



Walking the path of the Dead - pages 27-29



Shamanic cosmologies - pages 11-15



Seeing the hidden realms - pages 18-21

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The Lower, Middle and Upper worlds occur in many cultures across the planet. **Crow Swimsaway** looks at these worlds and explains how they differ across cultures, and how we need to find our own map of them.

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There is a great fascination for many people about the use of plants with mind altering properties. **Eliot Cowan** gives some insights on their use, as both an expert in plant spirit medicine, and as an initiated elder of the Huichol people.

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Most cultures know of the Little People, the fairies and have their stories about them, but they are not always to be seen. **Jim PathFinder Ewing** looks at the mechanism we use to keep our reality nice and tidy so we don't have to deal with the big picture.

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The Underworld is a deep part of the human psyche. **Danu Forest** looks at some of the ways different cultures have thought of the Underworld across time.

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The ancient long barrow of West Kennet in England is a sacred place of ancestors. **Peter Knight** shares some of its history and mysteries.

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The root of the Christian Saint Bridgit is the Celtic goddess Brighid. **Sun Fyre** looks at this root and gives ways for us to connect with her at the turn of the year.

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In May of this year, Amazonian shaman **Ipupiara**, of the Ureu-eu-wau-wau people died. His friend, **Llyn Roberts**, remembers him and shares a healing encounter she had while working with him a few years ago.

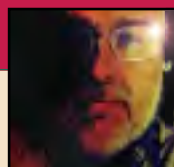
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“Then I was standing on the highest mountain of them all, and around and about me was the whole hoop of the world... I was seeing in a sacred manner the shapes of all things in the spirit and the shapes of all shapes as they must live together like one being. And I saw that the Sacred Hoop of my people was one of many hoops that made one circle, wide as daylight and as starlight and in the centre grew one almighty flowering tree to shelter all the children of one mother and one father, and I saw that it was holy.”

(From the vision of Nicholas Black Elk - Lakota Holy Man: 1863 - 1950)

From the Editor



Welcome to Sacred Hoop issue 74, I hope you enjoy the read. First of all I want to thank all those people who have supported Hoop in its work over the last few months. We've received many letters and emails of support. I strongly feel the work Hoop does is important, and I'm delighted that many of you also feel so.

I have never really considered myself a new-ager because shamanism is the oldest tradition there is. But saying that, I have sometimes thought that some aspects of the shamanism I see practised in the West can be a little ungrounded. So it was a pleasure to get the article from Jez Hughes with which we start. He writes about the need to be real and grounded in what we do, and I firmly agree with that.

Crow Swimsaway's article on shamanic cosmology is a plea for grounding too in its own way - as Crow seeks to encourage us to get a firm grip on the worlds of the shamanic universe we experience in our practice. And plant spirit expert Eliot Cowan has some important things to say about the growing interest in psychoactive plant-inspired shamanism, which has fuelled the whole global 'ayahuasca tourism' industry.

But too much rational grounding can leave us firmly closed-minded, as we can doggedly discount the greater reality around us. And so, Jim Pathfinder Ewing explains the perceptual adjustments we need in order to see the Little People.

Manda Clements talks about her dealings with some of these Little People - more precisely, gnomes. I had to do a big double take when that subject was brought up, but then I realised that shamanic cultures all over the world talk of gnome-like spirit beings and make statues and altars to them - but first my closed mind had to throw away all the garden gnomes with fishing rods it was cluttered with, and take a fresh look at the subject!

Gnomes and other Little People are a major part of the spiritual traditions of Western Europe - fairy lore is thick in the valley where I live, and so are tales of the other worlds and the underworld. Danu Forest shows that the Underworld is a feature of the cosmology of many cultures and is (excuse the pun) buried deep in the human psyche.

And part of our ancestors' connection to the Underworld were the great barrows - the so-called 'hollow hills.' One of the greatest of which is West Kennet long barrow, which Peter Knight takes us into in his fascinating article.

The ancient traditions of Western Europe can sometimes be hard to grasp and wear, but as Annie Spencer found out when she talked to Jürgen Kremer, they are vital fabrics we need to recover and incorporate into the clothes we wear today if we are to walk well in the world.

Many of the old ways have not gone, they have been adapted and hidden - sometimes in plain sight - as Sun Fyre demonstrates to us in her story of the pre-Christian goddess Brighid, who the early Church claimed for their own and turned into a saint.

And we close with a moving testimonial to Ipupiara, a traditional Amazonian shaman who died earlier this year. Llyn Roberts knew him well and remembers a healing circle she was part of.

With the turning of the year - the time of Brighid - we need to remember we are only walking our present life road a short while, and by being grounded and yet open to the mystery that is all around us, we can not only experience our life road in the fullest way, but also be there fully for our brothers, sisters, and all our other relations who walk the road with us - before we too become ancestors.

Blessings to all Beings:
Nicholas Breeze Wood

