

Sacred Geography: Pilgrimage



Overview

- What is pilgrimage?
- Pilgrimage and Religion - how are they connected?
- Types of Pilgrimage.
- Extraordinary Events - Lourdes, Fatima, Rendlesham.
- Ritual Process.
- Sanctuary, Ritual Healing, Caves and Consciousness.
- The Dreamtime.
- Re-Enchanting the Landscape.
- Conclusion.

Pilgrimage

- Etymology:
- Latin - peregrinus - foreign.
- Association with travel to foreign locations.
- “Most of this imagery is predicated upon notions and concepts drawn from medieval pilgrimage, a social movement that occurred between 500 and 1500 CE....” (Digance, 2006, p. 36).
- “Traditional religious pilgrimage is far from diminishing in popularity with age-old centres such as Rome, Jerusalem and Lourdes still attracting the faithful, with newer sites such as Medjugorje and Sri Sathya Sai Baba’s palatial Ashram at Puttaparthi in India, proving to be popular pilgrimage sites today. A veritable cornucopia of secular pilgrimages abounds, far too numerous to cover in detail...” (Digance, 2006, p. 37).



Dimensions of Religion

- Religious Studies scholar Ninian Smart identified 7 dimensions of religion:
 1. The Practical and Ritual Dimension
 2. The Experiential and Emotional Dimension
 3. The Narrative Dimension
 4. The Doctrinal and Philosophical Dimension
 5. The Ethical and Legal Dimension
 6. The Social and Institutional Dimension
 7. The Material Dimension.

(Smart, 1974).
- Pilgrimage weaves, or knots, all of these dimensions together.



Types of Pilgrimage

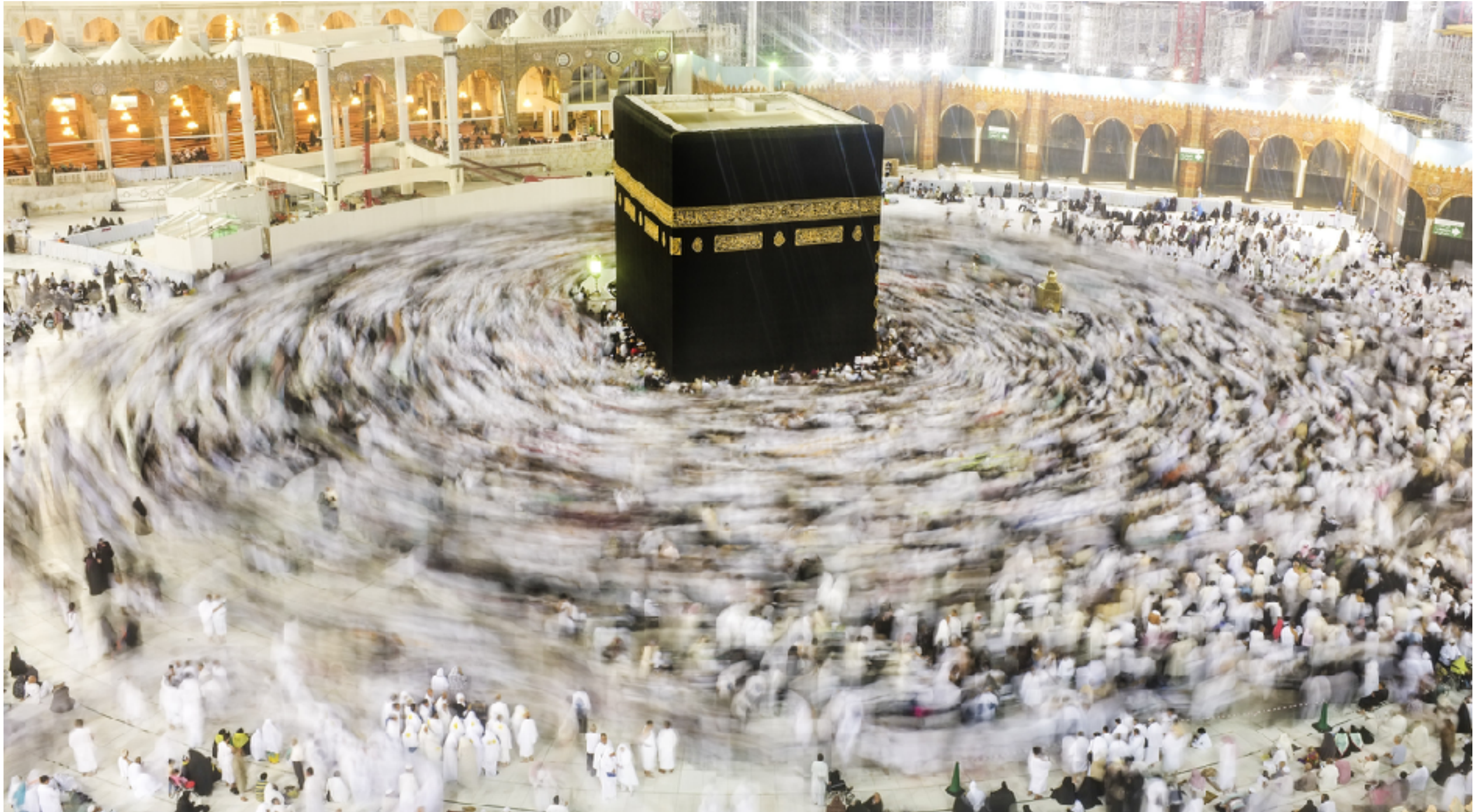
- 1. *Pilgrimage to a sacred place.*
 - May be a physical structure.
 - May be a natural feature of the landscape.
- 2. *Pilgrimage to a sacred person.*
 - Saints and holy people, e.g. Padre Pio and the Stigmata.
- 3. *Pilgrimage to a sacred object.*
 - Relics associated with saints, holy people, events.
- 4. *Pilgrimage as a sacred text.*
 - Christian pilgrimage to Holy Land - to live the Bible.
- 5. *Pilgrimage as an allegorical journey.*
 - Life as a journey towards perfection
 - Interior pilgrimage.

(Nolan & Nolan, 1989; Bowie, 2006).

- Sacred: "...the twenty-first century calls for a newer and more flexible definition of pilgrimage, namely 'undertaking a journey that is redolent with meaning'" (Digance, 2006, p. 36).



Sacred Place/Structure



- Hajj Pilgrimage, to the Qaaba in Mecca.

Sacred Place/Structure



- The Grotto, Lourdes.

Sacred Events



- Fatima - 1917.

ORIGINAL PHOTO OF THE "MIRACLE OF THE SUN" IN FATIMA

13 OCT 1917 - PUBLISHED BY L'OSSERVATORE ROMANO, 1951



OUR LADY OF FATIMA

This is the first parish
church in the world,
dedicated to
Our Lady of Fatima.

Presented for the feast of
the Queenship of
Our Lady
on 22nd August 1996 by a
group of Liverpool people.



- Bala, Gwynedd, Mid-Wales.

Llyn Tegid (Bala Lake)

- Why this location?
- According to Welsh mythology Llyn Tegid was the home of the sorceress Ceridwen.
- Legend of the birth of Taliesin.
- Association of ponds, lakes and spring with the Goddess, feminine divinity, Virgin Mary.
- Bala Goddess temple.



Sacred Events

- Rendlesham Forest UFO trail:

“This trail will stimulate your imagination, taking you through forest, heathland and wetlands and some of the areas connected to the UFO sighting in December 1980.”

(<https://www.forestryengland.uk/rendlesham-forest/ufo-trail-rendlesham-forest>)

- Is this a pilgrimage? What are people expecting to experience?



Ritual Structure

- Arnold Van Gennep (1873-1957), Victor Turner (1920-1983) and Edith Turner (1921-2016).
- Pilgrimage may be understood as an extended ritual:
 1. **The separation** (the departure, leaving home).
 2. **The liminal stage** (the journey, the ritual).
- “Liminal entities are neither here nor there; they are betwixt and between the positions assigned and arrayed by law, custom, convention, and ceremonial... Thus liminality is frequently likened to death, to being in the womb, to invisibility, to darkness, to bisexuality, to the wilderness, and to an eclipse of the sun or moon.... A moment out of time” (Turner, 1969, in Lambek, 2001, p. 359-340).
- 3. **The re-aggregation** (the homecoming, return to social group).



Ritual Structure

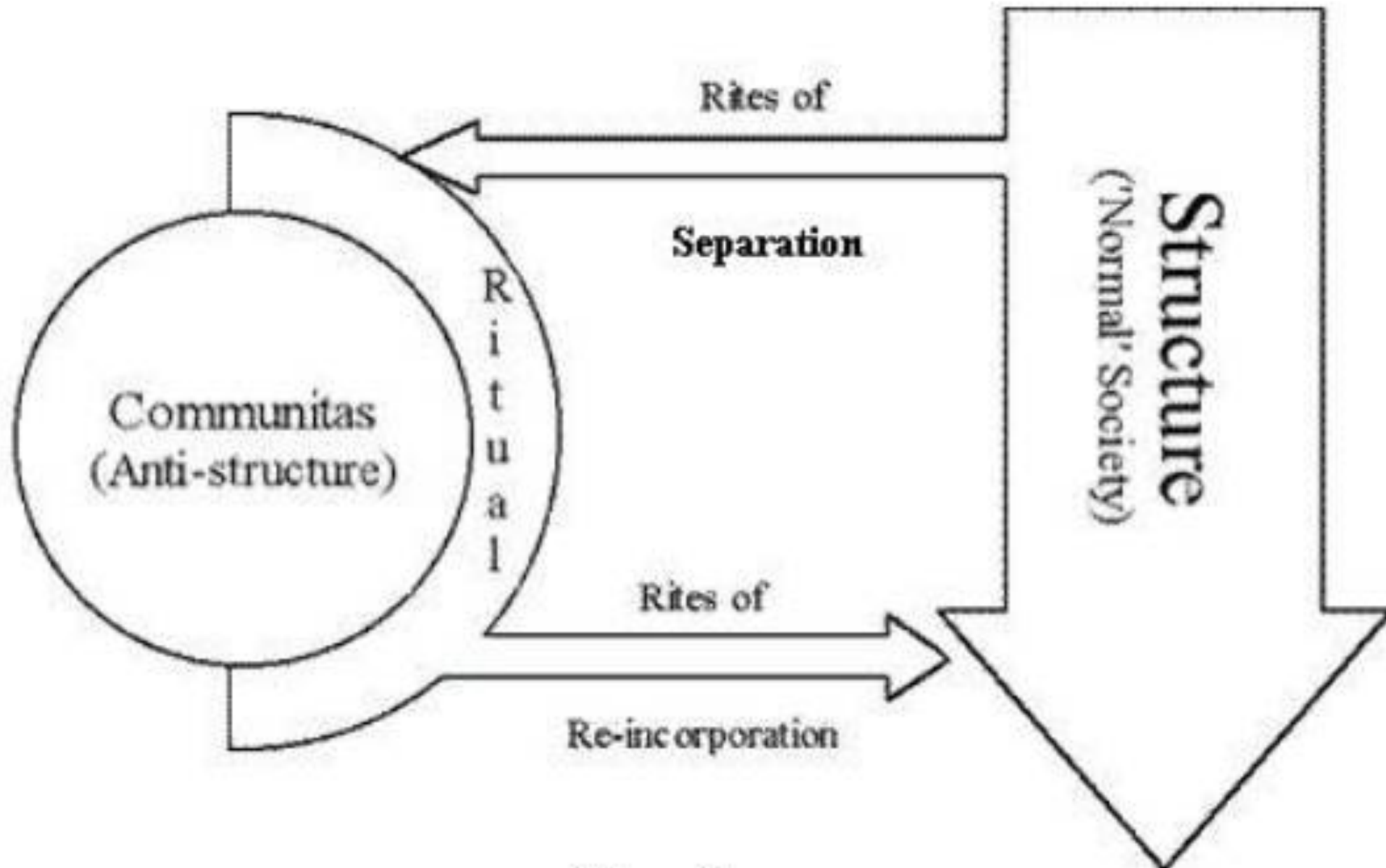


Figure 1

Pennant Melangell

- “The church, not far from the village of Llangynog (where I grew up), contains a twelfth century Romanesque shrine to Saint Melangell, said to contain relics of her body, as well as other unique features, such as a whale bone mounted on the wall inside the church, known as ‘Asen y Gawres’ (the Giantess’ Rib), or ‘Asen Melangell’ (Melangell’s Rib) ...”
- “When excavated, the circular churchyard was found to contain a Bronze Age cremation cemetery, suggesting that the site has had a special significance for people in the region for thousands of years...”
- “The church has also traditionally been associated with healing, both in the local area and further afield. The Saint Melangell Centre, adjacent to the church, for example, is dedicated to supporting adults with emotional, spiritual and mental health needs, and has an emphasis on healing and spirituality. The church is also an important pilgrimage site, attracting visitors from across the globe...” (Hunter, 2020).
- Assemblages of the sacred - stories, bodies, objects...





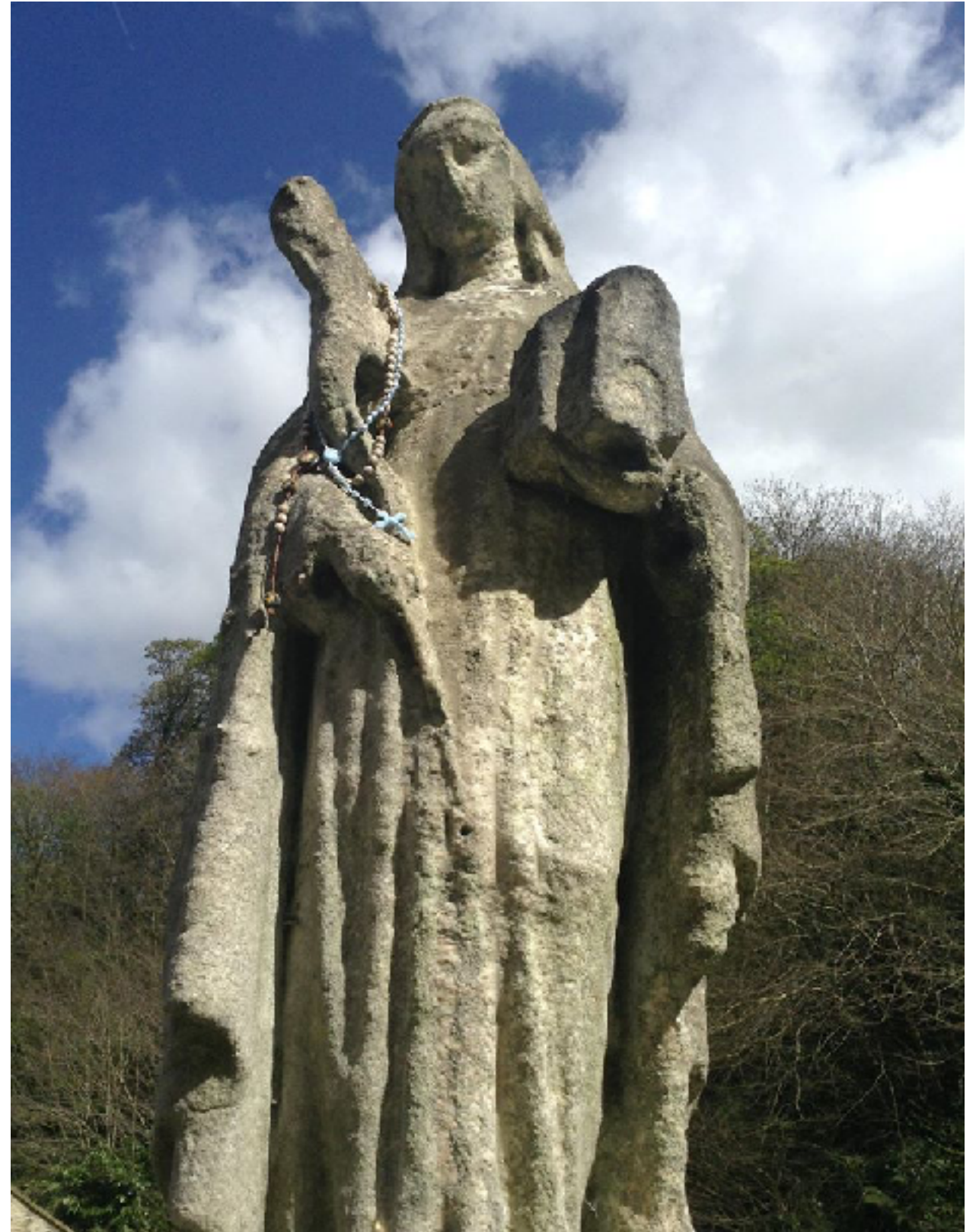


Welcome to
HOLYWELL
The Lourdes of Wales

Croeso
TREFFYNNON
Lourdes Cymru

Twinned with St Grégoire
Gefilliwyd â

Treffynnon (Holy Well)



Treffynnon (Holy Well)



- You can't just observe the site - it invites your participation.
- The role of the body in experiencing sacred sites (and getting to them).



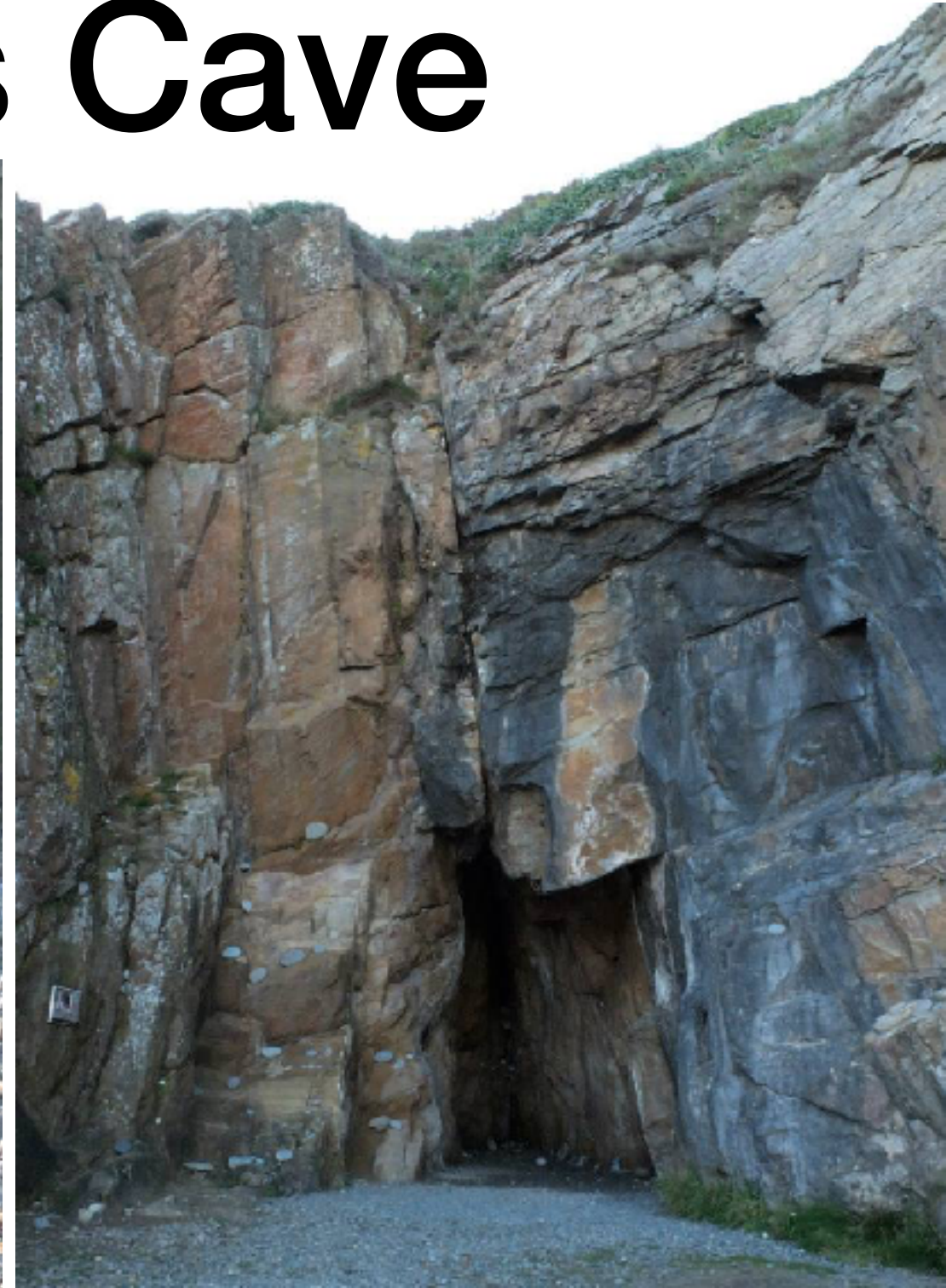
Miraculous Healing

- “...a segment of people in all societies have greater propensity for anomalous experience, dissociation/hypnotic capacity, and cognitive “openness” or “lability.” These individuals are more likely to benefit from therapeutic ritual. This knowledge could affect the practice of medicine. People with religious propensities, suffering from psychologically based disorders, are more likely to respond to appropriate ritual or faith-based treatments. The ritual healing theory provides a paradigm for the scientific exploration of treatment strategies in this area.”

(McClenon, 2006, p. 152)



St. Ninian's Cave

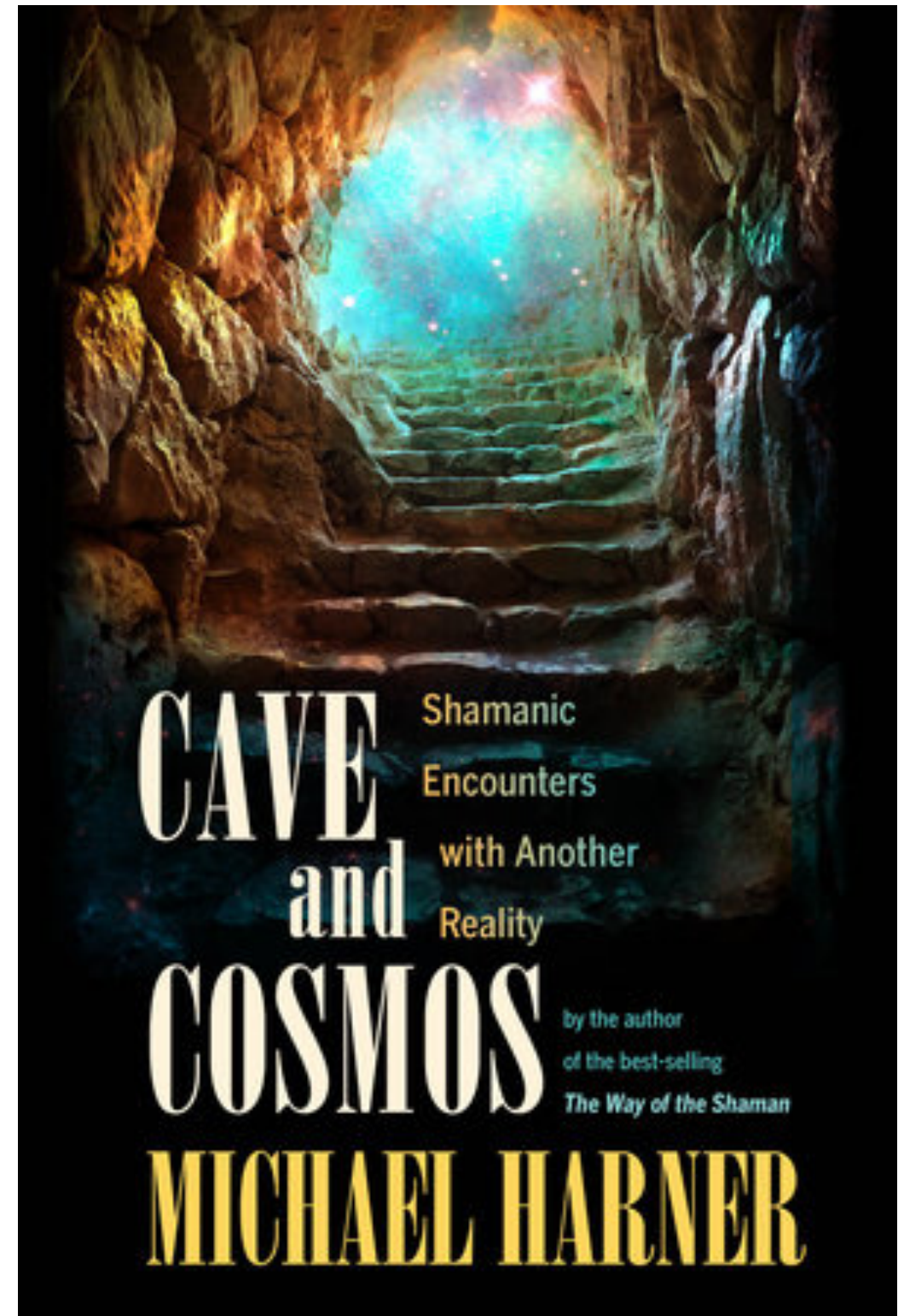


- Tradition holds that St Ninian's Cave was the hermitage of its eponymous saint. This can't be verified, but it may well have functioned as a retreat from the monastery at Whithorn.
- Ten crosses are cut into the cave wall itself, and 18 early Christian carved stones have been found in the cave (<https://www.historicenvironment.scot/visit-a-place/places/st-ninians-cave/>).



Cave and Cosmos

- Michael Harner (1929-2018) on ‘core-shamanism.’
- Entering caves, physically or symbolically, found in many shamanistic practices - entering the other world:
- “The ideal cave or cavern for leaving to go to the Lower World should have some depth or mystery connected to it, such as a passageway...a journeyer can sometimes use [a simple rock shelter] by entering a crack in its rock face. Since these are journeys of the spirit, even a crack an inch wide can permit access...” (Harner, 2013, p. 242).
- Sensory deprivation, extraordinary experience.
- Blurring of the distinction between ‘religious traditions’ and ‘shamanistic traditions.’
- Fundamental features of the interaction between human consciousness and place.

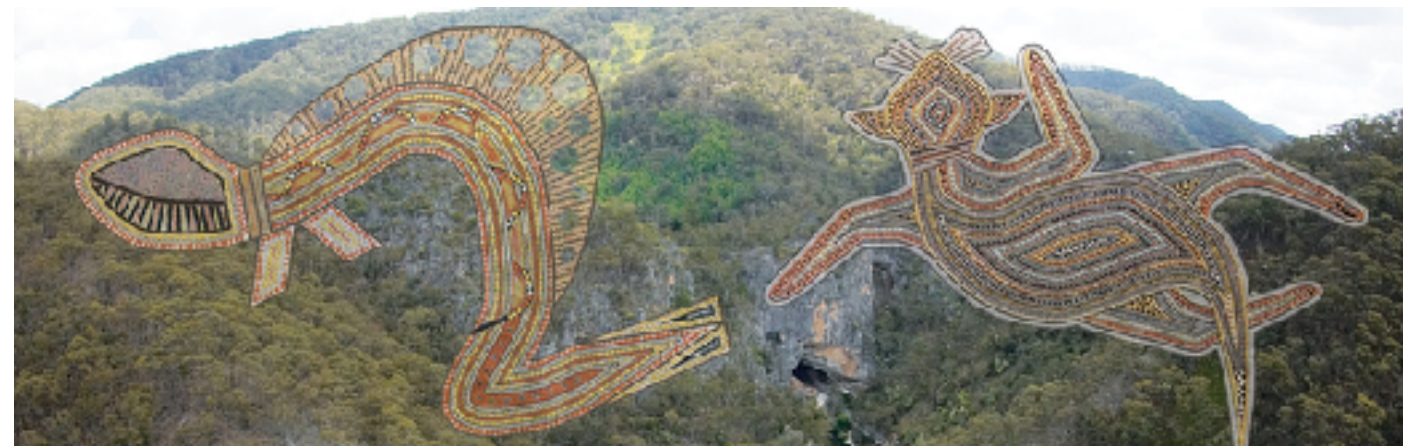
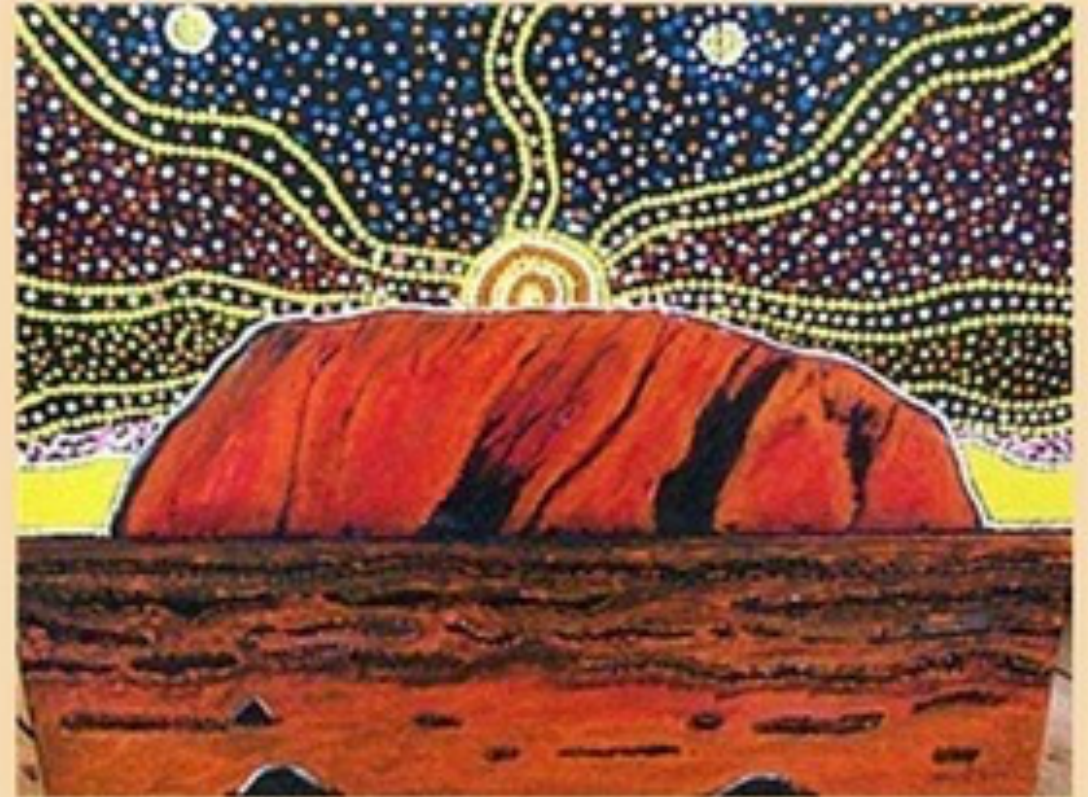


The Dreaming

- Different meanings:
- Warlpiri term Jukurrpa has five meanings:
- “The first referred to the Ancestral period, which although dictating a mythical past, also has a real temporal dimension in the present. The second meaning is designation of the whole category of Ancestral Beings. Third...[it] is used to refer to specific myths or Dreaming stories. The fourth meaning concerns the specific actions of an Ancestral Being...[The] fifth meaning is about ‘[night] dreams that individuals have during their sleep which are later associated with a specific Dreaming’”

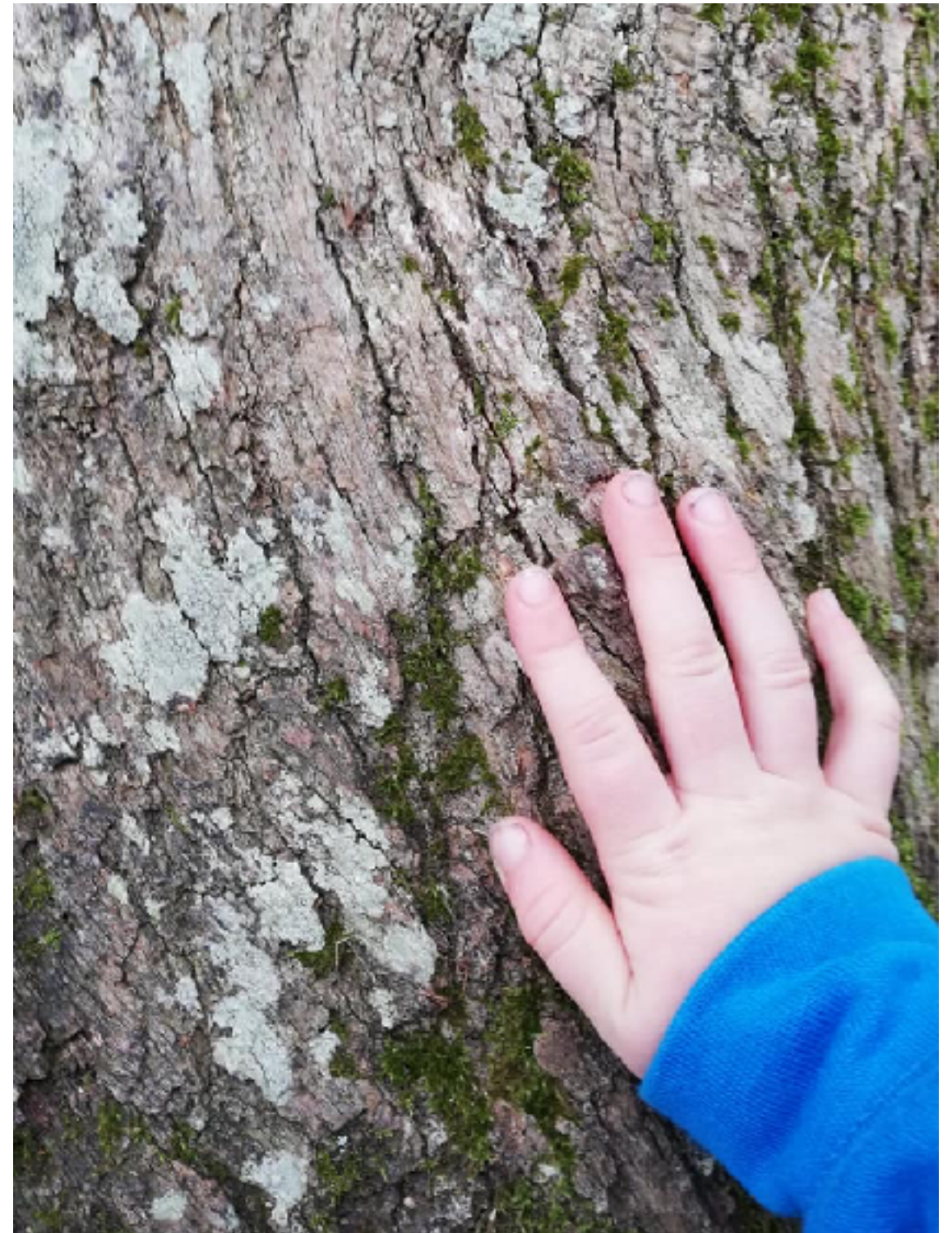
(Dussart cited in Price-Williams and Gaines, 1994 p. 375).

- By moving through the landscape, through sacred sites and mythic locations, and re-telling dreaming stories, it is possible to participate in the act of creation itself. Lynn Hume explains:
- “Everything is interconnected in a vast web of sacredness. Ancestor tracks and sites, and the Dreaming stories associated with them, make up the sacred geography of Australia. The entire continent is criss-crossed by tracks that the Ancestors made on their travels...Those responsible must take care of the country by periodically following songlines pertaining to these myths, thus maintaining their connections to the land and keeping the land...” (Hume, 2000, p. 127).



Re-Enchanting Landscape

- Is it possible to ‘borrow,’ for example, Aboriginal Australian conceptions of the ‘dreamtime’ and apply to our local environments?
- Can we also participate in creation of our own place?
- Does folklore give us any clues as to how our ancestors understood and interacted with the landscape?





- Casblaidd (Wolf's Castle), Carmarthenshire.



- Barclodiad y Gawres, The Giant's Apronful, Llanrhaeadr-ym-Mochnat

Conclusions

- Pilgrimage brings together different dimensions of religion/spirituality.
- It brings together the material and the spiritual - the body.
- Extraordinary experience and interaction with landscape give rise to stories of sacred places.
- combining Eliade and Durkheim.
- Healing - body, belief, tradition, external influences.
- Social cohesion - *communitas*.
- The dreaming is an example of one way in which we can participate in creation by walking through landscapes - we can connect with mythic stories, beings and places.

References

- Bowie, F. (2006). *The Anthropology of Religion*. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Digance, J. (2006). 'Religious and secular pilgrimage: Journeys redolent with meaning.' In D.J. Timothy & D.H. Olsen (eds.) *Tourism, Religion and Spiritual Journeys*. London: Routledge. (pp. 36-48).
- Harner, M. (2013). *Cave and Cosmos: Shamanic Encounters with Spirits and Heaven*. North Atlantic Books.
- Hunter, J. (2020). 'Folklore, Landscape and Ecology: Joining the Dots.' *Time and Mind: Journal of Archaeology, Consciousness and Culture*, Vol. 13, No. 3. Available Online: https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/1751696X.2020.1824098?fbclid=IwAR1GRwg7f-UJwYVJR_ZDCs2Trkx_FPkX-GkBxfAzs0JJo6GukKmD2dUZI3c
- McClenon, J. (2006). 'The Ritual Healing Theory.' In J. McNamara (ed.) *Where God and Science Meet: How Brain and Evolutionary Studies Alter Our Understanding of Religion Volume 1: Evolution, Genes, and the Religious Brain*. London: Praeger.
- Nolan, M.L. & Sidney, N. (1989). *Christian Pilgrimage in Modern Western Europe*. Chapel Hill & London: The University of North Carolina Press.
- Price-Williams, D. & Gaines, R. (1994). 'The Dreamtime and Dreams of Northern Australian Aboriginal Artists.' *Ethos*, Vol. 22, No. 3, pp. 373-388.
- Smart, N. (1974). *The Religious Experience of Mankind*. London: Fontana.
- Turner, V. (1969). 'Liminality and Communitas.' In M. Lambek (ed.) *Readings in the Anthropology of Religion*. Oxford: Blackwell. (pp. 358-374).
- Turner, E. (2012). *Communitas: The Anthropology of Collective Joy*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.