hundred pieces of silver, Tarquin finally took a look at her wares. He realized that they were the real thing, immediately paid the asking price and asked for the other books, too. She laughed at him, told him that she had burned them, and vanished into thin air.

The three surviving books, known as the *Sibylline Books* or *Sibylline Prophecies* became Rome's most heavily guarded treasure. Stored in a stone chest beneath the Temple of Jupiter on the Capitoline Hill, they were consulted only in emergencies and before momentous decisions. Even high priests were forbidden to read them without express permission from the Senate. Anyone who attempted was sewn into a sack, and thrown into the Tiber River. The Romans sent messengers to Sybils in other locations in attempts to reproduce the information contained in the six lost books.

The mysterious book-seller eventually re-emerged in Cumae (now modern Cuma) near the Bay of Naples. She lived and prophesied in a cave on a red volcanic hill overlooking the sea. Her cave was cut into a trapezoidal form, a shape now acknowledged as most earthquake resistant. Windows were cut into the rock. The Sybil purified and prepared herself via bathing. She then dressed in ceremonial clothing, sat on her throne in her cave, and prophesied. She became famous and the subject of a pilgrimage. Visitors were admitted to see and inquire of her. Coins in the area were engraved with her emblem: a mussel shell.

Scholars theorize that over centuries, a series of women fulfilled the role of Sybil of Cumae although others consider that the Sybil who sold King Tarquin the books was immortal and thus the only Cumaean Sybil. Early Christians honored the Cumaean Sybil because it was rumored that she had foretold the birth of Christ but this tolerance was short-lived: the prophetess was eventually considered a witch. The Cumaean Sybil evolved into the witch-goddess Sibilla who engendered the wrath of the Inquisition. In 1912, archaeologists excavating caverns corresponding to her legend discovered an ancient tunnel nearly five hundred feet long

drilled through solid rock. (See also: *Sibilla*.)

#### THE SYBIL HEROPHILE

The Sybil Herophile derives from what is now modern Turkey, Kybele's country. She was the daughter of a mountain Nymph and a mortal father. Sybil Herophile was worshipped in conjunction with her mother in a tomb-shrine in a grotto with a spring. She was venerated alongside Hermes, Apollo, Demeter and various other Nymphs. Dedicatory inscriptions date from as late as the second century CE.

**See also:** *Apollo; Ceres; Demeter; Hermes; Kybele; Nymph; Sibilla; Spirit Guides*

## Sylvanus

*King of the Woodlands*

**Also known as:** Silvanus

Sylvanus, horned spirit of forests, groves, and wild fields, presides over boundaries, thresholds, and hedges. *Sylvanus* literally means "Forest Spirit" in Latin and is the name used by the Romans to describe one or more spirits they encountered in Northern Italy—and perhaps as far as Pannonia, an ancient trans-Danubian nation now part of modern Hungary. What is known of him derives from Roman writings. Whether he had other local names is now unknown, but he has been responding to Silvanus for centuries. The Romans compared him to Faunus. He also resembles Pan in that he, too, reputedly enjoys scaring lonely travelers.

Sylvanus is the spirit of the wild, flourishing forest, but unlike Faunus and Pan, Sylvanus is not exclusively a wilderness spirit. When his woodland was cleared and cultivated, he evolved into a spirit of fields. Sylvanus is the protector of herds and cattle. In medieval France, Silvanus was identified with Saint Amador, who is sometimes called Sylvanus.

**Manifestation:** He is described as a horned spirit resembling Faunus. Sylvanus is usually accompanied by three Nymphs, the Sylvanae.

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*Sylvanus may derive from the Etruscan spirit Selvans. The forest is Selvans' shrine: he possessed no temples, priests, or festivals. The subject of exclusively male veneration, he was worshipped in private.*

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**Iconography:** Images of the Green Man may be used to represent him.

**Attributes:** Pruning knife, sickle, and a pine bough

**Animals:** Wolf, stag

**Tree:** Pine

**Sacred site:** Sylvanus was venerated with Diana at a shrine in Nettleton Shrub, Wiltshire, in the mid-third century CE. Based on archaeological evidence, the shrine was a major pilgrimage site.

**Offerings:** First fruits of the season were offered to Sylvanus alongside meat and wine. These were exclusively male rituals; women were not permitted to witness sacrificial offerings made to Sylvanus.

**See also:** *Diana; Faunus; Green Man; Nymph; Pan*

## Syrena

**Origin:** Poland

**Classification:** Mermaid

Syrena is the mermaid guardian of the city of Warsaw. Syrena, which means “mermaid,” is the daughter of Baltyk, King of the Baltic Sea. Once, pursued by some fishermen, she swam quickly and desperately. When she finally felt safe, she surfaced to look around and get her bearings: she found herself at the mouth of the Vistula River and fell in love with the landscape. Since then it’s been her home. According to legend, it was she who first convinced people to found the city of Warsaw.

Syrena is the subject of many legends. A man who once saw her in the



river without getting a really good look presumed that she was a drowning woman, so he jumped in to save her. Syrena allowed him to carry her to shore. When he saw her tail, he realized his error and gently carried her back to the water. Syrena was so amused and touched by his consideration that she rewarded him with a lifetime of wealth and good fortune. She is the emblem of the city.

**Manifestation:** Syrena is usually a classical mermaid: a woman above the waist and a fish below. However she is sometimes described as being half woman and half water snake similar to the earliest incarnations of Ezili and Mami Waters.

**Iconography:** Syrena appears on Warsaw's coat of arms. Statues of the mermaid appear throughout the city. She has also appeared on Polish stamps. An older version of Warsaw's coat of arms displayed an armed male dragon. It's theorized that this is Syrena's father or another close relative.

**Attributes:** Sword and shield

**Element:** Water

**Offerings:** Herb or fruit infused Polish vodka, Polish fruit brandy and Polish pastries, as well as jewelry, hand mirrors; hair combs and ribbons.

**See also:** *Ezili; Mami Waters; Mermaid; Siren; Sirène, La*

## Szélanya

*The Wind Mother*

**Pronounced:** *Sail-ah-nya*

**Origin:** Hungary

*Szélanya* literally means "Mother of the Winds" or "Wind Mother". *Szélanya* is the wind, but she is also the goddess who controls the winds. *Szélanya* stores and guards the winds in a cave at the top of a tall mountain at the end of the world. It's very important not to offend her because if she feels slighted, she releases violent storm winds. To some

extent, the winds mirror her moods. When Szélanya is feeling placid, so is the weather.

Post-Christianity Szélanya was demoted to a witch goddess however traditions survived in the guise of superstitions. It was considered dangerous to curse the wind or to refer directly to Szélanya using derogatory words for *witch*. Whirlwinds contain witches, according to a common belief in Central and Eastern Europe. Thus it became traditional to slash or cut a whirlwind (or any strong wind) with an ax or knife so as to weaken, frighten, or harm the witch within. Hungarian folk wisdom strongly advises *against* this practice, as it enrages Szélanya, raising her hackles and hence the winds.

Weather witches may consider Szélanya their goddess. She is invoked when you require a strong wind or when you need existing winds to lessen in intensity. She can send powerful cleansing winds when needed or can keep the air very still. She may also be invoked when winds of change are in order.

**Manifestation:** Szélanya usually manifests as an elderly lady, but she can also literally appear as wind.

**See also:** *Feng Popo; Samovila; Samovili*

## Szépasszony

**Pronounced:** *Sayp-uh-sohn-ye*

There is no fury like a goddess scorned. Szépasszony is a pre-Christian Hungarian love goddess now demoted to a beautiful but dangerous witch spirit. Her true name has been suppressed. *Szépasszony*, a euphemism, literally means “beautiful woman” in Hungarian. Spirit of romance, fertility, birth, and death, Szépasszony is a water goddess, associated with storms and rain.

Post-Christianity, she developed a malevolent reputation as a femme fatale, a dangerous, tempestuous demon, accused of fatally luring away children, similar to Hans Christian Andersen’s Snow Queen. Ailing children are described as nursing at her breast. It is unclear how much of this is true and how much is fear-mongering and defamation intended to

discourage veneration. Alternatively, Szépasszony is violently furious at the loss of her veneration. She may form alliances with those who love and respect her.

Her gifts, if she chooses to give them, are beauty, romance, and intoxicating ecstasy. Szépasszony is an authority on love spells and potions. She is invoked to find one's true love. Szépasszony adores dancing and rain and ventures out to dance in storms. Considered responsible for hail and white winter storms, Szépasszony is a sorceress who uses water as the primary ingredient in spells. Watch out for standing puddles: they are her magical tricks, laid down to ensnare victims. Those who walk through puddles, then catch cold and die are perceived as bewitched by Szépasszony. She is held responsible for any life-threatening ailment perceived as caused or aggravated by inclement weather. Szépasszony may be invoked to heal such illnesses, too.

**Manifestation:** Szépasszony is a true White Lady, very fair-skinned with long silver-white hair; her dresses are incandescent white.

**Color:** White

**Element:** Water

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*References in the trial testimony of Erzsébet Báthory (1560–1614), the so-called Blood Countess, suggest that she may have venerated Szépasszony. Some of the murders she is alleged to have committed are also reminiscent of the goddess. Countess Báthory forced some of her young female victims to strip naked while standing outside in freezing weather. Ice water was thrown over them and they were left to freeze to death.*

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**Sacred sites:**

- Cropped grass circles surrounded by taller grass mark her dance floors. It's considered bad manners (and dangerous!) to venture inside unless invited by the Szépasszony (and maybe even then).

- Szépasszony Valley in Eger, Hungary's wine country, allegedly the center of her veneration prior to Christianity, is lush, fertile land, suggesting that once upon a time she wasn't always such a chilly goddess. It is now prime tourist terrain.

**Tree:** Alder

**Offerings:** White flowers, clear crystals, gifts that sparkle; serve her white Eger wine.

**See also:** *Boldog Asszony; Demon; White Lady*

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### **Tabiti**

**Origin:** Scythian; Sarmatian

Scythian and Sarmatian women may have been the legendary Amazons—mounted, armed women warriors. Tabiti was venerated by these nomadic cultures who traversed a wide swathe of Europe and Asia on horseback. They left no writing, and very little is now known about them. Much of what is known is based on interpretation of artifacts, including their incredibly beautiful, finely wrought gold jewelry in the form of stylized animals. Tabiti is the Lady of the Beasts, guardian of animals. She is a fire goddess, lady of the hearth. Some scholars theorize that when her people stopped riding, Tabiti went to live in a little hut deep in a Russian birch forest where she eventually emerged as Baba Yaga.

**Manifestation:** Tabiti may be a woman or a half-woman, half-snake. She has long hair, possibly flame red.

**Iconography:** Tabiti is portrayed in the company of beasts.

**Planet:** Sun

**Bird:** Raven

**Animal:** Dog

**Element:** Fire

**See also:** *Ares; Baba Yaga; Bendis; Lady of the Beasts*

### **T'ai Shan, Lady Of**

*Princess of the Azure Clouds; Holy Mother; Green Jade Mother; Daughter of*

## *Heaven; Daughter of the Mountain*

**Also known as:** Bixia Yuanjin

**Origin:** China

Bixia Yuanjin, Lady of T'ai Shan, currently among the most popular Taoist goddesses, is the daughter of the Lord of T'ai Shan. She presides over conception, pregnancy, and childbirth, bestowing fertility to those who are lacking. Women and men make pilgrimages to her temples to petition for children.

**Favored people:** The Lady of T'ai Shan is guardian of women. She shows special favor to women who wish to be grandmothers and thus seek fertility for their children.

**Manifestation:** A beautiful woman wearing a headdress formed from three birds with outstretched wings; she also manifests as a fox or a star.

**Spirit allies:** She is usually accompanied by an entourage of spirits, including the Lady Who Brings Children who always carries a child, the Fecundity Lady, the Lady Who Favors the Start of Pregnancy, the Princess Who Mysteriously Nourishes and Strengthens the Shape of the Embryo, the Lady Who Activates Birth, and others. These attendants may also be petitioned for fertility independently, particularly the Fecundity Lady.

**Star:** The Lady of T'ai Shan is a small red star within the constellation Leo.

**Animal:** Fox

**Time:** The Lady of T'ai Shan, Spirit of Dawn, embodies the birth of each day.

**Sacred site:** T'ai Shan, in Shantung province, highest and most sacred of China's five sacred mountains, is covered with shrines and inscriptions. There are sacred paths with shrines and statues of the Daughter of the Mountain. The Lady of T'ai Shan has a great temple just before the summit.

**Feast:** The most popular pilgrimage to T'ai Shan is on the eighth day of the fourth month of the Chinese calendar. Although anyone and everyone may make the pilgrimage, it is traditional for women wishing to become grandmothers to do so on behalf of their fertility-challenged daughters. This is the traditional ritual; however, the Chinese government has periodically suppressed aspects, such as the burning of spirit money:

- Devotees eat only a spartan meal in the morning: no flesh, garlic, onions, or alcohol.
- Having rinsed out the mouth, devotees enter the Temple of the Lady, prostrating before her altar.
- Burn incense and spirit money.
- Bow once again before the altar and make your personal plea. The shrine guardian traditionally strikes musical stones to draw the Lady's attention.
- A cord is passed around the neck of her statue in supplication.
- Those desiring children may remove ex-voto offerings of baby shoes from the altar. If prayers for children are fulfilled, return these baby shoes or better ones.

**Offerings:** Incense, flowers, baby shoes, pilgrimage to her mountain, protection of foxes, needy women, and children

**See also:** *Green Jade Mother; T'ai Shan, Lord of* and the Glossary entry for *Spirit Money*

## **T'ai Shan, Lord Of**

*Emperor of the Eastern Peak*

**Origin:** China

The Lord of T'ai Shan is the presiding spirit of T'ai Shan in Shantung Province, the tallest and most sacred of China's five sacred Taoist mountains. (There are also four sacred Buddhist Mountains.) He is the landlord even if his daughter, the Lady of T'ai Shan is the most beloved

and popular spirit associated with the mountain.

The Lord of T'ai Shan married the Jade Emperor's sister, now called the Green Jade Mother. The Jade Emperor is his brother-in-law. The Jade Emperor and the Green Jade Mother first emerged on T'ai Shan, from whence they ruled Earth. Eventually, she wed the spirit of the mountain who rose to great prominence. The Lord of T'ai Shan has dominion over life and death. He controls ghosts. After death, souls journey to Mount T'ai. The Lord of T'ai Shan may or may not be the alter ego of the Taoist King of Hell, who governs the eighteen levels of Hell. That may or may not be his face on Bank of Hell spirit money notes.

**Day:** His birthday on the twenty-eighth day of the third month of the Chinese lunar calendar

**Sacred site:** Dai Temple in Tai'an, gateway city to Mount T'ai. The temple is traditionally a pilgrimage stop on the way up the mountain.

**Offerings:** Immense candles; excellent wine; rare, expensive incense; silver and gold foil; lavish feasts featuring whole ducks, chickens, geese, goats, and pigs

**See also:** *Green Jade Mother; Jade Emperor; Kings of Hell; T'ai Shan, Lady of;* and the Glossary entry for *Spirit Money*

## Tamatori-Hime

**Origin:** Japan

Tamatorihime, literally "Princess Tamatori" is the ama goddess. Ama are traditional Japanese divers, usually pearl divers but these deep sea divers famed for their amazing breath control also scour the deep for seafood or other treasures. Ama are almost exclusively female.

Once upon a time, a Chinese emperor sent a precious jewel as a gift to a Japanese noble. It fell overboard and was lost at sea. This was a tremendous financial loss as well as a source of humiliation for the emperor. Tamatorihime, then a mortal pearl diver, determined to recover the missing jewel.



She dove into the sea and located the gem, however retrieving it was no easy task. Anything that falls into the sea may be interpreted as tribute for the Dragon Kings of the Sea or at least that's how they interpret it. Ryujin, Japanese King of the Sea, claimed the gem as his own. When Tamatorihime attempted to retrieve it, he pursued her. She was fast but no match for the furious dragon.

Just before he caught her, Tamatorihime recalled a legend: dragons can only take things from the living. They can remove nothing from a corpse. She plunged her knife into her breast, tucked the precious gem within and floated to the surface. The jewel was delivered to its proper owner and the kami, so touched by Tamatorihime's self-sacrifice, decided to grant her immortality and welcomed her into their ranks.

That's the most famous version of her myth but there are variations. In some, Tamatorihime marries a prince and has a child before she sacrifices her life. She is venerated as an ancestral spirit as well as a goddess.

**Favored people:** Divers

**Iconography:** Tamatorihime and her myth are favorite tattoo topics.

**Offerings:** Japanese seafood dishes, flowers, incense and tattoos of her image.

**See also:** *Dragon Kings of the Sea; Kami; Ryujin*

## **Tammuz**

**Also known as:** Dumuzi

Inanna-Ishtar took Tammuz, the divine shepherd, as her lover. He quickly became her favorite, and she honored him above all others. Their love affair is the subject of sacred hymns. Following her resurrection, Inanna-Ishtar was permitted to leave captivity in the Realm of Death *if* she sent someone back to replace her. Returning to her palace, she anticipated her reunion with Tammuz, whom she assumed would be weeping and mourning for her. Instead she discovered him seated on her throne, enjoying the luxuries of her palace. Any guesses as

to who she chose as her replacement?

Tammuz fled but Inanna-Ishtar pursued. He did not wish to die. His devoted sister Gestinanna fought on his behalf, eventually negotiating a deal in which she serves half his time annually while Tammuz is permitted to return to life.

Tammuz is considered the prototype of the dying and resurrecting grain deity. He is compared to Persephone, a force of nature that refuses to stay dead, although disappearing into the depths of Earth annually. After his descent into darkness, Inanna-Ishtar wept bitterly for his loss, beginning the annual sacred ritual of weeping for Tammuz. This ritual was still honored centuries later and had been incorporated into folk Judaism as the Bible complains. Ezekiel 8:14 recounts the prophet's vision of Jewish women mourning for Tammuz at the gate of King Solomon's Temple: "He brought me to the entrance of the Gate of the House of the Lord ... and behold! There sat women weeping for Tammuz".

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*Tammuz, sometime chthonic spirit, is among those deities invoked in the magic spells of the Magical Papyri of Alexandria.*

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**Attribute:** Lapis lazuli flute

**Animals:** He owns black dogs; he is compared to a wild bull.

**Color:** Red

**Day:** Ritual mourning for Tammuz begins annually with the Summer Solstice.

**Month:** The Hebrew lunar month Tammuz, named in his honor, corresponding in time to the zodiac sign Cancer; the corresponding month in the Turkish calendar is Temmuz.

**See also:** *Adonis; Chthonic Spirits; Ereshkigal; Gestinanna; Inanna-Ishtar; Nergal*

## Tanit

*Lady of Carthage; Queen of the Stars; Face of Baal; She Who Nourishes; The Foster Mother; Serpent Lady; Lady of the Moon and Stars*

**Origin:** Carthage (modern North Africa, centered in Tunisia)

Tanit, the celestial queen, is the goddess of stargazers and astrologers. A goddess of fertility and abundance, Tanit was the supreme spirit of Carthage, the North African Phoenician nation now most renowned for its hero Hannibal. Tanit's almost two-thousand-year-reign lasted from the ninth century BCE through the Roman conquest, only finally eradicated by Islam, although rumors of surviving vestiges of her worship among Amazigh (Berber) mountain tribes periodically surface.

Tanit was an international goddess. Her veneration spread to Phoenician colonies in what are now Malta, Sardinia, and Spain. Septimus Severus (11 April 146–4 February 211 CE), the first Roman Emperor born in North Africa introduced the worship of Tanit to Rome.

There is debate as to whether Tanit is a Phoenician importation or an indigenous Amazigh (Berber). It's possible that she's both. Tanit may be an Amazigh goddess who was identified as Astarte by the Phoenicians. Tanit may also be another name for Neith.

- The Romans identified Tanit with Juno Caelestis.
- Tanit may hide behind the mask of Spain's Black Madonna of El Puig.

**Favored people:** Astrologers, stargazers, Berbers, or those with ties to North Africa

**Manifestation:** Tanit is a beautiful bejeweled woman. She usually wears long earrings and a necklace.

**Iconography:** A Punic stele depicts her wearing a triangular garment bearing cornucopias in each hand, from which flow pomegranates and grapes. A third or fourth century BCE statue found in Ibiza, Spain, portrays her as a crowned, enthroned woman holding a dove.

**Attributes:** Full or crescent moon, ears of wheat, cornucopia of fruit

**Consort:** Ba'al Hammon

**Symbol:** She is represented by a geometric symbol resembling a circle atop an upward-facing triangle, the two shapes separated by a horizontal line. Her symbol adorns many Carthaginian grave markers.

**Amulet:** The hand-shaped amulet now called a hamsa or Hand of Fatima was once called the Hand of Tanit.

**Time:** Night

**Color:** Blue

**Planet:** Moon

**Creatures:** Doves, Snakes, Dolphins, Fish **Plants:** Wheat, Figs, Pomegranates

**Sacred sites:**

- The Tophet, near Tunis—her sanctuary is long rumored to be the site of child sacrifices. However although the burial site was located, it's impossible to determine *how* the babies and young children died. An opposing theory suggests that the rumors are defamation and that the Tophet was a graveyard especially devoted to children who may have died of many causes during this era of high infant and child mortality.
- The ruins of Tanit's temple at Kerkouane, Tunisia.
- The Church of El Puig, Spain, is built atop her old shrine.

**See also:** *Anat; Astarte; Ba'al; Ba'al Hammon; Black Madonna of Regla; Juno; Neith*

## Tanuki

**Origin:** Japan

**Classification:** Yokai

The Tanuki, also known as the Raccoon Dog or Japanese Badger (*Nyctereutes procyonoides*), is usually described as a member of the canine family that more closely resembles a raccoon. Its genus

*Nyctereutes* means “Night Wanderer,” an appropriate name for the mischievous, shape-shifting spirits also called Tanuki. Tanuki are a type of East Asian mammal *and are* also a type of spirit who most commonly takes the form of that animal. (Other than their form, Tanuki spirits have little in common with the mammal. Information in this encyclopedia entry refers only to the spirits.)

Tanuki are tricky, gluttonous, and greedy but rarely malevolent. (There’s always an exception: Tanuki may be hostile to hunters. There are occasional tales of Tanuki smothering hunters beneath their huge scrotum.) They are sacred clowns who love sexual humor. They amuse themselves and others with their huge scrotum: draping it like a robe, using it as an umbrella, and most famously stretching it out like a drum and beating it. (Take a close look at images of Tanuki beating drums—they may not actually be drums.) Tanuki are shamanic spirits. Allegedly their drumming produces a hypnotic effect.

Tanuki are often classified together with Fox Spirits. They are also skilled shape-shifters but less inclined to possess. Rare cases of Tanuki possession may be treated at Inari shrines or by Inari shamans.

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*Tanuki Udon is a hearty noodle soup topped with deep-fried tempura batter, delicious but also an excellent hangover remedy (hence the association with Tanukis).*

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What a Tanuki spirit loves most is going out drinking. Tanukis carouse all night. Even when they run out of money, which they do quickly, they don’t wish to end their good times, so they carry around account books or promissory notes with which to run up bar tabs that they have no intention of ever paying. Magicians, they transform leaves into cash to buy sake. The money transforms back into its true, worthless form as soon as the Tanuki has left the establishment.

Tanuki are highly skilled at finding others to buy their drinks. They latch on to crowds and steer them toward their favorite bars and

restaurants. Once completely soused, they persuade someone to take them to a noodle shop to buy them food. Images of Tanuki are kept in bars and restaurants because of the Tanuki's legendary ability to draw a crowd. The Tanuki may never pay a bill, but he will bring lots of other customers who will.

Tanuki also draw abundance towards individuals. They serve as guardian spirits: in this capacity, their images may be posted at the front door. A Tanuki is a vigilant guardian spirit in *Snake Agent*, published in 2005, the first in author Liz Williams' series of Inspector Chen mystery novels.

**Favored people:** Restaurateurs; tavern, inn, and bar keepers; noodle shop owners

**Manifestation:** The Tanuki is its true form, but it can take others as desired. A favorite form is a Buddhist priest. A famous story involves a Tanuki transformed into a tea kettle.

**Iconography:** Like Maneki Neko and Nang Kwak, the Tanuki's benevolent powers are accessed through their images. Tanuki statues are traditionally placed at the entrance of restaurants, bars, and noodle shops to magnetically attract customers. Tanuki statues come in all sizes—from inches tall to the size of a person. Tanuki animals walk on four legs, but Tanuki spirits are always depicted upright. The traditional Tanuki statue has a big conical straw hat and a pot belly. Modern statues are sometimes sanitized and no longer have the huge scrotum or the barely visible itty-bitty penis that characterizes older statues. The scrota are not intended as sexual but as fun and lucky. (The Tanuki is not a fertility spirit.) Tanuki scrota are called golden balls and attract goodluck. A statue without them is less powerful. Statues of female Tanuki exist but are less common. How will you know she's a girl? Tanuki walk around naked except for their hats. One look at the genitals reveals all.

**Attributes:** A rake to sweep up wealth for devotees, an account book for the bar tab, a promissory note that will never be paid, a cup or drinking gourd (some Tanuki statues have actual cups so offerings may be made directly), a staff to lean on when the Tanuki gets loaded

**Offerings:** Sake! More sake! Another round! Tanuki Udon or other Japanese noodle dish if you think your Tanuki needs some solid food.

**See also:** *Fox Spirits; Inari; Maneki Neko; Nang Kwak; Neko-Mata; Okame; Yokai*

## Tara (1)

**Origin:** India

Tara is the preeminent Tibetan Buddhist female spirit, but before she was a Buddhist deity, Tara was an Indian goddess. In India, Tara is a Tantric goddess, possibly originally a tribal goddess. She is fierce, not serene like Tibet's Tara. Tara roams forests and battlefields, often in the company of Shiva.

India's Tara is Lady Wisdom. She bestows sacred and mundane knowledge. She instills literary talent and teaches palmistry and astrology among other skills. Tara protects against danger, disasters, violence, and illness. She performs feats of healing and fulfills all desires.

**Manifestation:** Tara is young, small, and although not pregnant has a big belly (considered a sign of power). She wears her locked, matted long hair in a bun, ornamented with Rudraksha beads and skulls. Eight snakes entwine her body.

**Spirit ally:** Shiva

**Number:** Eight

**Tree:** Rudraksha

**Offering:** Menstrual blood; incense

**See also:** *Shiva; Tara (2)*

## Tara (2)

*Queen of Compassion; Mother of All Buddhas; The One Who Saves*

**Also known as:** Dolma; Drolma; Do'ma

**Classification:** Buddha; Bodhisattva; Yidam

Tara is a Buddha, Bodhisattva, and Tibet's preeminent goddess. She is the most beloved member of the Tibetan pantheon, the miraculous savior who rescues from suffering. Call on Tara when you need assistance right now! She is the goddess of immediate assistance. Tara vows to carry devotees safely across the oceans of danger.

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*Tara protects against wind, water, fire, snakes, elephants, vicious spirits, thieves, imprisonment, and the power of kings.*

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Tara eliminates dangers and disturbance caused by ghosts and spirits, but she doesn't just banish them. She brings the ghosts and spirits to enlightenment so that they become protectors. They will not be back to bother you because Tara transforms them into benevolent beings. Tara is a Buddha, a fully realized being who vowed to return to Earth continuously in the form of a female Bodhisattva. Her name derives from a Sanskrit root word meaning "to traverse" or "to cross over." Tara helps devotees cross over to immortality and enlightenment. *Tara* is also related to root words for "star" and "pupil of the eye."

According to legend, the Bodhisattva Avalokitesvara gazing down from Heaven was overwhelmed by the *endless* human suffering he witnessed. No matter how many people he saved, there were still more. Overwhelmed, in despair, two tears streamed down his face and transformed into two paths of Tara. The two Taras bolstered his courage, soothed his despair, and encouraged him not to give up but to persist.

- The peaceful white tear from Avalokitesvara's left eye is White Tara.
- The fierce green tear from Avalokitesvara's right eye is Green Tara.

Green and White Tara are Avalokitesvara's companions. The two devout Buddhist wives of Songtsen Gampo (died 649), the Tibetan king who first brought the Dharma to Tibet, are considered avatars of Tara:



- Green Tara is incarnate in Nepalese Princess Brikuti.
- White Tara is incarnate in Chinese Princess Wen-Ch'eng.

Tara brings devotees to spiritual enlightenment. In addition to protecting from danger, she heals all illnesses and provides fertility to those who wish to conceive.

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*Sacred images of Tara are known to spontaneously appear on bone, stone, and wood.*

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**Manifestation:** Tara has an unlimited number of forms. She appeared to the thirteenth-century Tibetan Buddhist sage Gotsangpa near the top of the Drolma-La Pass in the form of twenty-one wolves whose paw prints are still visible in the stone.

**Iconography:** Tara's image is found in virtually every temple and monastery in Buddhist Central Asia. She is a favorite subject of Tibetan Thangka paintings. Different goals are accomplished by meditating on Tara's various forms. (See below.)

**Sacred site:** Drolma-La Pass

**Mantra:** This is Tara's basic root mantra: *OM TARE TUTTARE TURE SVOHA!* (Pronounced: *OM TA-RAY TOO TA-RAY TOO-RAY SO-HA!*) It allegedly promotes longevity, provides healing and removes obstacles from your path.

**Offerings:** Feed animals, birds, and needy people, especially children (food for people should include fun stuff as well as nutritious: things like chocolate or candy to give joy and pleasure as well as sustenance.)

**See also:** *Avalokitesvara; Bodhisattva; Bragsrin-mo; Buddha; Khadiravani; Tara (1)* and the Glossary entries for *Avatar* and *Mantra*

There are various forms of Tara, each associated with a different color. Officially these are considered different aspects or paths of one Tara, but in terms of folk religion they may be considered distinct spirits. In some

cases (Blue or Red Tara, for instance) these spirits were originally independent goddesses who are now-identified with Tara. The most popular forms of Tara are Green Tara and White Tara. (See also: Glossary entries for *Identification* and *Path*.)

## **Tara, Black**

### *The Black Flame; The Camphor Flame*

Black Tara may be a wrathful form of Green Tara. She subdues and subjugates evil and vicious spirits, conquering all those who oppose or obstruct spiritual progress. Black Tara heals all illnesses stemming from spiritual or magical causes. Black Tara bestows invincible will on her devotees so they are able to achieve all goals, aspirations, and resolutions. This is a comparatively rare form of Tara.

- Black Tara and Dark Blue Tara are sometimes considered to be the same.
- Black Tara may be Ekajata, the Blue Sky Goddess, at night.

**Color:** Black or midnight blue

**See also:** *Ekajata; Tara, Blue; Tara, Green*

## **Tara, Blue**

### *Lady with One Braid*

Ekajata, fierce Lady of Heaven, was among the Bon Spirits subdued by Padmasambhava. He pierced her right eye and banished her until she agreed to serve the Dharma. Ekajata as Blue Tara is now considered a form of Tara.

Blue Tara spreads joy and happiness. She transmutes negative emotions into positive. She is the Tara of protection who does more than just banish enemies: she removes your fear of them, too. Blue Tara clears away obstacles that obstruct her devotees' spiritual (and other) paths. She is a spirit of opportunity and good fortune. Blue Tara protects secret

mantras: her own is known only to initiates.

**Iconography:** Blue Tara may be portrayed with up to twelve heads. She wears a necklace of skulls, a tiger skin, and flayed human skin. She wears the image of Blue Buddha Akshobya in her hair.

**Attributes:** Arrow, ax, bell, book, bow, chalice, conch, hook, knife, noose, skull cup, staff, sword, and vajra chopper

**Spirit ally:** Blue Tara sometimes serves Khadiravani.

**Color:** Blue

**Flower:** Blue lotus

**Animal:** Blue wolf

**See also:** *Bon Spirits; Buddha; Ekajata; Khadiravani; Padmasambhava; Palden Lhamo; Tara (1); Tara (2); Vajra*

## Tara, Green

**Also known as:** Drolma

Green Tara is the active, dynamic manifestation of Tara. Green Tara is traditionally considered the original Tara. She brings joy and grants wishes. She eliminates suffering, fear, anxiety, and negative thoughts. She is a healer and provides fertility for devotees. She is the spirit of compassionate action. She is the miraculous savior who protects and rescues from the eight dangers and disasters:

- Lions and pride
- Elephants and delusion
- Fire and hatred
- Snakes and envy
- Thieves and fanaticism
- Prisons and greed
- Water (floods, storms, drowning) and lust

- Demons and doubt

**Manifestation:** Green Tara usually manifests as a young girl with dark green skin.

**Iconography:** Green Tara sits on a lotus throne supported by Nagas. Beyond color, she is distinguished from White Tara as she is usually portrayed with her right foot advanced and poised as if she were just about to rise up.

**See also:** *Nagas; Tara (1); Tara (2); Tara, White*

## **Tara, Orange**

### *The Liberator*

Orange Tara is the goddess of liberation. She liberates devotees from desire and negative emotions, which obstruct the path of enlightenment. Orange Tara provides literal liberation, too. She is invoked by prisoners and those suffering from any kind of confinement, whether actual or metaphoric. She may be invoked for liberation from hell zones and the prison of your own mind. Orange Tara is a midwife spirit:

- She liberates the baby from the womb during childbirth.
- She liberates the human soul after death.

Orange Tara is a comparatively rare form of Tara.

## **Tara, Red**

*See Kurukulla.*

## **Tara, White**

*Healing Tara*

**Also known as:** Drolma Karpo

White Tara is beautiful, serene, and peaceful, just like the moon. She offers peace and prosperity, good fortune and sturdy health. White Tara heals illness, removes obstacles from the paths of devotees, and provides longevity. Meditating on her image is a conduit for healing and extending the life span. She provides assistance and support during difficult pregnancies.

In Tibet, White Tara is associated with the seventh-century Tang Dynasty Chinese Princess Wen Ch'eng, wife of Tibetan King Songtsen Gampo.

**Iconography:** White Tara is portrayed seated on the moon and a lotus rising from a lake. Her moon-white skin radiates an aura of light. She may have dark blue hair. The full moon forms her aura. Her right hand forms the gesture (mudra) of generosity while her left holds a lotus.

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*White Tara has seven eyes: three in her face and one in each palm and sole. The Seven Eyes of Wisdom enable her to see suffering, pain, anguish and despair in all realms of existence and to heal and eliminate them.*

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**Attribute:** Book resting on lotus

**Flower:** White lotus

**Mantra:** OM TARE TUTARE TURE MAMA AYUR JANA PUNTIN KURU SOHA

White Tara's mantra provides healing, wisdom, longevity, and merit.

**See also:** *Mae Thoranee; Tara (2); Tara, Green*

## **Tara, Yellow**

*The Treasure Holder*

**Also known as:** Vasudhara; Vasundhara; Basundhara; Yasundhara; Nor-gyun-ma

Yellow Tara is the beautiful, tranquil spirit of abundance, fertility, and prosperity. She is the spirit of increase. Her consort is the lord of wealth. Yellow Tara is especially popular in Nepal. She is identified with Ganga and Lakshmi.

Yellow Tara bestows seven blessings:

1. Fertility
2. Wealth
3. Longevity
4. Happiness
5. Wisdom
6. Praise
7. Quality

**Manifestation:** Yellow Tara may manifest in the form of an extremely beautiful, saffron-robed mountain hermit or a bejeweled princess in silk (and sometimes a combination).

**Iconography:** Yellow Tara is portrayed with three faces and six arms. Two faces are red. Her center face is yellow, and her body is gold. She sits on a white moon and a pink lotus.

**Attributes:** Gold treasure vase, conch shell

**Consort:** Vaishravana, Guardian of the North (he may be Jambhala or Kubera)

**Color:** The spectrum of yellow and gold

**Mantra:** Her mantras include:

- *OM TUTTARE TURE PUSHTIM KURU OM* (Pronounced: *OM TOO-TAH-RAY-TOO-RAY-PUSH-TIMKOO-ROO OM*)
- *OM VASUDHARE SVOHA* (Pronounced: *OM VAHSOO-DAH-RAY SO-HA*)

**See also:** *Ganga; Jambhala; Kubera; Lakshmi; Oshun; Uma*

## Taungbyon Brothers

### *The Two Lords*

**Also known as:** Taungbyon Min Ni Naung

**Classification:** Nat

In life, the Taungbyon Brothers were carousers, drunks, and seducers. They are now the subject of Myanmar's most beloved annual Nat Pwe (festival), which is famous for carousing, too. The two brothers, Shwepyingyi and Shwepyingge, are subjects of a complex myth: The story begins in 1038 CE, when a wealthy merchant from Malabar was shipwrecked off the coast of Myanmar (Burma). He died, but his two young sons—Abraham and Ibrahim—survived, drifting ashore at Thaton where they were rescued by a Buddhist monk who raised them in a monastery.

The monk secretly possessed the corpse of a magician/hermit allegedly preserved for medicinal purposes. One day, left unsupervised, the two brothers ate the corpse and instantly acquired *incredible* psychic and supernatural powers, which they began to demonstrate—attracting the king's attention. He ordered the boys captured and brought to him. The older brother, captured via treachery, was killed and dismembered. His body was placed beneath the king's palace to serve as a supernal guardian, while his intestines were divided into four parts and buried under the city's walls facing in each direction for the same purpose.

Meanwhile, the younger brother escaped to the forest, where he fell in with thieves sent by Anawratha, King of Pagan, to steal Buddhist texts from the King of Thaton. The thieves were unable to enter the city because the spirit guardian/older brother would not admit them. The older brother appeared in the younger brother's dreams and revealed the only possible entrance. The younger brother stole the texts and took them to Anawratha, who rewarded him by appointing him Flower Officer in charge of gathering flowers from sacred Mount Popa.

The younger brother fell in love with the spirit of Mount Popa. They had two sons, Shwepyingyi and Shwepyingge. The Flower Officer eventually fell from royal favor and was killed by the king. The two boys

were raised on Mount Popa by their mother. King Anawratha ordered the boys to go to China to retrieve Buddhist relics. Their mother refused to let them go; the boys refused to leave their mother. The king sent an officer to force them, but the boys hung him upside-down by his heels over a high cliff until he begged for mercy. The king sent the officer back with a magic wand, which compelled the spirit mother and her sons to roll down Mount Popa. The boys were seized, and their mother died of a broken heart. (She is now the Nat, Popa Medaw, Mother of Popa.)

The boys went to China with the officers and returned with relics, including an emerald Buddha. On the way back to Pagan, the white elephant carrying the relics halted and knelt at Taungbyon Village. The king took this as a sign to build his pagoda there. Each soldier had to participate by contributing a brick. The brothers, whether slackers or conscious resisters, did not participate. They sat around playing marbles instead, the upshot being that two bricks were missing from the pagoda.

The supervisor of the building site was the same officer they had hung upside-down. He had never forgiven them, so he took this opportunity to report them to the king, who ordered the brothers flogged. The brothers escaped but were captured. They were so powerful that beating had no effect, but they were killed when their testicles were crushed. In death, they transformed into the Taungbyon Nats, even more powerful carousers. They appeared to King Anawratha and terrorized him into building them a shrine. The king ordered their annual festival, still the most popular in Myanmar.

The Taungbyon Brothers are served by female shamans who engage in sacred marriages with the brothers as well as by cross-dressing male shamans. Channeled via spirit mediums, the brothers heal illness and infertility, reveal the future, and provide prosperity and gambler's luck.

**Attribute:** Marbles

**Animal:** Tiger

**Plant:** Ferns

**Mount:** The Taungbyon Brothers ride tigers



**Festival:** The Taungbyon Festival lasts approximately a week, beginning on the eighth day of the waxing moon of the Burmese month of Wagaung and lasting until the full moon. This typically occurs in the Western month of August. The festival is held in Taungbyon Village, approximately twenty miles north of Mandalay. A festival honoring their mother follows shortly afterward, during the waning moon phase.

**Offerings:** Liquor, bananas, coconuts, fabric, cash, bouquets of ferns and flowers

**See also:** *Cerridwen; Golden Boy; Nats*

## Taweret

### *Mistress of Talismans*

**Origin:** Egypt

Taweret is the hippopotamus goddess of fertility, conception, childbirth, vengeance, and the underworld. In her earliest incarnation, she was a sky spirit who helped midwife the sun. An extremely ancient spirit, she may be an importation from sub-Saharan Africa. Evidence based upon archaeological finds in southern Egypt suggests that her images were displayed in households from prehistoric times. Both feared and revered, Taweret's importance in the official state cult diminished with time, yet she remained an immensely popular folk goddess. Her popularity remained until the Roman conquest.

Once you know Taweret, she's hard to miss. Her body is comprised of components of the fiercest creatures known to the Egyptians: a hippopotamus, a crocodile, a lion, and a pregnant woman. Her image was all over ancient Egypt: • Pregnant women wore amulets bearing her image.

- Images of Taweret and her husband Bes were carved onto beds and headrests to guard sleepers against snakes and scorpions as well as the night's spiritual dangers.
- Homes had murals featuring Bes and Taweret.
- Vases molded in her distinctive shape were filled with milk, which

poured out through her nipples. These were intended to guarantee conception, facilitate childbirth, and protect mother and baby.

- Her image is engraved on ivory magic wands.

Taweret's image is intended to have two effects. The first is that she is supposed to be terrifying. Would you choose a toy poodle to be your guard dog? Taweret is essentially the Rottweiler of the spirit world and a pregnant one at that. She is fierce. The protector of pregnant women and children, one of her main functions is to scare away evil spirits. She needs to be scarier than they are.

The second effect of her image is that you never forget her fertility. Taweret's saggy breasts and huge belly indicate both her present fertility and her past successes in childbirth. Taweret's form demonstrates that she can conceive, she can bear and she can nurse. She provides human women with these abilities, too.

**Manifestations:** Taweret usually manifests as a pregnant hippopotamus standing on her hind legs displaying large, pendulous, women's breasts. Sometimes her back is that of a crocodile complete with tail, while her arms and legs are those of a lion. In her avenger aspect, Taweret has the body of a hippo and the head of a lion. She brandishes a dagger and has a crocodile slung over her shoulder.

**Attributes:** A torch to drive away demons and purify the atmosphere and also the *sa*, a protective instrument, actually a stylized life preserver worn by ancient Nile river travelers. She may hold a knife, for defense and as a midwife's tool.

**Consort:** Bes

**Constellation:** Ursa Major and Draco

**Sacred sites:** Taweret had temples at Thebes, Karnak and at Deir el-Bahri. However, she is predominately a family guardian. Her primary residences are within people's homes.

**Offerings:** Beer, incense but mainly Taweret desires home altars and veneration by families.

**See also:** *Ammit; Bes*

## **Tçaridyi**

### *The Burning One*

**Origin:** Transylvanian Roma (Gypsy)

Tçaridyi, the fourth child of Ana and the King of the Loçolico, looks like a little hairy worm. If she can penetrate the human body, she causes burning fever. She causes puerperal fever in pregnant women. Tçaridyi enjoys tormenting people but rarely kills them.

Tçaridyi can cause and cure infertility in women. She forbids pregnant women or those who would one day like to be pregnant from eating shellfish. She offers an amulet of protection (from her and from other dangers during pregnancy): a sachet filled with dried crayfish shells and stag beetles. Tçaridyi is married to her brother Tçulo.

**See also:** *Ana; Loçolico; Tçulo*

## **Tçulo**

### *Potbellied*

**Origin:** Transylvanian Roma (Gypsy)

Tçulo is the third child of Ana and the King of the Loçolico. Melalo gave the king some stag beetles and crayfish to eat. As a result, Ana gave birth to Tçulo, who resembles a spiky little ball. Tçulo rolls himself up and sneaks inside the human body, where he causes severe, violent abdominal pains, especially in the lower belly. His specialty and special pleasure is torturing pregnant women. He had so much fun that he started torturing pregnant spirits too, even his sister Lilyi. Lilyi's husband, Melalo, advised their father that Tçulo was bored and needed a wife. Tçulo and his wife/sister, Tçaridyi, now sometimes have fun torturing people together. Tçulo and Tçaridyi really enjoy tormenting people but they rarely cause fatal illness.

**See also:** *Ana; Lilyi; Loçolico; Melalo; Tçaridyi*

## Telchines

**Origin:** Rhodes

The Telchines are mysterious, magical spirits who rule the island of Rhodes. Sea spirits, their mother is Thalassa. The Telchines are magicians, shamans, and smiths. As befitting these occupations, they are discreet spirits, very protective of their secrets, including their identity. It's not even clear how many Telchines there are: reports vary from four to nine.

The Telchines invented metalworking. They raise storms, control the weather, produce miraculous animated statues and, according to one myth, forged Poseidon's trident. (They may also have crafted the sickle used to castrate Uranus.) They are credited with producing the first images of the deities.

According to Greek myth, Poseidon was not swallowed by Kronos. Instead, Rhea rescued him and brought him to Rhodes where he was raised, guarded, and initiated by the Telchines with the assistance of Kapheira who may or may not be the same spirit as Cabeiro. Eventually the Telchines left Rhodes. One myth suggests that, being prophetic spirits, they foresaw the Great Flood and abandoned Rhodes for higher ground. An alternative suggests that Rhea brought them to Crete to help guard Zeus. A third suggestion says that Zeus feared their power and magic. He had them thrown into Tartarus and gave Rhodes to Apollo.

**Manifestation:** The Telchines are sometimes described as dwarfs. They are sometimes depicted with canine heads and fish flippers instead of hands.

**See also:** *Apollo; Cabeiro; Dwarves; Gaia; Kronos; Leucotheia; Poseidon; Rhea; Thalassa*

## Telesforos

**Also known as:** Telesphoros; Telesphorus

**Origin:** Greece

Telesforos is Hygeia's brother and the son of Asklepios. He is the spirit of convalescence, recuperation, and recovery from illness and injury. Telesforos is a divine child who possesses profound healing powers. He has dominion over sleep and dreams, an important component of Asklepiian healing. Telesforos may appear in dreams to devotees or to perform healing. Telesforos also provides fertility.

**Favored people:** Telesforos is the guardian of infants.

**Iconography:** Telesforos is a young barefoot boy wearing a wide cloak with a hood drawn low over his face or a Phrygian cap similarly shadowing his face. He resembles the Genius Cucullatus. Some theorize that he is the original Genius Cucullatus or vice versa. His image is found on many coins.

**Spirit ally:** Hygeia and Telesforos frequently work and travel together.

**See also:** *Aklepios; Genius Cucullatus; Hygeia*

## **Tellus Mater**

### *Earth Mother*

**Also known as:** Terra Mater

**Origin:** Italy

Tellus Mater, the Earth Mother, is the great mother without whom nothing grows and nothing could exist. She is the energy that sparks life. Tellus Mater has dominion over fertility and guards and assists laboring mothers of all species. She was invoked during ancient marriage ceremonies. Tellus Mater has dominion over earthquakes. Oaths were sworn upon her, as Earth sees and knows all.

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*Tellus Mater is the source of the words tellurian and telluric.*

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**Favored people:** Pregnant women, pregnant animals

**Manifestation:** Tellus Mater is Earth, but she also appears in the guise of a lush, beautiful woman.

**Iconography:** A Roman bas-relief depicts Tellus Mater holding two children on her lap while an ox and sheep sleep beneath her feet. She is flanked by two women, one holding a swan, the other a sea monster.

**Spirit allies:** Ceres, Vesta

**Date:** 15 April, her annual feast

**Animal:** Cow

**See also:** *Ceres; Gaia; Proserpina; Vesta*

## Tengu

**Origin:** Japan

**Classification:** Yokai

Tengu are spirits of the wilderness, guardians of the forest. They are wary, aggressive, protective tricksters. Often described as mountain goblins, they may be as helpful or dangerous as they please. Tengu are bird spirits who come in two basic forms:

- **Karasu Tengu**, literally “Crow Tengu,” have crow heads on human torsos covered with feathers. Their hands and feet are tipped with claws, not fingers or toes.
- **Yamabushi Tengu**, or “Mountain Priest Tengu,” have human form with bright red faces. They usually have exceedingly long beak-like noses.

Tengu are famed shape-shifters and may not appear in their true guise. Tengu are bird spirits even when they no longer look like birds. They can fly. Like the winged monkeys in the MGM musical *The Wizard of Oz*, Tengu use their flight skills aggressively: they play tricks, make speedy getaways, survey their territory, and swoop down to snatch people away.

Tengu are pranksters, sometimes maliciously so. They start fires,

arguments, and divisiveness. They carry off children, returning them somewhat stupefied and worse for the wear. Even their lesser pranks have an edge to them and are potentially harmful: they drop house tiles on people or throw pebbles into windows at night. Yet, when they wish, they can also be extremely helpful. Historically, Tengu have been invoked to locate lost children. When children went missing, especially in the mountains, Tengu were summoned to search for them.

Their origins are mysterious. Tengu are guardians of Kami, but they are not Kami themselves. Who are these wise, rampaging bird spirits?

- They may be indigenous Japanese spirits.
- According to one myth, Tengu are emanations of Susano'o.
- They may derive from or be related to Chinese T'ien-kou.
- They may derive from or be related to India's Garuda.
- They may be some or all of the above.

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*Tengu are beings of immense power, skill, and wisdom. Like Susano'o, they control weather. Their weapons include storms, wind, and whirlwinds.*

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Regardless of origin, Tengu are pre-Buddhist spirits who aggressively resisted Buddhism. Tengu and Buddhists alike consider them enemies of the Dharma. Tengu became symbolic of indigenous resistance to Buddhism. They allegedly cause fires in Buddhist temples and monasteries and play malicious tricks on Buddhist priests. Tengu transform themselves to resemble Buddhist priests, nuns, and sometimes even Buddhas to fool people, especially real priests. Tengu snatch priests up, carry them off and bind them to the tops of tall trees and towers.

In the twelfth century, the Buddhist concept of the Tengu Road evolved. The Tengu Road was the special punishment reserved for hypocritical, false or corrupt Buddhist priests. After death they become Tengu. (This is a Buddhist concept, not a Shinto one. Traditionally Tengu are spirits, not ghosts or transformed people like Hannya.) Meanwhile, the *yamabushi* (shamanic mountain priests) made

pilgrimages deep into forested mountains seeking to apprentice with the Tengu. The identities of some Tengu and mountain priests blur. Tengu sometimes adopt the guise of yamabushi.

Why would the yamabushi seek Tengu? Tengu are profound magicians, occultists, warriors, martial artists, and repositories of secret esoteric wisdom. They can transfer their powers to those they favor. If they really like someone, they will mentor and tutor them. Tengu are brilliant martial artists, especially associated with kendo (Japanese fencing) and ninjitsu. They are weapon smiths extraordinaire. Many legendary heroes and martial artists claim apprenticeship with Tengu.

Tengu are oracular spirits with powers of healing. They can possess people and speak through them. Spirit mediums channel them. They can also cause illness. They will mercilessly hound those who anger them with nightmares, apparitions, and illusions.

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*Tengu teach ninjitsu, the martial arts tradition associated with the stealth warriors known as ninjas. Ninjas first emerged in Japan's mountains to combat samurai overlords. Because of their stealth and mystery, ninjas were rumored to possess supernatural powers courtesy of their sponsors, the Tengu.*

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- Tengu may be invoked to provide fire safety.
- Tengu are summoned and communicated with via drumming.
- Tengu allegedly loathe mackerel, and so it may be used as an amulet to keep them away.

**Favored people:** Shamans, hunters, martial artists, ninjas, those they inexplicably like

**Manifestation:** Tengu often travel in flocks; they are masters of disguise who can take any form. They enjoy playing tricks and surprising people.

**Iconography:** Tengu are frequently portrayed disguised as yamabushi mountain priests. They wear the yamabushi's hexagonal hats and carry a



shaman's feather fan (which, in their hands, becomes a profound magical weapon).

**Tree:** Cryptomeria, pine, cypress

**Bird:** Crow

**Colors:** Black, red

**Sacred sites:** Tengu are venerated in some mountain shrines. Local festivals are dedicated to them. Their favorite haunts include forested mountains, groves, and in the vicinity of shrines and temples

**Offerings:** Tengu like and expect offerings. Offerings appease them and encourage good behavior. Woodcutters who fail to make offerings before cutting trees encounter unpleasant accidents. Tengu bless hunters with success *if* they first promise to share their food. Offerings are traditionally given outside, not too close to buildings. (This may be because of their propensity to start fires.) Tengu like sake and rice cakes, but they'll have some of whatever you're having. Their favorite treat is allegedly *kuhinmochi*, skewered rice balls covered with bean paste and then grilled.

**See also:** *Akiba-Sanjakubo; Amida Buddha; Garuda; Kami; Okame; Sojobo; Susano'o; Tanuki; T'ien-kou*

## Tenjin

**Origin:** Japan

**Classification:** Kami

Tenjin is patron of literature, learning, scholarship, and education. His shrines are visited regularly by students and their parents who wish to invoke his aid or thank him for favors granted. His shrines are packed prior to important national exams.

Tenjin wasn't always a kami, and he wasn't always benevolent. Once upon a time, Tenjin was Sugawara no Michizane (845–903 CE), a brilliant, successful administrator, poet, and scholar. (His specialty was

Chinese literature.) Jealous colleagues conspired against him at the Heian court (now modern Kyoto). Falsely accused, Sugawara was exiled to the isle of Kyushu, where he died a sad death. Immediately after his death, Heian was struck by a series of disasters, including storms, fires, and epidemics. In 923, the crown prince died suddenly. In 930, the Imperial Palace was struck by lightning, killing several of the conspirators who had exiled Sugawara. The emperor soon died, too.

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*Tenjin, Sugawara's spirit name, may be interpreted as "Heavenly Spirit," indicating lofty, celestial nature. It can also be interpreted as "Sky Spirit," indicating his association with storms and thunder.*

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In 942, Sugawara possessed a spirit medium and announced that he was responsible for the disasters. In 955, a Shinto priest's child announced that Sugawara was now Deity of Disasters and Chief of the Thunder Demons. Major attempts were now made to placate Sugawara and forestall further disaster:

- His order of exile was burned.
- Sugawara as Tenjin was enrolled in the official imperial roll of spirits as a deity of the highest rank under the name Tenjin.
- A major shrine was dedicated to him, still among Kyoto's most important Shinto shrines.

It took a little while for him to calm down, but Tenjin responded positively, especially when scholars, poets, and academics adopted him as their personal patron.

Tenjin assists researchers seeking divine assistance.

**Favored people:** students, professors, academics, researchers, authors

**Sacred site:** Kitano Temmangu shrine, also known as the Kitano-jinja, in Kyoto is his primary shrine but there may be as many as fourteen-thousand Tenjin shrines throughout Japan, which produce amulets for academic success and luck. (Tenjin shrines are called *Tenman-gu*.)

**Tree:** Ume (*Prunus mume*) the Japanese Apricot or Plum

**Festival:** The Tenjin Matsuri in Osaka held at the end of July

**See also:** *Goryo; Kami*

## Tenma

**Origin:** Tibet

The Tenma are twelve guardian goddesses who appear in the entourage of Palden Lhamo. The Tenma are ancient Tibetan Bon spirits who were defeated, one by one, by Padmasambhava who bound them with a sacred oath. The Tenma are now sworn guardians of the Dharma. They are mountain goddesses: six are guardian spirits of specific perilous, narrow mountain ledges. The

Tenma are divided into three groups:

- Dumo Chenmo (Great Female Demons)
- Nojin Chenmo (Great Female Malignant Ones)
- Menmo Chenmo (Great Medicine Consorts)

Each Tenma has a personal history and individual personality. They are not uniform and can be distinguished from one another. Each has a secret name usually indicating where she lives. The Tenma are served by oracular priestesses.

Shamans channel the Tenma who provide oracles via ritual possession.

**Iconography:** They are portrayed alongside Palden Lhamo.

**Offerings:** Water in a beautiful vessel, dice crafted from conch shells, peacock feathers, bronze mirror, crystal

**See also:** *Bon Spirits; Padmasambhava; Palden Lhamo; Tara, Blue*

## Tethys

*Mistress of the Sea*

**Origin:** Greece

Tethys is a primeval sea goddess. She and her consort, Oceanos, have multitudes of children. Three thousand of her sons are river deities. The Nereids are her granddaughters. Tethys is a goddess of fertility but also an oracular spirit. The Etruscans had an oracular shrine dedicated to her.

Tethys is the name given a primeval sea: What is now the Black Sea is considered a residual basin of the primeval Central European Tethys Sea, which existed from the end of the Paleozoic era to the Middle Tertiary period. Due to earthquakes in the Triassic period, the Tethys Sea was divided into a series of basins.

**See also:** *Nereid; Oceanos; Thetis*

## **Tezcatlipoca**

*The Smoking Mirror; Lord of Magic*

**Origin:** Mexico

*Tezcatlipoca* means “Smoking Mirror.” He is a spirit of magic and chaos, an omniscient, all-knowing, all-powerful somewhat dangerous figure who sees *everything* in his obsidian mirror. Tezcatlipoca is a divine sorcerer. He is now most famous as the rival of his brother, Quetzalcoatl, the Plumed Serpent, whose fall from grace was maneuvered by Tezcatlipoca’s smoke and mirrors.

Christian missionaries perceived the tragic Quetzalcoatl as a Christ-figure. They identified his opponent Tezcatlipoca, the unrepentant sorcerer, as Satan. Much Aztec mythology was destroyed. In many of Tezcatlipoca’s surviving myths, he appears threatening and malevolent. It is unclear whether this was always the case or whether his malevolence was emphasized by storytellers.

Tezcatlipoca is Lord of the Crossroads. He presides over the ancient magical art of *nahualism*, the complex, intense soul relationship between people and animal allies, characterized by transformation. He is a very complex spirit: a destroyer and a creator. His relationship with Quetzalcoatl may be likened to that between Egyptian rival deities Set

and Horus. They balance each other. Tezcatlipoca brings disaster but also good fortune, prosperity, and fertility. He is Quetzalcoatl's partner in creation of this world.

Tezcatlipoca is the master of subterfuge; the ruler of illusion and sleight of hand, especially when these skills are needed for survival, not just for tricks.

**Favored people:** Shamans, magicians, witches, sorcerers, occultists, mirror gazers

**Manifestation:** Tezcatlipoca may be missing one foot. He may limp. He is a shape-shifter. Favored forms include coyote, jaguar, monkey, owl, and skunk.

**Attribute:** Obsidian mirror

**Consort:** Xochiquetzal

**Time:** Night, especially midnight

**Element:** Water

**Material:** Obsidian, black volcanic glass used to create ritual knives and magic mirrors

**Bird:** Turkey

**Creature:** Jaguar, his nahual

**Constellation:** Ursa Major (What we see as a bear, the Aztecs understood as a jaguar.)

**Flower:** Morning glories

**Sacred sites:** Tezcatlipoca favors the temescal, the traditional Aztec bathhouse. He lives within the Earth's core in a mirrored realm inhabited by jaguars.

**See also:** *Quetzalcoatl; Xochipilli; Xochiquetzal*

**Thagya Min**

## *The Spirit King*

**Also known as:** Thagya Nat

Thagya Min is the Nat king and the guardian Nat of Buddhism. He presides over the Thirty-Seven Official Nats and keeps them in line. Thagya Min is Indra in disguise, filtered through the pantheon of Indian Buddhism. (See also: *Indra*.) King Anawratha (ruled 1044–1077) declared Thagya Min head of the Nat pantheon. (Whether Nats not included among the official thirty-seven are impressed with this declaration is subject to debate.)

Thagya Min keeps track of all human actions. Every year, he records the names of those who perform good deeds in a book made of gold leaves. He has another book made of dog skin in which he records the names of evil-doers. Complaints and requests for justice may be addressed to Thagya Min. He occasionally gives devotees gifts of amazing spirit-horses.

Thagya Min may be venerated alongside the Buddha.

**Offering:** Devotees traditionally light a candle for Thagya Min daily.

**See also:** *Buddha; Nats; Nats, Thirty-Seven*

## **Thalassa**

**Also known as:** Thalatta

**Origin:** Greece

Thalassa, a primeval sea spirit, is the essence of the sea itself. *Thalassa* literally means “sea.” She is the presiding goddess of the Mediterranean, but the oceans know no boundaries. Thalassa is the mother of fish and all sea creatures. She may be the mother of the Telchines.

- Thalassa is the presiding spirit of Thalassotherapy, the therapeutic use of sea water prescribed for a wide variety of medical and cosmetic uses. She may be invoked to enhance its powers.
- The Romans called her Mare (as in marine or mariner).

**Manifestation:** Thalassa is the sea, but she also manifests as a beautiful naked woman swathed in seaweed. She has wild hair and crabclaw horns.

**Attribute:** Oar

**Consort:** Pontus

**Element:** Water

**Sacred site:** The Mediterranean Sea

**Offerings:** Seashells; found crab shells and claws; chalices of salt water; crystals

**See also:** *Amphitrite; Mari (2); Telchines; Tethys*

## Thanatos

**Origin:** Greece

Thanatos is an ancient lord of death. He may be the son of Nyx alone or her son with Erebus. Hypnos, Lord of Sleep, is Thanatos' twin brother. Hypnos and Thanatos live together and are constant companions. Thanatos has a reputation of being coldhearted and merciless, but he is associated almost exclusively with peaceful death. (His sisters, the Keres, handle violent death.) Thanatos is a psychopomp who escorts dead souls to their new home. Unlike many other psychopomps who are mere escorts, Thanatos actually delivers the coup de grâce. Thanatos derives from an older pantheon than the Olympians and may originally have ruled a realm of death. In the context of Olympian myth, he is Hades' auxiliary.

Thanatos may be invoked by those who seek painless, peaceful death.

**Manifestation:** Euripides described Thanatos walking among people, robed in black and carrying a sword.

**Iconography:** Thanatos is depicted as a winged young man, a winged bearded older man, or a winged serpent. Hypnos and Thanatos are frequently portrayed together.

**Attribute:** Sword, inverted torch

**Color:** Black

**Flower:** Poppies

**Creatures:** Snake, butterfly

**Offerings:** Poppies; black candles; images of his sacred creatures

**See also:** *Charon; Hades; Hypnos; Keres; Nyx; Olympian Spirits; Psychopomp*

## Themis

**Origin:** Greece

**Classification:** Titan

Themis is the spirit of Earth's wisdom. Her name may mean "steadfast." She is a goddess of justice, righteousness, and sacred knowledge. Themis may be an independent goddess or an avatar of Gaia. She is sometimes described as Gaia's soul. Themis, a prophetess, manifests the inherent oracular powers of Earth. She is the spirit of order and the social instinct that enables people to form communities. Themis presides over what is right and just, not necessarily what is legal.

Themis is the daughter of Gaia and Uranus. Depending on whether one counts Dione, Themis may be Zeus' first wife. The Horae and Moirae (the Hours and Fates) are sometimes described as their daughters.

Themis and Zeus seem to have parted amicably. She is the presiding secretary of the Olympian pantheon. Themis is the goddess who convenes and dissolves their meetings. Zeus cannot convene them. When he wishes to meet, he requests that Themis call meetings to order. She also presides over Olympian feasts and social gatherings. If you need to communicate with the entire pantheon or a substantial percentage, rather than invoking each spirit individually, Themis may be requested to convene them for you.

**Iconography:** Themis is portrayed seated beside Zeus advising him or



gazing into a pan of water so that she can divine the future.

**See also:** *Dione; Gaia; Horae; Moirae; Olympian Spirits; Prometheus; Zeus;* and the Glossary entry for *Avatar*

## Thetis

**Origin:** Greece

**Classification:** Nereid

Thetis is the great goddess of the Aegean Sea. She is now most famous as Achilles' mother, but she is an exceptionally powerful goddess in her own right. A surviving fragment of an archaic hymn suggests that once upon a time, Thetis was worshipped as creator of the universe as well as goddess of the sea. She is credited with saving Zeus from an attempted coup staged by Hera and Poseidon. Her foster-sons are famous, too. She raised Hephaestus and Dionysus in her home under the sea.

Thetis is gorgeous, brilliant, and benevolent. Poseidon and Zeus both wished to marry her until Themis (Zeus' ex-wife) foretold that Thetis was destined to bear a son greater than his father. In response to this prophecy, Zeus forced Thetis to marry Peleus—mortal son of his own son Aeacus and Endaïs, Chiron's daughter. The tale of her marriage is the tale of her taming (at least temporarily). Peleus was instructed to hold fast to her while she transformed into a series of terrifying forms in her desperate attempt to escape. She doesn't seem to let him hamper her style—Thetis has liaisons with deities and mortals as she chooses.

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*Thetis, who adores dancing, is described as “silver-footed”.*

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**Manifestation:** Thetis is a beautiful woman or mermaid.

**Creatures:** Snakes, lions

**Mount:** Hippocampus

**Altar:** Decorate her altar with marine motifs: nets, shells, and anchors. Images of Achilles and Hephaestus, whom she adores, will please her too.

**See also:** *Achilles; Aiakos; Dionysus; Eris; Hephaestus; Hera; Mermaid; Nereid; Poseidon; Proteus; Tethys; Themis; Zeus*

## Thien Y A Na

**Origin:** Cham

Thien Y A Na may be the ancient creator goddess of Champa, or she may be a deified queen. According to legend, the goddess Thien Y A Na was once queen of the ancient kingdom of Champa, located in what is now southern and central Vietnam. Her husband, the king, was killed during conflicts with the Vietnamese.

To avoid capture, Thien Y A Na threw herself from a cliff but, as luck would have it, a passing Chinese prince happened to be sailing by. He rescued Thien Y A Na, fell in love with her, and decided to marry her. The wedding was scheduled to be held on the boat. At the very last moment, Thien Y A Na could not go through with the marriage. She threw herself from the boat, and this time her suicide attempt was successful.

Her drowned body caught on a log of sandalwood and floated back to Champa, where it was discovered on the beach, still fragrant, beautiful, and recognizable. Her subjects erected a shrine for her where her corpse washed ashore. Reports soon arose of Thien Y A Na calming winds and waves and saving seagoers.

Many ethnic Cham people believe that Cham spirits are claimed by Vietnamese people who then venerate them via traditional Vietnamese rituals. Spirits' names may be adjusted to sound more Vietnamese, thus Thien Y A Na may or may not be the same spirit as Ba Chua

Xu. She certainly has the same volatile temperament when it comes to renege promises, disrespect, and theft. Be sure to fulfill all vows in a timely manner.

**Favored people:** Those who ply their living from the sea (traders, travelers, fishers)

**Sacred site:** Her early-seventeenth-century temple on Hon Ba Island, Vietnam

**Offerings:** Flowers, incense, candles

**See also:** *Ba Chua Kho; Ba Chua Xu; Ma Zu*

## **Thor**

### *Drum Beater*

**Also known as:** Donar; Thunar

**Origin:** Norse

Thor, Lord of Thunder, may be the best-loved of all Norse deities. He is the defender of the Aesir pantheon and the vigilant protector of his devotees. Thor is something of a big lug, but he is consistent, predictable and dependable—as opposed to brilliant but volatile Odin, who can make even his dearest devotees a little nervous.

Odin was the spirit patron of the elite and esoteric (heroes, rulers, shamans, magicians), but Thor was the lord of the masses. He protects everyone because that's what he does: he is a protector. He is the protector of homes, communities, land, laws, and civilization. Thor guards against disaster and chaos. (Does he come into conflict with Loki, spirit of chaos? You bet.) In Germany, Thor in his guise as Donar was considered guardian of love, marriage, and families. Thor assists travelers and protects the dead.

Thor has power over Earth's fertility and abundance. He controls the quantity of rain, making sure there's just the right amount. He is the spirit of the oak forests, which once spread across Europe. He hallows sacred places, events, and crucial magical workings by striking with his hammer. Making the sign of Thor's hammer (in the same manner that Christians make the sign of the cross) allegedly banishes many spirits, especially Jotuns.

He manifests to people in dreams.

- Thor is invoked to protect against fire and lightning.
- Thor is a giant killer: invoke his aid if someone bigger than you is picking on you, be it spirit, human, corporate, commercial, or bureaucracy.

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*Saint Boniface cut down Thor's sacred oak near what is now Fritzler, Germany, and challenged the deity to strike him down with lightning. Boniface used the wood from the tree to build a cross and chapel. Frisians killed him in 755.*

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**Manifestation:** Thor is a huge, good-hearted, rough-hewn, red-haired and -bearded man with fiery eyes.

**Iconography:** As Thor is guardian of the dead, the image of his hammer is carved onto memorial stones.

**Attributes:** His iron hammer named Mjollnir, iron-clad gloves

**Consort:** Sif

**Day:** Thursday (literally "Thor's Day")

**Trees:** Oak, mountain ash, hazel

**Plants:** Thor's Beard, also known as the house-leek (*Sempervivum tectorum*) protects against malicious spirits; mistletoe called *Donnerbesen* ("thunder broom" or "Donar's broom") in Old German but later Christianized to *Teufelbesen* or "Devil's broom."

**Metal:** Iron

**Color:** Red

**Element:** Fire

**Amulet:** Miniature Thor's hammers are worn as a pendant similar to

wearing a Christian cross or a Wiccan pentacle.

**Rune:** Thurisaz, the rune of force and will

**Animal:** goat (but bulls were once sacrificed to him)

**Mount:** Thor drives a wagon pulled by goats.

**Sacred site:** Thor was venerated in sacred groves, including one near Dublin.

**Realm:** Thor presides over his hall, Bilskirnir, which he shares with Sif and their children. It is a huge hall with over five hundred rooms. Thralls, a class of slaves, entered Thor's hall after death and were feted and entertained.

**Offerings:** Thor has a massive appetite. He loves to drink and wins all drinking competitions. Offer him Thor's Hammer brand vodka, but Thor will probably accept most offerings if given with respect and a sincere heart.

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*Thor is a prominent member of the Viking Court in the Venezuelan spiritual tradition of Maria Lionza, where he goes under the nickname Mr. Barbaro.*

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**See also:** Aesir; Barbaro, Mr.; Jotun; Loki; Maria Lionza; Odin; Perkunas; Shango; Sif

Thoth

*Lord of Divine Words; Lord of Books*

**Also known as:** Tehuti; Djehuti

**Origin:** Egypt

Thoth is primeval: he is from before Creation. In some Egyptian myths, Thoth is the supreme creator. He created himself by speaking his own name. Even when he is not supreme creator, Thoth still does his fair share of creating. Thoth invented writing, gambling, stargazing,

engineering, geometry, botany, medicine, mathematics, and magic spells. He is the founder of alchemy and is the author, according to Egyptian myth, of the world's very first book called *The Book of Thoth*, a collection of magic spells and rituals so powerful that it had to be hidden away.

Thoth taught veneration of the spirits. He invented rules of sacrifice and composed hymns and prayers. Thoth is credited with writing some of the Egyptian *Book of the Dead: The Book of Going Forth by Day*.

Thoth is Ra's right-hand man. Without Thoth, Isis and her siblings would never have been born. Thoth may have taught Osiris the arts of civilization that Osiris then taught to humanity. Thoth, a master magician, taught Isis everything he knew. She is perhaps the only one who surpasses his magical knowledge, although, according to myth, even Isis still needs his assistance and advice once in a while.

Thoth is kind, benevolent, patient, wise, and generous. He is what is considered a "cool" deity; he calms and soothes impassioned situations. In one legend, only Thoth can safely subdue a rampaging goddess threatening to destroy Earth.

As befitting a shaman, Thoth lives in many realms at once:

- He travels among the living, teaching his magical skills.
- He serves as the official scribe in the Hall of the Dead.
- He rides in the solar barque beside Ra and thus lives in the realm of spirits.

The English name, *Thoth*, is based on the Greek pronunciation of the Egyptian *Tehuti*. His name is related to Egyptian words indicating "moon," "measure," "ibis," and "crystal."

- The Greeks identified Thoth with Hermes and Hermes Trismegistus.
- In Neil Gaiman's novel *American Gods*, Mr. Ibis runs a funeral parlor with his partner Mr. Jacquel.

**Favored people:** Scribes, secretaries, authors, magicians, shamans, sorcerers, witches, alchemists, occultists, librarians

**Manifestation:** In his guise as patron of scribes, Thoth has an ibis' head. As a master magician, he manifests as a baboon. Although ibis and

baboon are his most common forms, Thoth is a master shape-shifter. He could be anything or anyone.

**Attribute:** Ink pot, palette, ankh, scepter

**Consorts:** Ma'at and Seshet are identified as Thoth's wives.

**Spirit allies:** Hathor, Ma'at, Isis, Seshet

**Planet:** Moon

**Days:** Thoth rules the equinoxes

**Bird:** Ibis

**Animal:** Baboon

**Color:** White

**Sacred sites:** His primary shrine was in Khemennu (renamed Hermopolis by Greeks); he also had an important shrine in the holy city Abydos as well as others throughout Egypt.

**See also:** *Anubis; Hathor; Hermes; Isis; Ma'at; Obatala; Osiris; Seshet; Sekhmet; Set;* and the Glossary entry for *Identification*

## Thyone

*Lady of Inspired Frenzy; Ecstatically Raging*

**Origin:** Greece

Thyone is the goddess who presides over the Dionysian Mysteries, known in Rome as the Bacchanalia. Thyone is the name given to Semele after she was brought to Olympus from Hades by her son, Dionysus. Coincidentally, when Dionysus was in hiding as an infant, one of his wet-nurses was also named Thyone. It's possible that this was Semele incognito (in the same manner that baby Moses was secretly given to his true mother to nurse after his rescue by Pharaoh's daughter).

**See also:** *Dionysus; Hades; Semele; Zemele*

## Tien Hau

Tien Hau, a Chinese title meaning “Empress of Heaven,” usually refers to the goddess Ma Zu.

**See also:** *Ma Zu*

## Tien-Kou

**Origin:** China

T’ien-kou literally translates as “Celestial Dog” and refers to two different but possibly related things:

- T’ien-kou are shooting stars.
- T’ien-kou are dreaded dog-shaped mountain demons.

T’ien-kou the spirits first emerged from the sky amidst thunder and lightning. They may or may not be the shooting stars or may possibly be something that arrived with them. If T’ien-kou were first appearing now, instead of thousands of years ago, they’d be considered malignant space aliens. Instead they’re meteor demons. T’ien-kou are dangerous, unpleasant spirits. They kidnap and eat children. T’ien-kou are vengeful spirits who will nurse a grudge. They harm those who harm them.

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*Tengu and T’ien-Kou are not identical but have many resemblances, not least their name. Whether or not they are the same species of spirit has been fodder for centuries of great debate.*

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**Manifestation:** Although they’re called celestial dogs, T’ien-Kou resemble birds. They possess birds’ beaks, wings, and claws, but they have tangled, matted hair like a human. They are master shape-shifters who can transform into any form, including that of humans.

**See also:** *Extra-terrestrials; Tengu*



## Titan

**Origin:** Greece

The Titans are a pantheon of Greek spirits who preceded the Olympian spirits. They are the good-looking children of Gaia and Uranus, who refused to be ruled by the Olympians and so war ensued. The war between the Titans and the Olympians is called the Titanomachie. The war, waged in Thessaly, lasted for ten years. The Olympians finally won when Gaia promised Zeus victory if he would free the Cyclopes and Hecatoncheires from their captivity in the abyssal pit of Tartarus. (They are the less attractive children of Gaia and Uranus. Uranus was appalled by their looks and locked them away in Tartarus.) After their defeat, most of the Titans were either locked up in Tartarus or sent into exile to an island far away. Either way the Hecatoncheires have been charged to guard them. The Titanesses, the Lady Titans, were generally spared.

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*The fate of the Titans, cast down into the depths, should have given pause to whoever named the great ship Titanic. The Titans are also memorialized in the name given to titanium, a metallic element of exceptional strength used in the production of steel.*

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**Sacred site:** Mount Othrys is to the Titans as Mount Olympus is to the Olympians.

**See also:** *Atlas; Gaia; Hekate; Oceanus; Prometheus; Styx; Zeus*

## Titania

Titania is the name given the Fairy queen in William Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream* but is also found in Ovid as an alternative name for the goddess Diana. Flower Fairies serve as her attendants. Titania is the Fairy credited with giving the Fairy Flag to the Chief of Clan MacLeod of the Isle of Skye in the thirteenth century. Since her

stage debut with Shakespeare, Titania has made frequent appearances in popular culture including in books, paintings, and video games.

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*Titania and Mab are battling Fairy queens in Mike Carey and John Bolton's graphic novel, God Save the Queen (Vertigo Comics).*

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**Consort:** Oberon

**See also:** *Diana; Fairy, Flower; Fairy Queen; Mab; Oberon*

## **Tlaloc**

*The Provider*

**Origin:** Mexico

Tlaloc, pre-Aztec Lord of Rain and Lightning, is extremely old. He may be the oldest deity of the Central Mexico pantheon. He lives in mountain caves filled with treasure. Condition and quantity of rain indicates whether Tlaloc is feeling generous or stingy. Tlaloc stole corn from Quetzalcoatl and has owned it ever since.

*Tlaloc rules Tlalocan, a realm of death. He receives those souls who died of drowning, lightning, or any diseases specifically associated with rain deities.*

**Manifestation:** He may manifest as an old man or a child. Tlaloc may have big jaguar teeth or snake fangs. Speculation suggests that he may be part jaguar. Thunder may be his roar.

**Consort:** Xochiquetzal; Chalchihuitlicue

**Color:** Green

**Plant:** Chia

**Creatures:** Frog, Ahuizotl

**Stone:** Jade

**Offerings:** Marine-or water-themed offerings; offer huge quantities of incense so that the smoke mimics clouds.

**See also:** *Ahuizotl; Chalchihuitlicue; Quetzalcoatl; Xochipilli; Xochiquetzal*

## **Tlazolteotl**

*Eater of Filth; Goddess of Garbage; Lady of Confessions*

**Origin:** Mexico

Tlazolteotl is the spirit of magic, healing, love, sex, desire, cleansing, and garbage. As goddess of filth, Tlazolteotl cleanses individuals and Earth of spiritual debris, sin, and shame. Tlazolteotl is credited with invention of the Aztec sweat bathhouse, the temescal.

**Favored people:** Female healers, midwives, witches, and weavers

**Iconography:** A famous statue of Tlazolteotl portrays her as a naked, squatting woman grimacing in labor: this image appears as the stolen idol in *Raiders of the Lost Ark*. Other traditional images show her riding on a broomstick, naked except for a peaked hat made of bark.

**Attribute:** Broom

**Birds:** Owls, ravens, vultures

**Color:** Turquoise

**Creatures:** Bats, snakes

## **Tommyknockers**

**Origin:** United States

Cornish miners immigrated to the United States in the nineteenth century, initially working en masse in Pennsylvania's coal mines and then, following the Gold Rush, moving farther west. Skilled, experienced

miners, they were much sought after by mine owners. The indigenous spirits of Cornwall's tin mines—the Knockers—were left behind, but the Cornish men were sensitive and soon gained knowledge of the spirits of these new mines, whom they dubbed Tommyknockers. (If they have other names, they're unknown.)

- Tommyknockers may always have been subterranean spirits.
- They may be souls of dead miners who now haunt the mines.

Tommyknockers are unpredictable. They may be helpful—warning miners of danger—or they may cause trouble or even death. Tommyknockers are sometimes blamed for fatal accidents in the mines.

The Tommyknockers' name derives from the characteristic noise they make. Whether that noise is benevolent is subject to interpretation:

- Knocking may indicate the location of a rich lode or vein.
- Knocking may be a warning that a collapse or cave-in is imminent.
- Knocking may be a harbinger of doom, indicating a Tommyknocker in a bad mood.

Many miners traditionally left offerings for the Tommyknockers in the hopes that this would persuade them to serve as watchmen and guardians. Tommyknockers might serve as a guardian angel, or conversely, they might tease and torment a man. It is considered bad manners to enter a mine for the first time without asking permission of the Tommyknockers.

**Manifestations:** Tommyknockers are little men about the size of toddlers. They traditionally dress in miners' clothes and are sometimes described as appearing greenish. Tommyknockers may appear in dreams or visions but rarely, if ever, physically leave mines. If you do not enter the mine, you will not encounter a Tommyknocker. (The few legends of Tommyknockers leaving mines involves their visiting miners, old compatriots.)

**Home:** Mines—working mines as well as abandoned or ghost mines.

**Offerings:** Food and beverages left in mines. Tommyknockers are sometimes blamed for missing miners' tools, so perhaps it's best to give them their own.

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*Although it shares their name, the Stephen King novel Tommyknockers has little to do with mine spirits.*

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**See also:** *Dwarves; Kobold; Knockers*

## **T'ou Chen Niang Niang**

*Lady of the Thousand Flowers*

**Origin:** China

The reference to the thousand flowers may sound romantic, but T'ou Chen Niang Niang is a spirit of smallpox. The red flowers she owns are smallpox pustules. Unlike other smallpox spirits who also serve other functions, T'ou Chen Niang Niang is almost exclusively associated with this disease. She is interested in little else. She transmits smallpox but can also guarantee a patient's recovery.

T'ou Chen Niang Niang loves to travel; her presence is manifest in the smallpox she spreads. She is petitioned to travel elsewhere and stay far away. Should she arrive, however, magical steps are then taken:

- Burn incense and substantial quantities of spirit money (available from feng shui suppliers and in stores carrying Chinese spiritual goods) in her honor. Offer her cooling foods.
- Petition her extremely politely (she's touchy and gets offended easily) to oversee the patient's recovery.
- Should the patient survive: Place T'ou Chen Niang Niang's image on a paper boat or chair; then place these on a paper phoenix. Burn all on a bed of straw to bid the Lady of the Thousand Flowers farewell.

Should the patient die, do whatever you want to do with her offerings. T'ou Chen Niang Niang is then traditionally cursed off the premises.

**Manifestation:** T'ou Chen Niang Niang travels accompanied by two servants.

**See also:** *Babalu Ayé; Daruma; Sitala* and the Glossary entry for *Spirit Money*

## Toyotama-Hime

*The Luminous Jewel; Princess of the Dragon Palace; Dragon Princess of the Sea*

**Also known as:** Otohime; Toyotamahime; Toyotamahime-no-mikoto

Toyotamahime (literally “Princess Toyotama”) is a dragon princess, the daughter of Ryujin, Dragon King of the Sea. She married Hikoho-hodemi no Mikoto (also known as Hoori), youngest of Konohana and Ninigi’s sons. He lived with her in a palace beneath the sea for three years but then became homesick. Although pregnant, Toyotamahime returned to Earth with him. She made him swear not to watch her while she was giving birth but to give her privacy. He broke his promise: she transformed into a dragon in labor, her true form.

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*According to the Ryugu Fellowship, a Shinto sect also known as the Dragon Princess cult, Toyotamahime is humanity’s true savior. They believe their founder, the shaman Fujita Himiko, to be an avatar of Toyotamahime.*

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Angered by this betrayal, Toyotamahime abandoned Hoori and returned to the sea, where she remains. She sent her sister Tamayorihime to raise and guard her son. Aunt and nephew eventually married. Their child became Emperor Jimmu, first emperor of Japan.

**Manifestation:** Toyotamahime is a transformer who can appear in the guise of a beautiful woman, a dragon, a turtle, and perhaps other forms as well.

**Creatures:** Turtle and dragon

**Sacred sites:** Sites where Toyotama is venerated include the Otonashi

Shrine in Otanashi, Ito City, renowned for providing fertility and safe, successful childbirth and the Itsukushima shrine near Hiroshima, designated a UNESCO World Heritage site in 1996.

**See also:** *Dragon Kings of the Sea; Dragon Queens; Konohana; Melusine; Okuninushi; Ryujin*

## **Triton**

**Origin:** Greece

Triton, the son of Amphitrite and Poseidon. lives at the bottom of the sea in his mother's golden palace. Triton is a wise, oracular spirit. He commands violent storms and has the reputation of being a violent lover toward both women and young men. Triton is considered a very erotic spirit. Hekate is among his many lovers.

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*The word triton is sometimes synonymous with merman.*

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**Manifestation:** Triton is a merman with long hair, but he is also a shape-shifter.

**Spirit ally:** Triton often accompanies his father, Poseidon.

**Attribute:** Conch shell used as a horn

**See also:** *Amphitrite; Hekate; Poseidon*

## **Tsukiyomi**

*His Augustness; Moon Night Possessor*

**Full name:** Tsukiyomi no Mikoto

**Classification:** Kami

After the primordial mother Izanami died while giving birth to the fire kami, her brother/lover/ alter ego Izanagi traveled to Yomi, the realm of death after her. As he didn't yet comprehend death—a new concept—he expected to find Izanami as she was when she was alive. Instead he fled from her rotting corpse. Izanagi was defiled by contact with death and so upon reaching safety, he ritually bathed to purify himself. Tsukiyomi emerged when Izanagi bathed his right eye. Amaterasu emerged from the left eye, and Susano'o from Izanagi's nose. They are the Three Noble Children. Izanagi proclaimed Tsukiyomi to be the ruler of night. (Another myth suggests that Izanagi created Amaterasu from a hand-mirror held in his left hand and Tsukiyomi from a hand-mirror held in his right hand.)

**Time:** Night

**Planet:** Moon

**Rituals:** Moon-watching rituals (*Tsukimachi*) are traditionally held on the fifteenth, seventeenth, nineteenth, and twenty-third of the first, fifth, and ninth lunar months. Offerings are given in conjunction.

**Sacred site:** He is worshipped at Japan's Ise shrine, whose primary deity is Amaterasu. Tsukiyomi and Ukemochi are venerated in Ise's Outer Shrine. He also has a shrine at Gassan ("Mountain of the Moon") in Yamagata Prefecture as well as the Wakamiya Shrine in Kyoto.

**See also:** *Amaterasu; Izanami; Izanagi; Kami; Susano'o; Ukemochi*

## **Tsukumogami**

**Origin:** Japan

**Classification:** Yokai

Tsukumogami are ordinary household objects and appliances that become animated on their one-hundredth birthday. Look around. Tsukumogami could be anything. They are generally benevolent, even pleasant spirits unless they were mistreated. They will pursue vengeance against those who were rough or careless with them. Objects that were



thrown away or broken may search out their malefactors. The character Ren from the Japanese anime series *Hell Girl (Jigoku Shouju)* is a fictional example of a Tsukumogami.

**See also:** *Mononoke; Yokai*

## Tuatha Dé Danaan

**Origin:** Ireland

The Tuatha Dé Danaan are the spirits who inhabited Ireland before the arrival of the Gaels (Milesians). Their name means the “Children of Danu,” their divine, ancestral mother. (She may or may not be the goddess of the Danube River.) Their adventures are chronicled in the Book of Invasions, an epic compiled in the twelfth century from much earlier oral sources. As its title suggests, the Book of Invasions describes the successive mythic invasions of Ireland. The Tuatha Dé Danaan are the fifth invaders. They ruled Ireland until they too were displaced.

The Milesians negotiated peace with the Tuatha Dé Danaan: people now reside on the upper surface of the land while the Tuatha Dé Danaan rule beneath. The dispossessed Tuatha Dé created their own world, an underground Otherworld parallel to our own. The Tuatha Dé inhabit Fairy mounds, barrows, and hills. Their realm is parallel to ours with connecting portals. The Gaelic word for barrow is *Sidhe*. The Tuatha Dé Danaan evolved into *Sidhe*. They are the prototypical magical Fairies.

**See also:** *Aine; Airmid; Angus mac Og; Becuma; Blathnat; Boann; Dagda, the; Dian Cecht; Lugh; Manannan; Ogma; Sidhe*

## Tündér

**Origin:** Hungary

Tündér are charming, beautiful, and benevolent Fairies. Their name seems to be related to words meaning “appearing” and “disappearing.” Tündér are virtually exclusively female. They are fabulously wealthy, living on remote mountaintops in fabulous castles surrounded by

beautiful gardens. Hungarian fairy tales describe Tündér protecting orphans and saving the destitute with gifts of the priceless pearls that they wear in their hair. They adore dancing and music. Tündér will dance the night away under the moonlight. They have powerful magical powers and own magical jewels and herbs with which they cast spells. Their body fluids, including tears, milk, and saliva, have magical properties and are tools of enchantment.

Tündér are not just the stuff of fairy tales. Testimony from Hungarian witch trials indicates that these spirits were once intensely venerated. Individual Tündér are known by name. The most famous is Tündér Ilona (“Fairy Helen”). Others include Tündér Maros, Dame Rampson, and Dame Vénétur.

**Celestial:** The Milky Way is their path and dance floor; the forked part of the Milky Way is called in Hungarian *tündérek forduloja*, meaning “where the Tündér turn around.”

**See also:** *Fairy; Keshalyi*

## Tuonetar

**Origin:** Finland

Tuonetar is queen of the Finnish realm of death, Tuonela, which she rules with her husband, Tuoni who may also be her father. Tuonetar may be Louhi’s sister. Tuonela is divided from the land of the living by a long black river called Manala. This watery threshold between life and death may be reached by walking through forests and thickets for three times seven days. The border is patrolled by Surma, a fierce guard dog with a snake for a tail. Tuoni and Tuonetar’s daughters, including Kalma, Lady of Death and Loviatar, Lady of Pain, linger near the river. They provide escort service for the dead and may be persuaded to admit living shamans who only wish to visit.

The trick is not really entering Tuonela but leaving: Tuonetar has the reputation of being a kindly, generous hostess. She greets those who enter her realm with a tankard of what may first appear to be a welcoming drink but really contains frogs, worms and insects that feast

on the dead. Those who drink her brew will never leave Tuonela.

**Bird:** Swan

**Time:** Night

**See also:** *Kalma; Mania; Swan Goddesses; Veliona*

## **Turan**

### *The Mistress*

**Also known as:** Turanna

**Origin:** Etruscan

Turan is the Etruscan goddess of love, joy, and prosperity. Her name may derive from a root verb meaning “to give.” The Greeks and Romans identified Turan with Aphrodite and Venus.

**Manifestation:** Turan is a young, winged woman.

**Iconography:** Turan wears very little clothing but lots of jewelry. Her image appears frequently on Etruscan bronze hand mirrors.

**Consort:** Maris (the Etruscan name for Mars), but she also had a torrid romance with Heracle (Etruscan Heracles).

**Birds:** Doves, black swans

**See also:** *Aphrodite; Heracles; Mars; Venus* and the Glossary entry for *Identification*

## **Twenty-One Divisions**

**Also known as:** Twenty-One Nations (Haiti)

Twenty-One Divisions is the variant of Vodou practiced in the Dominican Republic, also known as *Vodo Dominicano*. Spirits (lwa) are divided into twenty-one groups or divisions, hence the name. Included

among these groups are the *Division Rada*, *Division Petwo*, and *Division Gedé*. Individual spirits belong to the different divisions.

Haiti and the Dominican Republic share one island but their histories and cultures are different. The Dominican Republic remained under Spanish rule. Twenty-One Divisions incorporates strong Santeria and Espiritismo Influences.

**See also:** *Anaisa Pyé; Belié Belcan; Candelina; Candelo; Gedés; Lubana; Metresili; Petro; Rada; Sili Kenwa*

## Tylwyth Teg

**Origin:** Wales

Tylwyth Teg means the “Fair Family,” but this may be a euphemism for these Welsh Fairies.

Tylwyth Teg live in organized societies ruled by a king, Gwyn ap Knudd. There are both male and female Tylwyth Teg. They typically dress in green, although the king’s court allegedly wears blue and red silk.

Tylwyth Teg prefer to live in remote locations: wooded areas in the mountains or lonely islands within lakes or off the Welsh coast. They are nocturnal, emerging at night to make music and dance in the moonlight in Fairy rings. They adore music and have been accused of kidnapping particularly skilled human musicians so that they will be forced to stay and play for them.

A human caught within a Fairy ring is obliged to dance with the Tylwyth Teg for a year and a day, although carrying a rowan twig grants you free passage through their territory. Plow through one of their Fairy rings, even by accident, and be cursed for life. Tylwyth Teg may intermarry with humans; however, marriage is almost always accompanied by various restrictions and taboos, which the human must never betray.

They dislike salt and iron and are among the Fairies accused of stealing children and leaving changelings behind.

**Manifestation:** *Tylwyth Teg* may be translated as “the beautiful people.” They are usually described as resembling humans but manifesting in various sizes. Some are humansized, some approximately the height of a man’s knee, while others are tiny. They are, however, renowned shape-shifters.

**Offering:** Their mainstay meal is milk with saffron.

**See also:** *Fairy; Sidhe*

## Typhon

**Also known as:** Typhaon, Typhos

**Origin:** Greece

Kronos was mightier than Uranus. Zeus was mightier than Kronos. Why does that analogy stop right there? Why doesn’t Zeus have a son who is more powerful than him? That’s what Hera wanted to know, too. Hera descended from Mount Olympus down to Earth. She slapped Earth with her open palms and invoked Gaia and the Titans to give her a child who would be greater than Zeus. She felt an Earth tremor and interpreted this to mean that her petition had been heard and would be successful.

Hera separated from Zeus for one year. She had sex with no one. She moved into her temple, where she gave birth to Typhon. She brought him to Delphi so that Gaia and the Python could care for him. An alternative myth suggests that Typhon is Gaia’s youngest son.

The goddesses waited until Typhon had come into his power. Gaia then sent Typhon to attack Zeus. As Typhon ripped up Mount Etna to hurl at Zeus, Zeus zapped him with a lightning bolt. The mountain fell back, pinning Typhon beneath. Trapped, he now lives within Sicily’s Mount Etna.

**Manifestation:** Typhon, a man above the waist, is so tall he bumps his head against the stars. One arm extends to the sunset, the other to the sunrise. Two snakes emerge below his waist, similar to a double-tailed mermaid. One hundred snakes’ heads emerge from his shoulders. Typhon can talk like a person, hiss like a snake, and bay like a hound. He

breathes fire when he feels like it.

**Sacred site:** Typhon remains trapped beneath Mount Etna. He is responsible for earthquakes and volcanic eruptions.

**See also:** *Adriano; Apollo; Echidna; Etna; Gaia; Hera; Kronos; Metis; Thetis; Titan; Zeus*

## **Tyr**

*Master of the Temple*

**Also known as:** Tir; Tiu; Ziu; Tiwar; Tiwaz; Teiwaz; Tiw

**Origin:** Norse

Tyr is the one-handed lord of the sky, war, justice, and self-sacrifice. He is among the most ancient Norse deities. He may originally have been the head of the Aesir spirits before Odin assumed that role. Tyr sacrificed his hand to the Fenris Wolf in order to maintain cosmic order.

- Tyr is invoked for justice and legal matters.
- The Romans identified him with Mars.

**Day:** Tuesday (literally Tyr's Day)

**Attribute:** Arrow, spear

**Plant:** Flowering spurge

**Rune:** Teiwaz

**Number:** Seventeen

**Sacred site:** Tyr is venerated in groves

**See also:** *Aesir; Mars; Odin*

## **Tzitzimime**

**Also known as:** Tzitzimitl (singular)

**Origin:** Mexico

Tzitzimime are female star spirits who linger at crossroads. Star Demons of Darkness, they are feared spirits who attack people during solar eclipses.

**Manifestation:** They usually appear in the guise of a female skeleton wearing a shell-fringe skirt.

**Creature:** Spider

**See also:** *Itzpapalotl*; *Santissima Muerte*

## Tzu Ku

*The Lavatory Lady; Goddess of the Toilet*

**Origin:** China

Tzu Ku is queen of the outhouse and pigpen. She is theoretically the lady of the modern bathroom too, except that it's not exactly the same. Her traditional domains are freestanding buildings similar to a little shrine building, albeit degraded.

Tzu Ku is a brilliant oracular spirit. She knows the unknown. Once she was a beautiful woman from Shou Yang named Ho Mei who married an actor in approximately 685 CE. The governor of Shou Yang desired Ho Mei. He arranged to have her husband killed and Ho Mei taken into his house as a concubine. His first wife was jealous. On the fifteenth day of the first month of the Chinese year, she had Ho Mei killed while in the toilet. When Ho Mei arrived in Heaven, Hsi Wang Mu, the Western Mother, appointed her Tzu Ku, the Lavatory Princess. Tzu Ku revealed her history to a famous Chinese poet via a spirit medium.

Although called goddess of the lavatory, she really has little to do with bathrooms or anything that usually goes on there. Instead, Tzu Ku is a divination goddess. She presides over a traditional Chinese method of fortune-telling and spirit communication called sand-tray divination, an ancestor of the modern spirit board. Sand or ashes are spread on a planchette or winnowing board. Tzu Ku sends messages using hair sticks

or chopsticks as writing implements in the sand or ashes, similar to automatic writing or the planchette on a ouija board.

- Mothers invoke Tzu Ku's blessings for their daughters' happiness and marriage.

**Favored people:** Women, fortune-tellers, diviners, shamans, spirit mediums

**Iconography:** Tzu Ku's image is kept in the bathroom or pigpen. Figures made from straw and grass are used to represent her.

**Animal:** Pig

**Days:** Women honor Tzu Ku at the very beginning of the Chinese lunar New Year and at the anniversary of her death on the fifteenth day of the first month.

**See also:** *Ceres* and the Glossary entry for *Spirit Board*



## U

### Ugajin

**Also known as:** Hakuja (White Snake); Ugano-kami **Origin:** Japan

**Classification:** Kami

Ugajin is the lord of prosperity, wealth, destiny, and having enough to eat. He has dominion over food, especially rice. Ugajin is venerated beside Benten at her shrine in Kamakura, Japan—a shrine originally dedicated to him. In the Western year 1185, on the day of the snake in the month of the snake in the year of the snake, Yoritomo Minamoto (1147–1199), founder of the Kamakura Shogunate, had a dream in which an old man who identified himself as the Lord of Ugajin gave him directions to a spring, telling him to worship Ugajin with the water. If he did this, peace, then lacking, would be restored. Minamoto did as directed; the shrine Zeniarai Ugafuku Jinja, now popularly called Zeniarai Benten, still stands at the spot.

**Manifestation:** Ugajin manifests as an old man or as a big white snake with an old man's head.

**Iconography:** A coiled snake with a human head **Spirit ally:** Dragon goddess Benten, his frequent companion **Animal:** Snake

**Offering:** Whole, unbroken raw eggs

**See also:** *Benten; Kami; Sojobo*

### Ukemochi

**Origin:** Japan

**Classification:** Kami

Ukemochi is the kami who created food; she is the literal source of food on Earth.

According to legend, Amaterasu sent her brother Tsuki-Yomi, Kami of the Moon, to Earth to visit Ukemochi. When he arrived, Ukemochi prepared a feast for him:

- Rice spilled from her mouth.

- She turned to the sea and fish spilled from her mouth.
- She turned to the mountains, disgorging other foods.

Tsuki-Yomi was appalled and disgusted. This wasn't how he envisioned food being prepared. He promptly gave her a piece of his mind, telling her she was impure, and then stabbed her to death with his sword. Even in death, Ukemochi continued to create:

- Cows, oxen, and horses emerged from the top of her head.

- Silkworms emerged from her eyebrows.
- Millet sprang from her forehead, rice from her belly, wheat and beans from her vulva.

Tsuki-Yomi returned home and reported his actions to Amaterasu, who in turn was appalled and disgusted—but with *him*, not Ukemochi. She banished Tsuki-Yomi from her presence, vowing never to be near him again. (The division between Amaterasu and Tsuki-Yomi explains why sun and moon avoid each other.) Ukemochi's presence on Earth survives in the form of the products of her body. When you touch silk, eat beef, fish or rice, or quaff beer, you are in contact with the essence of Ukemochi. Ukemochi may also linger under the guise of Inari (or at least some guises of Inari).

**Sacred site:** Ukemochi is venerated in the Outer Shrine of Ise, whose primary deity is Amaterasu. (Tsuki-Yomi is venerated there, too.) **See also:** *Amaterasu; Inari; Kami; Susano'o; Tsuki-Yomi*

## Ukko

### *The Old Man*

**Origin:** Finland

Ukko was the supreme male deity of the pre-Christian Finns. He is technically the lord of thunder, but he is more than that: Ukko is the lord of abundance, well-being, prosperity, and fertility. He is invoked to control the weather but also for healing, safe childbirth, and luck in hunting.

Ukko is celebrated by toasting him and drinking in his honor. Christian commentators were appalled by the ecstatic, sexual nature of his rites: men and women drank and celebrated together. Ukko is sometimes classified among those spirits believed to lurk under the guise of Santa Claus.

**Consort:** Rauni

**Attribute:** Hammer (source of his thunder) **Creatures:** Reindeer, butterfly, snakes **See also:** *Aiatar; Odin; Rauni; Saturn*

## Uma

*Lady of the Mountains; Lady of Light*

**Origin:** Himalayas

The goddess Uma, daughter of Himavat, Lord of the Himalayas, and the Apsara Mena, is the sister of river goddess Ganga. Different versions of Uma's myth exist, but in all she determines to marry Lord Shiva, who has retreated from the world in grief following the death of his beloved Sati. Uma may be the reincarnation of Sati.

Shiva, living an extreme ascetic existence, took no notice of Uma. Finally, a sage (rishi) sent by Indra advised Uma to simultaneously perform the following:

- Visualize Shiva.

- Practice austerities.
- Chant the mantra *OM NA MAH SHI VA YAH*.

The sage assured Uma that if she did this long enough and intensely enough, Shiva would come to love her. How long is long enough? Uma practiced austerities, chanting, and meditation for eighteen-thousand years in order to gain Shiva as a spouse.

She abandoned her luxurious life as a princess, traveling to a forested mountain to meditate on Shiva. Uma wore bark clothing and ate only fruit and leaves that fell from trees. She surrounded herself with five fires: four bonfires around her and the sun above. Finally, she abandoned eating all together. She stood endlessly on one leg, as in the yoga position (*asana*) called *Ardha Chandrasana*, chanting her mantra, focused on Shiva and her goal. The sage had not lied to her: Shiva appeared, impressed and moved by her austerities and determination, and took Uma as his bride.

Uma is usually venerated alongside Shiva as an aspect of Parvati. However, she is also worshipped independently, especially in the Himalayan nation of Nepal. Female ascetics, in particular, venerate Uma as a role model.

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*The myth of Uma and Shiva is retold graphically in Virgin Comics' Uma.*

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**See also:** *Apsara; Ganga; Indra; Parvati; Sati; Shiva* and the Glossary entry for *Mantra*

## **Umm Es Subyan**

### *The Child Witch*

King Solomon summoned a parade of harmful, malignant spirits to appear before him and reveal their identities. He also demanded that they reveal who or what was the antidote to the harm they caused. Among the spirits who appeared to him was one who identified herself ominously and solely as the “Mother of Sons”, the literal translation of the Arabic *Umm es Subyan*, also sometimes translated as “Mother of Children.” Umm es Subyan has dominion over people and their possessions. She becomes intensely fixated and jealous of women, striking out at them by causing their children to die. (She’s called the child witch because of what she does to children, not because she is a

child.) • Umm es Subyan causes infertility, impotence, miscarriage, and stillbirth.

- She kills children.
- She destroys property, careers, harvests, and financial well-being.

Solomon forced her to reveal a device that would protect against her. She promised to avoid harming anyone carrying the amulet known as the Seven Covenants of Solomon and never to go near the amulet. Needless to say, the Seven Covenants of Solomon was once an extremely popular amulet, fairly ubiquitous in the Middle East, Ethiopia, and North Africa. The amulet was hung from children's necks, hung over cradles, and carried by men and women alike.

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*The standard Seven Covenants of Solomon amulet is a lithographed strip of paper, four inches wide and seventy-nine inches long. The text is heavily Islamic: it invokes the protection of God, the four archangels, the Prophet and also recounts the story of Solomon and Umm es Subyan (reminding her of her vow, just in case she forgot). The scroll is rolled up tightly, tied, and placed into a leather or silver amulet case.*

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**Manifestation:** Umm es Subyan appeared to Solomon in the form of an old, scrawny, blue-eyed woman with disheveled hair and a uni-brow. Flames emerged from her gaping mouth. She has clawed hands and a voice loud enough to fell trees. She doesn't usually reveal herself full force but told Solomon that she usually signals her presence via the sound of animal noises heard where they shouldn't be. The sound is heard, but the appropriate animal is nowhere near. She barks, meows, hisses, neighs, and so forth. Umm es Subyan has a seemingly unlimited repertoire of sounds.

**See also:** *Solomon, King; Karina; Lilith*

**Urisk**

**Origin:** Scotland

The Urisk is a water spirit, variously classified as a Fairy or Elf. He haunts lonely ponds, springs, and waterfalls in the Scottish Highlands. The Urisk is a gregarious spirit who enjoys human company and sometimes seeks it out. He resembles a goat god, like Pan or fauns. His appearance makes people nervous, so encounters are often tense. The Urisk can be extremely helpful and benevolent (but can be tricky and mischievous, too). His behavior may depend on the reactions of humans he meets.

**See also:** *Elf; Fairy; Faun; Fuath; Pan*

### Ursitory

**Origin:** Roma (Gypsy)

The Ursitory are three birth Fairies who arrive on the third night after birth to foretell a baby's fate. Only the infant can see them but the mother and midwife (*drabarni*: literally "herb woman") can hear them and thus their pronouncements. No one can change destiny once it's been fixed by the Ursitory. The fate they decree cannot be annulled. The Ursitory make no mistakes and do not lie. They cannot be bribed. In *The Ursitory*, the 1946 book by Roma author Matéo Maximoff (17 January 1917–24 November 1999), the author uses the word *angels* as a synonym for the Ursitory in order to emphasize their power, grandeur, and significance.

#### URSITORY BIRTH RITUAL

Invite good fortune by welcoming the Ursitory politely: • On the third night following a birth, cast a circle within which you must place offerings for the Ursitory. The circle should be large enough to enclose the baby and may be cast around the baby's bed and a small table.

- Set three places, one for each Ursitory. Each Ursitory should receive a glass of wine and a slice of bread or cake. It's recommended that sweet bread or honey cake be served in hopes that the destiny they reveal will be similar.

**Manifestation:** Depending on who's describing them, the Ursitory may be male or female. Sometimes *Ursitory* refers to three male spirits and *Urme* refers to their three female counterparts.

**See also:** *Fairy, Birth; Keshalyi*

## Ushas

*Leader of Light*

**Also known as:** Ushus; Usas; Usha

**Origin:** India (Vedic)

Ushas, Goddess of Dawn, is the twin sister of Rati, Goddess of Night. Sometimes the sisters are partners and friends; sometimes they're bitter rivals. Ushas brings the light that heralds each new day, driving a chariot drawn by seven cows or mares with saffron-colored wings. Her name may be translated as "to burn." Demons and malignant spirits run and hide from her like cockroaches fleeing kitchen lights.

**Manifestation:** Ushas wears saffron-colored robes and a veil. She reveals herself fully to enlightened adepts only.

**Number:** 7

**See also:** *Aurora; Eos; Rati*

## Uzume

**Also known as:** Ama-no-Uzume

**Origin:** Japan

**Classification:** Kami

When the despairing sun goddess Amaterasu barricaded herself in a cave, the world plunged into darkness. Try as they might, none of the other kami could persuade her to emerge. They sat outside her cave, as despondent and despairing as Amaterasu within. Finally, Uzume, the

Goddess of Mirth, approached. She whispered to the smith kami and set them the task of creating a mirror and situating it right before Amaterasu's cave. Then Uzume bound her head and sleeves with vines, overturned a barrel, and climbed upon it. Grasping leafy branches in her hands, she began to stomp rhythmically on the drum and dance. It's unclear how the other kami first reacted, but eventually her joy was infectious. They began to clap and drum, too.

Uzume's dance evolved into a strip tease, one full of fun, defiance, and humor. She exposed her breasts. She flashed her vagina. All the other kami roared with laughter. Amaterasu, locked within her cave, was puzzled. She heard laughter, not grieving. Why was no one mourning her absence? She called out to ask what was going on. Uzume called back, telling her that the kami had a brand-new sun goddess, one more beautiful than ever. She beckoned Amaterasu to come see. Amaterasu, unable to resist, poked her head out and, gazing directly at the mirror positioned before the cave entrance, saw her own radiant beauty. Before she could retreat, she was pulled from the cave and the entrance blocked. Dance and hearty laughter restore order to the world.

Uzume came to the rescue with Amaterasu and again with Sarutahiko. (See: *Sarutahiko*.) Uzume, savior of the world, is not a young beauty nor is she the standard sex goddess. Instead she is envisioned as a middle-aged woman who doesn't appear especially youthful or young for her age. Her breasts and belly are a little saggy. She's got some wrinkles, and her hair may be a little gray. She could probably lose a little weight, but it doesn't matter: she is the spirit of joy and good humor that defies despair. Uzume is a primal spirit of shamanism, intoxication, sex, fertility, and reproduction. She is not mirthful because she is innocent or inexperienced. Uzume has seen it all and still perceives the joy of life, even in moments of absolute, deepest despair.

Uzume is the prototype for Japanese shamanic dance. She is still dancing under the friendly guise of Okame.

**See also:** *Amaterasu; Amatsumara; Bastet; Baubo; Kami; Okame*



## V

### Vajra

The Sanskrit word *Vajra* and its Tibetan synonym *Dorje* are variously interpreted as diamond, lightning bolt, thunderbolt or phallus. The Vajra/Dorje is also a kind of ritual knife or chopper. In addition to these literal meanings, *Vajra* also has tremendous extra resonance, symbolizing:

- Diamond-hard, indestructible wisdom
- That perfect piercing moment of epiphany and clarity
- Enlightenment
- Divine inspiration
- Fertility; procreativity
- Life essence and the ability to generate life
- Death
- Apocalypse

*Vajrayana* or “Diamond Vehicle” is the name given to esoteric, Tantric Buddhist traditions. The word *Vajra* is incorporated into the names of many spirits, not limited to those included in this book.

**See also:** *Ghantapa; Marichi; Vajranairatmya; Vajrapani; Vajravahari; Vajravetali*

### Vajranairatmya

*Diamond Self essence; Lady of Emptiness; She Who has Achieved Self essence*

**Also known as:** Nairatmya; Vajra Nairatmya

**Origin:** Tibet

**Classification:** Buddha

Vajranairatmya is a path to enlightenment and a primary Tantric deity. She is the spirit of freedom, the goddess of “non-self”. Vajranairatmya achieved enlightenment and is now called the Ego-less One. She travels with a retinue of eight dakinis.

**Manifestation:** Vajranairatmya appeared to the sage Virupa in the guise of an older, gaunt, low-caste woman with very dark, blue-black skin.

**Iconography:** Vajranairatmya wears a crown of small skulls over her red hair. Her hair is otherwise ornamented with a five-pronged vajra. She wears a tiger-skin skirt. She is envisioned in sublime union with Hevajra or by herself as a seated yogini. In her four-armed guise, she dances within a halo of flames.

**Attribute:** Vajra, bowl formed from a skull

**Emblem:** Downward-facing triangle

**Consort:** Hevajra

**Color:** Blue

**See also:** *Buddha; Dakini; Vajra; Vajravetali*

## Vajrapani

*Thunderbolt Bearer; Diamond Bearer*

**Also known as:** Phyagna Dorje

**Classification:** Bodhisattva; Buddha

Vajrapani began as a Yaksha and was so fierce that he eventually attained the status of Chief General of the Yakshas. He is now one of the three principal protectors of the Buddha, alongside Avalokiteshvara and Manjushri. The three are sometimes venerated together.

Vajrapani epitomizes the power of *all* the Buddhas. He is a complex spirit who manifests in many forms. Vajrapani is the companion and

bodyguard of the Buddha, but he is also a Buddha himself. According to legend, he will be the last Buddha to appear in the world cycle. He is a principal Bodhisattva.

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*When the Nagas approached the Buddha seeking to listen and learn from him, Vajrapani was charged with protecting them from their mortal enemies, the Garudas. In order to confuse the Garudas and combat them if necessary, Vajrapani assumed a form closely resembling a Garuda.*

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Vajrapani is wrathful, a spirit of fierce, benevolent compassion. Because of his associations with Nagas, he has evolved into a rain deity and is petitioned when rain is either too abundant or insufficient. Vajrapani banishes the worst demons. As a guardian spirit, his image is frequently found near the entrances to Buddhist shrines in Mongolian and Tibetan temples and in the homes of devotees.

**Iconography:** The earliest images of Vajrapani were based on Greek images of Heracles. In his modern aspect, he is draped in a tiger or elephant skin. A snake coils around his neck. He wears a crown of five skulls. Vajrapani dances within a halo of flames symbolic of the energy of the enlightened mind (and his fearlessness).

**Attributes:** Vajra, blue lotus, rope

**Consort:** Sujata

**Color:** Dark blue

**Mantra:** *OM VAJRAPANI HUM* (Chanting Vajrapani's mantra reputedly dispels fear *and* illness and thus is beneficial for hypochondriacs among others.)

**See also:** *Bodhisattva; Buddha; Garuda; Heracles; Naga; Vajra* and the Glossary entry for *Mantra*

**Vajravahari**

## *The Diamond Sow*

**Also known as:** Vajra Dakini; Vajrayogini; Dorje Pakmo

**Classification:** Buddha; Dakini; Yidam

Vajravahari, gorgeous yogini and adept, is a spirit of transmutation. She oversees the transformation from mundane to magical and holy. She is the presiding spirit of sacred enlightenment. Vajravahari is the epitome of wisdom and the essence of pleasure. She is among the most important meditation deities and a path to enlightenment.

Vajravahari Buddha is credited with the creation of dzi beads, much coveted, mysterious, sacred stone beads. According to Tibetan myth, once upon a time, when Tibet was overwhelmed by illness and despair, Vajravahari, in her compassion, released dzi beads from the sky. Dzi beads transmit and radiate her blessings of good fortune and protection from evil, illness, harm, and all danger.

**Manifestation:** Vajravahari is usually envisioned naked but for a diadem formed from five skulls. a garland of fifty severed heads and ornaments crafted of human bone. Her long hair hangs loose below her waist. She is fierce, wrathful, and laughing.

**Iconography:** Vajravahari is usually depicted in sacred union with her consort, Paramasukha-Chakrasamvara (Ghantapa) but she is also sometimes portrayed alone or with her retinue.

**Attributes:** Vajra chopper and a bowl formed from a skull

**Color:** Red

**Animal:** Sow

**Sacred site:** Her shrine in Patan, Nepal

**See also:** *Buddha; Dakini; Ghantapa; Vajra; Yidam*

## **Vajravetali**

*The Diamond Zombie; The Adamantine Ghoul; The Resurrected Diamond;*

## *The Diamond Vampire*

**Also known as:** Vajra Vetali; Dorje Rolangma

**Classification:** Dakini; Buddha

Vajravetali, Wisdom Dakini, is the consort of Yamantaka, the Diamond Terrifier. She is among the eight dakinis in the entourage of Vajranairatmya. She is somewhat eclipsed by these more famous spirits, but Vajravetali is an extremely significant Tantric deity in her own right and was once venerated independently. She is the embodiment of the wrathful power that heals and resurrects. Vajravetali straddles the threshold between life and death: she annihilates fear, especially fear of death and the afterlife.

**Iconography:** She is envisioned in divine union with her consort Yamantaka.

**Attributes:** Vajra chopper and skull cup

**Consort:** Yamantaka

**Color:** Vajravetali owns all shades and colors reminiscent of corpses. Her primary color is slate blue but in the context of sacred imagery, she may be depicted in various colors including red and green.

**See also:** *Dakini; Vajra; Vajranairatmya; Yamantaka*

## **Valkyries**

**Origin:** Norse

Valkyries, Goddesses of Life, Death, Battle, and Magic, serve as psychopomps, divine escorts guiding souls to the next realm. The original Valkyries were daughters of Odin and Herta, but their ranks swelled to also include deified priestesses of Odin. Their leader is Freya, operating under her *nom de guerre*, Valfreya. Individual Valkyries like Brunhilde, Hilda, and Sigrun achieved renown and are sometimes venerated independently. They are also venerated alongside Freya, Herta, and/or Odin.

The name *Valkyrie* may derive from *Valr* or “fallen in battle” and *Kyria*, “she who chooses.” They are not exclusively battlefield goddesses: they also serve as escorts for those dying elsewhere, but they are now most famous for their role on the fields of war. Valkyries travel to battlefields where they determine a battle’s course: who wins, who loses, who lives, and who dies. According to Norse cosmology, souls of half the dead warriors journey to Freya’s hall while the other half go to Valhalla, Odin’s hall. The Valkyries select the warriors going to Valhalla and serve as their escort.

Souls arriving at Valhalla are greeted by Valkyries bearing drinking horns filled with Odin’s best mead. In Valhalla, Valkyries supervise hospitality services, keeping an eye on distribution of drinking vessels and tableware, serving as Odin’s hostesses.

The Norns are sometimes classified among the Valkyries: they may perform double duty. Like the Norns, the Valkyries are weaving goddesses, although their materials are unique:

- Arrows serve as shuttles for the Valkyries’ looms.
- Severed human heads serve as weights.
- Entrails form their warp; their weft is consistently crimson.

Valkyries are bird goddesses. They manifest as birds and communicate as birds. Their origins may lie in ancient swan goddesses. They serve a similar function as those other bird goddesses, Sirens and Vila and possibly Dakinis.

Valkyries are also erotic, shamanic goddesses (and many may be deified shamans). They enter into sacred marriages with shamans, warriors, and heroes (not necessarily mutually exclusive). Valkyries guide, protect, and sponsor their human lovers, sometimes battling with other spirits on their behalf. It’s crucial to recall that Valkyries are not only involved in decisions regarding which soldiers die in battle: they also help determine which soldiers survive. The Valkyries teach shamanic skills, martial arts, battle spells, and rune lore. They teach and sponsor women and men.

- *The Valkyrie (Die Walküre)* is the second of the cycle of four operas comprising Richard Wagner’s *Ring of the Nibelungs* and features the famous musical theme “The Ride of the Valkyries.” • Valkyrie, the

Marvel Comics superheroine, is an incarnation of Brunhilde.

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*Valkyries are psychic, spiritual, and magical warriors as well as martial artists. They may be invoked to battle on your behalf in many contexts not only actual, literal war.*

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**Manifestation:** Valkyries manifest as shield maidens, sometimes beautiful, sometimes not. They also manifest as ravens and swans.

**Attribute:** Horn (as for drinking)

**Mount:** Despite romantic nineteenth-century illustrations of Valkyries riding horses, Valkyries ride wolves. In fact, *Valkyrie horse* is a traditional Norse *kenning* (poetic circumlocution; euphemism; sacred word puzzle) for “wolf.” Modern Valkyries may perhaps show a preference for Honda Valkyrie motorcycles.

**Creatures:** Bees, swans, horses, wolves, crows, ravens

**Celestial:** The Valkyries are associated with the Aurora Borealis, the Northern Lights

**See also:** *Dakini; Freya; Herta; Ildiko; Norns; Odin; Siren; Swan Goddesses; Velinas; Vila*

## Vampire

*Vampire* has evolved into a catch-all phrase that encompasses a tremendous variety of spirits and creatures, some based on ancient traditions, others on modern imagination. What vampires have in common is that they drain life-essence from others, one way or another.

Contrary to popular Hollywood movies, blood-sucking vampires tend to be an aberration. Although they did exist prior to Bram Stoker’s incredibly influential best-selling 1897 novel, *Dracula*, they were rare and are very much a product of Gothic fiction. (Fifty years before

Dracula, there was James Malcolm Rymer's penny-dreadful opus, *Varney the Vampire; or, the Feast of Blood.*)

Traditional folkloric vampires have comparatively little to do with many literary or movie vampires. Vampire traditions exist throughout virtually all of Eastern and Central Europe. Similar sounding words exist in Slavic, Finno-Ugric, and Romance languages. Variations include *upir*, *wampir*, *vampyr*, and *upior* as well as *vampire*. (They may all derive from *ubir*, a Turkic word for "witch.")

Traditionally speaking, vampires are understood as revenants, living corpses of witches/sorcerers/shamans/magical practitioners who, for one reason or another, rise from the grave. At their most neutral, they are harmful merely because they are not obeying natural laws; at their worst, they rise with the deliberate intent to cause harm. (Italian director Mario Bava's horror movie classic *Black Sunday* features a reasonably traditional vampire-witch out for revenge.)

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*Another interpretation suggests that a vampire may not not be dead at all but a living sorcerer able to send out his or her shadow soul (and recall it when desired) and that this soul is interpreted by others as a vampire*

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Although little or no notion of blood-sucking exists in the original conception, that doesn't mean a vampire isn't potentially dangerous. Because vampires may be in a liminal state, between death and life, they require life-energy (*chi*; the aura), which is easiest absorbed from the living. However this life force is more likely to be absorbed via sexual energy or siphoning off *chi* than sucking blood. From this perspective, Fox Spirits who sexually drain men to the point of death are considered vampiric.

Traditional antidotes to vampires include bells, sunlight, bright light, a rooster's crow, garlic, peppermint, onions, silver bullets, and bullets melted down from old bell metal.



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*Various spells and charms intended to protect against vampires may be found in Judika Illes' The Encyclopedia of 5000 Spells.*

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### **BANISHING VAMPIRES**

Surprisingly perhaps, the puppet Count von Count of *Sesame Street* is a fairly accurate folkloric vampire, compelled to count whenever confronted with anything capable of being counted. Many vampires, like so many ghosts and low-level demons, are afflicted with obsessive-compulsive syndrome:

- Place fishing nets over any entrances you'd like to protect: allegedly the vampire will be forced to count all the holes or knots and will never make it indoors to bother you.
- Alternatively spill poppy, millet, or some other tiny seeds: the vampire may feel compelled to stop and count or pick up those seeds.

**See also:** *Fox Spirits; Hone-Onna; Kumiho; Lamiae; Langsuir; Menthe; Vampire Mermaids; Vampire Pumpkin; Vampiri*

### **Vampire Mermaids**

Many mermaids have associations with death. Some are psychopomps providing responsible escort service to the realms of death, especially for those who die by drowning. Others are just lethal killers.

Legends describe mermaids luring people into the water for the express purpose of killing them. Little reason or motivation is given. Many of the killings seem random; in other words, these mermaids aren't justice spirits who target only those they deem guilty of some crime. Neither are these guardian spirits: they actually lure people into the water rather than just punish trespassers.

Now in some cases, this may just be bad press. Most mermaids are benevolent beings: they've been venerated since that old time immemorial. Some stories may be constructs intended to discourage this veneration and instill fear. However, some stories do derive from pre-

Christian traditions. What many of these killer mermaids have in common is their method of dispatching their victims. They don't drown them or devour them: they absorb their life-essence.

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*A classic fictional example occurs in H. G. Wells' 1902 novel, The Sea Lady, in which a mermaid pretends to drown in the hope that her intended target will be stimulated to enter the water—and her trap!—in an attempt to rescue her.*

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Vampire mermaids suck breath, not blood. Stealing life-essence seems to be their motivation. These mermaids are cold, calculating hunters. Many are extremely beautiful and sexy and there is usually an erotic component to their seduction. These mermaids more closely resemble traditional vampires than traditional benevolent mermaids, their unique quality being that they are vampires who reside in water.

**Manifestation:** Although some vampire mermaids possess fish tails, others are indistinguishable in appearance from human women.

**Iconography:** The mermaid as femme fatale with her lover caught in her fatal embrace is a favorite theme of Salon, Symbolist, and Pre-Raphaelite artists alike. This type of mermaid also occasionally appears as the villain or monster in horror movies.

**See also:** *Fox Spirits; Kappa; Lamia of the Sea; Lorelei; Mermaid; Ondine; Siren; Syrena; Vampire*

## Vampire Pumpkin

**Origin:** Romani (Gypsy)

Eat pumpkins quickly, lest they turn into vampires. People aren't the only beings who can become vampiric. According to Balkan Romani folk traditions, hard-shelled, seedy fruits and vegetables can become

vampires, too. Although melons and squashes can also be vampiric, pumpkins—maybe because of Halloween associations—have garnered the most attention.

The potential vampire is activated when a pumpkin is kept longer than ten days or not consumed before Christmas. Leaving it out all night exposed to a full moon may activate transformation, too. Not every pumpkin is guaranteed to turn into a vampire just as not every corpse is expected to rise. Vampire pumpkins betray themselves by making growling noises or developing red, vaguely blood-like splotches on their shells.

In general, there's no need to worry about vampire pumpkins very much. As they don't possess teeth, they can't cause sudden, immediate harm. They are, however, unhealthy to keep around as they gradually absorb psychic energy from those around them. If a person is debilitated with low energy and a weak aura, such pumpkins can eventually cause damage, although it is a slow process. Vampire pumpkins also attract malevolent spirits.

- Plunge pumpkins (or other suspect produce) into boiling water to kill them. Then break them into pieces and discard. (The traditional weapon for breaking them is a branch or handmade broom, which is then also discarded.)

**See also:** *Vampire*

## Vampiri

**Origin:** Macedonia

The Vampiri, the Macedonian variant of the vampire, is a dead soul unable to transition to the next realm because of unfulfilled obligations. Unfortunately having transformed into Vampiri, many forget the original goal that keeps them tied to Earth. They are doomed to wander Earth until they either fulfill their vowed obligations or are sent to the next realm via magical or shamanic rituals.

Vampiri rise after dark, congregating in the cemetery where they dance and socialize with other Vampiri. They tend to return home to

their families, whom they usually do not harm (unless that was their original unfulfilled goal). They will drink blood from family livestock and other people's livestock, too.

Although they're dead, male Vampiri can father children. Vampiri tend to return to the women to whom they were married in life—their unfulfilled obligation may be fathering a child so as to continue a family name or lineage—but they may start fresh, new relationships, too. When the child of a Vampiri matures, it may manifest extraordinary shamanic skills, including profound exorcism talents. Many are extremely gifted at recognizing demons in disguise.

**Manifestation:** Vampiri take corporeal form. They are exceptional shape-shifters, transforming instantly from human to animal forms. A favored manifestation includes a four-eyed dog.

**See also:** *Vampire*

## Vanir

The Vanir are one of the pantheons of Norse mythology and pre-Christian religion. They are an indigenous pantheon; the Aesir who arrived from afar encountered the Vanir already living in the Norse lands. Their realm is Vanaheim.

The Vanir are associated with magic, shamanism, and prophecy. They are spirits of land, sea, fertility, and creative energy. They may or may not be the same as Elves, although they are affiliated. The Vanir are associated with land spirits: spirits that are tied to specific natural formations. (Thus every rock, cliff, cave, or spring has its own unique, individual presiding spirit.) The Vanir are erotic spirits who may engage in divine marriages with people.

The Vanir evoked greater hostility from the Christian Church than their Aesir counterparts, so less information about the Vanir now survives. Among the most significant Vanir spirits are Njord, Freya, and Freyr, the Elven King. These three are the best known of the Vanir spirits, if only because they were sent to live with the Aesir as hostages to preserve peace between the pantheons. Njord, Freyr, and Freya got

along well with their captors and were essentially incorporated into the Aesir cosmology, even while retaining their previous identities.

**Manifestation:** The Vanir are notorious shape-shifters.

**Emblem:** Ships

**Sacred sites:** The Vanir were associated with some gravesites, which then became considered sacred turf. We know they were associated with sacred mounds because references to organized attacks on these mounds survive. (The attacks were intended as religious desecration, not treasure hunting. Attackers were proud of their actions, documenting them.) Graves associated with the Vanir include ship graves, in which one or more bodies were placed in ships or boats, which were then buried. Unearthed bodies have included a high proportion of women.

**See also:** *Aesir; Angerboda; Elves; Freya; Freyr; Herta; Mimir; Njord; Sidhe;* and the Glossary entry for *Marriage*

## Vanth

**Origin:** Etruscan

Vanth, Goddess of Destiny, records the fate of humans. Images of Vanth appear frequently on Etruscan tomb paintings and sculptures, often in the company of Charun. Vanth, in the guise of an attractive young woman, serves as a psychopomp, escorting dead souls portrayed walking or riding in wagons to their next destination. Although she is now sometimes described as a “demon” nothing indicates that she is not wholly benevolent.

**Manifestation:** A young woman. She may have short hair, or it may be pulled up in a bun. She may have wings.

**Iconography:** Vanth is dressed like a hunting girl. Some perceive her outfit as resembling those of the Erinyes.

**Attribute:** Flaming torch, key, sword, scroll

**See also:** *Ankou; Charun; Erinyes; Santissima Muerte*

## Velinas

**Also known as:** Velnias; Velas; Velns

**Origin:** Baltic

Velinas, one-eyed patron of seers and prophets, is lord of the dead. He rides through the night leading a host of ghosts and ancestral spirits. (These ancestral spirits are known as Veles.) He also has dominion over cattle and livestock. Velinas is the most popular figure of Lithuanian folklore and allegedly has over two hundred names. In modern Lithuanian, *Velnias* may be translated as “devil.”

Velinas has a complicated relationship with people. He blesses and protects but also tricks and seduces. He can be extremely friendly and gregarious, seeking close relationships, alliances, even love. Velinas has a reputation as a Lothario. He’s very fond of human women and may engage them in sacred marriage. He loves musicians and will ask them to play for him and entertain him. He can be very helpful, too, serving as a guardian spirit who protects against enemies. But he can be hostile, too, in a tricky, indirect way that can sneak up on someone. Velinas sometimes plays with people, tempting them toward destructive behavior.

**Favored people:** Women, psychics, clairvoyants, fortune-tellers, seers, shamans, mediums, musicians, smiths, hunters

**Manifestation:** Velinas is a master shape-shifter who takes the form of animals, birds and reptiles as well as people.

**Attributes:** Noose, lance

**Consort:** Veliona

**Color:** Black

**Creatures:** Black birds and animals

**Trees:** Coniferous trees, alders; Velinas was worshipped in groves.

**Feast:** Velinas presides over Velines, the traditional Lithuanian feast of the dead, which now corresponds to All Souls’ Day (2 November) and

the preceding eve but was once a substantially longer holiday. (See also: *Veliona*.) He also presides over a spring festival of the dead celebrated on the first full moon Sunday after the spring equinox.

**Sacred site:** Velinas presides over the Golbe spring near Insterburg (now part of modern Germany but once Prussia). Allegedly bathing one eye with Velinas' water bestowed the gift of clairvoyance.

**Offerings:** Libations of beer and ale, cooked pork and grains, candles, decorated eggs

**See also:** *Odin; Veliona; Volos*

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*The names Velinas, Veliona, and the Veles derive from the same root as Valkyrie and Valhalla, hall of dead warriors. Vila may or may not derive from the same root word. (Vila lack the battle associations of Veliona and the Valkyries.) Another related word is the Old English Wael, meaning a corpse left on the battlefield.*

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## Veliona

**Also known as:** Veliuona

**Origin:** Baltic

Veliona, the Dark Mother, is the guardian goddess of Earth, water, and subterranean regions. Together with her consort, Velinas, Veliona rules the spirits of the dead known as the Veles who live in her subterranean realm. Her primary function is to protect the dead, but she also guards water, especially subterranean water and hidden treasure. Veliona has dominion over fertility of land, animals, and people. She lives within Earth, the better to keep an eye on her charges. Although Veliona is guardian of the dead in general, she personally receives fallen warriors into her realms, especially those who died protecting Lithuania from invading Christian crusaders (the Teutonic Knights).

**Consort:** Velinas

**Animal:** Pig

**Sacred site:** The Lithuanian town Veliuona on the Nemunas River, named in her honor, was once the center of her veneration. A church is built over the site of her old sanctuary.

**Feast:** Veliona presides over Velines, the Lithuanian festival of the dead. Once upon a time, the festival coincided with harvest celebrations in October and lasted four weeks. Under Christian influence, the holiday is now reduced to one day, 2 November and the preceding eve. In parts of Lithuania, the festival coincided with pig-slaughtering time (as well as the slaughter of other animals including cows, goats, sheep and poultry). A sacrifice was immediately offered to Velinas by the eldest family member. Portions dedicated to Veliona were then cooked immediately in a grain stew and offered equally immediately. Food was also offered to the Veles, souls of returning dead relatives.

**Offerings:** Libations of beer, pork products—especially sausages—and candles

**See also:** *Mania; Tuonetar; Valkyrie; Velinas; Vila; Volos*

## Venus

**Origin:** Italy

Venus was originally the Italian goddess of fertile soil, the presiding spirit of the vegetable garden. She was a rustic garden goddess with a relatively minimal cult until the Romans identified her with Aphrodite. According to Roman legend, the Romans were descendents of Trojan refugees, the last survivors who escaped the burning city and fled to Italy, where they founded the city of Rome. These Trojans were led by Aeneas, whose survival was ensured by his mother, Greek goddess Aphrodite.

Julius Caesar traced his ancestry to one of Aeneas' sons, Aphrodite's grandson. He wished to honor his divine ancestress, but Aphrodite was a



bit too foreign for Roman taste and too associated with the sea and lascivious rites. A homegrown Aphrodite was sought and found in the beautiful, fertile vegetable goddess Venus. Julius Caesar dedicated a magnificent temple to Venus Genetrix in the Roman Forum.

In addition to assuming Aphrodite's traditional attributes and functions, Venus evolved into an ancestral goddess of the Roman elite, those who descended from Aeneas. Venus and Mars, ancestor of Romulus, founder of Rome, serve as the guardians of Rome.

**Sacred days:**

- 1 April, feast of Venus the Heart Turner: female devotees seeking her blessings of happy love and romance bathe her statues and then garland them with flowers.
- 19 August: houses and gardens are dedicated to Venus, and her blessings are invoked; kitchen gardeners have an official vacation day.

**See also:** *Aphrodite; Mars* and the Glossary entry for *Identification*

## Verbeia

**Origin:** Celtic

Verbeia is the presiding spirit of England's River Wharfe. Her name may mean "meandering" or "winding." Her existence is documented by an altar dedicated to her discovered in North Yorkshire. Much of what is known or surmised about Verbeia derives from this altar.

**Iconography:** Verbeia is portrayed wearing a long pleated robe. She holds a large zig-zaggy snake in each hand. The snakes seem to ripple, as if combining serpentine and watery imagery.

**Creature:** Snakes (Because of the prominence given to snakes in her image, it's theorized that she's a healing goddess.)

**See also:** *Fauna; Hygeia; Nehalennia; Sirona*

## Vesta

**Origin: Italy**

Vesta, Lady of the Flame, Guardian of the Hearth, was the preeminent goddess of Rome. Her name may derive from a root word meaning “to burn.” Although Vesta is identified with the Greek hearth goddess, Hestia, and they possess much in common, they are not the same. Vesta was venerated in Italy long before her identification with Hestia and played a far more significant role in Roman religion than Hestia did in Greece. Vesta was included in virtually every Roman sacrifice. She was consistently the last deity invoked during ceremonies: the polar opposite of Janus.

Vesta’s small circular temple in the Roman Forum was the epicenter of Roman life and religion. Its round shape marked it as architecturally unusual, in comparison to standard quadrangular Roman temples. Vesta’s temple was designed to recall the round huts of the earliest Romans. Vesta was the goddess of Rome’s origins, so sacred and powerful that her archaic traditions could not be changed, even when they fell from fashion elsewhere. Vesta was the last and ultimately only Roman deity served exclusively by a female priesthood.

Vesta’s fire priestesses, the famed Vestal Virgins, lived next door to her temple in a large building arranged around an atrium. Six Vestal Virgins were chosen in childhood by Rome’s high priest, the Pontifex Maximus, from among the daughters of Rome’s most noble families. It was considered an exceptional honor to be asked to serve. Compared to the average Roman woman, the Vestal Virgins possessed many legal and economic privileges, although they also lived under severe restrictions and threat of penalty.

Vestal Virgins served Vesta for thirty years: ten spent learning the Mysteries of Vesta, ten in service to Vesta, and ten training their replacements. They were sworn to celibacy for the thirty years of their service but could marry afterwards. (Because they entered Vesta’s service so young, they were not old women at its conclusion.) If a Vestal broke her vow, she was whipped, then buried alive within the boundaries of Rome. Her lover was publicly whipped to death.

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*The Vestal Virgins were considered so sacred that if they walked past a condemned man, he was instantly pardoned.*

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The primary role of the Vestal Virgins was ensuring that Rome's sacred flame never went out. (If it did, the Vestals were scourged.) If the fire ever went out, it could only be relit the old-fashioned way: by rubbing two sticks together. The fire could not be brought from elsewhere. Vestal Virgins were also responsible for creating *mola salsa*, sacred ritual salt cakes. Mola salsa was offered to Vesta as a sacrifice; it was also sprinkled on animals before their sacrifice to other deities and used to purify space. Mola salsa was prepared with water drawn exclusively from Juturna's Well and carried in vessels that were impossible to set down without spilling the contents. Specially prepared salt was pounded with a mortar and then sliced with an archaic iron saw. The salt was mixed with farro wheat gathered on May 7, 9 and 11 only.

Roman Emperor Gratian (ruled 367–378 CE), hostile to Paganism, stopped paying the Vestal Virgins their established salary, diverting funds to the imperial postal service instead. Vesta's official fire was finally extinguished in 394 CE when Emperor Theodosius banned all devotion to Pagan spirits.

Vesta was also venerated in homes. She is present in all flames. Offerings to Vesta are placed directly into the fire. She is an oracular spirit: information is obtained from Vesta via flame-gazing.

- *Vesta Powder* is a highly combustible, mass-produced occult powder used to honor Vesta and to dispel general negativity, including gossip, evil spirits, and disturbing auras. It is sometimes sprinkled but more frequently burned in a fireplace, cauldron, or incense burner. Handle with care: it lights with a bang, producing a sudden leaping, flashing flame followed by lots of white smoke.

**Favored people:** Bakers, millers

**Iconography:** Vesta was rarely portrayed and even then usually veiled.

Instead, she is represented by fire.

**Emblem:** Flame

**Element:** Fire

**Animal:** Ass

**Mineral:** saltpeter (*Potassium nitrate*)

**Tree:** Bay laurel

**Sacred dates:**

- Her festival, the Vestalia: 9 June-15 June. From the seventh to the fifteenth of June, her sanctuary was open to women exclusively. Women entered her shrine barefoot. The fifteenth was the day for cleaning her shrine. Dirt was disposed of in the Tiber River.
- 1 March, the first day of the Roman year, when Vesta's fire was ritually re-lit (the New Year was moved to 1 January in 153 BCE honoring Janus).
- Vernal Equinox: branches of bay laurel before the Temple of Vesta were discarded.

**See also:** *Gabija; Hestia; Janus; Juturna; Kybele; Pales* and the Glossary entry for *Identification*

## Victoria

**Origin:** Rome

Victoria is the Roman goddess of victory. She was identified with Greek Nike, and it can now be extremely difficult to disentangle the two goddesses. Victoria was venerated alongside Jupiter and Mars rather than with Minerva. (Nike is intensely associated with Athena to whom Minerva is identified.) Victoria is more intensely and exclusively associated with military victory than Nike but of course this may be a reflection of her devotees, the Romans. Roman soldiers carried veneration of Victoria throughout the Roman Empire.

Victoria was a major goddess possessing a vast official cult that existed for centuries. The Romans had a hard time denying Victoria or giving her up: hers was among the last cults abandoned with the rise of Christianity. Victoria's image appeared on Roman coins until the third century C<sub>E</sub>.

**Iconography:** Victoria was envisioned as a winged woman carrying trophies and spoils taken from defeated enemies. She may stand with one foot resting on the globe. Her image was often incorporated into the reliefs carved on Roman triumphal arches, including the Arches of Augustus, Constantine, and Septimius Severus.

**Sacred sites:** Victoria had multiple temples, including one on the Palatine Hill dedicated in 294 BCE. An altar was dedicated to her in Rome's Senate house.

**See also:** *Andraste; Athena; Jupiter; Mars; Minerva; Nike* and the Glossary entry for *Identification*.

## Vidar

### *The Silent One*

**Origin:** Norse

Vidar is the son of Odin and the frost giant Grid. Although technically considered a Jotun, he is closely allied with the Aesir, his father's clan of spirits, and lives among them in Asgard. It is Vidar's destiny to avenge his father's demise at the final Battle of Ragnarok. Vidar is the opponent and slayer of the Fenris Wolf. Vidar and his half-brother Vali are among those few who are destined to survive Ragnarok and serve as rulers of the new world.

Grid fashioned special shoes for Vidar from the scraps of leather that cobblers save when they make all the other shoes on Earth. He wore these shoes at the battle of Ragnarok; allegedly these shoes enabled him to slay the Fenris Wolf and survive.

**Manifestation:** A huge, silent, powerful man described as being second

in strength only to Thor

**Attribute:** Thick-soled shoes

**Realm:** Vidar's hall in Asgard is called Vidi.

**Offerings:** He likes to drink; he likes to eat. He's a giant—that's all you need to know about his appetite. In addition, when your shoes wear out, rip off the soles or any bits of leather and offer them to him. After a little while, discard in the trash.

**See also:** *Aesir; Angerboda; Grid; Jotun; Loki; Odin; Thor*

## Vila

**Also known as:** Willies; Wila; Veela; Veles; Vily

The Vilas are beautiful, charming, dancing forest spirits of Central and Eastern Europe and the Balkans. The many variations in pronunciation of their name indicates the vast territory they inhabit. Depending on region, the word "Vila" may be singular *and* plural.

Vilas are shamanic spirits: magical dancers, skilled healers, herbalists, and teachers of witchcraft. Vilas are guardians of women, animals, and the forest. They are now most famous as punishing spirits:

- They punish hunters who fail to perform correct spiritual rituals.
- They punish men who betray women or leave them abandoned at the altar.

Vilas have developed a reputation as dread spirits of the forest. To describe something as giving you the willies is to compare it to the shiver of horror evoked by the Willies or Vilas. However, this may be a Christian attempt to discourage previously widespread veneration of Vilas.

No legends describe Vilas punishing or killing women. Instead, some women join the Vilas in the forest to dance and receive instruction in herbalism and other magical arts. Vilas are the sponsors of village sorceresses, midwives, and healers. They teach shamanic arts to women as well as to those men whom they favor. Vilas were the sponsors and

guardians of the Balkan hero Prince Marko. Depending on the legend, he may have been suckled on a Vila's milk in infancy. (The Vila in question may or may not have been his mother.)

The Vilas are literally alluring spirits who seem to prefer passive-aggressive modes of punishment when angered, rather than the sudden strike associated with many Fairies. Their primary weapon is dance. First they seduce men with their beauty and charm, luring them deeper into the forest and encouraging them to join their dance. Eventually when the men tire and have enough or think they'll move on to activities beyond dancing, they realize they're literally unable to stop: the Vilas dance them to death. Other legends suggest no seduction is needed; men wandering into the wrong neck of the woods suddenly find themselves compulsively dancing, akin to the Hans Christian Andersen story "The Red Shoes" or the Saint Vitus Dance. Again, the dance ends only with death.

Sometimes dancing has nothing to do with it. Other legends describe men who chance upon Vilas in the forest and, enchanted, fall hopelessly in love forever. Their love is unrequited so the men waste away, eventually dying. That said, Vilas will engage in sacred marriages with mortal men, if it's what the Vila desires. Individual Vilas have names and unique personalities. Historically some have been venerated independently, especially in Serbia.

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*Some perceive Vilas and Valkyries as cut from the same cloth because of the resemblance of their names, their shared associations with death, and because both are intensely identified with wolves and swans. Vilas and Valkyries may both descend from primordial swan goddesses.*

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- Legends of the Vilas form the basis for the ballet *Giselle*.
- In the Harry Potter novels, *Veela* are so charismatically beautiful that men find them magically irresistible.

**Manifestation:** Vilas are incredible shape-shifters who manifest as

swans, horses, snakes, or wolves but most famously as beautiful, longhaired women. Sometimes Vilas dance naked; sometimes they dress in diaphanous white. Bulgarian Vilas ride deer, using snakes for bridles.

**Rituals:** Although domestic altars may be built for them, offerings and petitions are traditionally brought to the Vila at springs, wells, forest caves, and clearings.

**Offerings:** Flowers, ribbons, fruit, pastries, mirrors, hair ornaments, bells

**See also:** *Fairy; Ielle; Samovila; Swan Goddesses; Valkyries; Veliona; White Ladies*

## Viracocha

**Also known as:** Wiracocha; Kon-Tiki

**Origin:** Andes Mountains

In the beginning, Viracocha emerged from the sacred waters of Lake Titicaca, or so goes an Andean myth. He created Earth and time, summoning the sun, moon, planets, and stars to emerge from the Island of the Sun in the center of the lake. He took stones from the shore and molded them into human beings. Viracocha and his sons gave people clothing, seeds, songs, and spirituality.

*Viracocha* is not a personal name but a title indicating Supreme Creator in various pre-Inca Andean pantheons. It is sometimes poetically translated as “sea foam,” but it literally means “sea of fat” in the Quechua language. In twenty-first-century industrialized civilization, *fat* has horrendously negative connotations, but way back when, in the Andes where life was tough and people struggled for calories not weight loss, fat had the connotation of extra power, wealth, and ease. Fat was perceived as the source of energy, and so *Viracocha* implies “Sea of Creation” or “Sea of Potential.” Viracocha is the force of creative energy. (The title later became an honorific for the Spanish conquerors and eventually for white people in general.)

Viracocha reigned as an omniscient, all powerful deity but was also



remote and inaccessible. (In some legends, Viracocha and sons sailed off across the Pacific, promising to return someday.) Andean cosmology acknowledged him as supreme creator but also recognized a world filled with all sorts of spirits who might be more responsive.

Among the masses, Viracocha was never as significant or beloved as Pachamama and the mountain spirits. The ruling Incas adopted Viracocha from the people they conquered, and he became part of their official myth. According to Inca legend, Viracocha personally gave Manco Capac, the first Inca ruler, a special headdress and battle axe.

**Manifestation:** Viracocha wears the sun as his crown. His tears are rain.

**Attribute:** Lightning bolts

**See also:** *Apu; Nakaq; Pachacamac; Pachamama*

## Virbius

**Origin:** Italy

Virbius, Lord of the Forest, is now most famous as Diana's chief companion at her shrine in the Forest of Nemi. He is invoked for virility.

- He may always have been a spirit of the woods.
- He may be her first priest, now deified.
- The Greeks identified Virbius with Hippolytus, brought back to life by Asklepios and spirited away to the oak groves of Nemi. (Hippolytus died trampled by horses; horses were not permitted in Virbius' grove in Nemi.)

**Favored people:** Thieves, fugitives, slaves

**Manifestation:** A man or a stag; statues of Diana depicting her beside a stag may indicate a literal stag, her sacred animal, or Virbius in stag guise.

**Sacred site:** The Forest of Nemi, Italy

**See also:** *Asklepios; Diana, Egeria*

## Vishnu

*The Preserver; The All-Pervading One*

**Origin:** India

Vishnu is the principal deity of Hinduism, worshipped by millions around the world. He is the lord of law and order, master of ethical and moral standards. He preserves world order and protects it from being overwhelmed by evil. Vishnu has over one thousand names. In times of crisis, Vishnu descends to Earth to save us. The various forms he takes when he descends are known as his avatars. His descents are innumerable but ten are most famous and sometimes, as when he manifested as Krishna, take on a life of their own. His final avatar will be Kalki, who will appear at the end of this present age (the Kali Yuga) to usher in the New Age.

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*According to myth, Vishnu was once simultaneously married to Lakshmi, Ganga, and Sarasvati. It was not a happy situation. The goddesses were jealous of each other and fought bitterly. To make peace, Vishnu gave Ganga to Shiva and Sarasvati to Brahma. He did not, however, give away Lakshmi, Goddess of Good Fortune.*

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**Iconography:** Vishnu is usually portrayed as a regal, dignified but youthful four-armed man. He wears a sacred thread around his chest, emblematic of his membership in the uppermost caste, the Brahmins.

**Attributes:** Conch, discus, lotus, mace

**Consorts:** Bhudevi, Ganga, Lakshmi, Sarasvati

**Mount:** Garuda

**Color:** Blue

**Offerings:** Sweet foods cooked in ghee (clarified butter)

**See also:** *Bhudevi; Ganga; Garuda; Kali; Krishna; Lakshmi; Sarasvati; Sati; Shiva* and the Glossary entry for *Avatar*

## Volos

**Also known as:** Veles

Volos is the lord of cattle, wolves, wealth, and well-being. He defends the balance between wolves and domestic animals. Volos has dominion over birth and death: his power is manifest in alternating cycles of birth, growth, death, and decay. Oaths are traditionally sworn upon his name as Volos punishes oath-breakers as well as others who displease him with disease. In some regions, Volos is considered a lord of death and the ruler of an afterlife realm.

Volos, a particularly beloved deity, was historically venerated throughout the Slavic world. Even after he was officially banished, Volos did not disappear but transformed into Christian saints:

- Russian Saint Vlasii is the patron saint of livestock, especially cattle. Russian icons portray him surrounded by cows and sheep. His image is placed in the barn to provide protection. His blessings are invoked when cattle are ailing or infertile.
- Officially, Saint Veles is just the Croatian pronunciation of Saint Blaise, patron of the city of Dubrovnik. However, local people insist that their Saint Veles is a local saint, not the Armenian bishop. His specialty is guarding flocks.

**Favored people:** Cattle herders, wolf lovers, snake charmers, musicians, merchants, traders

**Manifestation:** Volos may appear in the guise of a snake, dragon or a horned, bearded man. He has the capacity to continually regenerate in the manner that a snake sheds its skin and so Volos may appear old or youthful.

**Iconography:** An image of Volos was kept in Kiev's merchant quarters near the Pochaina River. When Vladimir I, Grand Prince of Kiev (circa 950–1015), converted to Christianity, this statue was allegedly thrown

into the river. Likewise his stone image in Rostov, Russia, was destroyed and a church built on the site.

**Element:** Water

**Creatures:** Wolves, cows, sheep, dragons, snakes

**Days:** 1 January–6 January, the Festival of Wolves

**See also:** *Faunus; Ogun; Palici; Velinas*

## **Voluptas**

*Bliss*

**Also known as:** Volupia

**Origin:** Rome

Voluptas, daughter of Psyche and Cupid, is the goddess of voluptuous pleasures. She is invoked for romance and bliss. She has dominion over whether sex is pleasurable or not.

**Iconography:** A beautiful woman sits enthroned with Virtue at her feet.

**See also:** *Angerona; Psyche*

## **Vouivre**

**Also known as:** Wouivre

**Origin:** French

Vouivres are mysterious serpentine spirits, The most famous may be Melusine. Many Vouivres may be guardians of Earth's treasures. In addition, their presence radiates fertility, which may be transmitted to people, animals, land, and water.

Places associated with Vouivres, at least in France, tend to have names that end in *-is* or *-es*, such as Paris or Troyes. *Is* may be a pre-Celtic word for the Vouivre. Vouivres are major sources of fascination for modern

researchers because sites historically associated with them are also associated with fault lines, ley lines, underground streams, veins of metal, and telluric currents. These subterranean currents, whether water, electric, or metaphysical, allegedly create conditions conducive to shamanic or visionary experiences. Adding to the fascination, sites historically associated with Vouivres are also often centers of Black Madonna veneration. What does this mean? No one really knows, but it makes for interesting speculation and debate.

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*The 1989 French film La Vouivre takes its plot from the novel of the same name by Marcel Aymé.*

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**Manifestation:** Vouivres take many forms:

- As winged serpents (their wings resemble those of bats)
- As dragons
- As snake-human hybrids, possibly winged: serpentine below the waist, human above
- As beautiful women

**See also:** *Black Madonna; Melusine*

## Vulcan

**Also known as:** Volcan; Volcanus; Vulcanus; and sometimes Mulciber

**Origin:** Italy (possibly Sabine)

Vulcan is the devouring power of fire, which destroys all in its wake and puts enemies to flight. He's also the power of fire that provides warmth and safety. Vulcan can extinguish fires as well as cause and control them. He also has dominion over earthquakes, lightning, volcanoes, cremation and spontaneous combustion.

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*Vulcan's name is the source for the word volcano: a mountain spewing fire.  
Volcanoes are named after him; not the other way around.*

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Vulcan was the patron deity of Ostia, the ancient harbor city near Rome, where he protected stored grain from fire. He is a volatile spirit, if only because of his fiery nature. His temples were traditionally placed outside city bounds, possibly for safety's sake. Vulcan is celebrated with rituals incorporating bonfires and fireworks.

Vulcan was identified with Greek Hephaestus and so became identified with smithcraft, too. (Sometimes when people say Vulcan, they really mean Hephaestus.) As Mulciber, Vulcan is the lord of the forge: the fire that softens metal.

**Attribute:** Anvil

**Iconography:** A fifty-six-foot cast-iron statue of Vulcan standing atop a 124-foot pedestal for a grand total of 180 feet overlooks the city of Birmingham, Alabama, and is the world's largest cast-iron statue.

**Date:** 23 May and 23 August, the Volcanalia

**Sacred site:** Vulcan had a Roman temple on the Fields of Mars. His country residence is in the Aeolian Islands, which include Stromboli, home of one of Italy's three currently active volcanoes. Two of the other islands—Vulcano and Vulcanello—are named in his honor. Vulcan resides beneath the islands.

**Offerings:** Grilled fish, wine, incense

**See also:** *Aeolus; Hephaestus; Mars* and the Glossary entry for *Identification*

## W

### Wacholder, Frau

**Origin:** German

Frau Wacholder is a spirit of magic, healing, prosperity, and abundance. She is invoked to prevent ghosts and demons from bothering you as well as to facilitate communication with loved ones who have passed on to other realms. (She can open or shut those portals.) Frau Wacholder is petitioned for fertility and protection.

*Frau Wacholder* is German for “Madame Juniper”: she is the goddess of juniper trees. Junipers are significant, special trees with unique properties, and so Frau Wacholder is a significant goddess.

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*Frau Wacholder may or may not be the same spirit as Hulda, also closely associated with junipers.*

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Junipers have many uses—culinary, medicinal, and magical: • Juniper berries are used to season food and craft intoxicating beverages. (Gin derives from juniper.)

- Junipers serve as portals between realms; Frau Wacholder, a threshold spirit, oversees these gateways.
- Junipers are a staple of traditional herbalism with various medicinal uses.

They potentially exert a profound effect on fertility: sometimes enhancing it but also sometimes used to terminate pregnancy, depending on use, method of administration, and dosage. In Central Europe—where Frau Wacholder comes from—one local species, *Juniper savin*, is, amongst other medicinal uses, a powerful abortifacient, meaning it can

theoretically be used to induce miscarriage. (It is potentially a very dangerous method unless administered by a trained, skilled herbalist.) During certain eras, a juniper savin in the backyard was considered the sign of a midwife as surely as three gold balls over a door indicate a pawnbroker. Local authorities went on juniper hunts, eradicating the trees (and sometimes the people who owned them).

*Wacholder*, the German word for “Juniper” derives from the Old High German *wachal* (“awake”) and *tar* (“tree”), literally “the awake tree.” Frau Wacholder is a vigilant watcher. As she allegedly sees everything, she is invoked for the return of stolen goods:

#### **FRAU WACHOLDER STOLEN GOODS RETURN SPELL**

This spell involves a juniper tree, a rock, and strong but gentle hands.

- Write your request to Frau Wacholder on paper or leaves. Her assistance may also be invoked silently or verbally.
- Very gently bend a lower branch of a juniper down to Earth, and then secure it with a stone. Place written petitions beneath the stone. Petitions may also be written *on* the stone with invisible ink or blood pricked from your smallest finger. (Women may use menstrual blood if deemed appropriate.)
- Be extremely careful not to break the branch or otherwise harm the tree, lest your spell backfire on you. (Brings lots of water for libations and gifts for Frau Wacholder, just in case.)
- Demand that the thief hear your call and return your property *now*.
- Allegedly the thief and/or property will be brought to you via Frau Wacholder’s intervention. If and when this happens, return to the tree, remove the stone, and release the branch. Bring water for the tree and gifts for Frau Wacholder.

**Offerings:** Gin, jenever (Holland gin: the Dutch beverage from which gin derives), craft necklaces for her using dried juniper berries as beads, plant juniper trees or care for them

**See also:** *Hulda*

**Wadjet**



*Lady of Flame; Lady of the North; Lady of Heaven; Queen of Holy Spirits*

**Also known as:** Udjat, Edjo, Buto

**Origin:** Egypt

Wadjet is a cobra goddess. Originally the guardian of the ancient city of Buto in the Nile Delta, she did her job so well, everyone wanted her for their guardian, too. She became the matron of Lower (Northern) Egypt and eventually the pharaoh's own special guardian goddess. Wadjet is the uraeus ("rearing cobra") on the pharaoh's crown.

Wadjet heals, protects, and punishes via the power of snake venom (but exponentially so as she has the powers of a goddess, rather than a plain snake). Her other weapons include heat and fire. She is invoked for protection from snakes and from poison deriving from *any* source. Wadjet protects devotees against enemies.

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*Wadjet assisted Isis when she was hiding in the Delta swamps with baby Horus and is sometimes considered Horus' foster-mother.*

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**Manifestation:** Wadjet may appear as a cobra, a cobra with a woman's head, or a woman with a lion's head. She may also manifest as a huge, winged serpent wearing the Egyptian Crown of the North, or as a woman wearing that crown.

**Iconography:** Wadjet is portrayed as an erect, rearing cobra poised to strike at the enemies of Pharaoh and Egypt.

**Attribute:** Her scepter is a stalk of papyrus with a snake twined around it, considered a talisman of strength and virility.

**Spirit allies:** Her primary ally and constant companion is Nekhebet. Together they represent Upper and Lower Egypt. Wadjet is also sometimes considered the left Eye of Ra. She is closely associated with Isis, Horus, and Anubis.

**Element:** Fire

**Plant:** Papyrus (the *djet* plant)

**Creatures:** Snakes, especially but not exclusively cobras; also lions and mongoose

**Sacred site:** The center of her veneration was in Buto, an ancient city located in the Nile Delta, not far from modern Alexandria. Her shrine contained a famous oracle.

**See also:** *Anubis; Asklepios; Hermes; Horus; Isis; Nekhbet*

## Waiau

**Origin:** Hawaii

Waiau and her sisters Poliahu, Lilinoe, and Kahoupokane—daughters of Haumea and Kane— were born fully formed on Mauna Kea, the now dormant Hawaiian volcano. Their father lived with them for a while. Before departing for further adventures, he created the sacred pond Waiau, naming it in honor of the daughter who tends it. The sisters bathe in the pond, drink its water, and are charged with protecting it from desecration.

Waiau is considered one of Pelé's principal and most formidable rivals. (Do *not* place them on the same altar.) She is both a volcano goddess *and* a spirit of water, presiding over Mauna Kea's subterranean reservoirs. Lake Waiau is known as the bottomless lake, traditionally considered an entrance to the Underworld. Goddess Waiau presides over this portal.

**Sacred site:** Lake Waiau in the Pu'u Waiau cinder cone on Mauna Kea, Hawaii.

**See also:** *Haumea; Kahoupokane; Kane; Lilinoe; Pelé; Poliahu*

## Waldmichen

*The Wood Nymph*

**Origin:** Teutonic

*Waldmichen* may be a title used for Hulda in Lower Saxony, or she may be a closely related spirit. The Waldmichen lives in a grotto deep in the forest where souls of unborn babies frolic. She owns a mill where she grinds old men and women into brand-new souls, ready for rebirth. The Waldmichen is served by an entourage of rabbits sometimes envisioned as carrying eggs. It's possible that her rabbits are the root source of the Easter Bunny.

**Manifestation:** She has a retinue of rabbits. Two hold up her train while two hold candles to light her way.

**See also:** *Astara; Hulda; Nymph; Wacholder, Frau*

## Walpurga

*Lady of Summer*

**Also known as:** Walpurgis; Waldborg; Walburga

Winter is a persistent force that sometimes refuses to willingly leave. Walpurga, ancient goddess of beauty, warmth, fertility, the renewal of life, and grain, was once the focus of rituals intended to defeat the forces of winter and permit the emergence of summer. For nine days before May Day, the Wild Hunt, traditionally most active in cold weather, pursues Walpurga. She is their quarry. If they can capture her, they can prolong winter, prevent summer, and keep riding all night.

On the run, Walpurga seeks refuge among local villagers who leave doors and windows open so she can find safety from frost and her pursuers. According to one myth, Walpurga begged a farmer to hide her in his stack of grain. He did, acting purely from compassion, not realizing her true identity. In the morning, she had vanished, leaving grains of gold sprinkled amongst his rye crop. May Eve is Walpurga's night. If she can survive this night, then summer's arrival is ensured. Meanwhile, the Wild Hunters intensify their pursuit in one last-ditch attempt to maintain their power.

Under Christian influence, Walpurga's Night transformed into a time

to banish forces of Paganism, not the forces of winter. Eventually, it was remade as a holiday honoring a saint instead of a goddess of summer. (However, it's still the night for witches to revel, whether to cheer on Lady Summer or for one last opportunity of the season to dance with the Wild Hunters.)

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*Vestiges of Walpurga survive in the proliferation of spindles and thread used in divination and love spells on the night named in her honor.*

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**Manifestation:** Walpurga is a beautiful crowned woman with long flowing hair, wearing fiery shoes.

**Attributes:** Ears of grain, spindle, a triangular mirror that reveals the future

**Tree:** Alder

**Time:** Walpurgis Night (May Eve, the night of April 30)

**Planet:** Sun

**Element:** Fire

**See also:** *Wild Hunt*

## Wanyudo

**Origin:** Japan

**Classification:** Yokai

Spirits come in all forms. Wanyudo is a spirit in the form of a burning ox-cart wheel. He patrols the border between the living and the dead. Wanyudo rolls back and forth, guarding the entrance to Hell. There are different versions of how Wanyudo inherited this task. In some he was always a wagon wheel. In others, he is a transformed human punished

for evil deeds. Wanyudo is now in the service of Enma, Lord of Hell. Jizo and Datsueba are among the other spirit denizens of the frontier that Wanyudo patrols.

Although Wanyudo doesn't usually bother people—or, at least, not randomly—he is a terrifying sight. Some spirits may initially appear innocuous but Wanyudo is clearly a supernatural being. Wanyudo may take pleasure in simply causing panic and terror however encounters with him are potentially dangerous. If you approach him too closely or without respect or if you draw too near to Enma's gates, Wanyudo will seize you and ferry your soul to hell. Wanyudo guest stars in the Japanese anime series *Hell Girl*.

**Manifestation:** Wanyudo is a rolling, burning wagon wheel with a man's stern, tormented face at the center.

**See also:** *Datsueba; Enma; Jizo; Mononoke; Pan; Tsukumogami; Yokai*

## Wanzami

*The Butcher; The Barber*

**Classification:** Bori

Wanzami is the official butcher, barber, circumciser, and scarifier (cicatrisation) of the Bori. This may sound mundane, but traditionally all these roles are considered sacred and charged with profound magic and spirituality. Wanzami, as befitting a spirit of his importance, serves as judge among the Bori and lives in the House of Sarkin Aljan Suleimanu, whom he serves as a personal adviser.

- His father is Mai Dawa, Owner of the Bush, Chief of the Bori House of Hunters.
- His mother is Barhaza, youngest sister of Inna; hence Suleimanu is his uncle.
- Wanzami was raised by his mother's brother, Sarkin Fulani.

Wanzami is a close personal friend of Dan Galadima, who exerts considerable influence over him. They appear frequently together, enjoy

each other's company and are venerated together. The afflictions Wanzami causes include baldness, shaving rashes, sensitivity to shaving, painful ingrown hairs that are prone to infection, and slow healing or failure to heal after surgery. Operations gone wrong may be laid at Wanzami's door.

**Color:** Red

**Number:** 10

**See also:** *Barhaza; Bori; Dan Galadima; Inna; Mai Dawa; Sarkin Aljan Suleimanu; Sarkin Fulani*

### **Washers at the Ford**

**Origin:** British Isles

The Washers at the Ford are death spirits, harbingers of doom, now often classified among the Sidhe. Their first documented appearances are in Irish sagas, most notably the tale of Cu Chulain, Champion of Ulster. These spirits of doom appear in Ireland and the Scottish Highlands. (Scottish variants are sometimes called Little Washerwomen.)

Their name explicitly describes who they are, what they do, and where they are found. While there are variations, the standard Washer at the Ford is encountered in the guise of a haggard, distraught woman with disheveled hair, standing in the ford of a river, keening and wailing while laundering blood-soaked linens. She is mourning for someone; traditionally if you can see her and make eye contact that means that she's mourning for *you*, although this is not always the case. If the doomed person is sufficiently heroic and deemed worthy of public mourning, the Washer foretelling his or her death may be visible to many others too.

Not all Washers at the Ford are identical. There is a Scottish Washer who manifests as a little old lady with only one nostril and red webbed feet: if you can sneak up and grab her before she sees you, she's obliged to reveal for whom she mourns and grant you three wishes, which might include redemption of the doomed.

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*Modern retellings of encounters with Washers at the Ford tend to be poetic and romantic with the Washers envisioned as ethereal, wraith-like ghosts, something like White Ladies genteelly doing laundry. In fact, many old stories are pretty grisly. The Washers wash more than linens. Sometimes they wash severed heads, limbs, assorted body parts, bloody weapons, and armor. The river runs scarlet with blood and gore. There's no doubt that they are death goddesses.*

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In general—there are a couple of exceptions—the Washers do not cause death. Like their sister spirits, the Banshees, they only announce it. Many Washers are anonymous. Serving as death harbingers may be their exclusive spiritual role. However, many famous Irish goddesses also double as Washers, especially when the death of a true hero is imminent. These include Badbh, the Morrigan, and Nemain.

**See also:** *Badbh; Banshee; Bean Nighe; Cyhyraeth; Glaistig; Morrigan; Nemain; Sidhe*

## **Weaving Maiden**

### *The Spider Princess*

**Also known as:** Zhi Nu

**Origin:** China

Depending on the version of her myth, the Weaving Maiden is either the eldest or youngest of the Jade Emperor's seven daughters, collectively known as the Seven Sisters or the Seven Fairies. They are star maidens, associated with the Pleiades. (Depending on the version of their legend, their father may be a solar deity or the Kitchen God instead.)

One day, the Seven Sisters descended to Earth to frolic in hot springs. They were observed by a young cowherd called Ox Boy, who stole an item of clothing left on the banks of the spring. When all her sisters flew

away home, the Weaving Maiden discovered that without her garment she was stuck and could not fly.

Ox Boy approached and revealed that it was his theft that prevented her departure. Although initially sad, the Weaving Maiden fell madly in love with Ox Boy, and they had two children and lived happily ever after for seven years. After seven years, her father suddenly realized that she was missing, or he changed his mind about human-spirit marriages. Regardless of reasoning, celestial guards were sent to forcibly escort the Weaving Maiden back to Heaven, separating her from her husband and children.

She did not go willingly. The Weaving Maiden wept so bitterly that finally it was decided that the lovers could reunite for one night each year. Once a year, on the Feast of the Double Seventh, magpies build a bridge across the Milky Way and the lovers are permitted to reunite. On the day of the Double Seventh, the Weaving Maiden is particularly sympathetic to lovers: in Chinese folk magic, it's considered the ideal day for love spells and requests for the Weaving Maiden's blessings of true love.

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*Another version of the Weaving Maiden's myth suggests that her marriage to the cowherd was arranged by her father. There was no objection to the marriage per se until the two lovers became so passionately engrossed in each other that they neglected all other responsibilities. The Weaving Maiden is no trivial spirit nor is she an ordinary weaver: her weaving helps maintain universal order. Hsi Wang Mu, Queen Mother of the West, forcibly separated the couple and ordered them back to work.*

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The Weaving Maiden blesses people with happy romance and marriages. She gives the gift for which she herself longs. She unites lovers and families and may be petitioned to help discover your soul mate. She is a particularly beloved spirit also invoked for assistance with fertility and healing. Although at the peak of her power and generosity



on her feast day, she may be invoked anytime.

How do you know your spirit allies? In general, establishing their identity is a lengthy process of trial and error. The Weaving Maiden, however, is a straightforward spirit who will let you know where you stand with her. This ritual can only be performed on the Feast of the Double Seventh:

- On the morning of the Feast of the Double Seventh, find a spider.
- Using extreme care and caution, very gently place the spider in a box and leave it there for twenty-four hours.
- After twenty-four hours, liberate the spider to go where she will.

Examine the box:

- » If the spider started a web, the Weaving Maiden likes you.
- » The bigger the web, the more she likes you.
- » If there's no web, if the spider escaped without starting a web, or if you were never able to find a spider and so couldn't perform the ritual, then perhaps another spirit should be considered.

**Manifestation:** In human form, the Weaving Maiden is an exceptionally beautiful, sweet, gentle Fairy. You can also see her in the skies as one of the Seven Sisters (the Pleiades) and as Vega, the brightest star in the constellation Lyra across the Milky Way from her lover, now manifest as the star Altair.

**Sacred date:** Feast of the Double Seventh: the seventh day of the seventh month of the Chinese lunar calendar

**Number:** 7

**Creature:** Spider

**Offerings:** Cakes, watermelon. She is traditionally given special paper offerings, including paper garments, ornaments, and combs (available before her holiday from vendors catering to traditional Chinese clientele).

**See also:** *Fairy; Hsi Wang Mu; Jade Emperor; Jade Maidens; Kitchen God; Ox Boy; Pleiades*

## Wepwawet

### *Opener of the Ways*

**Origin:** Egypt

Wepwawet is a road opener:

- He clears the path to success and good fortune.
- He opens the way to victory in battle (literal and metaphoric).
- He opens the road for souls to travel to the afterlife.
- He opens the way for new souls on their way to the womb.

Wepwawet, a particularly ancient spirit, originally comes from Upper Egypt. He has dominion over birth, death, success, and opportunities. He removes obstacles, but he can close paths, too, so that roads to success, victory, and conception are blocked. If Wepwawet is uncooperative, dead souls roam as aimless ghosts rather than finding the right path. Because of his associations with death and the afterlife, he developed associations with Osiris and is sometimes considered his son, which makes Anubis Wepwawet's half-brother.

Wepwawet is a desert wolf spirit. Say his name fast and listen to the wolf howl. Call his name—a war cry—when you seek his blessings. He is fearless. Wepwawet leads pharaohs' armies to war. He opens the way to the Underworld and is envisioned standing at the prow of Ra's barque when it makes its nocturnal journey through the Underworld provinces. (During the day, Thoth holds this position.) One might think that two canine spirits affiliated with death might growl and bicker, but Anubis and Wepwawet are friends and traveling companions. They may be invoked together and will share altar space.

**Manifestation:** Wepwawet manifests as a wolf, a jackal, or a man with canine head

**Iconography:** The traditional Tarot Moon card portrays a dog and a wolf (or a jackal and a wolf) standing on either side of a long, mysterious path and howling at a full moon. This image may be understood as representing Anubis and Wepwawet.

**Attribute:** Mace and bow

**Tree:** Tamarisk

**See also:** *Anubis; Osiris; Thoth*

### White Lady (1)

White Ladies are mysterious apparitions. Some are true spirits. Some are ghosts. In general, what they have in common is their appearance: they resemble the traditional conception of a ghost. True White Ladies are the color of white clouds, sometimes transparent or semitransparent. They are usually completely, strikingly, often unnaturally white, hence their name. The term *White Lady* makes no reference to their ethnic background or appearance when they were alive. In life, many so-called White Ladies may have had dark hair or dark skin. The point is what they look like *now*. White Ladies are clearly supernatural beings—there's no mistaking them for someone living, unlike many other spirits.

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*Sometimes ghosts or spirits who dress in white are lumped in with White Ladies. Many are more accurately called Ladies in White, as the only thing white about them may be their clothing.*

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White Ladies are unnerving spirits, although many are beautiful. White is traditionally the color of purity and Western brides, but it's also the color of death: bones, shrouds, and ashes tend to be white. White Ladies bridge these concerns. Although this is a vast category, a high proportion of White Ladies died for love. Many died as brides, often on their wedding day. Some died of broken hearts. Others were killed by lovers, husbands, or fathers who opposed their romance. Although some haunt the scenes of their death, others pursue their true loves through eternity.

White Lady ghosts are ethereal wraiths. Many are particularly active

spirits, making regular appearances. They haunt houses, mysteriously slip through walls, vanish and appear at will or dissolve into mist. White Ladies are sometimes a tourist draw. Many mansions, hotels, and castles brag about their resident White Ladies.

In general, White Lady ghosts are disturbing but not harmful. (Exceptions do exist. Some vent their romantic frustrations on the living.) Some seem to enjoy scaring the living daylights out of people with abrupt sudden appearances. These White Ladies tend to haunt hotels or public areas where there is greater opportunity to surprise strangers.

Some White Ladies are harbingers of doom. Their appearance signals a death in the family. Unlike Banshees, they usually don't wail. Instead, their appearance says it all.

Because most White Ladies are persistent but not harmful, they are generally left alone. It is relatively easy to coexist with most White Ladies. Beyond appearing and haunting the premises, they do little harm—unless you perceive proximity to ghosts as integrally harmful to the living, in which case it's probably easier for you to move than to displace them. Many are *very* attached to the scenes of their hauntings. If you really wish to remove a White Lady, standard exorcism methods used on other ghosts should work on them, too, although White Ladies have a tendency to pretend they've been exorcised only to reappear years later when they think the coast is clear.

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*White Ladies can become attached to homes or families with whom they live and may evolve into allies, scaring intruders or giving warning of danger.*

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**Manifestation:** They're white! Many but not all are beautiful. The White Lady may dress in a bridal gown, draping white garments, a shroud, or a winding-sheet.

**Offerings:** Acknowledge her existence by setting a place for her at holidays or special occasions. Offer a portion of whatever everyone else

is having. Alternatively pastry and champagne usually please. Serve her a White Lady cocktail. Standard ingredients are gin, Cointreau, and lemon juice, but ingredients like cream or egg whites are sometimes included to make the drink whiter. White Ladies don't need a lot of offerings—they're preoccupied with their own private obsessions. In general, if they need or desire something, they'll let you know.

**See also:** *Ghost; Gray Lady; White Lady (2)*

### White Lady (2)

*White Lady* is also the name given to a species of European forest spirit, the equivalent of Fairies. In non-Celtic parts of Europe, many Fairies don't wear green; they dress in white. These White Ladies live in packs in the wilderness. They generally do not emerge, or at least not without cause. They won't bother you unless they perceive that you've invaded their forest home, in which case some are pretty lethal. If you come respectfully and with good intent, most will not harm you.

These White Ladies are sometimes invoked for healing and oracular information. Many are botanical experts and can identify herbal remedies for illnesses that have stymied conventional methods. They may be visited in the woods or via visualization.

Forest White Ladies are generally considered to be a combination of goddesses and ghosts. Ranks of the original nature spirits are swelled by souls of women who've come to join them. White Lady goddesses are death spirits who rule an afterlife realm: a woodland dance hall largely populated by women.

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*White Lady goddesses may be descendents of Swan Goddesses. Vila and Rusalka are sometimes classified as White Ladies. German forests house spirits who are simply called White Ladies.*

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**Offerings:** Woodland White Ladies accept bread, milk, wine, honey, and

dairy products, but they may enjoy champagne or a White Lady cocktail, too. *See White Lady (1) for details.*

**See also:** *Béfind; Berchta; Bereginy; Ielle; Rusalka; Samovili; Vila*

## Wild Hunt

The Wild Hunt is the name given to a wild procession of spirits. The Wild Hunt rides on windy, stormy nights as well as on specific dates of the year like Halloween, May Eve, and Midsummer's Eve. They are particularly active during the winter, especially during the Yuletide season.

The Wild Hunters aren't the only spirits out roaming around at night. Trooping Fairies cavalcade, especially on full moon nights, Halloween, May Eve, and Midsummer's Eve. Their territory often overlaps with the Wild Hunt. The tradition of a parade of spirits who may or may not be accompanied by spirits of the dead and living devotees appears around the world, including areas as isolated as Hawaii. Legends of the Hawaiian Night Marchers predate European contact while in Japan, *Hyakki Yako* names the Night Parade of at least one hundred spirits.

Sometimes these spirits troop or march like soldiers. Sometimes they're wild revelers or marauders. Dionysus and Shiva are but the most famous of those who lead spirit parades. Some welcome the participation of people. Anyone who likes reveling with ghosts and spirits is welcome. Other processions, like the Night Marchers of Hawaii, are more exclusive. Human reactions to these processions vary. These spirits are powerful and unpredictable and it is usually considered advisable to stay out of their way. Magical practitioners, however, often seek to observe or join this parade of spirits.

In some European traditions, dead souls periodically travel in procession to visit families and loved ones, led by deities who bridge thresholds of death and life like Freya, Berchta, Herta, and Hulda, all of whom serve as leaders of the Wild Hunt.

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*B. Clay Moore and Steven Griffin's 2003 comic, Hawaiian Dick: Byrd of Paradise, draws upon legends of Night Marchers on the Pali Highway.*

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Hanging with the Hunters may be punishment or pleasure. The Wild Hunt may do more than party: they may enforce justice. A Danish runestone (gravestone engraved with runic inscriptions) concludes with the warning, "A rati be he who destroys this stone." The *rati* is a person whose soul is taken and driven by the Wild Hunt.

Under the influence of Christianity, the nature of the Hunt changed; it was no longer considered sufficient to merely avoid the Hunt for fear of being swept up. It was now sinful to even watch the Hunt as it passed. The Hunt became associated with witchcraft. Those humans who sought to participate (or who were trapped by the Hunters) were perceived as wicked witches or damned souls.

The Wild Hunt, once associated with souls of the dead seeking brief reunions with loved ones, became associated with the punishments of Hell. The spirit who heads the hunt was literally a headhunter, out searching for transgressors against Christianity who would be forced to join the host of imprisoned souls forever. The host of the Hunt now included those who somehow fell outside Church sacraments: unbaptized babies, illegitimate children, major sinners, suicides, those deprived of funeral rites. Heathens, Jews, and witches were allegedly among those riding with the Hunt, too. Traveling souls of shamans are allegedly fated to join the Wild Hunt if unable to rejoin their bodies.

There are two ways to interpret this, depending upon personal perception:

- Disobedience to the Church dooms you to this parade of the damned.
- Those uninterested in Church sacraments revel in this sacred carnival.

The Wild Hunt is but one of many names for this nocturnal procession of spirits. Others include Asgard's Chase, Spirit's Ride, Holla's Troop and Cain's Hunt. Spirits who lead the Wild Hunt include Arawn, Berchta, Diana, Freya, Frau Gaude, Herodias, Herta, Hulda, and Odin. See their individual entries for further details.

## Windigo

**Also known as:** Wendigo; Widigo

**Classification:** Manitou

Windigos are dreaded Native North American cannibal spirits, the stuff of nightmares, now primary subject matter for horror entertainment. There are two kinds of Windigo, although they are interrelated: spirit Windigos and human Windigos.

The name *Windigo* derives from an Algonquian root word meaning “evil spirit” and “cannibal.” Jesuit missionaries reported sightings of Windigos in the 1600s. The Windigo is an incredibly tall, gaunt spirit of harsh winter, frost, and starvation. Windigos are spirits of ice, snow, and winter. Their hearts are made of ice. Sometimes they travel in packs. They allegedly like to play catch or kickball with human skulls.

A Windigo is *always* hungry. Its scream paralyzes its victims so they’re unable to escape. Windigos are so horrific, many victims die of fright just looking at them. They are the lucky ones. Those who remain alive are eaten alive, slowly. The closest comparison to the Windigos’ effect, in more ways than one, is not to other spirits but to the fictional Reavers of Joss Whedon’s television series *Firefly* and movie *Serenity*.

Windigos can devour people, but Windigo spirits can also possess people:

- If they devour you, it’s like being eaten by an animal or a person: you’re dead.
- If they possess you, then you too become a Windigo, joining their ranks.

Thus roaming packs of Windigos may be comprised of spirits *and* the humans they have possessed. The same word, *Windigo*, is used to indicate both the possessed person and the possessing spirit. A Windigo who attacks you may be a spirit or a human—the result is the same. Anthropologists explain the phenomenon of Windigos as humans overwhelmed by cold and hunger. Traditional lore understood the phenomenon as spirit possession. In Cree and Ojibwa cosmology, the human Windigo, once possibly a perfectly normal person, is now a



possessed cannibal.

Although the word used for the phenomenon is *possession* it's really more like an infection. The Windigo spirit is not within the human, nor does the spirit manipulate the person. Instead, the human takes on the characteristics of the Windigo and behaves exactly like one (i.e. they prey on other people, consuming them.).

This infection may be acquired voluntarily or not. Involuntary possession may derive from several sources:

- Actual physical contact with the spirit
- Being attacked or especially bitten by the Windigo spirit
- Dreaming of the Windigo (the Windigo may be understood as invading someone's dreams)

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*Windigo possession may be averted by throwing feces at the Windigo. This allegedly causes temporary confusion and may allow time for escape.*

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Voluntary infection is accomplished through ritual. (Why would anyone wish to become a Windigo? For the power. For protection against enemies. To punish others. Because Windigos are Manitous: they're not only marauding cannibals, but also possess fonts of hidden wisdom.) An individual travels into a forest where Windigos allegedly live. The person fasts for days and then offers himself to the Windigo spirit.

- The Windigo may accept the person as his own child.
- Alternatively, the Windigo may reject the petition and mercilessly devour the person.

If adopted and infected, the human transforms. He or she becomes perpetually cold and extremely hairy. The person develops a craving for human flesh and may devour his or her own family.

**Manifestation:** Windigos are described as exceptionally tall but gaunt and emaciated. They usually lack clothing, no matter how far below zero

the temperature. The Windigo may be sensed before it is seen or heard: those in close proximity often feel chills. Sometimes their arrival is accompanied by blizzards. Human Windigos do not achieve the immense height of their spirit counterparts.

**Time:** Winter; the Windigo tends to go on seasonal rampages. Windigos experience the opposite of hibernation: they become more active during winter.

**See also:** *Manitou* and the Glossary entry for *Possession*

## World Surveyor Man

*The Gander Prince; Gander Chief; Golden Prince*

World Surveyor Man is the spirit hero of Siberia's Finno-Ugric tribes. He is the seventh and youngest son of Numi-Tarem, the Sky Father, and the goddess Kaltes, born when his mother fell to Earth from Heaven. World Surveyor Man's hands and feet are made from gold. He is the original golden goose.

World Surveyor Man's primary function is to see all, know all, and protect people from whatever endangers them. When the sun goes down, he traverses the sky on his gleaming white horse. His horse is as magic as he is. If he turns his horse's nose toward someone, that person is healed. (Alternative versions say the horse is gold or that World Surveyor Man rides in a sleigh drawn by swans, geese, ducks, or horses.)

World Surveyor Man gives shamans their power. In some Siberian cultures, this is meant abstractly, but in others it's literal: he gives it directly to the shaman while they are entranced. World Surveyor Man lives in a seven-sided house with seven doors inside a sacred forest. Once upon a time people were expected to visit him three times a year at his home (or if not possible, at least send a lot of gifts). He is now identified with Saint George, Saint Nicholas, and sometimes Jesus Christ.

**Manifestation:** World Surveyor Man wears a golden hat and a garment with seven goose wings. He can adopt the form of any of his sacred creatures.

**Attribute:** *Amanita muscaria*, the fly agaric mushroom; iron falcon; double-edged knife; a saddle with seven bells or tassels

**Consort:** The Swan Goddess

**Creatures:** Geese, swan, falcons, waterfowl, hares, mice, pike (fish)

**Time:** Appeals to World Surveyor Man are made at night.

**Planet:** Sun

**Tree:** Larch

**Number:** 7

**Ritual:** Traditionally, if one wished to summon World Surveyor Man, four ritual metal plates, each bearing an image of the sun, were placed on the ground approximately where a horse's four hooves would be. Alternatively, four silver cups similarly placed calls him, too. Archaeological evidence of silver trays associated with World Surveyor Man rituals, dating to the first millennium, have been found in areas associated with the Ugric tribes.

**See also:** *Kaltes; Swan Goddesses*

## Woyengi

**Origin:** Ijaw (Nigeria)

Woyengi, the Great Mother, is the divine Creatrix of the Ijaw people. She arrived from the celestial regions on a bolt of lightning to an Earth devoid of people. What she found was a sacred seat beneath an Irokò tree (*Chlorophora excelsa*) and a lot of clay. Woyengi sat on her throne and began to form people. When she had completed their bodies, she breathed life into them and asked each one to choose a destiny. People selected their own genders, professions, ways of life, and manner of death. Whatever they selected became their destiny.

**See also:** *Nu Kua; Ogboinba*

## X

### **Xochipilli**

#### *The Flower Prince*

**Pronounced:** *Sho-CHEE-pee-lee*

**Also known as:** Macuilxochitl

**Origin:** Aztec

Xochipilli is the lord of flowers, love, maize, beauty, fun, games, music, art, dance, shamanism, and prophecy. He is the patron of all life's pleasures; the very essence of creative potential and masculine beauty, responsible for sexual lust and desire. If you lack libido and desire, ask him to provide the spark. Xochipilli radiates the warm, fertilizing powers of the sun. If you lack any kind of creative energy, he can provide that, too. Xochipilli breaks artists' creative blocks.

Xochipilli rules sexuality. His rituals incorporate sexual fasting: prescribed periods of celibacy. He punishes those who anger him with boils, hemorrhoids, and venereal disease. He can heal these ailments, too. Xochipilli protects souls of dead warriors who return to Earth as hummingbirds.

**Favored people:** Warriors, dancers, singers, florists, artists, those who create beauty

**Iconography:** A fifteenth-century statue of Xochipilli was unearthed on the side of the volcano Popocatepetl near Mexico City. He sits cross-legged on a pedestal, mouth half open, and eyes up-tilted: he appears entranced. The base of his pedestal is ornamented with images of flowers, including tobacco (*Nicotiana tabacum*), *Ololiúqui* (*Turbina corymbosa*), *Sinicuichi* (*Heimia salicifolia*) and possibly *cahua xochitl* (*Quararibea funebris*). One flower remains unidentified. *Psilocybe*

*aztecorum* mushrooms are also depicted.

**Consort:** Mayahuel

**Attribute:** His scepter has a string of hearts attached

**Spirit allies:** Tlaloc, Cinteotl, and especially his twin sister, Xochiquetzal

**Time:** High noon

**Planet:** Sun

**Bird:** Hummingbird

**Plants:** Xochipilli rules shamanic, potentially psychoactive plants and mushrooms, including tobacco; *Ololiúqui*, a species of morning glory; and *Sinicuichi* also known as the Sun-Opener.

**Offerings:** Devotees ornament their bodies with tattoos of flowers.

**See also:** *Ahuiateteo; Huitzilopochtli; Mayahuel; Xochiquetzal; Xochitl*

## **Xochiquetzal**

*Precious Flower; Quetzal Flower*

**Pronounced:** *Sho-CHEE-ket-zul*

Xochiquetzal, beautiful Aztec goddess of love, pleasure, flowers, and vegetation, is the lady of birds and butterflies, the very essence of youthful female sexuality and generative, creative power. Xochiquetzal is the inventor of artistic crafts. She presides over menstruation, conception, pregnancy, and childbirth. According to myth, Xochiquetzal was the very first to menstruate, have sex, and give birth. She first menstruated after being bitten on her vagina by a bat, which sprang from Quetzalcoatl's semen. The very first flowers emerged in response to that bite, too. The ever-charming and seductive Xochiquetzal resides in Tamoanchan, the Aztec Paradise, where she guards the Tree of Life. Allegedly one touch of its flowers ensures happiness, fidelity, and good fortune.

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*Xochiquetzal is sometimes identified as the sister with whom Quetzalcoatl engaged in incest, causing the downfall of the Toltec empire and forcing him to flee.*

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- The conquistadors identified her with Eve.
- Veneration of Xochiquetzal may survive under the guise of Our Lady of Ocotlan, a Mexican Madonna.

**Favored people:** Artists, artisans who create luxury items, including embroiderers, feather-workers, metalworkers, painters, sculptors, and weavers. Also florists, housewives, young mothers, pregnant women, prostitutes, sex workers, midwives, healers.

**Manifestation:** Xochiquetzal has long black hair with bangs cut in the style the Aztecs associated with young women. Her face may be painted with flowers, or she may sport facial tattoos. Xochiquetzal is *always* young, beautiful, sexy, and alluring. In reality, she's thousands of years old, but she looks like a young girl. Xochiquetzal *never* looks scary (even when she's being scary). She is accompanied by a retinue of birds and butterflies

**Iconography:** She is portrayed wearing a quetzal feather headdress and a jeweled butterfly nose ornament. In Codex Vaticanus B, her menstrual blood is portrayed as a single flower emerging from her vagina.

**Consort:** Tlaloc (although she eventually left him for the very persistent Tezcatlipoca)

**Spirit ally:** Her twin brother, Xochipilli

**Element:** Fire

**Planet:** Moon

**Metal:** gold

**Flower:** All, but especially Aztec marigolds (*Tagetes erecta*), called *Cempazuchil* in Nahuatl.

**Creatures:** Hummingbirds, quetzal, butterflies. Dr. Carlos Beutelspacher, author of *Butterflies of Ancient Mexico*, theorizes that Xochiquetzal's specific butterfly is the Western Tiger Swallowtail (*Papilio multicaudatus*).

**Offerings:** Flowers! Also the traditional crafts that she loves. Patronize artisans in her honor. Xochiquetzal drinks Mexican hot chocolate. Devotees obtain flower tattoos.

**See also:** *Itzpapalotl; Quetzalcoatl; Tezcatlipoca; Tlaloc; Xochipilli; Xochitl; Xtabay*

## Xochitl

**Pronounced:** *Show-CHEE-tul*

In Nahuatl, the language of the Aztecs, *Xochitl* literally means “flower” but also possesses other implications:

- *Xochitl* names a type of power implicit in beauty, goodness, love, and purity.
- *Xochitl* is the power of creativity. Art may be a physical expression of this power.
- *Xochitl* means “to flower,” as in to bloom or blossom.
- *Xochitl* also refers to genitals. *Xochitl*—the title of a small 1938 painting by Frida Kahlo, sometimes called *The Flower of Life*—portrays a flower consisting of two parts, one resembling a vulva, the other a phallus.

*Xochitl* is the root word in the names of the twin deities Xochiquetzal and Xochipilli who epitomize this power. *Xochitl* is also the name of a goddess who is the perfect embodiment of this force. Usually *Xochitl* refers to Xochiquetzal but may refer to Mayahuel, her brother's wife. In Frida Kahlo's originally private but now published letters written to her lover, photographer Nikolas Muray, this contemporary goddess adopts *Xochitl* as her *nom d'amour*.

**See also:** *Kahlo, Frida; Malinalxochitl; Mayahuel; Xochipilli; Xochiquetzal*

## Xolotl

**Pronounced:** *Sho-Low-tul*

In Meso-American cosmology, the assistance of a dog is required to reach the next realm. When someone dies, a spirit dog is expected to appear to lead the soul on the lengthy, arduous journey to the realm of death. Xolotl supervises that journey. A spirit of death, he is simultaneously man and dog, living and dead. Xolotl is a magical crossroads spirit who lives in many realms at once.

Xolotl is Quetzalcoatl's alter ego; his shadow side or double. In Aztec terminology, Xolotl is Quetzalcoatl's *nahualli* ("nagual": sacred animal double and ally). Xolotl is Quetzalcoatl's faithful, devoted companion, assistant, and guide. His name refers to the concept of twinship. Throughout the Americas, twins were simultaneously feared and respected—perceived as extremely dangerous but also sacred.

Xolotl is the evening star, counterpart of Quetzalcoatl, the morning star. Every night, Xolotl pushes the sun into darkness and guides it on its journey through the Underworld. Xolotl accompanied Quetzalcoatl when he went to steal bones from Mictlan.

- *Xolotl* is the root word from which the modern word *cholo* ("gangster") derives.
- Xolotl has dominion over ailments and physical disorders.

**Favored people:** Twins

**Manifestation:** Xolotl may manifest as a man, a skeleton, a dog, or a man with a dog's head. Whether man or dog, one ear is usually ragged, like a dog with sores or a constant ear infection. His face is deeply furrowed.

**Attribute:** A flint knife

**Planet:** Venus

**Element:** Fire

**Creature:** His namesake, the *Xoloitzcuintli* breed of dog (also known as the Mexican Hairless) as well as creatures that undergo transformation



and metamorphosis, like tadpoles to frogs and caterpillars to butterflies or snakes that shed their skin and appear renewed.

**Offerings:** Xolotl accepts contributions made on behalf of Xoloitzcuintli dogs (as for example Xoloitzcuintli Rescue).

**See also:** *Cihuacoatl; Mictlantecuhtli; Quetzalcoatl; Tezcatlipoca*

## Xtabay

**Also known as:** Ixtabey; Xtabey; Xkeban; Xtabai

**Pronounced:** *Shh-tah-bay* or *Ish-ta-bay*

Xtabay, Mayan jungle goddess, is the subject of many legends told throughout the Mayan and Mayan-influenced world, most of them horror stories. Xtabay lives near lakes, rivers, and sources of freshwater. She is a spirit of wild nature, surrounded by birds, beasts, and intoxicating flowers. Most tales in which she stars portray her as a sexy, seductive killer, a spirit to be avoided, but these negative associations may derive from Christian denigration of a powerful Pagan goddess.

Xtabay may originally have been the goddess of the Tree of Life. Consistently portrayed as lascivious, she is a goddess of love and sex. The clue that she is more than the demon of the woods, as she is sometimes called, derives from the tree with which she is so closely associated.

Xtabay is associated with sacred kapok trees (also known as silk cotton trees), identified with the Tree of Life in Mayan cosmology. As it is so closely identified with traditional Mayan and Caribbean religion, it was vilified post-Christianity. (Attempts to eradicate Haitian Vodou have historically involved chopping down kapoks, also known as Mapou trees.)

The kapok is a massive tree with a buttressed root system, potentially extending over thirty feet from the main trunk. These above-ground roots create the equivalent of caves. Xtabay sits among these roots, singing and combing her gorgeously long hair using cactus spines as a comb. Depending on legend and perspective, Xtabay inhabits the tree

because she's its goddess or because it's a convenient hideout for her nefarious deeds.

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*Yma Sumac's song, "Xtabay (Lure of the Unknown Love)," refers to an elusive Andean/Inca spirit of the same name. Men catch a glimpse of Peruvian Xtabay and fall madly, hopelessly in love, becoming forever unsatisfied with mortal relationships. They compulsively search for Xtabay, who may never be seen again, thus dooming the men to eternal loneliness or even suicide.*

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Xtabay resembles a Siren/mermaid, combing her hair and singing. Her victims are young men out alone late at night. In a world where men are more likely to prey on women and men typically have more freedom and safety to walk around alone after dark, Xtabay turns the tables. Allegedly her voice draws victims near, but they may approach assuming that she's a lady of easy virtue. (And they would be right.) She's described as seducing young men, but she's so alluring, seduction may not really be required.

Xtabay allegedly lures men into the jungle from whence many never emerge. (She reputedly strangles them with her hair.) Contact with her may result in insanity and illness. Victims allegedly die within a few days unless they receive immediate shamanic attention.

Xtabay manifests in the Caribbean too. She combs her hair with cactus spines on the island of Saint John, but there men falling asleep after sex with her wake to discover themselves seriously wounded. What seemed to be a woman while they were making love is revealed to really be a spiny cactus. Wounds caused by Xtabay tend to become infected. Fever develops, which is fatal if not treated shamanically as well as physically.

Xtabay is sometimes compared to La Llorona. Like Llorona, she may be an old goddess in disguise, possibly Atabey or Ix Tab. She may also be a completely independent goddess. Negative legends may be attempts to discourage veneration and to keep people far from kapok trees.

**Manifestation:** Xtabay manifests as a beautiful seductive woman, a cactus, Xtabentun flower, kapok tree, and a green-and-yellow snake.

**Tree:** Kapok (*Ceiba pentandra*)

**Flower:** The Xtabentun flower, a white flower that grows wild among agave plants

**Creatures:** Quetzals and other tropical birds, snakes, jungle insects

**Offerings:** Flowers; decorate her altar like a jungle bower of love; Mexican Xtabentun liqueur created from Xtabentun flower honey

**See also:** *Atabey; Diabliesse; Gran Bois; Ix Tab; Mayahuel; Xochiquetzal*

## Y

### Yacatecuhtli

#### *The Nose Lord; Lord of the Vanguard*

Yacatecuhtli is the Aztec lord of commerce, merchants, and travelers. His name literally means “Nose Lord”: • He sniffs out bargains.

- He sniffs out opportunities.
- He sniffs out bullshit.

Yacatecuhtli points his devotees’ noses in the right direction, steering them away from poor choices and investments. Yacatecuhtli’s power and protection extends in every direction and down every road. For centuries before the European conquest, merchants, and traders in the Americas traveled extremely long distances, from Mayaland and points south to what are now the Pueblos of the southwestern United States. At night, when caravans rested, an image of Yacatecuhtli was assembled from the merchants’ staffs as an appeal for the Nose Lord’s vigilant protection. In the morning, the image was quickly disassembled but ready to be reassembled at any time as long as all fellow travelers cooperated with each other, yet another gift from Yacatecuhtli.

Yacatecuhtli protects travelers in general. Once upon a time, he guarded against nocturnal animal attacks (and still does, if you need him to do so). These days, air travelers may invoke his aid guarding their luggage and reservations.

**Favored people:** Traveling merchants, travelers of all kinds, spies, those who go undercover to nose out information, those whose livelihood depends on sticking their noses in other people’s business **Iconography:** He carries a big cross, indicating his ability to travel in all four directions.

**Attributes:** Cross, bundle of staves

## Yama

*King of Hell; Keeper of the Dead*

**Also known as:** Yom Phra Baan (Thai)

**Origin:** India

Yama, Lord of Death, rules Hindu and Buddhist Hells. Yama lives with his minions in the sixteen sealed-up iron cities of Hell. He maintains the Book of Destiny in which life spans allotted to each individual are recorded. Yama himself sometimes comes to collect souls, carrying a rope with which to lasso and herd them to his realm.

According to Thai myth, Yama contracts with individuals at birth, establishing the *exact* moment of death. Should the individual die before this appointed time (whether because of suicide, violent death or magical causes), his or her soul must linger on Earth as a ghost until the scheduled appointment. Yama will not see anyone early nor does he adjust appointments. No temples are dedicated to him. There are no rituals (at least officially) to beckon or ward him off. Yama arrives at the appointed time, not one second before or after.

Yama maintains a record of all human deeds. He calculates each individual's karmic debts. He determines how long one must remain in Hell and the nature of one's next incarnation.

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*In Hindu cosmology, no event on Earth, regardless how seemingly insignificant, goes unrecorded. The Akashic Records document every single action, thought, and intent that has ever occurred. Yama is among the sacred guardians of these records and among the few to have ready access to them.*

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Yama and his sister, Yami, are the children of Surya, the Sun, and Saranya, daughter of Tvastr, Vedic celestial artisan. How did Yama achieve his position? According to the Rig Veda, Yama refused to unite with Yami, preferring to die childless rather than commit incest. With no

descendents to facilitate his rebirth, Yama, trapped in the realm of death, became its overlord.

**Manifestation:** He may manifest as a man or as a man with the head of a water buffalo.

**Attributes:** Cup, sword, looped rope (lasso or noose)

**Mount:** Black water buffalo

**Direction:** East

**Bird:** Crow

**Colors:** Red, black

**See also:** *Enma; Savitri; Yama Dharmaraja; Yamantaka; Yami*

## **Yama Dharmaraja**

*King of the Law; Protector of the Law*

**Also known as:** Yama Dharmapala

Yama was incorporated into the Buddhist pantheon after Manjushri (in the guise of Yamantaka) allegedly brought him under control. He evolved into a major Tibetan Buddhist deity. As Yama Dharmaraja, he is lord of wealth and protector of Buddhism as well as king of Hell. He destroys delusion. Yama Dharmaraja judges souls in the Tibetan Buddhist afterlife. He protects Buddhist practitioners and monasteries from destruction. Fierce Yama Dharmaraja is a favorite subject of meditational Thangka paintings.

**Manifestation:** Yama Dharmaraja manifests with the head of a water buffalo.

**Consort:** Chamundi

**Mount:** Bull or water buffalo bull

**See also:** *Eight Dharma Protectors; Manjushri; Yama; Yamantaka*

## Yama Oba

*The Mountain Crone; Old Woman of the Mountains*

**Also known as:** Yama Uba; Yamamba; Yamauba; Yamaoba

**Origin:** Japan

*Yama Oba* means “Old Mountain Woman.” Depending on the version of her myth, she is a benevolent spirit, a cannibal ogress, a demon, or some or all of the above. She’s sometimes classified as a witch, but whether or not that’s intended positively or negatively depends on the myth and the beholder’s perspective.

Yama Oba is a master herbalist. She knows all the plants on her mountains. A renowned healer, she also knows a thing or two about poison. According to more malicious folk tales, Yama Oba sometimes manifests as a sweet old lady proffering invigorating health potions. Really they’re the equivalent of date-rape drugs, intended to immobilize the victim to make it easier for her to accomplish her nefarious goals.

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*Yama Oba—like Baba Yaga, whom she sometimes resembles—is a dangerous initiatrix simultaneously celebrated and defamed by generations of gruesome stories.*

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Mountains are revered as sacred places in Shinto (and other) cosmology. Yama Oba was originally a mountain goddess, albeit a fierce, not always sympathetic, one.

- Yama Oba may be the name of one goddess.
- Yama Oba may refer to a species of mountain spirits.
- There may be one great Yama Oba who presides over a host of local Yama Obas.

Yama Oba, the Mountain Mother, lives in caves or little huts in deeply forested mountains. She may be old, but she’s fertile. Yama Oba gives

birth to various spirits, possibly Tengu. Although she can be harmful and is a favorite subject of horror stories, Yama Oba also sometimes bestows blessings and good fortune. She is the mother or foster-mother of folk hero Kintaro and the subject of some famous Noh dramas, including those titled *Yamauba* and *Yamamba*. Legends about Yama Oba date back to at least the Heian era (794–1185 CE).

**Manifestation:** Yama Oba is usually described as an old hag with long, disheveled hair but she's a shape-shifter. She may appear in the guise of a much younger woman, too. According to folklore, her hair transforms into snakes when she wishes. She may have a hidden mouth on top of her head—the better to eat people with.

**Iconography:** Among the many artists inspired to create portraits of Yama Oba are Hokusai, Kitagawa Utamaro, Hokkei Totoya, and Toriyama Sekien.

**Color:** Red

**Creature:** Snake

**See also:** *Baba Yaga; Kybele; Medusa; Tengu; Yokai*

## Yamantaka

*Death Terminator; Destroyer of Death; The Diamond Terrifier; The Diamond Terror; The Solitary Hero*

**Also known as:** Vajrabhairava; Vajra Bhairava

**Classification:** Bodhisattva; Buddha; Yidam

Yamantaka triumphs over evil, suffering, death, and delusion. He strikes fear into forces of evil. They quake before him, thus his image serves as an amulet to dispel malicious ghosts and spirits. There are three forms of Yamantaka: • Yamantaka Vajrabhairava, Diamond Terrifier, the most famous form (multicolored) • Yamantaka Krishnayamari (Black Yamantaka)

• Yamantaka Raktayamari (Red Yamantaka)



Yamantaka's original root identity is subject to debate:

- He may be an indigenous Tibetan spirit incorporated into Buddhist cosmology.
- He may be Shiva in disguise.
- He may be a wrathful form of the Bodhisattva Manjushri.
- He may be a manifestation of a Buddha form of Manjushri.

Yamantaka represents the victory of wisdom and knowledge over death, whether literally or metaphorically. (Buddhism associates ignorance with a form of death.) *Meditating on Yamantaka's image helps develop the strength to confront death: not necessarily to defeat it but to comprehend and accept death without fear or anger.*

**Manifestation:** Yamantaka is a man with a buffalo's head.

**Consort:** Vajravetali, the Diamond Zombie

**See also:** *Bodhisattva; Manjushri; Vajravetali; Yama; Yama Dharmarajah*

## Yami

**Also known as:** Yamini; Yamuna

Yami, Yama's twin sister, approached her brother with love, seeking marriage and children. He rejected her, preferring to die childless, rather than commit incest. (Yami and Yama may derive from an earlier pantheon in which—like Hera and Zeus or Isis and Osiris—sister-brother marriage was the norm.) Without her brother, Yami transformed into Yamini, Mournful Lady of Night. She did not travel to the realm of death with Yama but remains an Earth-bound spirit, the spirit of the Yamuna River.

- In some Tibetan legends, Yami is a goddess of death and Yama's consort. She rules the female spirits of the Hell zones. She may or may not be Yama's sister.

**Color:** Black

**Creature:** Tortoise

**Time:** Night

**See also:** *Yama*

## **Yaoji**

### *Princess of the Flowery Clouds*

**Also known as:** Yao Ji

Yaoji, twenty-third and youngest Fairy daughter of Hsi Wang Mu, Queen Mother of the West, is among the primary Taoist goddesses. She has dominion over birth, sex, lust, life, death, healing, and dreams. A shaman and master herbalist, Yaoji is responsible for the presence of many medicinal herbs on Earth. She sponsors healers, heroes, and adepts and is the lover of kings. Yaoji is a protective weather goddess who raises and soothes storms. She commands dragons.

Yaoji once lived in the Celestial World where she mastered all the requisite Fairy crafts, but she was bored. Yaoji wished to see the world, so she assembled a flock of Fairy attendants and embarked on a grand tour. Flying through the air, appreciating the beauty of Earth, Yaoji was frustrated when she reached China's Wushan Mountains and her vision was blocked by thick clouds and rain stirred up by destructive dragons. An alternative myth suggests that her vision wasn't blocked. She saw only too well the dangers facing travelers in the perilous Wushan Gorge.

Yaoji descended to Earth with her entourage of Fairies. They tamed and dredged the gorge and formed the mountains. By the time their work was complete, Yaoji discovered that she loved the Wushan Peaks and Gorge. She decided to move in permanently along with her Fairy entourage. Eventually she transformed into one of the peaks, Goddess Mountain. (The other peaks may be transformed Fairies or dragons.) Yaoji protects ships, sailors, and people in general. She prevents natural disasters. She reveals secrets of healing, instructs Taoist adepts, and teaches the art of seduction and sacred sexuality. Yaoji is the subject of operas, films, folktales, and literature.

The controversial Three Gorges Dam has effectively cut off Yaoji's

access to the land below, leaving her stranded at the peak. Or rather, the goddess may not be stranded: she can fly away. However, those who seek her have had their access routes destroyed.

**Manifestation:** Yaoji most commonly appears as an irresistibly beautiful woman or a beautiful blue stone, but she can take virtually any form she desires. Yaoji may appear as an apparition, a corporeal presence, and in dreams.

**Mount:** Tiger

**Creatures:** Cranes, phoenixes, dragons

**Sacred site:** From a distance, Goddess Peak (Shennu Peak), one of twelve Wushan mountain peaks, resembles a beautiful feminine silhouette. She has a temple at the base of a peak.

**Plant:** Lingzhi, the mushroom of immortality

**See also:** *Fairy; Hsi Wang Mu*

## Yawkyawk

**Origin:** Australia (Kuninjku)

Yawkyawk are aboriginal Australian mermaids who live in waterholes, freshwater springs, and rock pools, especially in the Stone Country of Australia's Top End. Although it is often suggested that Europeans spread mermaid tales around the world, the Yawkyawk were envisioned as mermaids long before Europeans arrived in Australia. *Yawkyawk* literally means "young woman spirit being." They radiate incredible fertility power. Allegedly just approaching a Yawkyawk water hole can cause a woman to conceive. Yawkyawk provide rain for plants and sweet water for people, but if angered they raise destructive storms. Yawkyawk sometimes engage in marriages with people.

**Manifestation:** Yawkyawk manifest as classical mermaids: young woman above the waist, fish below. Their long hair resembles green algae or fronds of seaweed. This is believed to be their true form, but if

they want, they can sprout legs and walk. Yawkyawk can also morph into dragonfly form and fly.

**Iconography:** Yawkyawk are a favorite subject of aboriginal art, both traditional and contemporary.

**Spirit ally:** The Ngalyod, a rainbow serpent, may be the Yawkyawk's husband or father. The Ngalyod may be a different type of spirit or a different form of Yawkyawk. He manifests in white lilies and white clay and lives in water holes.

**Time:** Yawkyawk tend to be most active and visible at night.

**See also:** *Mermaid*

## Yazata

**Also known as:** Yazd

*Yazata* is frequently translated as “angel,” but it literally means “adorable one” or “one who should be adored.” Yazatas derive from the earliest documented era of Iranian religion and culture. They are guardians of planets and celestial bodies. The name of the Yezidi religion may or may not be related to the word *Yazata*.

**See also:** *Anahita; Peacock Angel*

## Yei

### *The Holy People*

**Also known as:** Ye'ii

**Classification:** Diné (Navajo)

*Ye i* literally means “spirit,” defined as beings who possess more power than people. Yei are benevolent. They may be male or female. Yei bestow prosperity, protection, and good fortune but are especially associated with healing. They are invoked in traditional Navajo healing

ceremonies like the Night Way, Blessing Way, or Enemy Way. Images of Yei are incorporated into Navajo sand paintings. Different Yei possess different powers of healing.

**Iconography:** All Yei are depicted with eagle down. Those depicted with round heads are male, while square-headed Yei are females. Yei sometimes appear depicted on Navajo carpets and weavings. Carved Yei, similar to carvings of Kachinas, are now also crafted.

**See also:** *Ganaskidi; Kachina*

## Yemaya

### *Holy Queen Sea*

**Also known as:** Yemalla; Yemoja; Yemalia; Yemaja; Iemanja

**Origin:** Yoruba (Nigeria)

**Classifications:** Orisha; Mermaid

Yemaya, Queen of the Sea, epitomizes motherhood and rules all issues pertaining to women. She is among the most powerful and beloved of the Seven African Powers, the sexy matriarch of the Yoruba spirits known as orishas. The translation of her name, “The Mother Whose Children are Fish” has dual implications: • Yemaya’s children are innumerable: she is the mother of most of the orishas.

- Her generosity and benevolence have also garnered her countless human devotees, equivalent to the innumerable fish of the sea.

Yemaya has profound associations with the sea and saltwater. She resides *in* the sea, she is the spirit *of the* sea, and she *is* the sea, literally present in ocean water. Her nature resembles that of the sea: profound, beautiful, filled with treasure and generosity but also potentially tempestuous. Yemaya generously bestows abundance, wealth, healing, love, and fertility, but she is also the essence of tidal waves and rip currents.

Yemaya, a profoundly powerful orisha, may be petitioned for:

- Anything possibly considered a “woman’s issue”

- Fertility and reproductive issues
- Protection from domestic violence, which she despises
- Protection when traveling over the sea

However, those who develop an especially close relationship with Yemaya must be extra cautious when actually near the sea. Communicate with her *constantly* when in the water or beside it. Remind her that you are human and must live on land. Yemaya doesn't intend to cause harm but likes to keep everything she loves—her treasures—near her.

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*Once upon a time, Yemaya lived in the cemetery and Oya in the sea. Yemaya tricked Oya into permanently trading places. Oya has never entirely forgiven her. Do not feed or venerate them side by side. Leave some distance between these two powerful orishas.*

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Yemaya is syncretized to the Stella Maris and the Black Madonna of Regla.

**Favored people:** Anyone of African descent whose ancestors survived the Middle Passage to the West may consider their connection to Yemaya established. It is traditionally believed that anyone who survived did so through her grace, while those who did not survive were received into her body.

Yemaya also protects:

- Women and children
- Practitioners of the occult
- Those born under water signs, especially Cancers

**Manifestations:** Whether manifesting as woman or mermaid, Yemaya is always spectacularly beautiful. She can be sexually provocative with a rolling, hip-swaying walk that evokes the sea. Her traditional costume includes seven skirts. Her hair, clothes, and body may be ornamented

with crystals, pearls, coral, or tiny bells.

**Attributes:** Seashells, marine motifs

**Emblem:** Star and half moon; Yemaya is the only orisha associated with two heavenly bodies—one isn't sufficient to represent her beauty.

**Colors:** Blue, white

**Birds:** Doves, ducks, peacocks

**Creatures:** Fish, all sea creatures

**Element:** Water

**Metal:** Silver

**Number:** 7

**Planet:** Moon, which controls the sea

**Plants:** Indigo, seaweed, water hyacinth

**Minerals:** Quartz crystal, pearls, coral

**Places:** Originally the spirit of Nigeria's Ogun River, her profound associations with the ocean may have coincided with the African slave trade.

**Day:** Saturday

**Time:**

- 2 February
- Summer Solstice • 15 August (Brazil)
- 7 September (Cuba)
- New Year's Eve and New Year's Day. Midnight, the threshold between years, is her power moment.

**Altar:** Devotees traditionally visit her at the ocean, bearing gifts. Alternatively, create an altar for Yemaya featuring saltwater and ocean motifs at home. Yemaya's shrine should evoke the sea. Decorate it with nets, seashells, sea stars, and sea horses. Add salted water to a crystal

glass containing small seashells.

**Offerings:** Jewelry, perfume, brand new scented soap still in its wrapper; flowers, especially white roses. Yemaya's favorite food offerings include wet seedy fruits like pomegranates and watermelon plus fish, duck, and lamb dishes. She likes to snack on pork cracklings, plantain or banana chips and pound or coconut cake. Garnish everything with generous libations of molasses. Gifts on behalf of the marine environment and sea creatures may also please her.

HOW TO PETITION YEMAYA • Summon her with a gourd rattle.

- Petition her at the beach.
- Can't get to the beach? Yemaya's fellow water spirit, Oshun, spirit of sweet waters, will accept offerings on her behalf. Deposit gifts for Yemaya in flowing streams or rivers. Nothing is free, however: if utilizing Oshun's services, be sure to speak to her first, explaining that you would like her to deliver your offering to Yemaya. Bring Oshun an appropriate gift, too.

YEMAYA CLEANSING SPELL

Re-create the sea: add sea salt to spring water.

- Murmur over it. Tell the water your goals and what you seek. Invoke, petition, or pray to Yemaya.
- Sprinkle the water over your naked body from head to toe using your fingers or a rosemary branch.
- Let the water remain on your body for a little while, and then gently pat yourself dry with a brand-new clean white towel or cloth.
- Put on clean clothes.
- Take the cloth to the sea with seven white roses; throw everything in the water.
- Walk away and don't look back.

Although there is one Yemaya, she also has multiple paths, which may be venerated independently. Alternatively they may be understood as different facets of one extremely complex, profound goddess. Yemaya's different paths are symbolized by different shades of blue (and



sometimes by unique attributes). The particular hue represents each path's specific nature and home. Thus the aspects of Yemaya who live closest to land or the water's surface are represented by paler shades than those dwelling in the depths. Aggressive, violent aspects of Yemaya also claim the color red. The following are but a few of her many aspects: **YEMAYA ASESUN**

Yemaya Asesun, an ancient path of Yemaya, is Queen of Water Birds including ducks, geese, and swans. She rules the springs that gush forth from Earth, especially in deep forests. **Color:** Light blue **YEMAYA ASHAGBA**

Yemaya Ashagba, "The Chain," is Olokun's first child and may be the oldest, most primordial aspect of Yemaya. (See Yembo below.) Queen of the Anchor, Yemaya Ashagba connects the bottom of the sea with the top. She is a spirit of divination and healing. When angered, floods, and tidal waves are her weapons.

**Attribute:** Anchor

**Color:** Light blue

**YEMAYA ATAREMAWA**

Yemaya Ataremawa, the queen who is ever so important, owns all treasures of the sea. She has a home in the forest. **Color:** Light blue **YEMAYA IBU AGANA**

Yemaya Ibu Agana is a wrathful aspect of Yemaya who lives at the bottom of the sea where she churns destruction.

**Color:** Deep blue

**YEMAYA IBU ARO**

Yemaya Ibu Aro distributes treasure. She controls trade routes and markets.

**Colors:** Indigo blue, red coral

**YEMAYA MAYALEWO**

Yemaya Mayalewo, Queen of the Harbor, the One Who Tends to Commerce and Trade, lives at the bay's entrance. She is queen of the

marketplace, Oya's prime competitor.

**Color:** Light blue, teal

#### YEMAYA OGUNTÉ

Yemaya Ogunté is Warrior Yemaya: the courageous, fearless warrior who fights alongside Ogun. She lives on rocky, treacherous coastlines and wears a crown of seven machetes.

**Color:** Midnight blue, red

#### YEMAYA OKOTO

Yemaya Okoto, the Pirate Queen, causes shipwrecks and drags ships and treasure down to the ocean floor. Her name means "the one who lives amongst the seashells." Her crown is a shark's jawbone. She clenches a dagger between her teeth. She rules all predatory marine creatures who serve as her messengers and servants, possibly including human pirates. Yemaya Okoto fills the sea with blood. The Red Sea is her official hideout, but she sails where she chooses. (To complicate matters further, Yemaya and her daughter, love goddess Oshun, may be alter-egos of Lady Asherah, another Red Sea Queen and *her* daughter, love goddess Astarte.) She is also known as Yemaya Ibu Okoto.

**Color:** Indigo, navy blue, blood red

**Altar:** Decorate with Jolly Rogers and pirate flags

#### YEMBO

Yembo may be Yemaya's mother or the oldest form of Yemaya. Yembo may be the mother of the orishas. Because Ogun allegedly raped her, metal knives are not permitted in her presence or used in her offerings. Substitute crystal, stone, or wood.

**See also:** *Aganyu; Asherah of the Sea, Lady; Astarte; Bahlindjo; Black Madonna of Regla; Dandalunda; Iemanja; Janaina; Maria Lionza; Mermaid; Nana Buruku; Ogun; Olokun; Orisha; Oshun; Oya; Seven African Powers; Shango; Stella Maris; Swan Goddesses*

## Yewá

**Also known as:** Yeggua; Yeguá; Ewá

**Classification:** Orisha

Yewá is a shadowy, mysterious, reclusive orisha. Yewá resides in the graveyard where she works in close partnership with her sister, Oya, the Cemetery Queen. Yewá is Queen of Cadavers, which she guards from time of death through funeral rites and burial, when she delivers them over to Oya. Oya may allow time for Yewá to consume corpses or otherwise preside over the reduction to skeletons at which time Oya takes over.

Yewá didn't always live in the cemetery. She was originally a marine orisha, Olokun's most beautiful daughter, ruler of lagoons together with Olosa. She was venerated within a cave that could only be reached by swimming across the lagoon.

Legend has it that when Yewá was still a very young virgin girl, Shango, that womanizer, secretly seduced her. She conceived. Boromu (or another sharp-eyed orisha, depending on the version of the myth) persuaded her to drink an herbal potion causing her to abort. Devastated and overwhelmed by her experiences, which she bore alone, Yewá buried the fetus beneath a tree and exiled herself to the cemetery, the realm of death.

Either before or after she ran away, Boromu went to Olokun to report the events. He brought Olokun to the tree where the remains were unearthed. (The child, named Borosia, resurrected at least in spirit, now serves as a guard of Olokun's court.) Boromu may or may not now be Yewá's husband (and whether he always loved her, hence his actions, or whether this was an arranged marriage to salvage her reputation is subject to debate).

Yewá is a severe orisha. In Africa, her devotees were obliged to be celibate. She was attended by eunuchs under the supervision of Logunedé. Although her Western Hemisphere restrictions may be somewhat looser, she still loathes promiscuity and any kind of sexual banter or humor. She doesn't like explicit discussion of sex, and she doesn't like innuendo either. She hates any kind of vulgarity and

strongly disapproves of foul language and cursing. Don't indulge in it anywhere near her altar. (And if you can't resist, then she's not your goddess.) One must always be fully dressed when in her presence.

- She is syncretized to the Black Madonna of Montserrat.

**Manifestation:** She has a regal, queen-like bearing.

**Elements:** Water, earth

**Colors:** Pink, scarlet

**Numbers:** 7, 9, 11

**Creatures:** Doves, owls, goats

**Day:** Friday

**Plant:** *Turnea ulmifolia* (yellow alder or *marilope*), *Phyllanthus augustifolia* (Panatela) **Offerings:** Offer her the most fragrant flowers (to cover up the stench of the corpses she now guards). Don't get her just one pink rose or carnation: get *lots* to maximize their fragrance.

**See also:** *Boromu; Logunedé; Olokun; Olosa; Orisha; Oya; Shango; Yemaya*

## Yidam

The Yidam are Buddhist meditation deities. Their images serve as portals and bridges, not dissimilar in nature from Eastern Orthodox icons. Yidams are featured in sacred mandala and Thangka paintings. The Yidam serves as a vehicle, potentially transporting devotees, adepts, and practitioners to the state of enlightenment that the spirit symbolizes and has personally achieved. Among the most beloved Yidams are Tara, Vajranairatmya, and various Dakinis, especially Vajravetali, the Diamond Zombie.

**See also:** *Dakini; Tara (2); Vajranairatmya; Vajravahari; Vajravetali; Yamantaka*

## Yokai

## *Bewitching Apparitions*

**Also known as:** Bakemono

Yokai are spirits of Japan, a vast category incorporating thousands of different spirits of all kinds, some anonymous but many with individual names and agendas. Yokai are essentially all spirits of Japan with the exclusion of the kami. The word *Yokai* is variously translated into English as “demon”, “ghost”, or “monster” but none of these categories are exactly synonymous perhaps because Yokai form such a huge, diverse clan of spirits.

Yokai encompass Fox Spirits, Kappa, Oni, and Tengu as well as individual spirits like Hone-Onna and Yuki-Onna. Unlike the kami, Yokai have no hierarchy or pantheon—they are independent operators. One Yokai may have nothing to do with another. Some are kind, some are cruel, others range anywhere on the spectrum in between. Should you ever be menaced by threatening Yokai, summon Shoki the demon queller to vanquish them.

The science of studying Yokai is called *Yokaigaku*, essentially “Yokai-ology.” Many scholars of Yokai have also traditionally been artists who enjoy painting their portraits. Among the earliest and most influential is Toriyama Sekien (1712–1788), whose published works include *The Illustrated Night Parade of One Hundred Yokai* and *the Illustrated Bag of One Hundred Random Yokai*.

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*During the later Edo era (1603–1867),*

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*children collected cards, known in Japanese as karuta, that featured images of individual Yokai, perhaps the precursors of modern Pokemon or Yu-Gi-Oh! trading cards.*

**Ritual:** *Hyakumonogatari Kaidankai* or the “Gathering of One Hundred Candles” is a Japanese Spiritualist parlor game/ritual. (As with Western séances, whether it’s purely a game or a ritual depends on participants’

intent.) The tradition was invented by samurai. Participants gather at night in a room lit solely by one hundred candles. Each takes a turn telling a ghost or supernatural story. After each story, one candle is extinguished so that the room becomes progressively darker. Theoretically, when the last candle is extinguished, some sort of Yokai should manifest. (Different sources claim, it may be one Yokai or one hundred.) Knowledgeable players may attempt to invoke a specific spirit; others enjoy being surprised. The Yokai may or may not be pleased to appear. A game of One Hundred Candles may be observed in the second volume of the manga series *xxxHolic* (Del Rey Publishing, 2004).

**Time:** Reveling Yokai parade on summer nights in the nocturnal procession called *Hyaki Yakko*, the “Night of One Hundred Spirits.”

**See also:** *Fox Spirits; Hannya; Hone-Onna; Kami; Kappa; Neko-Mata; Nure-Onna; Nurikabe; Obake; Oni; Shoki; Tanuki; Tengu; Tsukumogami; Wanyudo; Wild Hunt; Yama Oba; Yuki-Onna*

## Yu Huang Da Di

**See:** *Jade Emperor, The*

## Yucahu

*Large and Powerful as the Sea;  
Spirit Without Male Ancestor*

**Also known as:** Yucahu Bagua Maorcoti

**Classification:** Zemi

**Origin:** Taino

Yucahu is the supreme deity of the Taino, an Arawak people of the Caribbean. He is lord of the sea. Atabey is Yucahu’s mother, although she is also sometimes described as his consort. He has no father and no beginning. In Taino cosmology, a mother and son, Atabey and Yucahu, create the world. All other spirits owe their existence to them.

**Iconography:** Yucahu is the most commonly represented Zemi. These so-called three-pointer stones are the largest surviving group of Taino artifacts. Most surviving stones represent Yucahu. He was usually depicted with his mouth wide open and his legs bent back. Some stones were buried in cassava flour. Others were revered as personal zemis.

**Creature:** Frog

**Plant:** Cassava (*Manihot esculenta*), also known as manioc or *yuca*. Its root is edible and was a primary Taino food starch, but its leaves can be fatally poisonous. (Tapioca is a cassava product.) **See also:** *Anacaona; Atabey; Xtabay; Zemi*

## Yuki-Onna

*Lady of the Snows; Snow Woman; The Snow Princess*

Travelers caught in snowstorms in Japan, especially in the mountains, describe encountering a ghostly woman: Yuki-Onna, the Snow Princess. She's tall and beautiful with *very* pale skin and breath like ice. She looks serene and doesn't appear to be freezing, unlike the poor traveler. Sometimes she wears a white kimono, which should be a tip-off to her supernatural identity. Not only is it too cold to be walking around wearing nothing but a kimono but in traditional Japanese culture, white is associated with death, not brides. Sometimes Yuki-Onna appears stark naked in sub-zero weather, which should be an even greater tip-off.

Few survive encounters with Yuki-Onna, although some do or we would not have these stories. Encounters with Yuki-Onna are not invariably fatal. Every once in a while she helps travelers in the snow. Occasionally she engages in sacred marriage.

That said, Yuki-Onna is a death goddess. She is the essence of the killing power of snow. Her methods vary:

- She may breathe on someone and fatally freeze them.

- She may deliver the coup de grâce with a kiss.
- She may lead travelers astray on snowy nights. Hopelessly lost, they die in the snow.

- Sometimes she has sex with men before they die.
- Sometimes she kills people in their sleep. They fall asleep in the snow, never to wake.
- Sometimes she carries a baby and will ask someone to please hold her child. Those who do instantly freeze to death.

Nothing indicates that refusing to hold her child will save you. If you're caught in a snowstorm alone with Yuki-Onna in the middle of nowhere, it's possible that the only thing that can save you is her mercy.

Frequently classified as a vampiric spirit, Yuki-Onna fatally sucks the breath from her victims, albeit gently and maybe even sweetly. As she's an erotic spirit, frequently engaging in sex with her victims, she's sometimes classified as a succubus. Alternatively, Yuki-Onna may be considered a goddess of mercy. She appears to those who are doomed or already dying and blesses them with a peaceful, quiet, even happy death rather than a prolonged, fearful, agonized one. As angels of death go, there are far worse.

Yuki-Onna most typically reveals herself to those who are stuck in snowstorms, but she doesn't have to stay outside. She can invade a home in the form of a gust of wind. She can transform into a frosty white mist or vapor that enters buildings through cracks or keyholes. Some legends say that snowflakes are her teardrops. More malevolent legends suggest that Yuki-Onna doesn't just appear when it snows; she actually creates blizzards, actively entrapping people within them.

Although Yuki-Onna's appearance during a snowstorm may be the indication that all hope is gone, she will occasionally help people. If really desperately lost in the snow, a last-ditch invocation of Yuki-Onna may be worthwhile.

Yuki-Onna makes frequent appearances in literature, movies, manga, and anime:

- Her myth is most famously retold in Lafcadio Hearn's 1904 *Kwaidan: Ghost Stories and Strange Tales of Old Japan*.
- A filmed version is included in director Masaki Kobayashi's 1965 classic, *Kwaidan*.
- Yuki-Onna is the inspiration for the CLAMP manga *Shirahime Syo*



(“Tales of the Snow Princess”).

**Manifestation:** A tall, serene, cold woman with long black hair. She may lack feet. Yuki-Onna can also appear as vapor, cold wind, or snow. Alternatively, Yuki-Onna is snow that sometimes takes the form of a woman.

**Mount:** Yuki-Onna rides a great white wolf, although she can also glide through the air.

**Color:** White

**See also:** *Cihuacoatl; Ghost; Vampire; White Lady (1); Yokai*

## Yurei

*Yurei*, a Japanese word that literally means “faint soul,” refers to a kind of ghost. The word is now sometimes used to indicate any kind of ghostly apparition, but technically the Yurei is a special kind of ghost: a ghost with a vendetta. Not every dead soul can evolve into a Yurei. Strength of personality and spiritual power are required with overwhelming emotion serving as the catalyst.

The following causes may create Yurei:

- Sudden, unexpected death or death in particularly traumatic circumstances (murder, suicide)
- Death while experiencing overwhelming negative emotions like rage, jealousy, or hatred
- Inadequate, incorrect, or no funeral rites

The soul transforms into a ghostly Yurei who pursues a personal agenda rather than becoming a protective ancestral spirit or just fading away. Yurei sightings and stories usually involve revenge or some attempt to complete unfinished business.

The easiest way to lay a Yurei to rest is by helping it resolve the emotional situation or issue that keeps it attached to Earth. Those who help the Yurei may even gain its alliance and assistance in the future. (The most powerful Yurei, like Oiwa, take on the characteristics of spirits or Yokai.) Alternatively, correct shamanic, magical, and/or spiritual rites may lay them to rest or at least stop them from tormenting

the living.

Not all Yurei are harmful or have malevolent intent, although horror stories are inevitably the most popular and most frequently retold. In the 1996 Japanese movie *Shin Izakaya Yurei*, a returning dead wife ends up helping her husband's new wife.

**Manifestation:** Yurei typically appear dressed in white funeral attire, as if they emerged from the grave. Yurei may lack feet, floating or gliding rather than walking.

**See also:** *Ghost; Goryo; Hannya; Obake; Oikiko; Oiwa; White Lady (1); Yokai*

## Z

### Zagaz

#### **Classification:** Djinn

Zagaz is a Djinn held responsible for the deaths of infants. Dr. Françoise Legey, author of *The Folklore of Morocco*, a medical practitioner who oversaw hospitals in Algiers and Morocco identifies Zagaz as the spirit of infantile tetanus.

Zagaz is counteracted by magically powerful but extremely poisonous plants like oleander and colocynths. Rituals must be performed with extreme caution; powders and incense are concocted by skilled shamans, not amateurs or beginners.

Rituals against Zagaz are performed at the end of pregnancy, in the birthing room, and after the birth.

- A powder ground from virtually all the magical and medicinal herbs sold by an herbalist is burned, as the aroma allegedly repulses Zagaz.
- Powdered colocynths and oleander are sprinkled in the corners of the birthing room, lest he be lurking in the shadows.
- Following birth, the midwife/shaman sprinkles a blend of asafoetida and oleander powder on the placenta, which she then buries in the cemetery, announcing, “I’m not burying you, Afterbirth. I’m burying Zagaz!”
- A blend of alum and harmala (*Peganum harmala*, also called Syrian rue) is burned as incense. The mother or midwife passes her right hand through the smoke three times and then lays her hand on the infant’s head.
- The baby is covered with a black veil and the protection of Sidi Mimoun, King of Djinn is invoked.

**See also:** *Djinn; Mimoun, Sidi*

## Zar

**Also known as:** Asaid; Asyad; Sar

Zar names a type of spirit, the spiritual tradition focusing on them, and the ceremonies that summon and honor them. Although these spirits may derive from ancient and once public spiritual traditions, in the twenty-first century, Zar is essentially a woman's secret spiritual society. Although men participate in Zar—especially in the capacity of musicians but as devotees, too—Zar is dominated by women. (There are exceptions: in parts of Somalia, local Zar reputedly despise men. They are purely women's spirits.)

Few written records of Zar's history exist. Few will discuss it openly as it is illegal or persecuted in most of the countries where it is prevalent. At best, it is considered disreputable. Egyptian President Gamal Abdel Nasser (1918–1970) actively attempted to eradicate Zar. Zar devotees try to be discreet or at least as discreet as seven-day rituals involving lots of incense and ecstatic drumming can be. Attitudes and prejudice against Zar are reminiscent of those commonly expressed against African Diaspora traditions like Santeria and Vodou but even more so.

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*Zar may be a sub-species of Djinn. However, in Egypt as elsewhere in the Islamic world, it's very important to avoid associations between Djinn and Zar because consorting with Djinn is strictly forbidden. An Egyptian euphemism for Zar spirits is Malayka Ardiyya, "underground angels."*

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Considering it is a secret spiritual tradition, Zar is extremely widespread, celebrated throughout East Africa, the Middle East, North Africa and wherever North Africans and Ethiopians have settled. The earliest written records regarding Zar derive from 1870s Egypt. It is generally believed to have originated in Ethiopia.

- Zar may have been brought to Egypt by Ethiopian slaves in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries.

- Zar may have been brought home to Egypt by wives of Egyptian soldiers following Egypt's early-nineteenth-century conquest of Sudan.

From Egypt, Zar radiated through North Africa and the Middle East. But these are mere theories: Zar may have taken other routes, too. In the polarized Middle East, Zar transcends boundaries. Devotees are mostly Muslim—if only because they are the majority of the population—but also include Christians, Jews, and those adhering to traditional African religions.

Origins of the name *Zar* are mysterious and subject to debate:

- It may derive from the Arabic *za'er* meaning “visitor.”
- It may derive from Amharic or another Ethiopian language.
- It resembles *Sar* a Semitic root word meaning “prince,” as in the Hebrew *Sarim* (a synonym for “angels”) or *Sarkin* (Hausa title of respect for the heads of Bori spirit houses).

In parts of Sudan, where Zar has been illegal since 1992, Zar refers only to the ceremonies, while the spirits are called *Asaid* or “Masters.” (*Asaid* is often translated as “demons,” but that is not its literal meaning.) Some Zar are renowned, at least within Zar circles and may have countless devotees, similar to the most famous orishas. Others are comparatively anonymous, known only within small circles, perhaps only to those they possess, similar to a Spiritualist medium's private spirits.

- Among the renowned are Sultan Siad el Bihar, Master of the Seas, and his sister. Saydah.
- In Somalia, Isis and Osiris—called Aysitu and Azuzar, respectively—survive as Zar spirits. Pregnant women make offerings to Aysitu for blessings of safe childbirth.

Zar announce their interest in a person via what is called possession in English, but the Egyptian term for the phenomenon literally means “covered” or “clothed.” The Zar is envisioned covering the individual, not within her. Symptoms of Zar possession include any or all of the following:

- Infertility
- Extreme apathy, malaise, or lethargy gradually increasing to the point

of illness

- Seizures or convulsions
- Increasingly accident-prone behavior

Illnesses caused by the Zar will not respond to conventional medical treatment. In other words, if someone having these symptoms is successfully treated by a physician so that the condition is truly healed (not just temporarily contained), then their case did not involve Zar spirits.

A shamanic Zar specialist is consulted to determine whether the person is possessed. Ritual specialist and victim are both most likely to be female. Depending on location and language, the specialist may be called a *Kodya*, *Sheikha*, or *Ba'alat Zar*. (In parts of Ethiopia, the word *Zar* refers to the spirits, their ceremonies, and the ritual specialist who mediates with them.) If so, the spirit's desires must be determined so it can be propitiated and transformed into an ally. Once appeased, negative symptoms like illness, pain, misfortune, and infertility will dissipate and disappear.

Zar spirits *crave*. They hunger for luxuries: fine perfumes, fabrics, clothing, jewelry, and food. The way they get them is through people. Zar also like blood, especially menstrual blood, one reason for their fondness for women. Zar themselves are female, male, and transgender but all tend to prefer married women, especially bored, frustrated, unhappily married women. Divorced women are popular, too. Zar have little interest in men and even less in children or virgins.

- Anthropologists who study Zar without accepting the reality of spirits suggest that the whole phenomenon is a bid for attention, prestige, and goods by these women—a tacit way of making demands without doing so directly
- Alternatively, Zar choose those who mirror their own emotions and desires. Craving spirits are attracted to craving humans. They are sympathetic and empathetic to them.

A Zar spirit must be identified before it can be propitiated. Different Zar have different desires and needs. Similarly, orishas Oshun and Oya receive different offerings. Each Zar spirit possesses signature colors, fragrances, numbers, songs, and rhythms.

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*Zar must be propitiated to prevent them from causing harm. However, the desire also exists to please the Zar, to go beyond mere propitiation, because then the Zar is transformed into a powerful ally who grants wishes and good fortune, heals, and provides oracular information.*

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The identity of the Zar spirit may be established via different methods:

- The spirit identifies itself during ceremonies incorporating ritual possession.
- The Zar, speaking through its host's mouth, negotiates its desires, promising to vacate the woman's body on a specific date providing that demands are met. Demands usually involve gifts and/or ceremonies.
- The Zar may identify itself to the shaman in a dream. The ritual specialist places an item of clothing belonging to the possessed woman under her pillow, an invitation for the spirit to communicate with her.

Because the Zar is a disembodied spirit, the gifts are given to the possessed woman who serves as the Zar's proxy:

- If the Zar wants an expensive green silk dress, the woman must wear it for the spirit.
- If the Zar wants French perfume, the woman accepts it on the Zar's behalf.
- If the Zar wants champagne or beer, it receives it via the woman's mouth.

Zar tend to seek finery. Their victim is adorned and enriched, not humiliated. (Hence anthropologists' suspicions.) Zar spirits may demand that the woman wear a certain perfume or smoke certain cigarettes. They may commission jewelry bearing their own image, which the woman is then expected to wear. Zar are rebellious spirits, demanding that their hosts be given what is not usually permitted women in conservative Islamic societies: cigarettes, alcoholic beverages, cosmetics, and wild parties.

In general, Zar are not exorcised, they are accommodated. Most Zar *cannot* be exorcised. Ignoring them may lead to debilitating physical or

mental illness and ultimately the host's death. Once arrived, Zar rarely leave. They can make life miserable, or an alliance can be forged. The Zar will loyally protect its host providing its stipulated demands are met.

Dealing with the Zar is more than just a one-time crisis intervention. It is not a matter of just paying them off so they will disappear. Zar spirits generally don't want a ransom: they want an ongoing relationship:

- The spirit is transformed from pest to guardian.
- The person is transformed from victim to devotee.

A Zar spirit enters into a lifelong contract with its host. (Zar devotees are sometimes referred to as brides.) The woman may be expected to attend weekly meetings intended to honor and communicate with Zar spirits. (Not all who attend are possessed. As in Vodou or Santeria, many never experience possession.)

Common elements of Zar ceremonies include dancing, drumming and the dedication of a bird or animal to the Zar, which is sacrificed and then cooked and eaten by participants. Ceremonies may last a few hours or days. A full Zar ceremonial may last for a week: seven nights (and days) of dancing, drumming, and ecstatic ritual possession. Each Zar spirit has its own rhythm, tone, or song with which it is summoned.

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*A vivid description of a Zar ceremonial is found in Albert Memmi's autobiographical novel Pillar of Salt.*

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Zar spirits may be received and served via methods other than possession. Zar that are transformed into guardian spirits may be passed down from mother to daughter. (In parts of Ethiopia, a distinct word—*Weqabi*—names this transformed spirit.) Zar manifest somewhat differently in different places. In Sudanese cosmology, Zar are divided into ten main tribes or societies, not dissimilar from the Bori houses, at least in terms of organization. Each consists of a family of individual spirits with unique personalities. Like Iwa, orishas, and Bori, Sudanese Zar arrive at ceremonies in specific order.



Zar, like Djinn, have religion. There are Pagan, Jewish, Muslim, and Coptic Christian Zar, but unlike Djinn, they do not stick to their own kind when it comes to humans. A Pagan Zar may visit those of any of the monotheistic faiths and vice versa.

The Zar's own religious affiliation does influence offerings and treatment, though. For example, Muslim Zar are not offered alcoholic beverages, but others demand it. Muslim Zar are also vulnerable to Koranic exorcisms. As opposed to other more recalcitrant Zar, they will, theoretically anyway, cooperate and leave in response to proper rituals.

**Ritual:** Candles are crucial to Zar ceremonies. Rituals *must* be held by candlelight even if electric lights are available.

**Altar:** Zar altars usually include henna, incense, and flowers, especially roses.

**Offerings:** Each Zar has personal preferences, so the following are generalities:

- Zar usually like fruit, cheese, olives, and beer plus perfume and incense, especially frankincense.
- Ethiopian Zar are allegedly inordinately fond of coffee.
- Muslim Zar demand soft drinks, as do most female Zar.
- Non-Muslim Zar may demand alcoholic beverages.
- Ethiopian Zar like magical scrolls and talismans, even those traditionally used to banish spirits. (This may also be their way of bragging about their inability to be exorcised.) A scroll is made from skin of an animal dedicated to a Zar spirit, then slaughtered and eaten. Once created, the scroll must be worn by the devotee.

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*Koranic healing is sometimes prescribed for Zar (and Djinn) but the goal is exorcism, not propitiation. The possessing spirit is perceived as a demon, not a potential ally. Although based on the Koran, not on Christianity, methods used are not dissimilar from traditional Christian Fairy exorcisms in Ireland, including beating the possessed human in an attempt to drive out the spirit.*

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**See also:** *Bori; Djinn; Fairy; Kel Asuf; Lwa; Mami Waters; Orisha; Oshun; Oya*

## **Zarabanda**

**Also known as:** Sarabanda; Sarabanda Rompe Monte

**Classification:** Nkisi

Zarabanda is a spirit of iron and an immensely powerful shaman, sorcerer, healer, and warrior. He is a great ally for those seeking protection, as he is afraid of *nothing*. Zarabanda may or may not be Ogun. Like Ogun and many other spirits of iron, he objects to the presence of menstruating women. Even if allied with him, do not make offerings when bleeding. In addition to protection, he is invoked for help with employment.

**Manifestation:** He may wear a coat of armor.

**Attributes:** Ladder, white-handled knife

**Altars:** Maintain his altars with discretion. They are usually kept within cabinets, not out in the open for casual public view.

**Color:** Red

**See also:** *Kanayago; Nkisi; Ogun*

## **Zemele**

*Mother of the Earth*

**Origin:** Phrygia

Once a very important goddess in her own right, Zemele is now overshadowed by her son, Dionysus. The two were venerated together. When Dionysus was incorporated into the Greek Olympian pantheon, it was as Zeus' son. Zemele, powerful goddess, was demoted to Princess Semele, Zeus' lover who died after being exposed to Zeus' full glory. The

myth that Semele, unlike Hera, was too weak to handle Zeus' full impact serves to cut Zemele down to size.

After Semele's death, according to Greek myth, Zeus rescued Dionysus, sewed him up in his thigh and served as surrogate mother, birthing the baby himself. The inconvenient Semele meanwhile was sent to Hades. Dionysus, loyal son, refused to be venerated without her. His first act upon achieving Olympian status was to bring his mother up from Hades to join him.

Zemele is a chthonic goddess: a goddess who lives within Earth. She was venerated in women's mystery traditions and so little clear information survives. She may manifest in the form of her sacred creature, a snake.

**See also:** *Dionysus; Hera; Semele; Thyone; Zeus* and the Glossary entry for *Mystery*

## Zemi

**Also known as:** Cemie

*Zemi* is a Taino word for "spirits." The Taino are an indigenous people of Puerto Rico and Hispaniola, encompassing Haiti and the Dominican Republic. (There were also Taino settlements in the Bahamas, Cuba, Jamaica, and elsewhere in the Caribbean.) The most prominent Zemi spirits include Atabey and Yucahu, but the word refers to all kinds of sacred beings, including ancestors.

Spirits are Zemis, but so are images and objects, which contain and possess the power of Zemis. According to Taino cosmology, natural objects possess indwelling spirits. These objects are also known as zemis. These include shells and rocks left intact, exactly as found in nature, but also images formed from fabric, stone, wood, and shells.

Zemis were prized possessions, sacred objects, considered incredibly precious, and their indwelling spirits were venerated. Zemis possessed gender, unique personalities, and were able to communicate with people. The owner of a zemi could sell it, give it as a gift or pass it down to a family member as an heirloom. To own the zemi was to have access

to the power within. Households traditionally kept the zemis of all family members on a low table or within a niche.

**See also:** *Anacaona; Atabey; Yucahu*

## Zemyna

**Origin:** Baltic

**Also known as:** Zeme (Lithuania); Zemes Mate (Latvia)

Zemyna, holiest of all Baltic deities, ceaselessly creates and nourishes all life on Earth, including animals, plants, insects, and humans. Zemyna is Earth, and she is the spirit of Earth's abundance, too. The mother and protectress of the living and the dead, Zemyna does not bring or cause death: she is a goddess of life, not death. She receives the dead into her body via burial, then transforms death into new life in an eternal cycle.

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*Zemyna is the daughter of a primordial pre-Baltic deity called Zemyna of the Marshes or Zemyna of the Swamps.*

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In traditional pre-Christian Lithuanian religion, all celebrations begin with an invocation of Zemyna. Devotion to Zemyna the Earth Goddess was primarily maintained by peasants and farmers. She was not particularly significant to the ruling elite who venerated male spirits like Perkunas. Because of this, Zemyna was somewhat ignored during the transition to Christianity, allowing her veneration to quietly persist. (It's also hard to eradicate devotion to a deity who is literally always underfoot.) Documents indicate that as late as the seventeenth century, Zemyna's priestess sacrificed black suckling pigs to Zemyna, which were then consumed by participants during rustic harvest festivals.

- Zemyna, the life-giver, bestows the power to give life: she has dominion over fertility.
- As a goddess of justice, oaths are sworn on her.

**Manifestation:** Zemyna is literally Earth, but she also manifests as a woman. She appears each spring in the guise of a beautiful pregnant woman.

**Date:** Spring equinox

**Color:** Black

**Tree:** Birch

**Creature:** Black pig

**Altar:** Although Zemyna is ever-present and may be venerated anywhere, large, flat stones dug into Earth are her traditional altars.

**Offerings:** Bread, beer, ale: pour generous libations directly onto Earth; bread may be buried in Earth. Offerings to Zemyna are a component of traditional Lithuanian funerals.

**See also:** *Kybele; Laima*

## Zephyr

**Also known as:** Zephyrus

**Origin:** Greece

Zephyr is the spirit of the west wind, the bringer of pleasant weather, associated with spring. Although he has a reputation for being the gentlest of the Anemoi wind spirits, he is violent in love. Zephyr is blamed for the death of Hyacinth. After he raped the Harpy, Podarge, she gave birth to Achilles' horses. His consorts include his sisters, Chloris and Iris, but he also adores young men. Zephyr lives in a cave in Thrace.

**See also:** *Achilles; Anemoi; Harpies; Hyacinth; Iris*

## Zeus

Zeus is the king of the Greek Olympian spirits, the wielder of the mighty thunderbolt. Scholarly debate rages as to whether he is an indigenous

Greek spirit or whether he arrived with invading Achaeans in approximately 1200 BCE (partly because there's no consensus on exactly who the Achaeans are or where they came from).

Various mythic versions of Zeus' birth exist, although in all he is the hunted and protected Divine Child. Various sites competed for the honor of being his birthplace or the place where he was kept hidden (and the pilgrimage funds that would accrue from this honor). Depending on the myth, baby Zeus, child of Gaia and Kronos, was nursed by a bear, dog, dove, goat, sow, or bees, all of whom may or may not be Nymphs in animal guise.

Zeus does *not* come to power because of his own superior strength and strategizing. His victory is owed to Gaia and her other children. Zeus received his signature thunder and lightning bolts from the Cyclopes after he liberated them from the pit of Tartarus. A later rebellion against Zeus led by Hera and Poseidon is ultimately foiled by the hulking presence of Briareus of the Hecatoncheires. Zeus expands his power via alliances with Gaia's daughters and granddaughters.

Zeus is a voracious spirit: hungry for women, victory, power, and territory. Most of the romantic myths regarding Zeus and his seduction (or rape) of mortal women, usually described as princesses or queens, are mythiceuphemisms for his mergers with local goddesses who were then demoted to the rank of mortals, albeit royal.

Zeus' ascendance to power accompanied and symbolizes a social sea-change in which men, especially fathers or patriarchs, are rulers. For example, although from Demeter and Persephone's perspective, Persephone was abducted, technically this is not the case. Zeus gave Persephone, his daughter, to Hades, asserting father right. Zeus is a spirit of a new world order: a revolution where the male contribution to conception was understood as something that must be protected. Worship of Zeus embraces a social change in which the father is of greater significance than the mother. In the words of Apollo, a mother is just an oven required to prepare the child the father has placed within until it's done.

Zeus is the lord of paternity. Myths recount his countless, fruitful liaisons with women, mortals and goddesses alike. The point of these

myths isn't just to demonstrate that he's a player; those myths are a promise. Zeus bestows children like divine gifts—and not just any children, either. His descendents include heroes and the most beautiful woman in the world. Since he sowed his seed so prolifically, Zeus was also venerated as an ancestral spirit by many people, especially royalty.

Despite images of him sitting high above the clouds on Mount Olympus, Zeus was not a remote spirit but a communicative, oracular one. One could visit his shrines and solicit his advice. At his ancient shrine in Dodona, oracles were obtained by interpreting the sound of rustling leaves in his oak grove, understood to be his voice.

There are very few traces of Zeus among the persistent, surviving remnants of Greek Paganism. His role was essentially usurped or given to God. (Surviving spirits like the Neraida tend to be those for whom Christianity had no true adequate replacement; thus it's the sexy, wild, magical spirits that people refuse to let go.) However, the concept of God as an enthroned, regal, white-haired, bearded man may derive from Zeus.

- Zeus can fulfill any request or petition. If he can't do it himself, he will order another spirit to do it for him. However, he is generally invoked for healing, prosperity, protection, justice, and fertility.

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*Ellinai, or the Holy Association of Greek Ancient Religion Believers, received official state recognition and on 22 January 2007 was permitted to celebrate the nuptials of Zeus and Hera at the Temple of Olympian Zeus in Athens, the first openly practiced religious ceremonies at Zeus' temple since Paganism was abolished in the fourth century.*

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**Favored people:** Those who have been struck by lightning and survived may consider themselves under Zeus' patronage.

**Manifestation:** Zeus is a notorious shape-shifter. Favorite forms include bulls, snakes, and a distinguished, handsome man in his prime. Allegedly his true manifestation is a raging, incredibly bright, vivid flame, the

equivalent of the flash from an atomic bomb, whose full impact mortals are unable to withstand (as happens in the myth of Semele).

**Iconography:** Zeus is usually envisioned as a powerful, curly-bearded man wearing a wreath of oak or olive leaves.

**Attribute:** Thunderbolt

**Color:** White

**Tree:** Oak

**Bird:** Eagle

**Creatures:** Bull, wolf, snake, bear

**Sacred sites:** Mountain peaks in general, places struck by lightning. Lightning indicates Zeus marking his territory. Once upon a time, altars dedicated to Zeus were erected wherever lightning had struck. The place was then reserved for spiritual rituals only.

- Construction of the Temple of Olympian Zeus in Athens began in the sixth century BCE. It was envisioned as the world's largest temple and was not completed until the second century CE.
- The Temple of Olympian Zeus in Agrigento, Sicily, was the largest Doric temple ever constructed.
- The Temple of Zeus at Olympia, whose colossal statue of Zeus was considered one of the Seven Wonders of the Ancient World.

**Offerings:** Honey, ouzo, generous portions of Greek food and wine

In addition to his standard manifestation, Zeus also possesses some distinctive paths, which may be venerated independently:

#### **ZEUS LYKAIOS**

Zeus Lykaios, "Wolf Zeus" or "Wolfish Zeus," is the patron deity of the rural Greek region Arcadia. His sanctuary atop Mount Lykaion, "*Wolf Mountain*" the highest peak of Arcadia, is approximately twenty-two miles away from his sanctuary at Olympia. Recent archaeological evidence indicates that his ash-heap altar was first used at least five thousand years ago, significantly longer than Zeus was known in the



region.

Human sacrifices to Zeus Lykaios were allegedly still performed during the second century C.E. Greek travel writer Pausanias described it as a “secret sacrifice” saying that he “was reluctant to pry into the details of the sacrifice; let them be as they are and were from the beginning.” According to legend, one man was transformed into a wolf at each annual sacrifice to Zeus Lykaios. Whether this means a literal wolf, a werewolf by modern standards, or a euphemism for wolf priests—the original werewolves—is up for speculation. **Spirit allies:** Zeus, Leto, Artemis, and Apollo form a wolf pack and may be venerated together.

### **ZEUS SOTER**

Zeus Soter is Zeus the Savior. He is the protector of property. Zeus Soter is venerated in the marketplace and the harbor. His image is kept in the home for luck and protection. Honey is offered to him, encouraging him to behave sweetly. **Sacred site:** A statue of Zeus Soter stood atop the lighthouse at Pharos, considered one of the Seven Wonders of the Ancient World.

**See also:** *Apollo; Artemis; Athena; Callisto; Cyclopes; Dione; Dionysus; Europa; Helen of Troy; Hephaestus; Hera; Heracles; Io; Jupiter; Kronos; Leto; Metis; Nemesis; Neraida; Nymph; Pasiphae; Poseidon; Prometheus; Rhea; Semele; Styx; Themis; Thetis; Titan; Zemele* and the Glossary entry for *Path*.

## **Zorya**

**Also known as:** The Auroras; Zaria; Zarya

**Origin:** Slavic

The Zorya are guardian goddesses, three sisters:

- Zorya Utrennaya, Lady of the Morning Star
- Zorya Vechernyaya, Lady of the Evening Star
- Zorya Polnochnaya, Lady of the Midnight Star

Every morning Zorya Utrennaya opens the celestial gates so the chariot of the sun can emerge and ride through the sky. When the sun

returns home in the evening, Zorya Vechernyaya is waiting to close the gates. Zorya Polunochnaya is the sun's secret lover: she is the reason he returns home at the end of each day. After the sun sets, he retires to Zorya Polunochnaya's bed. Every night he dies orgasmically in her arms, but each morning she revives him so the sun can once again ride through the sky.

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*Sometimes only two, not three, Zorya are depicted. Zorya Polunochnaya is the secret sister, the one who sometimes goes unmentioned. Zorya Utrennaya is also worshipped independently as a warrior goddess who protects soldiers from injury and death in battle.*

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In addition to caring for the sun, the Zorya's other role is to guard the doomsday hound that perpetually menaces the constellation Ursa Minor, the Little Bear. Should the dog ever break free from his chain and succeed in devouring the little bear, then the entire universe as we know it is doomed. The Zorya guard individual people, too: Utrennaya and Polunochnaya in particular are venerated independently as love goddesses. They may be appealed to for romantic assistance.

- The Zorya play a significant role in Neil Gaiman's novel *American Gods*.

**Element:** Water

**Animal:** Horse

**Planet:** Venus



## Appendix: Spirits and Their Specialties

Although any spirit may assist you and it's possible that your own personal guardians can provide all your needs, some spirits are renowned as specialists. Some bear reputations as miracle healers. Others are associated with specific ailments. (They may cause these ailments as well as cure them.) Some spirits are patrons of specific professions while others guard people with specific interests. This appendix matches topics with spirits closely associated with them. It also includes lists of the Bori found within this book as well as the various players in the Gypsy myth of Ana and the king of the Loçolico.

This is not a definitive list. It only includes spirits that are contained within this book. It also does not list *every* spirit in this book affiliated with any topic. This appendix is a starting point, a road map to point you on your journey. Details regarding spirits may be found within their individual entries.

**Abuse, Child:** Kwan Yin; Miao Shan; Yemaya.

**Abuse, Spousal:** Ezili Dantor; Juno; Yemaya.

**Addictions:** Exu, Mae Thoranee; Maximon.

**Alcoholism:** Ariadne; Dionysus; Maximon.

**Ana and the Loçolico Saga:** Ana; Bitoso; Keshalyi; Lilyi; Loçolico; Lolmischo; Melalo; Minceskro; Poreskoro; Schilalyi; Tçaridy; Tçulo.

**Athletes:**

**Archery:** Apollo, Artemis

**Boxing:** Dioscuri; Hermes

**Equestrian:** Epona; Poseidon

**Female:** Artemis

**Fencing:** Holler; Michael; Ogun

**Gymnastics:** Hermes

**Hurling:** Angus Mac Og

**Skiing:** Holler; Skadi

**Snowboarding:** Poliahu

**Snowshoeing:** Skadi

**Sumo:** Kappa

**Wrestling:** Hanuman

**Baby, Dead:** (Guardians of the souls of stillbirths and voluntary and involuntary miscarriages as well as deceased infants and very young children): Berchta; Black Madonna of Avioth; Cihuacoatl; Jizo; Marassa.

**Baby, Female** (Fulfillment of requests for female children): Akkan, The; Hekate.

**Baby, Male:** (Fulfillment of requests for male children): Ajysit; Akkan, The; Bahuchara; Kwan Yin; Ma Zu; Min; Mountain Spirit; Seven Stars Spirits.

**Baby, Premature:** Renenet.

**Bat Deities:** Camazotz; Itzpapalotl.

**Bear Spirits:** Artemis; Black Madonna of Orcival; Callisto.

**Bee Spirits:** Aphrodite; Aristaeus; Austeja; Bubilas.

**Better Business:** Ba Chua Kho; Ba Chua Xu; Buraq; Fukusuke; Maneki Neko; Nang Kwak; Oya.

**Bird Women:** Alkonost; Gamayun; Harpies; Isis; Lilith; Marinette; Muses; Nekhebet; Sirens; Sirin.

**Blockbusters**, also known as Road Openers, these spirits specialize in removing obstacles (in metaphysical parlance: “blocks”) from the paths of their devotees: Alakshmi; Anubis; Dosojin; Eshu Elegbara; Ganesha; Kokuzo; Lubana; Ogun; Padilha, Maria; Sarutahiko; Tara, Blue; Tara, White; Wepwawet. See also: Appendix entry for *Crossroads Spirits*.

**Bori Spirits:** Arziki; Barade; Barhaza; Dan Galadima; Danko Dan Muso; Duna; Inna; Kure; Kuturu; Kwakiya; Magajiyar Jangare; Mai Dawa; Mai Gizo; Malam Alhaji; Nakada; Sarkin Aljan Biddarene; Sarkin Aljan

Shekaratafe; Sarkin Aljan Suleimanu; Sarkin Aljan Zurkalene; Sarkin Arna; Sarkin Fulani; Sarkin Gwari; Sarkin Rafi; Wanzami.

**Bull, Sacred:** Aatxe; Almaqah; Ba'al (1); Bossu; Poseidon; Zeus.

**Cat Spirits:** Bastet; Black Annis; Ketta; Maneki Neko; NekoMata.

**Childbirth and Pregnancy, Guardians of:** Antevorta (assistance with breech births); Bastet; Bendis; Bes; Bethen, The; Birth Grandmother; Boldog Asszony; Brigid; Cihuacoatl; Dosojin; Konohana Sakkuya Hime; Koyasu; Kunti; Kwan Yin; Oshun; Yemaya. (See also: Appendix entry for *Fertility*).

**Children, Guardians of:** Barons, The; Baron Samedi; Bastet; Baubo; Berchta; Birth Grandmother; Ebisu; Gedé; Hariti; Jizo; Kwan Yin; Ling Chui Na; Marassa; Mimoun, Sidi.

**Children, Missing:** Adeona.

**Computers and the Internet:** Brigid; Gabriel; Ogun; Simbi.

**Cow Goddesses:** Ajysit; Damona; Hathor; Hera; Io; Isis; Pasiphae.

**Crabs and Other Crustaceans:** Amphitrite, Hera, Kedalion.

**Crane Bird Goddesses:** Aoife; Ariadne; Bagalamukhi.

**Crocodiles and Other Crocodilians:** Sobek.

**Crossroads Spirits:** Carrefour, Chimata; Maitre; Dosojin; Eshu Elegbara; Hekate; Hermes; Lucero; Maximon; Padilha, Maria; Padilla, Maria de; Sarutahiko; Simbi.

**Death, Peaceful:** Amentat; Artemis; Gabriel; Hekate; Hera; Hermes; Ildiko; Mictlancihuatl; Mictlantecuhtli; Persephone; Santissima Muerte, La; Sirin; Thanatos; Yuki-Onna.

**Death, Spirits of:** Arawn; Barons, The; Baron Samedi; Barona, La; Brigitte, Madame; Enma; Gabriel; Giltiné; Hades; Kalma; Libitina; Mictlancihuatl; Mictlantecuhtli; Mrityu; Oya; Thanatos; Tuonetar; Wanyudo; Xolotl; Yama; Yewá; Yuki-Onna. See also: Appendix entry for *Psychopomps*.

**Deer Goddesses:** Artemis; Flidais; Ildiko

**Dogs, Spirits Associated with:** Adrano; Alu; Annwn, Hounds of; Babalu Ayé; Bau; Black Dog; Hekate; Nehalennia; Ogun; Xolotl

**Dragon** (Spirits who are dragons or who have close associations with them): Amaru; Aryong-Jong; Benten; Dragon Goddess of Borneo; Dragon Kings of the Sea; Dragon Queens; Hekate; Hera; Hesperides; Hydra; Kyeryong; Ladon; Lilith; Long Do; Long Mau; Long Mu; Ma Zu; Medea; Melusine; Ryujin; Toyotama-Hime; Typhon; Vouivre; Yaoji See also: Appendix entry for *Snake Spirits*.

**Dragon Slayers:** Apollo; Garuda; Heracles; Zeus

**Dream Masters:** Artemis; Asklepios; Asteria; Baku; Diana; Gabriel; Hermes; Hybla; Kalu Kumara; Kannon; Lalinn, Madame; Lalla Mira; Madama, La; Mania; Michael; Nanshe; Selene; Telesforos.

**Earthquakes:** Echidna; Inari.

**Eating Disorders:** Carna, Demeter.

**Education, Learning, and Academic Success:** Ba Chua Xu; Carmenta; Jurojin; Kokuzo; Kurukulla; Ma Zu; Sarasvati; Tenjin.

**Elephant Spirits:** Gajasura; Ganesha; Indra; Kangi-Ten; Lakshmi.

**Erectile Dysfunction** (Deities that provide the equivalent of spiritual Viagra): Agni; Agoussou; Aisha Qandisha; Alpheios; Aphrodite; Ba'al (1); Bossu; Chimata; Dagda, the; Fergus; Freyr; Inanna-Ishtar; Konsei Myojin; Min; Ogun; Pan; Priapus; Shango; Sobek.

**Evil Eye:** Athena; Ayizan; Baubo; Bes; Genius Cucullatus; Gobbo; Kedalion; Liber; Mania; Nang Kwak; Priapus; Proserpina.

**Exorcists** (Spirits who protect against other spirits and banish, vanquish, and remove them): Black Hawk; Carrefour, Maitre; Dosojin; Durga; Golden Boy; Ksitigarbha; Kwan Kung; Kwan Yin; Kurukulla; Ma Zu; Madama, La; Michael; Ogun; Okame; Oshun; Oya; Pi Xiu; Raphael; Rudra; Shango; Shoki; Tara (2); Vajrapani; Yamantaka. See also: Appendix entry for *Ghost Busters*.

**Eye Disorders and Ailments:** Apollo; Boyuto; Mullo (1); Sequana.

**Family Feuds:** Aegina; Alastor; Erinyes; Santoshi Ma.

**Fertility:** Afréketé; Aine; Aisha Qandisha; Ajysit; Akkan, The; Ala; Amberella; Amphitrite; Ana; Anahita; Anat; Aphrodite; Artemis; Asherah; Astghik; Atargatis; Atete; Avalokitesvara; Awashima; Aynia; Ba Chua Xu; Ba'al (1); Bahuchara; Bao Gu; Baron Samedi; Bastet; Bau; Baubo; Belenus; Bendis; Benten; Bes; Bethen; Black Madonna; Boldog Asszony; Bossu; Brigid; Chandi; Chandra; Coventina; Dosojin; Egeria; Fergus; Freya; Freyr; Fuji; Gobbo; Hariti; Hekate; Isis; Ix Chel; Jingu, Empress; Kalu Kumara; Kapo; Keshalyi; Konohana Sakkuya Hime; Kunti; Kwan Yin; Laka; Lalla Mira; Lilith; Ma Zu; Mami Waters; Manasa; Mayahuel; Mermaid; Miao Shan; Min; Minona; Nephthys; Nymph; Ogun; Oshun; Shango; Sobek; Sukunahiko; T'ai Shan, Lady of; Taweret; Tçaridyî; Yemaya. (Many of these spirits also serve as guardians of pregnancy and childbirth. See also: Appendix entries for *Childbirth and Pregnancy*, *Guardians* as well as Appendix entries for *Baby*; *Illnesses: Reproductive Disorders, Female*; *Miscarriage*; *Stillbirth*).

**Fertility, Male** (Spirits who specifically enhance and repair male infertility): Alpheios; Anahita; Freyr; Kwan Yin; Li Tieh-Kuai; Miao Shan; Min.

**Fire Safety:** Akiba-Sanjakubo; Hestia; Inari; Jizo; Michael; Tengu.

**Floods:** Enki; Kolowisi.

**Forge Masters, Spirits of Iron and Metalworking:** Amatsumara; Athena; Berggeist; Brigid; Cabeiri; Dactyls; Dwarves; Hephaestus; Inari; Kajishin; Kalvis; Kanayago; K'daai Maqsin; Kedalion; Kothar wa-Khasis; Muso Koroni; Nats, Mahagiri; Nereids; Ogun; Svarog; Telchines; Vulcan.

**Fox Spirits:** Fox Spirits; Huli Jing; Inari; Kumiho.

**Gambler's Luck:** Apsara; Ashmodai; Hermes (especially dice); Mae Nak; Poseidon (horse racing).

**Gambling as Affliction:** Dan Galadima, Maximon

**Gay and Lesbian People, Spiritual Guardians of:** Artemis; Athena; Awashima; Bahuchara; Erinle; Ezili Dantor; Hyacinth; Kybele; Logunedé; Narcissus; Ochossi; Oshumare; Pan; Triana: see encyclopedia entry for Macarena, La.



**Ghost Busters** (Spirits who corral or banish ghosts): Baron Samedi; Berchta; Ereshkigal; Hades; Hekate; Kali; Kamakhya; Khadiravani; Ma Zu; Madama, La; Mania; Nergal; Osiris; Oya; Pali Kongju; Persephone; Santissima Muerte, La; T'ai Shan, Lord of.

**Goat Spirits:** Akerbeltz; Almaqah; Azazel; Ba Neb Tetet; Basa Jaun; Faunus; Gwillion; Kallikantzari; Kshumai; Pan; Se'irim.

**Gossip and Slander, Banishing:** Bagalamukhi.

**Grain Spirits:** Amaterasu; Ceres; Demeter; Inari.

**Healers:** Ana; Apollo; Asklepios; Ba Den; Bagalamukhi; Bau; Belenus; Binzuru; Black Madonna; Buddha, Medicine; Coventina; Damballah La Flambeau; Danko Dan Muso; Exu; Fauna; Hayagriva; Hekate; Hygeia; Kalu Kumara; Kola Sanni Yakka; Li Tieh-Kuai; Manasa; Mayahuel; Ragana; Raphaël; Simbi; Telesforos (See also: Appendix entry for *Illnesses* for spirits associated with specific conditions.)

**Horse Spirits:** Arion; Ashvins; Boreas; Demeter; Despoena; Domovoi; Each Uisge; Epona; Gandharvas; Hayagriva; Kannon; Kelpie; Lady Horsehead; Macha; Poseidon; Rhiannon.

**Hunting Spirits:** Artemis; Baobhan Sith; Diana; Faunus; Ildiko; Mai Dawa; Ochossi; Skogsfruar

**Illnesses, Disabilities, and Ailments** (Spirits associated with specific conditions):

**AIDS:** Achilles; Babalu Ayé; Manasa; Ogun; Sitala

**Amputated Limbs:** K'daai Maqsin

**Aneurism:** Aganyu

**Bacterial Infections:** Babalu Ay é

**Bleeding, Internal:** Barade

**Blood Pressure, High:** Aganyu

**Boils:** Xochipilli

**Bubonic Plague:** Poreskoro

**Cholera:** Chandi; Dschuma; Kali; Poreskoro

**Chronic Fatigue:** Mami Waters

**Fever:** Jari-Mari

**Food Poisoning:** Janguli

**Fugu (Puffer Fish) Poisoning:** Ebisu

**Headaches and Migraines:** Antaura; Hephaestus

**Hemophilia:** Achilles; Ogun

**Hemorrhoids:** Phii Krasue; Xochipilli

**Insomnia:** Hypnos, Michael, Somnos

**Leprosy:** Babalu Ayé; Kuturu; Naga

**Leukemia:** Ogun

**Measles:** Daruma

**Mental Disorders:** Afarit; Aisha Qandisha; Aynia; Bori; Hera; Ibeji; Naga

**Motion Sickness:** Michael

**Ovum, Blighted:** Aswang

**Paralysis:** Aisha Qandisha; Barhaza, Black Dog, Inna; Lalla Mira

**Reproductive Disorders, Female:** Anaisa Pyé; Awashima; Bendis; Ix Chel; Kunti; Lalla Rekyá; Mami Waters; Oshun; Sukunahiko

**Respiratory Problems:** Sequana

**Sea Sickness:** Michael

**Sexually Transmitted or Venereal Diseases:** Aphrodite; Awashima; Benten; Bes; Inanna-Ishtar; Inari; Mami Waters; Sukunahiko; Xochipilli

**Skin Ailments:** Babalu Ayé; Hayagriva; Klu; Naga

**Sleepwalking:** Barhaza

**Smallpox:** Babalu Ayé; Daruma; Dayamava; Hosogami; Jari-Mari; Manasa; Mariamman; Shoojoo; Sitala

**Stroke:** Amadan; Melalo

**Terminal Illness:** Baron Samedi; Brigitte, Madame

**Tetanus:** Shasthi

**Tetanus, Infantile:** Zagaz

**Tinnitus:** Bitoso

**Vision, Impaired:** Apollo; Boyuto; Chandi; Helios; Sequana

**Immigration Issues:** Ba Chua Xu; Maximon

**Knowledge, Magical** (Spirits invoked for acquisition of magical knowledge): Agrat bat Mahalat; Apollo; Artemis; Asteria; Daphne; Freya; Hekate; Odin; Simbi; Sphinx; Thoth; Zorya Polunochnaya.

**Labyrs:** Ariadne; Britomartis; Pasiphae; Shango.

**Legal Assistance:** Ba Neb Tetet; Black Hawk; Obatala; Ochossi.

**Longevity:** Akiba-Sanjakubo; Anna Perenna; Chung-li Ch'uan; Li Tieh-

Kuai.

**Lottery Luck and Numbers:** Golden Boy; Joan the Wad; Madama, La; Mae Nak; Mami Waters; Nang Takian (2); Sirène, La.

**Love and Romance:** Aizen Myo'o; Alcyone (1); Amberella; Amphitrite; Anaisa Pyé; Angus Mac Og; Anteros; Aphrodite; Astghik; Ausriné; Ba Chua Chu; Bastet; Benten; Chandi; Chieh Lin; Eos; Ezili Freda Dahomey; Hathor; Helen of Troy; Laka; Mary Magdalen; Narcissus; Oba; Oshun; Szépasszony; Weaving Maiden; Xochiquetzal.

**Love, Forbidden:** Amberella; Angus Mac Og; Benten; Weaving Maiden.

**Love, Gay:** Aizen Myo'o; Apollo; Erinle; Ezili Dantor; Ochossi; Pan.

**Marketplace Spirits:** Ayizan; Ba Chua Kho; Ba Den; Centella Ndoki; Dinh Cô; Ferronia; Fukusuke; Maneki Neko; Oya; Yemaya Mayalewo.

**Marriage:** Alcyone (1); Boldog Asszony; Chieh Lin; Dosojin; Juno.

**Martial Arts:** Aikido (Sarutahiko); Archery (Apollo, Artemis); Boxing (Dioscuri, Hermes); Capoeira (Shango); Fencing (Holler, Michael, Ogun); General (Aife, Bodhidharma, Daruma, Priapus, Scatach, Shango, Sojobo); Kendo (Sojobo, Tengu); Kickboxing (Hanuman); Ninjitsu (Tengu).

**Menopause:** Juno (especially in her path of Juno Fluonia); Ragana; Rangda.

**Menstrual Goddesses:** Adamu; Aisha Qandisha; Artemis; Bloody Mary; Gorgons; Ix Chel; Jahi; Juno; Kaltes; Kamakhya; Kurukulla; Medusa; Mermaids; Nakawé; Ragana; Sekhmet; Xochiquetzal.

**Mermaids:** Afréketé; Aine; Amberella; Aphrodite; Apsaras; Atargatis; Basa-Andre; Bereginy; Clairmesine Clairmeille; Coventina; Gorgon; Iara; Janaina; Lamia of the Sea; Lorelei; Mami Waters; Medusa; Mero; Morgan Le Fay; Morrigan, The; Naddaha, Al; Nereids; Nixie; Njuzu; Nu Kua; Nyai Loro Kidul; Olokun; Ondine; Oshun; Pincoya; Rusalka; Scylla; Sedna; Sirène, La; Syrena; Thetis; Vampire Mermaids; Yawkyawk; Yemaya.

**Mermen:** Enki; Nebaunaubae; Nereus; Nerites; Nix; Olokun; Poseidon; Triton

**Mine Spirits:** Berggeist; Dwarves; Knockers; Supay; Tommyknockers.

**Miscarriage, Spirits Who Cause or Prevent:** Abiku; Aisha Qandisha; Al; Aswang; Duna; Heket; Karina; Lamashtu; Lamia; Lilith; Oya; Sukunahiko.

**Monkey:** Anjani; Avalokitesvara; Brag-srin-mo; Hanuman; Ibeji; Tara (2); Thoth.

**Moon Spirits:** Alcyone (1); Arianrhod; Artemis; Aynia; Bendis; Cerridwen; Chandra; Chang'O, Lady; Chieh Lin; Coyolxauhqui; Dandalunda; Diana; Hekate; Ix Chel; Jezanna; Lalinn, Madame; Pasiphae; Selene.

**Oaths, Spirits Associated with:** Gaia; Helios; Ogun; Orcus; Palici; Volos; Zemyna

**Occult Practitioners, Sponsors and Guardians of:** Asteria; Azazel; Bastet; Chung-li Ch'uan; Freya; Hekate; Isis; Kapo; Nephthys; Odin; Padilla, Maria de; Palden Lhamo; Primal Woman of the Nine Heavens; Sibilla; Silibo; Simbi; Sirène, La; Tezcatlipoca; Thoth.

**Owl Spirits:** Athena; Blodeuwedd; Kukauakahi; Lechusa; Lilith.

**Pirates, Protection from:** Achilles; Aeacus; Kwan Yin; Ma Zu; Stella Maris; Yemaya.

**Prisoners, Political:** Black Madonna; Chelone

**Prisoners, Protection of:** Black Hawk; Black Madonna; Lalla Malika; Ochossi; Tara, Orange.

**Professions, Sponsors and Guardians of:**

**Abortionist:** Kapo

**Actor:** Dionysus

**Acupuncturist:** Bao Gu; Ogun Balendjo

**Alchemist:** Hsi Wang Mu; Ma Gu; Primal Woman of the Nine Heavens; Thoth

**Architect:** Ptah; Seshet

**Aromatherapist:** Hathor; Mary Magdalen

**Artisan:** Hina; Huehuecoyotl

**Assassin:** Santissima Muerte, La

**Astrologer:** Asteria; Astraios; Chandra, Fudo, Gabriel, Nut; Tanit; Tara  
(1)

**Astronomer:** Nut

**Bartender:** Agathos; Fairy, Green; Hotei; Siduri; Tanuki

**Beekeeper:** Aristaeus; Austeja; Nymph

**Beggar:** Daruma; Dhumavati

**Brewer:** Abuk; Aegir; Hathor; Sukunahiko

**Cheese maker:** Aristaeus; Nymph

**Chef:** Daikoku

**Con Artist:** Hermes, Laverna, Mercury

**Counterfeiter:** Hermes, Laverna, Mercury

**Dancer:** Bastet, Benten; Charites

**Dancer, Flamenco:** Triana, La (See entry for Macarena, La)

**Dancer, Hula:** Hi'iaka; Kapo; Laka; Pelé

**Elephant Trainer and Care-giver:** Ganesha

**Firefighter:** Jizo; Michael

**Florist:** Flora; Lan Ts'ai Ho; Xochiquetzal

**Fortune-teller:** Ahuiateteo; Antevorta; Anubis; Asteria; Hotei; Jizo;  
Kybele; Madama, La; Nymph; Tzu Ku; Velinas

**Fortune-teller, Blind:** Chang Kuo Lao

**Funeral Worker:** Anubis; Barons; Libitina; Qebhut

**Geisha:** Benten; Kishijoten

**Hairdresser:** Laveau, Marie; Mary Magdalen; Oshun

**Healer, Crystal:** Dwarves

**Jockey:** Poseidon

**Landlord:** Aizen Myo'o

**Law Enforcement:** Kwan Kung, Michael

**Librarian:** Oya; Sarasvati; Serapis; Seshet; Thoth

**Matador:** Macarena, La

**Medium:** Anubis; Apollo; Daphne; Jingu, Empress; Jizo; Kybele;  
Madama, La; Nymph; Velinas

**Meteorologist:** Antevorta

**Midwife:** Chan, Lady; Hekate; Kapo; Kybele; Nymph

**Musician:** Apollo; Benten; Mami Waters; Naamah; Nix; Orpheus;  
Velinas

**Ninja:** Tengu

**Palm Reader:** Tara (1)

**Perfumer:** Aphrodite; Bastet; Hathor; Mary Magdalen; Nefertem

**Physician:** Apollo; Bishamon; Dian Cecht; Raphael; Sekhmet

**Radiologist:** Michael; Sekhmet

**Reiki Healer:** Sekhmet

**Restaurateur:** Daikoku; Ebisu; Tanuki

**Sex Worker:** Acca Larentia, Aizen Myo'o; Bes; Grann Ezili; Huehuecoyotl; Inari; Padilha, Maria; Santissima Muerte, La; Sukunahiko; Xochiquetzal

**Shipbuilder:** Athena

**Snake Charmer:** Angitia; Brigid; Mami Waters

**Spy:** Loki

**Sword Smith:** Brigid; Michael; Ogun

**Tattoo Artist:** Acat; Golden Boy

**Thief:** Furina; Hermes; Laverna; Virbius

### **Psychic Gifts, Spirits Who**

**Bestow:** Apollo; Bossu; Boyuto; Egeria; Nymphs; Ogboinba

**Psychopomps:** Agni; Agwé; Ankou; Annwn, Hounds of; Anubis; Banshee; Black Dog; Cao-inteach; Charon; Charos; Charun; Eros; Gabriel; Giltiné; Hekate; Hermes; Iris; Keres; King of Terrors; Manannan Mac Lir; Michael; Samovila; Samovili; Shekhina; Simbi; Siren; Sirène, La; Sirin; Swan Goddesses; Thanatos; Valkyries; Vanth. See also: Appendix entry for *Death, Spirits of*.

**Rape, Protection from and Punishment of:** Amphitrite; Arang; Ares; Ezili Dantor; Hekate; Michael; Yemaya

**Sacred Sex (The Great Rite):** Abtagigi; Adonis; Agrat Bat Mahalat; Aizen Myo'o; Aphrodite; Astarte; Inanna-Ishtar; Kadesh; Lilith; Mylitta; Silibo

**Sea, Rulers of the:** Aegir; Afréketé; Agwé; Amphitrite; Dragon Kings of the Sea; Dragon Queens; Kanaloa; Komokwa; Lir; Manannan; Nereus; Oceanus; Olokun; Phorkys; Poseidon; Ryujin; Yemaya

**Sea, Safety at:** Achilles; Agwé; Alcyone (1); Baleine, La; Black Madonna; Isis; Janaina; Kwan Yin; Leucotheia; Ma Zu; Nereids; Stella Maris; Suijin

**Sexual Abuse, Recovery From:** Abtagigi (Kalili); Silibo

**Shark Spirits:** Ka'ahu Pahau; Kamohoali'i; Kua; Lamia

**SIDS (Sudden Infant Death Syndrome, also known as Crib Death or Cot Death):** Abiku; Al; Al Karisi; Lamashtu; Lamia; Lilith; Naamah

**Slaves, Guardians of:** Diana; Ferronia; Palici

**Snake Bite and Injuries from Other Venomous Creatures, Spirits**

**Who Heal and Guard Against:** Bastet; Buddha, Nagayoun; Isis; Janguli; Kadru; Karni Mata; Sekhmet

**Snake Spirits:** Abata; Abuk; Agathodaemon; Agathos; Aglaurides; Aglauros; Aïdo-Hwedo; Amaru; Amonet; Angitia; Athe na; Ayida-Wedo; Amaru; Benten; Beset; Cihuacoatl; Coatlique; Damballah; Damballah La Flambeau; Danko Dan Muso; Echidna; Erichonios; Ezili; Hannya; Hera; Hesperides; Hydra; Janguli; Kadru; Klu; Klugyalmo Sripé Tanla Phapa; Kolowisi; Kwakiya; Ladon; Lady Blue; Lady White; Lamiae; Mami Waters; Manasa; Naga; Naga Kanya; Nu Kua; Nure-Onna; Proserpina; Renenet; Sachamama; Sibilla; Simbi; Snake Spirits. See also: Appendix entry for *Dragon*.

**Soldiers, Guardians of:** Aeronwen; Anat; Athena; Badb; Bellona; Bishamon; Inari; Mae Thoranee; Mars; Set; Xochipilli

**Star Spirits:** Alcyone (2); Pleiades; Seven Stars Spirits; Sirona; Weaving Maiden

**Stillbirth:** Abiku; Anat; Karina; Lilith

**Sun Spirits:** Aine; Amaterasu; Apollo; Belenus; Helios; Kalvis; Saulé; Sekhmet; Silibo; Sulis.

**Swamp Queens:** Abata; Isis; Nana Buruku; Oshun; Yemaya.

**Swine Deities:** Adonis; Aisha Qandisha; Arduinna; Ceres; Cerridwen; Henwen; Kamapua'a; Marichi.

**Traffic Safety:** Achachilas; Akiba-Sanjakubo; Ba Den (Black Lady); Hanuman; Kahlo, Frida.

**Transgendered People, Guardians of:** Bahuchara; Erinle; Kybele; Logunedé; Oshumare.

**Travelers, Guardians of:** Abeona; Ammon; Eshu Elegbara; Khidr, Al; Lucero; Marichi; Ogun; Raphael. See also: Appendix entry for *Crossroads Spirits*.

**Turtle Goddess:** Chelone

**Twins:** Apollo; Artemis; Cihuacoatl; Dioscuri; Ibeji; Marassa; Palici; Quetzalcoatl; Xolotl

**Vampiric Spirits:** Abchanchu; Al Karisi; Aluqa; Aswang; Baobhan Sith; Bhut; Hone-Onna; Kalu Kumara; Kumiho; Langsuir; Pomba Gira; Vampire; Vampire Mermaid; Vampire Pumpkin; Vampiri.

**Victory:** Aeronwen; Akiba-Sanjakubo; Alala; Anahita; Anat; Andraste; Athena; Camunda; Jingu, Empress; Nike; Ogun; Oya; Shango; Victoria.

**Volcano Spirits:** Adrano; Aetna; Aganyu; Fuji; Hybla; Kahoupokane; Konohana Sakkuya Hime; Pelé; Vulcan.

**Werewolves, Guardians or Sponsors of:** Angerboda; Diana; Leto; Loup-Garou; Marinette; Odin; Ogun; Zeus Lykaios.

**Wind Spirits:** Aeolus; Anemoi; Boreas; Feng Popo; Lilith; Oya; Szélanya.

**Witch Goddesses, Also Known as Queens of Witches:** Angerboda; Angitia; Aradia; Artemis; Asteria; Aynia; Baba Yaga; Badbh, The; Bagalamukhi; Basa-Andre; Befana; Bendis; Berchta; Bruxa Evora; Camunda; Cerridwen; Circe; Delvcaem; Diana; Ferronia; Freya; Hekate; Herodias; Herta; Hulda; Ildiko; Irodeasa; Itzpapalotl; Jezibaba; Kapo; Kybele; Lamashtu; Leto; Lilith; Louhi; Malinalxochitl; Medea; Minona; Morgan Le Fay; Muso Koroni; Neith; Nephthys; Nicnevin; Ogboinba; Padilha, Maria; Padilla, Maria de; Pasiphae; Rangda; Sibilla; Szélanya.

**Wolf Spirits:** Angerboda; Apollo; Artemis; Faunus; Leto; Zeus Lykaios.

**Zodiac, Eastern:**

**Year of the Rat:** Kannon/Kwan Yin (1924, 1936, 1948, 1960, 1972, 1984, 1996, 2008)

**Year of the Ox:** Kokuzo (1925, 1937, 1949, 1961, 1973, 1985, 1997)

**Year of the Tiger:** Kokuzo (1926, 1938, 1950, 1962, 1974, 1986, 1998)



**Year of the Rabbit:** Manjushri/Monju (1927, 1939, 1951, 1963, 1975, 1987, 1999)

**Year of the Dragon:** Fugen (1928, 1940, 1952, 1964, 1976, 1988, 2000)

**Year of the Snake:** Fugen (1929, 1941, 1953, 1965, 1977, 1989, 2001)

**Year of the Horse:** Daruma and Seishi (1930, 1942, 1954, 1966, 1978, 1990, 2002)

**Year of the Sheep:** Dainichi (1931, 1943, 1955, 1967, 1979, 1991, 2003)

**Year of the Monkey:** Dainichi, Daruma, and Tara (1932, 1944, 1956, 1968, 1980, 1992, 2004)

**Year of the Rooster:** Fudo (1933, 1945, 1957, 1969, 1981, 1993, 2005)

**Year of the Dog:** Amida Buddha (1934, 1946, 1958, 1970, 1982, 1994, 2006)

**Year of the Boar/Pig:** Amida Buddha (1935, 1947, 1959, 1971, 1983, 1995, 2007) (Years are not calculated from 1 January but from the start of the lunar New Year, corresponding to the new moon in Aquarius. Those born in January and February must verify to which year they belong.)

### **Zodiac, Western:**

**Aries:** Ammon; Ares; Khnum; Mars; Sekhmet

**Taurus:** Anahita; Brigid; Hathor; Io; Kybele; Macha; Maia; Venus

**Gemini:** Dioscuri; Ibeji; Marassa; Mercury; Palici; Raphael

**Cancer:** Amphitrite; Artemis; Chandra; Diana; Hera; Ix Chel; Kedalion; Selene; Yemaya

**Leo:** Aine; Diana; Helios; Sekhmet; Sulis

**Virgo:** Astraia; Baba Yaga; Demeter; Dike; Isis; Kore; Mary Magdalen; Persephone

**Libra:** Ma'at; Michael; Raphael; Venus

**Scorpio:** Hekate; Ishhara; Lilith; Mars; Maui; Oya; Rachel; Selket; Scorpion Guardians

**Sagittarius:** Chiron; Jupiter; Tyche

**Capricorn:** Chiron; Enki; Saturn

**Aquarius:** Amymone; Ganymede; Hebe; Inanna-Ishtar; Raphael;

Saturn

**Pisces:** Atargatis; Enki; Mermaid; Nanshe; Nereus

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This book was conceived in June 2006 on the shores of Lake Michigan, where I taught a weekend workshop. On the last morning, I joined a group at breakfast engaged in intense discussion regarding how to solve one attendee’s long-term problems. She had tried various conventional and magical solutions, all to no avail. Someone suggested that she request spiritual intervention. She turned to me with questions: “But how do you know which spirit to ask? How do you know *how* to ask? Is there a book with this information?” This book is for *you*.

## About the Author

Born in New York City, **JUDIKA ILLES** is an independent scholar and has spent her life researching a broad spectrum of the magical arts, including astrology, mythology, the Kabbalah, Egyptian mysteries, and spiritual and healing traditions from all over the earth. Illes is the author of the *Encyclopedia of 5,000 Spells*, *Encyclopedia of Witchcraft*, and *Pure Magic*. Visit the author online at [www.judikailles.com](http://www.judikailles.com).

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