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This assignment is for the module of the degree 1 st ☐ 2 nd ☒ 3 rd ☐ 4 th ☐ 5 th ☐ 6 th ☐			
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HPCA7014

January 11, 2023

Exploring Sacredness in Natural Space: Druids of Iron Age Anglesey and Llyn Cerrig Bach

Introduction

There are two primary objectives at the root of this monograph – first, to explore the nature of sacredness and how it is experienced in natural spaces and second, to analyze the historical use of Llyn Cerrig Bach of Anglesey, Wales, in tandem with my own phenomenological engagement with the space as a case study for sacredness in the landscape. The notion of sacrality is a broad and powerful one that greatly reflects a being's perception of their subjective reality. Such ontological thoughts are nestled in the purview of anyone who has considered themselves or others as a being or entity beyond a material sense. So, what is 'sacredness'? Is it natural or conceived? Where is it and in what ways might it be perceived? Is 'sacredness' forever, temporary or maintained? While a truly definitive answer will prove elusive, many a brilliant mind has attempted to illuminate these questions which lie at the root of our subjective reality and have provided us with a framework to explore. Theorists like Rudolf Otto, Mircea Eliade and Emile Durkheim have laid out some groundwork with which we might proceed into a productive conversation surrounding 'sacredness' in a general sense. Working within that general framework we will approach sacredness as it might be experienced in the landscape by turning our attention to a site in Anglesey, Wales, an area historically documented and studied for its famous 'Celtic' strongholds and Druid ritual sites (Steele 2012). Specifically our focus will be on a phenomenological approach to Llyn Cerrig Bach, a site that has become famous since its rediscovery in 1942/43 when many important Iron Age votive depositions were uncovered

during the construction of an RAF airfield and has since been proposed to be a sacred lake to the ‘Celtic’ people of Iron Age Anglesey.

In order to facilitate a responsible phenomenological approach to Llyn Cerrig Bach I first consult the works of researchers like Miranda Aldhouse-Green, Jacqueline Borsje, Andrew P. Fitzpatrick, Sharon Paice Macleod, Ronald Hutton and Jane Webster to clarify the problematic ethnonym ‘Celtic’ and debatable romanized and christianized constructions of a Druidic role and worldview. While this will not be the focus of this case study, having some kind of ‘Druidic lens’ is necessary because as far as the material evidence and body of historical documentation can reveal it was this group of peoples who officiated ceremony, made offerings and engaged in veneration or propitiation at natural sites such as Llyn Cerrig Bach (Aldhouse-Green 2010; Macleod 2012; Macdonald 2007). Thus it will be briefly discussed in order to aid us in a more contextualized phenomenological methodology which will be discussed below.

Academic Rational

Throughout scholarship centered on the Druids of Britain the metalwork from Llyn Cerrig Bach, Anglesey, is highly regarded as one of the most important assemblages from the Iron Age (Macdonald 2007). With the recent work of P. Macdonald the body of archaeological research that includes Llyn Cerrig Bach and the material evidence found there specifically has been exhaustively consolidated and analyzed while generally avoiding aspects of a religious or cultural nature - breaking away from Fox’s originally quite Druid centric analysis (Macdonald 2007). Macdonald’s work also serves to address claims that the Llyn Cerrig Bach was never a ritual site at all (Roberts 2007). However thanks to further geographical surveying of the site and detailed examination of the material remains, the majority if not all of the metalwork assemblage of Llyn Cerrig Bach ought to be safely considered the result of votive depositional acts (Macdonald 2007).

However, Macdonald's work leaves a gap to be filled where-in the lake itself, the longest standing participant in the conversation, has been removed from the discussion. Viewing the lake as a participant with a 'sacred' nature in the essence of its entanglement with the Druids as I feel we can safely say the Druids conceptualized (Aldhouse-Green 2010; Macdonald 2007; Macleod 2012), might allow us to deepen the conversation around the nature of 'sacredness' in natural space. If the lake is taken as a relational 'participant', recognizing its agency in the landscape for example in the sense that Amy Whitehead ontologically posits the Roan Mountain nestled in part of the Appalachian Mountains of North-East Tennessee (2020), then a phenomenologically centered methodology is constructive to reintroducing the lake to the conversation about Iron Age Druids and 'sacredness' in natural space.

Because of the ontological and phenomenological complexity of the task (to explore the nature of sacredness through a case study of Llyn Cerrig Bach), it is pertinent for us to match the rhythm of our step as we walk around the lake in question; to be on the same page so to speak. To do so we first need to address 'sacredness', what a sacred landscape entails generally and in a carefully broad 'Celtic' context as informed by recent scholarship.



FIG. 1 Metalwork assemblage from Llyn Cerrig Bach, Anglesey, Wales. Photograph ©
Amgueddfa Cymru – National Museum Wales.

The Sacred

Postulating and helming the idea of a ‘noumenal’ world in Kant’s ontologically centered idea of ‘the thing-in-itself’ – hinting to a basis in Plato’s theory of Forms (Kant 1781; Schopenhauer 2014) – the floor was opened for further application to religious studies,

subsequently helmed by Rudolf Otto (1917) by further popularizing notions of the ‘numinous’. For our use ‘sacredness’ being numinous is thus considered to be ‘inherent in all aspects of the natural or perceived world’ – and seeing as how the ‘Celts’ were said to have held ritual and centered praxis in natural spaces, as opposed to indoors, this distinction is very relevant to postulating a ‘Celtic’ world-view as well as framing our phenomenological methodology (Aldhouse-Green 2010; Macdonald 2007; Macleod 2012). The ‘numinous’ is a higher reality perceived as underlying, fundamental or intrinsic to the concept of reality as a whole and is perfectly reflected in the supernatural reality deemed ‘the real’ by highly influential scholars such as Mircea Eliade and Emile Durkheim as the source of the inexplicable experience deemed ‘sacred’ (Eliade 1957, 180; Fields 1992, xviii; Kant 1871).

Sacredness in Natural Space

From Eliade and Durkheim we have two directions to consider the ‘sacred’ and by extension sacredness in natural spaces. The chief discrepancy between the two outlooks are held in the applications of the term ‘Hierophany’ – the manifestation of the ‘sacred’, the true or ultimate experience of reality in the common, every day or mundane reality experienced as an element of the psyche (Eliade 1957; Fields 1992, xviii-xx). For Eliade this psychic element is a structure of consciousness (without the distinction that it must be human consciousness) and is then represented by a phenomenon (Eliade 1957, 183). The hierophany ‘erupts’ into some phenomenological form, be it a deep and impenetrable cave network, a steep mountain or a body of water, and is then relationally entangled in mimetic ritual, symbolism, prayer and many other forms of worship and sacral representation that in turn become part of the phenomena, extending the sacred experience and serving as a gateway to the numinous; for natural spaces in the case of Druidic ritual – becoming a constituent in a broader numinous landscape and enriching the

‘storied’ landscape (Aldhouse-Green 2010; Ingold 1993; Macleod 2012; Smith 2000, 334; Studstill 2000, 178).

In Durkheim’s framework the sacred (from here on we will drop the quotation marks) is ‘the real’ or the numinous expressed uniquely through human experience and action (Fields 1992, xviii-xx). In this way it is human agency and action that affords sacredness and then maintains it in a way quite similar to how I have described Eliade’s theory.

Both directions may very well be reflective in some way or another in terms of the different ‘Celtic’ group’s beliefs and religious praxis, however Eliade’s notion being more open to regarding other forms of consciousness and entanglement makes it more applicable with regarding Llyn Cerrig Bach as a ‘participant’ or ‘agent’ of its own accord; understanding the lake to have agency and a sacred or noumenal element as the Druids would have in some manner (Macleod 2012, 11; Webster 2015, 128). Thus, this approach will prove more fruitful for our phenomenological endeavors by attempting to maintain proximity to some semblance of a Druidic world view.

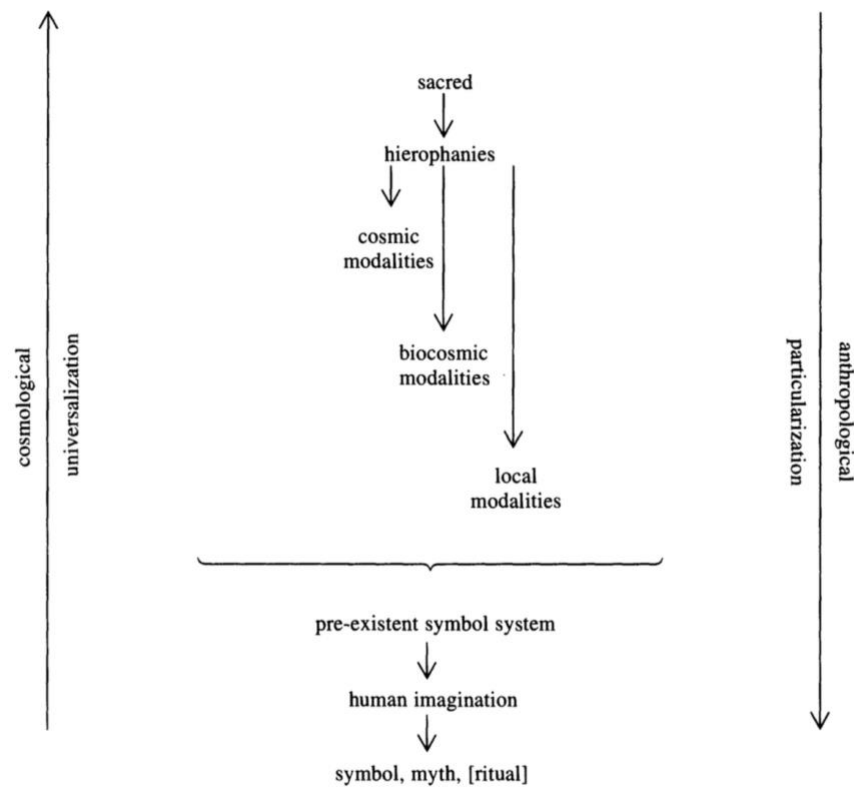


FIG. 2 A diagram of Eliade's decent and ascent of the sacred. (Smith 2000, 338).

Methodology

In my approach to Llyn Cerrig Bach I am addressing two similar primary methodologies. The first, in the adoption of a participant mindset as proposed by Lucien Lévy-Bruhl (1923) and by ensuring an openness to 'noumenal' qualities in a 'contested landscape' (Tilly 1994), which accords a liminal notion to the lake much like how a 'Celtic' participant would be inclined (addressed below), I am developing a personal experience with the lake, becoming somehow part of its character and relationally it becoming part of mine (Whitehead 2013, 2020). While the phenomenological analysis portion of my research project consisted of a limited one day trip,

from south-central Wales to roughly one mile from the nearest coast in the central western side of Anglesey immediately next to an RAF airfield, taking field notes and some images I was still capable of gathering the necessary information to work within the framework of our other more directive methodological instruction, Kim Knott's '*Spacial Theory and Methodology for the Study of Religion*' (2005).

Knott's spacial theory and methodology entails 5 elements of space to be explored though not all of them need be employed in order to function appropriately for our purposes. In brief these elements are: The body as the source of space, the dimensions of space, the properties of space, the aspects of space and the dynamics of space. In light of the limitations in the scope of my research I will focus on just 3 of them. Since our goal is to explore a druidic natural sacredness we shall work with what can provide the most information. Because perceptions of body and space are somewhat covered in our development and adoption of a shared 'noumenal' outlook and landscape in which we too are a constituent, 'the body as the source of space' will not be elaborated specifically in the fieldwork discussion. In the opposite vein, seeing as how we lack true representation the most, I will set aside 'aspects of space' for fear of projecting assumed 'Celtic' ritual praxis any more than I may have already done. This leaves us with our three spacial approaches for discussion – The dimensions, properties and dynamics of the space (elaborated further in the fieldwork discussion).

Due to the subjective nature of my experience at Llyn Cerrig Bach it will be necessary to reflexively illustrate some background information about myself in advance: I am, at the time of conducting the fieldwork, a middle aged Caucasian-American male who grew up in a primarily academically focused household, not a particularly religious one. In my early youth I spent a great deal of time hiking and camping in the outdoors at sites like 'Enchanted Rock' which gets

its name-sake from earlier ‘Native American’ veneration near Austin, Texas, and tumbling around in the sun amongst the jagged wellspring of life that are the coastal tide pools of Southern California. I was always captivated by the enchanting of the landscape that has surrounded us since long before our current society was formed – finding a deep sense of parenialism in the mysterious names attached to spaces throughout the ‘storied landscape’ as Tim Ingold would call it from a ‘dwelling perspective’ (Ingold 1993). In this perspective, so long as, like the ‘native dweller’, I am seeking the past by engaging perceptually with the landscape then I am engaging in a project of fundamentally the same ‘remembering’ nature (152). It is worth pointing out how reminiscent of Durkheim’s collective effervescence this feels (Fields 1992), however not having access to an Iron Age ‘Celt’ and not directly being part of that collective (though it is likely somewhere in my ancestry) does indeed stress the need to emphasize care in reaching for their impressions on the landscape – ‘A place owes its character to the experiences it affords to those who spend time there...’ and ‘...the kinds of activites in which its inhabitants engage’ (Ingold 1993, 155). Belden Lane has suggested that ‘we can walk upon something sacred without actually entering it’ and while that seems to hold true for Llyn Cerrig Bach over the past several hundreds of years (from the first centuries CE to its rediscovery in 1942) and even though I cannot observe the full capacity of how ‘Celtic’ occupants and Druids have engaged with the lake, I wish to ‘enter’ the sacred space at least even if it is only one inch (Lane 2001). To that effect let us paint a rough yet responsible picture of what ‘Celtic’ engagement with a sacred natural space might have signified.

Literature Review

The ‘Celts’ and Druids

In the process of reviewing the large body of research done regarding the ‘Celtic’ peoples of Britain and specifically Anglesey it quickly became clear that the ethnonym ‘Celtic’ is a problematic one and has been a subject of interrogation throughout recent scholarship (Bergholm 2015; Borsje 2015; Fitzpatrick 2007; Garrow 2008; Hutton 2009; Macleod 2012; Webster 2015). The term is a highly generalized one that comes to us from Ancient Greek and Roman writers who ‘referred to the Celts fairly indiscriminately as either *Keltoi*, *Celtae* or *Galli*, or *Galatae*, as though the names were interchangeable’, however ‘many Celtic peoples would have probably self-identified through tribal designations’ (Macleod 2012, 18). Later writers, like Caesar speaking of the Gauls and Roman writers invading and romanizing Britain, exasperated the issue by taking what they summarized of one tribe’s belief and praxis (often times in conjecture) and generalizing that information throughout a region that would have held a ‘great deal of local variation in terms of culture and religion’ (Macleod 2012, 18), having Greek, Roman and Christian ideas projected onto them throughout the common era (Bergholm & Ritari 2015; Fitzpatrick 2007; Hutton 2009; Macleod 2012; Webster 2015). Macleod suggests that based on first century BCE maps the Celts did ‘not seem to have been centrally organized or governed’ but a tribal structure consisting of tribes of ‘tribes of various sizes ruled by kings or chieftains’ (Macleod 2012, 18).

In regards to commonalities in social structure amongst these many tribes we will work with Macleod’s careful observation of a ‘three-fold division of society: Rulers and Sacred Persons; Warriors and Crafts-people; Farmers and Herders’ (2012, 22). Druids, in their shamanic and noumenal officiate role, were one such group of sacred persons and were certainly a

respected pillar of Celtic society, societally responsible for the most profound or powerful acts of propitiation (complicated ritual, communion and gifts) to the many natural sacred constituents in the Celtic numinous landscape (Aldhouse-Green 2010, 59).

Cosmology, beliefs and the ‘Celtic’ landscape

‘Natural constituents’ so to speak, refers to the many deities that populate the numinous landscape experienced by the Celtic peoples often with the guidance of the learned Druids, whom Ceasar, speaking of the Gauls specifically, says may spend up to 20 years in training; learning the depth of their religious praxis and memorizing the stories of their sacred landscape and the deities that populate it, for they famously did not commit any of their study to paper or keep any identifiable records – any myth or legend thus retained is well after centuries of romanization and christianization (MacLeod 2012, 23X; Hutton 2009; Webster 2015). In the opening chapter of *Celtic Myth and Religion* (2012) Sharron Paice MacLeod posits that although there were differences in religion across the vast Celtic peoples, regions and in different eras, some commonalities in many of the sources do remain. These include: ‘The worship of both male and female deities; Respect for ancestors and elders; Appreciation of the natural world; The interconnection between this world and the otherworld; the cyclical nature of time and immortality of the soul (continually passing on to a living body); Cosmology and the sacred center; The cauldron, the sword, the well, the head, the number three; The importance of knowledge and skill; Respect for truth, honor and courage’ (MacLeod 2012, 9).

The Cosmos, Localized Veneration and Liminality

Some of these deities would have cosmic association, which the Roman’s utilized in their romanization of the Celtic peoples and religion, such as being tied to the sun, moon, plants and stars as well as the ocean (Aldhouse-Green 2010; MacLeod 2012; Webster 2015). Aside

from ‘widely venerated cosmic gods and goddesses’ features of the local landscape to the many tribes were included in localized worship as deities, or as having a sacred and/or liminal property and even serving as a connection to the otherworld – the object of many of their lost stories no doubt (MacLeod 2012, 10). Natural spaces in the landscape perceived as ‘liminal’ or ‘contested’; connecting two of the three worlds of the cosmos, The Upper, Middle and Lower worlds, were likely included on this list of places for localized veneration, such as bodies of water like lakes, springs and wells, trees and groves, or central points in the landscape which had a special connection to the sacred cosmos (MacLeod 2012). There was notably a special association with the night time, wherein many groups were known to pay particular ritual attention to lunar phases as liminal boundaries and of other cosmic significance (Aldhouse-Green 2010; Macleod 2012; Webster 2015); even in other more mundane ways, for example the Gauls did not measure periods of time by days but by nights (Aldhouse-Green 2010; MacLeod 2012, 124).

Iron Age Anglesey

Tacitus, a prominent Roman historian writing in the mid to late first century CE, holds a lot of influence in how we might imagine Iron Age and early Common Era Anglesey due to his account of the Roman conquest of Anglesey. In the ‘*Annals*’ Tacitus describes the Romans’ first assault on a stronghold in Anglesey in 60CE. Painting a vivid scene of their approach to the stronghold Tacitus describes women with torches and ‘robes of deathly black’, ‘flitting between the ranks’ while nearby a circle of Druids are ‘lifting their hands to heaven and showering imprecations’ which ‘struck the (Roman) troops with such awe...’ (Tacitus 1939, 29-30).

Although Tacitus’s integrity as an authority on first-century Britain has been questioned lately (Hutton 2009, 13-14), his description might imply some important things about Anglesey (Sharp et al. 2009, 14, 25); implications that are not without support in the material evidence from Llyn

Cerrig Bach. MacDonald's 2007 considerations after re-evaluating the depositions reveal several periods of depositions between the second century Iron Age and up to the mid first century Common Era, suggesting that Tacitus' account and the relevant Roman invasion may have had reflection in ritual action at Llyn Cerrig Bach, seeing as how the Romans famously destroyed everything they could in the invasion (Sharp et al. 2009, 25)– it is also worth mentioning that some slightly later depositions were also found, also coinciding with later Roman invasions after the short one described above (Hutton 2009; Macdonald 2007). The nature of the depositions suggest that some of the prestigious war items were brought from throughout the region, with some notably being unsuitable to Anglesey (like chariot wheels that would not have been practical in Anglesey's rocky terrain) or being identifiable to other areas, implies they were likely brought to Anglesey for deposition specifically at the sacred lake (Macdonald 2007). Furthermore, the account of Tacitus is quite odd because the Romans typically would not have demolished all religious structures when invading and Druids were not at all known to make appearances in battle – such a telling, if true (Hutton 2009), would imply that this area was of great religious or ritual importance to the Druids, perhaps being deemed a central point in the landscape (a powerful or even sacred thing) (See fig. 3), amongst the Britain region (Sharp et al. 2009). In such a scenario, based on the account of the invasion of Anglesey and the unique nature of the material evidence found at the sacred lake, could Llyn Cerrig Bach have been regarded as a ritual foci of potent natural sacred power for Iron Age Druids in the region? We can only speculate, but it must be stated that the possibility of special attention beyond that of regular communal veneration or propitiation being paid to the site remains.

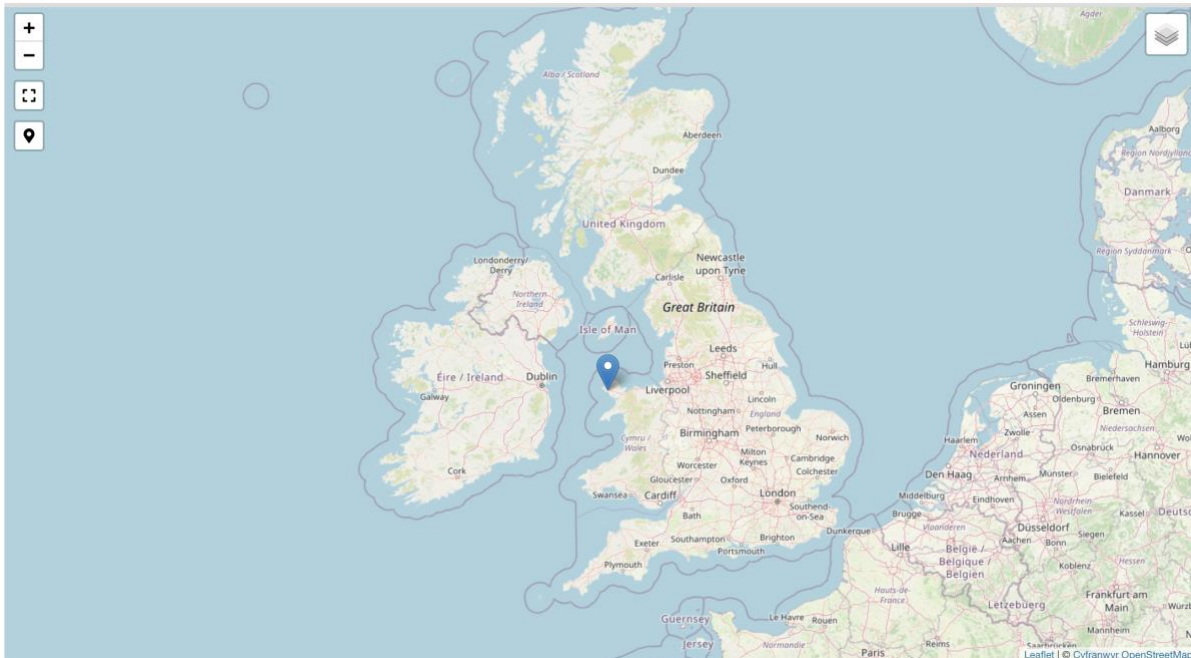


FIG. 3 The centrality of Anglesey in the broader Britain region (reference on map).

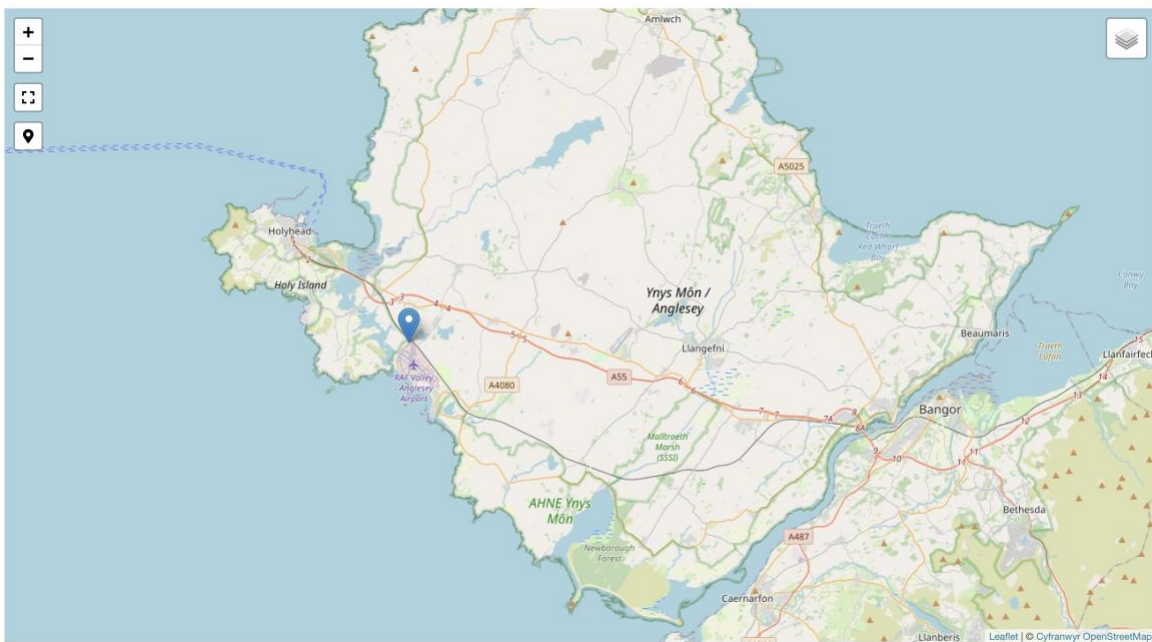


FIG. 4 Llyn Cerrig Bach in Anglesey (reference on map).

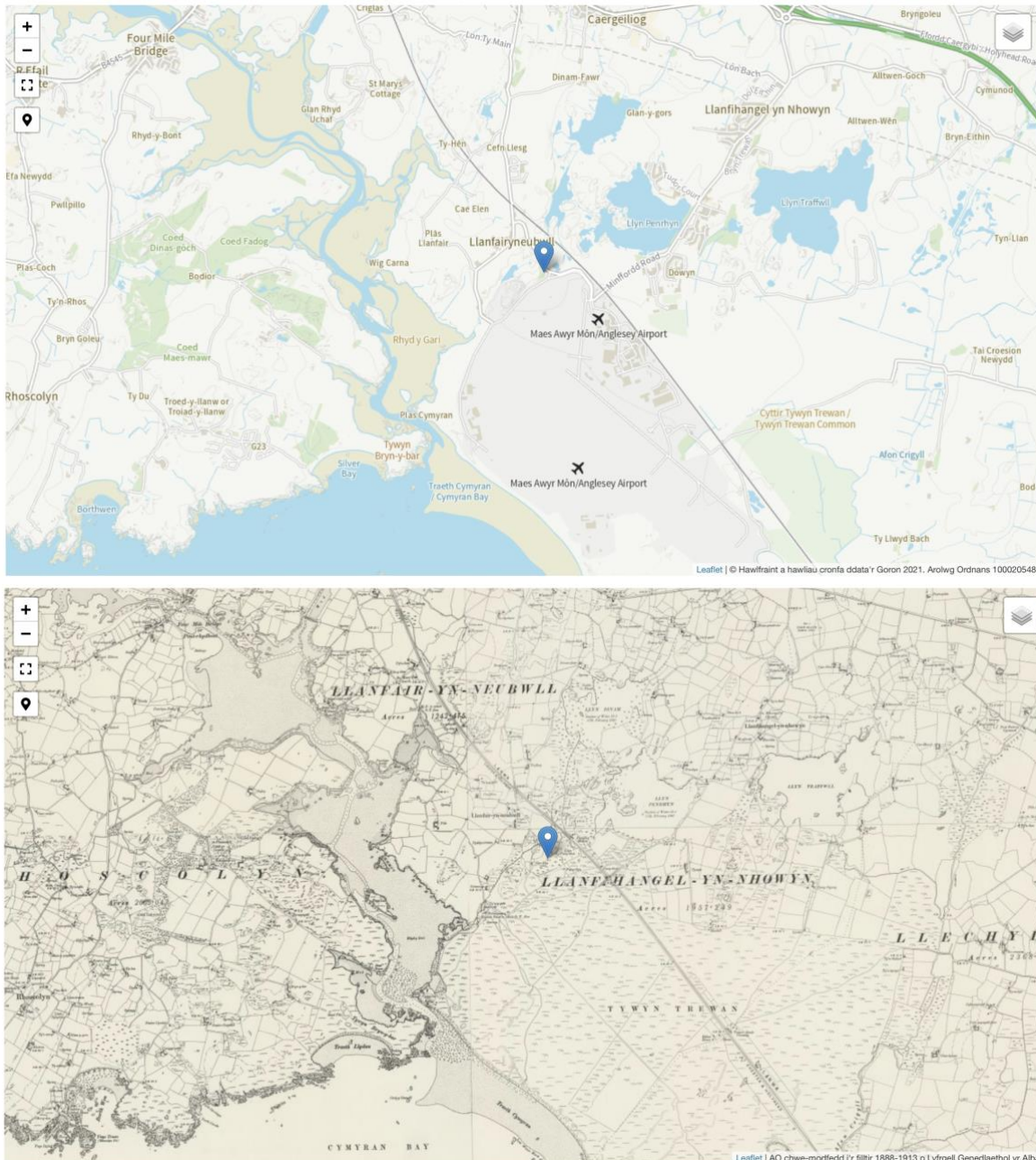


FIG. 5 Llyn Cerrig Bach now and in 1900, pre-construction of the air field (reference on map).

Fieldwork and Discussion

It was the 27th, just a few days after a calm Christmas spent with friends, although the atmosphere was peaceful on the long drive from southern Wales to Anglesey in the north, there was not a moment of respite from the steady drizzle and sporadic winds to the north that made it

feel colder than the 10 degrees celsius my cellphone claimed it was throughout the entire day. This however served a unique role in my own experience of the lake because in my senses the lake seemed restless, its scents, banks and other 'limbs' with which the river interacts with others heightened, as if stirred by the activity of the sky that day. It was truly easy to imagine how this space, with its banks peeking through the dense reeds as they shift with the wind and its obscure edges laden with Pochard ducks seeking shelter on the water, bobbing in and out of the rippling surface, could be perceived as a powerful liminal space in the landscape. The lake does feel like a point of interconnectedness, but the effects of the events surrounding its rediscovery; the construction of the nearby airfield and railroad, cannot go without notice. In the construction of the airfield that led to the rediscovery of the lake's past much of the lake was dug out for its peat and thus the geography of the lake in general should be somewhat different from how the Druids would have experienced it (Steele 2012). In the distance you can hear cars and a train between the lake and the coast which invade the scene and feels like they distance us from authenticity. When comparing maps, the extent that modern man has 'designed' the landscape around Llyn Cerrig Bach without knowing its stories and entering its sacred spaces, also functions as a barrier between us and the sacred landscape of Anglesey; obscuring its features. However regardless of the barriers brought with construction, when I offered a metallic coin of my own after communing with the lake in my own way (for me this is usually with meditation and observation through watercolor painting or drawing) I did have the strong feeling that I was part of a conversation with the lake and that such a ritualistic procedure actualized a relational experience. Perhaps the Druids had a similar feeling as they enacted their far more complex ritual acts beneath the moon, especially considering the prestige of the metalwork assemblage used in their depositions (Macdonald 2007).



FIG. 6 Llyn Cerrig Bach during my field work (My own photo)

Dimensions

The dimensions of space are described as ‘physical, mental and social space... brought together’ (159) – the space is social because it ‘plays its part in the production and reproduction of social space’; in being engaged with it too engages an act of relationality – the lake as a sacred natural space is ‘not an empty container in which other things are placed or against which they happen’ but an active participant in dialogue with the grass, trees, fish, birds and even myself; in

the social interactions that happen there the lake too is participant in experience. When I offered my own object of some kind of value to the lake this created a deeper dialogue, a physical, mental and social exchange that simultaneously acknowledges the other as keeper of its own stories and past. Of course as the lake of now may have changed with the landscape through time, accumulating more and more stories and interactions, so have I similarly in my own right from childhood to now. If more was known about the exact praxis of the Druids who would have ritually engaged with this space, perhaps more could be done to explore the depth of the sacredness embedded here. However with what we have available, the votive metalwork assemblages from the Druids, some degree of the dimensions of sacredness in the space are made accessible, though obscure, and can be related to.

Properties

Following the dimensions of the space which we have posited in a relational sense, the properties of the space are how interactions take form and are held together by the power of space. Knott notions that ‘places of worship, as symbolic places, are one means by which religious ideas about the divine, human community, and the ritual process of producing sacred space are given a material presence’ (162). In the case of Llyn Cerrig Bach part of its material presence as we experienced it come through the metalwork assemblage votively deposited there (and now my coin in a much less though still ontologically charged sense), which are a property of the power of the place. Heidegger first posits the notion that places ‘gather’ and ‘hold’ things together (1993) – this is the power of time and space that Foucault calls our ‘epoch’ wherein its properties: configuration, simultaneity and extension, all share in the power of space (1986, 22-23). This would be the plethora of interactions that happen there, forming countless stories. The intersection of these stories is part of the character of the lake and the lake’s ability to gather and

hold those stories is the power of the space – for the Druid’s veneration took place here and not another local as well as my own offering and personal dialogue, or the activity and dwelling of countless others over time – that is a property of the lake’s sacredness.

Dynamics

Speaking of the dynamics of space is to be considerate of the form that agency is being expressed by the space. Knott explains it succinctly as the ‘ever present spacial possibilities that vie for ascendancy’; the interfacing of space and sacralization. The agency of Llyn Cerrig Bach is continually expressed in and through space and is thoroughly enmeshed and embodied by it – this has been done by ritual action hence the rediscovery of the site’s sacredness. Prior to the site expressing itself via the offerings made to it, its agency was expressed in a different way and the dialogue it had with the other constituents of the landscape were embodied more subtly. After the depositions were recognized and studied a different perception of the lake’s agency ascended to take precedence over the prior reception, which is still present as well if we consider the other ways the lake is known in the landscape for example as a dwelling and source of life for countless fauna who may have their own sacred experience in pure symbiosis. However with the findings acting to deepen our dialogue with the space, we are thus able to hear something of its stories and the lake takes on a more sacred visage.

Final Thoughts

After thinking of my field experience with the lake in terms of some of Knott’s elements of space it seems that acknowledging Llyn Cerrig Bach’s agency and sacredness became the main themes. Often thanks to the powerful evidence of prior occupation, which in my mind empowered the sacredness of the site and perhaps aided in facilitating my own experience. My use of the methodology is certainly limited to heavily lean on historical impressions afforded by

the material evidence, however without any built structures (not including the airfield, etc. which have no sense of attachment and mostly serve to detach us from the lake when we traverse near it) those depositions, aside from the lake itself, are our sole contributor to the conversation with the space as a religious one; thus I feel I have adequately employed Knott's methodology in its intended fashion.

In conducting my fieldwork and delineating on my observations with such a methodological approach, I began to subconsciously interrogate the way I regularly converse with other spaces, especially natural and religious spaces. Have I been truly open to them? Perhaps I have not and that is why I might feel completely detached from a space from which another feels powerful sacredness – perhaps our choosing of where we open up to conversations with our surroundings can be attributed to part of the power of those places and is a result of relationality between our own agency and the agency of a space. Perhaps when we feel nothing from a sacred space despite our openness it might be the space that is closed to us, or perhaps it is we who are ignorant of a powerful story and thus blind to its sacredness. Other times, though, a sacred natural space will transcend such barriers and shout to us, like a raging waterfall or soaring jagged mountain peak. Basically, just because I cannot 'enter' a sacred space does not mean another cannot or has not, and it does not mean the space has no agency but perhaps instead that I am simply unable to relate to it based on my own perceptions and temporal association.



FIG. 7 A very clear photo of Llyn Cerrig Bach in which you can see the surrounding structures, such as the airfield in the top left and the railroad in the center (Photo: Ian Jones, Capel Coch).

Conclusion

The aim of this research project was to explore sacredness in natural space with Llyn Cerrig Bach of Anglesey as a case study. In order to accomplish that I first reasoned that the site had room for such an analysis and was not already thoroughly studied in this regard – following which I set out to define the sacred as it is used in religious studies, in this case for the study of the Druids said to have worshipped at the lake. In order to apply my chosen methodology appropriately a section was dedicated to Celticities and I attempted a responsible reception of a ‘Celtic world view’ that tries not to skirt the boundary on assumption, a difficult task due to how much generalization is done throughout many potentially unverifiable accounts of Celtic religion and its romanization (Hutton 2009). I then set out to engage with the site phenomenologically, observing my experiences captured in field notes and a few pictures under the guidance of Knott’s ‘elements of space’. What I found was that in order to connect with a religious space, one first cannot deny the object of their study, much like how Eliade and Durkheim posit the study of the sacred in their great works referred to throughout this paper. Doing so in a loose Druidic context notably enriched the life of the lake in my eyes; my methodology was continuously encouraging me to view the sacred natural space before me as not just a place but a participant and dwelling of other participants in the landscape.

The 5 elements of space proposed by Kim Knott (2005) for use in studying a religious space can be said to be likened to Ingold’s idea of ‘lines’ that intersect and build Llyn Cerrig Bach as a place of countless stories (Ingold 1993). Although Levy-Bruhl has deliberated that ‘participation’ is ‘localized in space and time’ (Levy-Bruhl 1923) – the sacred ‘participant’ that is the lake relational to the Druids is still a ‘line’ participating in perception of the lake today

through the blurry, yet tangible and thus relational and further entangling presence of the metal work assemblage votively sacrificed by the Druids (Aldhouse-Green 2010; Ingold 1993; Whitehead 2013, 2020). It is in that relational capacity that the analysis of the elements of space employed above allow us to account for that feint yet persistent ‘thread’ left by the Druids; A conversation with the sacredness of the lake persevering in the landscape through time.

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