

## Magic and the Sacred Land

The magical inner powers that flow through the land have fascinated humanity since the dawn of time. Power spots became sacred places, people constructed groves, stone circles, temples and some power places were avoided at all costs. This interrelationship between humanity and the power that flows through the land is still a major part of some cultures, religions and magical systems to this day.

On the other hand, many cultures, religions and magical systems have become heavily divorced from the land powers around them and they operate in a total vacuum. For us in the west that divorce has been particularly harsh and the more urban we become the harder it is for the younger generation to spiritually connect with the raw land: the rush to modernise and intellectualise has put a great distance between nature and humanity. And this is compounded by the sprawl of cities, towns and urban areas.

Those who follow paths such as witchcraft, paganism, druidism etc. tend to reach out to attempt to build strong relationships with their land/environment whereas occultists and magicians in general tend to hide themselves away in temples and lodges. Saying that, I have come across many reversals of this trend, with ritual magicians striding purposefully across hill and dale with the wind blowing their long leather coats, and shaman druids sitting in their centrally heated rooms with tea towels over their heads, drumming and swaying (usually off beat) as they put somebody's wolf 'back in'.

Often, we find that magical paths draw upon deities from far away lands (though not a bad thing so long as you don't ignore your neighbours) or even ones cooked up in the imagination of Victorian/post Victorian sexually frustrated wannabe demon lovers. This is nothing new; the demon on the other side of the fence that wears exotic clothing, speaks in a tongue no bugger understands and is very showy at getting the job done has always pulled at the curious and is far more impressive as a 'path' than the boring old spirits in the back yard. The foreigners tend to be more commercially viable too.

But there comes a time when the Babylon goddess of fancy purple prose wears thin and the seeker wants something more 'real', something that is a true connection. That search for a meaningful and 'true' connection takes us to the stage where we need to start asking questions like; what power/contact/wisdom and magical pattern is already here in the land where we live? Why is it here? Who is here? What affect are they having on my life and my work? What effect is my work having on the land, the spirits? Can they be a part of my work? And finally, how can we connect with them?

Magic grew out of a mystical conversation that humanity had with its environment, the various inner beings, and out of humanity's wants and needs. It is important to keep that path of development in mind when delving deeper into the more ancient mysteries within our land - it is very easy to approach such mysteries with a modern religious mindset of blind faith (the Nephilim did it), dogmatic belief (the Nephilim did it and shagged the women) and over dramatised worship (we want to shag the Nephilim and get more magic!). We use the Christian/Judaic model in our approach to the ancient consciousness within the land without really realising it and it can be very hard to truly step out of that model.

While this is not a bad thing in many ways, it can end up re-creating the same dogmatic patterns that are no longer applicable to our land or culture and it can quickly devolve into dressing up and role playing with an added side of psychology. Every come across a Celtic Druid Shaman Goetic Klippoth therapist who wants to wash your aura in the blood of Tubal Cain's second brother's wife (who happens to be named Lilith) at a high mass? I mean, how Catholic can you get?

Which takes us to the other question that we really really need to ask of ourselves before we approach something quite so powerful as the consciousness of the land around us. And that question is... how much of what we do is for us, for our own satisfaction/ego/entertainment/identity, and how much is a real attempt at connecting with the consciousness within the land?

It is important to be truthful with oneself as to the reasons why we do what we do. The dressings of the path may be fun and nurture us in different ways, but it is important for true magical connection to be aware of how much of what we do is to make ourselves feel good and feel like we belong, and how much of what we do is the real magic. It is also about evolving a more mature conversation with the powers around us and looking at the land with new eyes; the eyes of magical enquiry, connection and relationship rather than dependant worship or fantasy.

It is a dynamic that requires something that we humans are not comfortable with, and that is truth, and taking responsibility for ourselves, our actions and the land around us. While ever we feel there is a paternal or maternal deity to oversee us, protect us and feed us, we are happy to look no further and place our welfare in 'their hands'. This is effectively devolving us of any responsibility which in turn emotionally, energetically and psychically stunts the magician/priestess.

If however we approach the local powers, ancestors and deities of the land around us in a slightly different way, i.e. be willing to respect and interact with them but take responsibility for ourselves, then an interesting conversation and friendship develops.

So, let's get down to practicalities. One major resource is the local myths, annals, epics, legends and faery tales. These stories are the result of long-standing oral traditions and they often have ancient wisdoms, knowledge and experiential learning that has been passed down from generation to generation. These stories, if you know how to look at them (and be aware of modern editing – look for old versions), will give you clues to the local powers, deities, ancestors, land qualities etc, and will give clues as how to live and deal with them. You can use the information to attempt connection through giving gifts of food/drink, song, through sleeping in a sacred place, through working in vision or through group ritual.

Whatever means for connection you use, ensure that there is a defined way for the beings within the land to communicate with you and that they are aware of it. Using visionary methods is a good one if your can work that technique. Dreaming is also a good one: sleep out on the land and ask for dreams, though be aware that the sleeping on the land is not to capture the dream, but for the communion – the dream can often come days or weeks later.

The other is through awareness of external cues around you (i.e. owl visit means death or message). This goes back to the myths and legends; each set of land spirits have their own vocabulary of communication and that is often hidden in faery tales and the legends of heroes. The cues will appear in every day life around you (which can suck if you are slightly paranoid).

Once those lines of communication have been opened and are established, then you can begin to invite the 'locals' to work magically with you on projects if it is appropriate. Just bear in mind this is always a two-way street and they will also ask you to do magical work or a mundane but important task for them.

But if you wish to work magically with the beings and spirits of the land around you, then it is wise to rethink the use of banishing rituals and casting circles. (I hear sharp intakes of breath! Blasphemy!) This is back to the comment about moving away from dogmatic thinking. Why do people use LBRP or cast circles? Because that was what they were taught to do. And those techniques developed in an era where virtually every being created a sense of fear and the magician was always grappling for control.

Magic does not happen in a vacuum. Magic of any real power is a combination of patterns, energies and beings all interacting at a certain frequency. Together a great deal can be achieved as you are operating as just one link in a long and powerful chain. You learn how to work as a team, how to understand your own limitations and how to trust other beings to do their job. You learn about how time and magic work, and that the conclusion of a magical act does not happen at the end of a vision or ritual, but often months or even years later.

Magic is a long game and paying attention to how the chess game (magic in action) triggers, and watching the pieces being moved across the board of life can be fascinating and very educational. This of course has to be done carefully so that you do not open yourself up to every Tom, Dick and Samael that happens to be passing through. This is achieved by 'tuning' yourself, your working space or even your living space to a certain frequency so that you do not become dinner for a hungry local energetic vampire or bottom feeder. It's a bit like having a couple of tigers move in with you; you don't need to lock the front door anymore.

Tuning is simply done by establishing contact with land spirits, by feeding the 'locals', honouring the local dead/ancestors/burials with songs, visiting them in their graves, and sleeping with them (I said sleeping, not sex... sheesh!), and honouring the local goddess or god (usually found in vision if there is no local legend or ancient site to guide you).

It does not matter if your path is that of the witch, the magician, or the druid; we are all stood on the same earth with the same powers flowing all around us. The different paths may dictate that we approach these powers in a different way. I also think it is very important if magic in general is to evolve, that we do not fall back on old dogmatic pre-learned religious patterns, but that we stop to think about what we are doing, why we are doing it and what our relationship to the land and beings around us is. Our land is full of ancient powerful consciousness, and it is up to us to open the doors again and say hello.

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