**EARTH-CROÍ – STEP FOUR – SINSIR**

**Sinsir** means **ANCESTORS.**

Ancient peoples had many ritual practices around the honouring of ancestral heritage and wisdom. In a sense that ancestral knowledge is like our own personal dúchas – because it’s all about our story, our history, the memories, that we have inherited in our blood, bones and deepest consciousness.

So just as the energy in a place can be heavy and negative – perhaps because of what may have happened in that place – so it’s the same for each of us in this life. It may be that in our family history we have inherited unconscious memories of fear or scarcity or violence. For example, in Ireland there are memories – not so far away – of famine and the loss of loved ones through death in war or immigration. These sorts of human experiences have happened in many places in the world over centuries – and are, sadly, still happening today. They leave a heavy heritage which needs to be acknowledged and processed before healing can come to our minds and bodies (though to some extent we are all ‘wounded healers’ in this life and somehow have to learn to carry our scars).

However, we’re not alone on this journey – and that is one aspect of the wisdom of sinsir. In ancient Ireland ancestors were believed to be very real and present, like the words of the writer, D.H. Lawrence, who said ‘The dead don’t die. They look on and help.’[[1]](#footnote-1)

There’s a beautiful story in the old mythological tales that reveals the nearness and power of ancestral spirit. The story goes that when the Gael banished the Tuatha Dé Danann (the semi-divine fairy folk of Ireland), it is written that ‘*they went away by themselves.* *And Manannán[[2]](#footnote-2)…..chose out the most* *beautiful of the hills and valleys of Ireland for them to settle in; and he put hidden walls about them, so that no one could see through, but they themselves could see through and pass through them.[[3]](#footnote-3)*

So, according to this, the world of sinsir or ancestral spirit is not an ‘afterlife’ in a linear, futuristic sort of way. Instead it is a ‘circular’ world which always surrounds us, as the ancestors watch over our lives at every moment. It’s an invisible realm within which this visible land of the material world is held. Only a thin veil inhibits us from seeing and experiencing it. Again, this is why in Celtic Spirituality they speak of ‘the thin place’ – because there are places and times when the world of Spirit seems so close that we could reach through that veil and touch the magic of the Otherworld.

There are two other particular insights that the wisdom of sinsir reveals to us.

The first is about awareness of your sacred lineage. Because when we’re aware of where we’ve come from, this knowledge gives us marvellous insights into our **sacred identity**, as a special and individual person of great worth. No one else has the same DNA as you - you’re unique and have a unique part to play in the unfolding of life at this time.

The second is to do with ancestral places and times of the year. In Ireland, as in many places in the world, graveyards and cemeteries are very special places. The bones of those who have gone before us lie in these places so there’s always a particular powerful dúchas about them. In addition there are times of the year when ancestral presence is stronger. In Ireland the traditions of Samhain bring that special energy of the death and life cycle very close. There are the Christian festivals of All Saints and All Souls and Remembrance Sunday in November. But there’s also Hallowe’en – the eve before All Hallows and the first night of Samhain, when the veil between this world and the Otherworld is thin, and it might just be possible to sense the presence of ancestors who have passed through death to the world beyond.

Finally, sinsir also reminds us that our ancestral heritage stretches back far beyond our human family tree to the beginnings of life itself in what scientists call ‘the primordial soup.’ Our beginnings as a species still reside within us – the feral and the elemental energies of the building blocks of life. As I write this I am hearing that the indigenous Māori people of New Zealand have won ‘personhood’ for Taranaki Maunga, a sacred mountain for their people. They speak of the sacred face and voice of the mountain and regard Taranaki Maunga as ‘an honoured Ancestor.’ In New Zealand’s law personhood is defined as ‘a living and indivisible whole.’ That seems like a good definition for it’s true - **we are kin** **to all life!**

**WAYS TO PRACTICE SINSIR IN YOUR LIFE**

1. A simple way is to gather any photos you may have of ancestors and create an ‘Ancestral Wall’ in your home. This helps you to remember and honour your ancestors.
2. Have you ever thought of having a DNA test with an ancestry company? It may open your eyes to aspects of yourself that you never knew about before. For example, my love of Eastern folk music became more understandable when I got the results of a DNA test!
3. Soul retrieval work is part of Shamanic Wisdom. This wisdom teaches that when we go through life traumas – grief, violence, abuse, loss, sickness etc – bits of our souls get lost in these shocking experiences. Soul retrieval is a healing journey to reintegration and wholeness which enables a calling back of the parts of our soul that have become stuck or lost to us. As part of that journey you may encounter an ancestor(s) who is a helping Guide for you in this life.
4. Do you feel that you have a helping ancestor? Do you know who s/he is?

1. D.H. Lawrence *The Letters of D.H. Lawrence*: Vol. 3, October 1916- June 1921. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Manannán mac Lir was the Sea God and King of the Otherworld. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Lady Gregory’s *Complete Irish Mythology,* 1904, p.61. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)