

## *Samhain, the root of trick or treat*

The ancestor festival, also called Samhain, is one of the four nature-religious moon festivals of the Germanic and Celtic annual cycle. It is primarily a festival for the dead, which is traditionally celebrated on the 11th black moon (invisible moon) of the annual cycle at the end of summer and is also the last harvest festival of the annual cycle.

For several centuries, however, the ancestor festival has always been celebrated in many places on the night of November 1, which can be traced back to intervening calendar reforms, among other things. As a result of the location of this festival on the threshold between summer and winter, festivals for the dead have always been celebrated then; for at this time the gates to the so-called Otherworld are open. In the meantime, a migration between the world of the living (Sidhe) and that of the dead (Otherworld) seems possible. Until the end of the Rauhnächte, the gates to the Otherworld are considered particularly permeable.

However, Samhain is not only dedicated to the dead themselves, but also to the gods of the dead, who welcome the dead into their realm and under whose protection they stand. In the Germanic-speaking world, Hulda, Holle or Hel is known here, a form of the earth goddess in her guise as ruler of the realm of the dead. In southern Germanic settlement areas she is also called Bercht or Perchta, the salvager. On this day, sacrifices can also be made to her in the form of natural goods, smoke, candles or the like. Wodan and Freyja, who also rule over the dead, can also be sacrificed on this day.

Pope Gregory IV had this traditional religious festival Christianized by having November 1 set as the holiday All Saints' Day and the following day as All Souls' Day in 837. The term "Halloween" was not introduced until the 16th century. The term is explained by the English words "hallow" and "eve", i.e. the evening before All Saints' Day.

The evening before All Saints' Day is known in English as "All Hallows Eve," which later evolved into Hallowe'en or Halloween. Irish emigrants brought the Halloween celebration to the American East Coast. Today, Samhain is celebrated as Halloween in parts of Europe and Ireland on the night of November 1. It is considered a festival of late autumn, the middle of the Celtic year. The widespread thesis that it is the festival of the Celtic beginning of the year goes back to John Rhys; however, his claims are not very conclusive, the beginning of the year was probably, as everywhere until the introduction of the Julian calendar, the 1st or the 25th of March, as even today on Easter the Christian church year begins. The festival corresponds largely to the Gallic "Trinox Samonis" which was celebrated by the historical Celts at the beginning of November and is also mentioned in the calendar of Coligny. Among the Scots, Samhain corresponds largely to the festival "Féile na Marbh" and in Wales "Nos Galen-gaeof".