



Systemic Ritual as a gateway to the ancestral realms

By Aleksandra Shymina

Imagine yourself facing a crowd of people, men and women, standing as strong as trees in the forest. Different ages, different clothing, different colour eyes, and all of those eyes are looking at you. With kindness. You are standing in front of your ancestors, seeing them in their most powerful selves. Imagine saying to them – “Thank you for my life.” Imagine them replying in a variety of voices and volumes – “You have our blessing.” What happens in your body when you see this image in your mind’s eye? Close your eyes and check.

Ancestors are something we all share as a concept and at some point back in time, as a fact. Every human being has a biological father and a mother, they in turn had their parents, and grandparents and so on; and some generations back we are all related. Beyond

humanity, if we imagine that as species we had others as ‘parents’ then we include all living beings as our ancestors, even the planet herself – all those that gave us life.

Nowadays there are still cultures in the world that actively engage with their ancestors seeking blessings, good will and support from them. They are seen as sacred and are feared, loved and appeased in a variety of ways. They are part of everyday reality as much as living people around. In Vietnam, for example, every household and business would have a little shrine for the ancestors, where incense and offerings are brought to every day. In Africa, some cultures have strict protocols for working with ancestors, practices that support everyday life, bring protection and a sense of belonging. An embodied experience of a live relationship that exists even when one is not

consciously thinking about it.

Systemic Ritual has been developed in the Netherlands and is based on traditional and core shamanic principles for a healing ritual combining it with techniques and philosophy of systemic family constellations. It therefore provides a framework, a tool, a map for healing and restoration not only on a personal level but for the whole ancestral field too. It is a perfect gateway to ancestors that works for any belief system and practice – it is a frame that you make your own, a unique ritual that you create using a given map to suit your set of circumstances.

Our ancestral fields - family trees - are numerous and diverse. There is no way to know all of our ancestors, but some of us are luckier to have quite a detailed and long family history available and for others even the closest ancestors are a mystery. No matter what we know in our conscious awareness, on a level of our soul and our epigenetics and genetics we are always connected to that 'field behind us'. We carry their stories in our bodies; we follow in their steps, make their mistakes and continue what they have started. We inherit their trauma and we inherit their wisdom and strength. We receive their blessings and curses, we entangle with their destinies. We do this out of love and deep loyalties to our tribe, to those who gave us life and who gave us this chance on earth, who was instrumental in our survival.

How could knowing your ancestors, working with them help you live a happier, more fulfilling life? As you learn about your ancestors, as you introduce yourself to them, you might be intrigued to find out similarities between their lives and your life. Patterns that, for example, run 'in the family' or are common for maternal line, or happen to only men of this family etc. Recognising repeating scenarios passed down generations might help to see a bigger picture and to disentangle yourself from family dynamics, help to free up decision making from existing family loyalties.

Come back to the image of the ancestors in front of you – see them in their power, some faces you know really well, some not at all, some you can't see but you know they are there. Notice whose choices are impacting your own life? Whose steps are you following? Look at them with kind eyes; find this place within yourself that connects your life to their life.

Imagine saying to them – Thank you for my life. I take it fully. I respect and honour your choices and fate, and I leave it with you. I have my own fate and I ask for your blessing to walk my own path in my own way. Even if this was not possible for you in your time.

Imagine receiving their blessing. What do you feel in your body?

In all the centuries of our ancestors everything that could have been has already happened: all sorrows and happiness, all losses and love. Every family has a history of pain but it also holds and treasures stories of success, love and tenderness.

When we are faced with a dilemma, when we don't know what to do, how to do it, what is the right step – we can connect with 'Those who know'. Those who came before us, experienced life and found a way out, found an answer, found right solution.

A simple meditation to explore the wisdom of 'Those who know' is described below. In most traditions and practices it is customary to first prepare the space, sacred space, that you will work in and as you do so tune your mind to set an intention. In systemic ritual you make it very much your own experience, one that you can connect to, one that will work for you and for your soul. Find a way to create a sacred space that is possible for your circumstances – some use song and drum, some meditate, some smudge and light a candle to connect with their guides and helping spirits. Even simply slowing down, entering silence and saying a little prayer of intention could work.

When you are ready set up four or five stones (or any other objects or pieces of paper) to represent 'Those who know' and one for 'you'. First take a place of 'you' – stand right above the stone, allow yourself to drop into your body, take a deep breath, notice what is going on inside of you, hold your question in your awareness but focus on your body. Look at 'Those who know' in front of you and notice what changes in you when you know they are there. Introduce yourself as their descendant and present them with your question. Notice what happens in your body, when you do that.

Step out of your place and choose one of the 'Those who know' places to step in to. As you take a place of representing 'Those who know', take time to listen to

your body. Notice what happens as you represent an ancient one. Look at your descendant (the stone that represents 'you') who is asking a question from 2020; notice how it feels. As you focus on your body allow an answer to emerge from deep within you. It could be a subtle knowing, or a sensation or a word or a full-formed answer. It could be just a confirmation of support whatever happens, or a feeling of being on the right path. It will happen in your own way. Offer it to your descendant in a short, concise, kind wording. It always helps to speak out loud even when you are on your own. Vibration of words is as important as their meaning.

Step out of 'Those who know' and back into 'you'. Allow yourself to hear the answer and to fully receive it. Thank them for their support. Take a deep breath in and out and finish this meditation. If you are doing this with a friend, let them stand as 'you' and you stand as 'Those who know'. When you finish, 'release' all stones or your friends from their roles and contemplate/share the insights.

Systemic Ritual offers a whole spectrum of ways to connect with your ancestors, through meditation, or representing with stones, in groups, or even with trees. With practice you become good friends with your ancestors, rebuilding your sense of belonging, receiving support of your lineage behind you.

This is true even in cases when you don't know anything about them, and if they were as scattered around the world as stones at the bottom of the ocean. There is nothing to stop you imagining. Your imagination is a gateway for the spirit of the ancestors to find their way back into your life, to share their resources, wisdom and love.



Aleksandra Shymina is a London based practitioner of systemic ritual, shamanic healing and family constellations. She trained with Daan van Kampenhout in Mexico and in Europe; and with Chetna Lawless in the UK. Her systemic constellations training she received from the Centre for Systemic Constellations and various international intensives. Aleksandra's vision is reconnecting people to their ancestral fields to bring balance and a sense of support, to reduce the overwhelming sense of disconnection and loneliness experienced in the modern world, to contribute in becoming a generation of good future ancestors.

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