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Introduction: ‘Indigenous’ and ‘Indigenous Religion’¹

A few Native Americans have suggested that non-Natives who want to be like them should seek out their own indigenous traditions, such as Druidry, a sentiment shared by a Native American activist, cited by Bron Taylor, who ‘expressed his clear preference that the whites strive first to return to their own pre-Christian, pagan traditions.’² In his book, *God Is Red*, Vine Deloria Jr appears to regard ‘Druidism’ as a native tradition in Europe, which has led me to investigate whether or not Druidry can be considered an indigenous religion, raising questions about how indigenous religions are defined in the study of religions.³

Indigenous peoples are often defined as the colonised, or formerly colonised, first inhabitants who are marginalised within a dominant culture. Although this definition is quite narrow, it does not necessarily have a bearing on the definition of ‘indigenous religion’ except when the latter is defined as the religion of indigenous peoples, using an ethnic criterion. It is also possible to categorise ‘indigenous religion’ using other criteria, such as defining it as a religion that has emerged within a particular place, regardless of who is practising it, a definition based on locality. Another possibility, which this chapter proposes, is that an ‘indigenous religion’ is a religion that relates to the land, the people (inclusively) and that which has gone before. This more inclusive, relational definition, alluded to by Vine Deloria himself (see below), allows a religion or tradition such as Druidry to be regarded as ‘indigenous’.⁴

Definitions of ‘indigenous religion’ are often primitivist, implying that they refer to pristine, pre-colonial, self-contained and unchanging oral traditions based on kinship. Among other things, this fails to recognise the sharing of ceremonial practices that takes place. The form of sweat lodge practised today among First Nations in Eastern Canada originates from the Plains. Therefore, is the sweat lodge still an indigenous religious tradition when performed by Mi’kmaq? What if it is performed by Druids? In this case it would be regarded as an appropriation. Just as Mi’kmaq are adapting elements of the sweat lodge, some Druids perform what they call a Druid or Celtic sweat lodge, though still using a Plains Indian model.⁵

In determining whether or not Druidry is an ‘indigenous religion’, I will begin briefly with what is generally meant by the term ‘indigenous’. Existing definitions are

¹ I wish to express my thanks to members of the Druid Network and the Irish College of Druids for participating in this research.

² Bron Taylor, ‘Earthen Spirituality or Cultural Genocide?: Radical Environmentalism’s Appropriation of Native American Spirituality,’ *Religion*, 27 (1997): p. 190.

³ Vine Deloria, Jr, *God Is Red: A Native View of Religion* (Golden, Colorado: Fulcrum Publishing, 1992), p. 288. ‘Religion’ is another problematic category, discussed by Suzanne Owen and Teemu Taira, ‘The Category of “Religion” in Public Classification: Charity Registration of the Druid Network in England and Wales,’ in T. Fitzgerald, T. Stack and N. Goldenberg (eds), *Modernity and the Category of Religion* (forthcoming).

⁴ I first developed a relational definition of ‘indigenous’ in ‘Defining “Indigenous”: Lineage, Locality or “Living Relationship”’ presented at the Indigenous Religions in Context symposium at the University of Edinburgh, 6th March 2004.

⁵ See Suzanne Owen, *The Appropriation of Native American Spirituality* (London and New York, 2008).

based on either a romantic notion of the ‘primitive’, which Armin Geertz says ‘keeps real indigenous peoples out of the picture just as effectively as the scientific racism of the nineteenth century’ as it does not address the varied situations indigenous people are in today, or based on an ethno-political category identifying only those who have experienced colonisation.⁶ In his paper on ‘Indigenous Articulations’, James Clifford says diverse cultures and histories are claiming indigeneity, therefore he does not think one can arrive at a core list of essential indigenous features, although he does assert that they have overlapping experiences of imperialist nation-states.⁷ This type of definition is contentious in India and African countries, and other places where there may be conflicting indigenous claims. Although Europeans, by this definition, are not considered ‘indigenous’, it did not stop Nick Griffin of the British Nationalist Party claiming to represent the interests of the ‘indigenous British’, most notably during the European Parliament election campaign in 2009 when they won two seats.

Although the term ‘indigenous’ could be applied to anyone or anything ‘native’ or ‘belonging to’ a locality, the term has taken on a more political significance. People tend to associate ‘indigenous people’ with those who are ‘first peoples’ living as a minority within nation-states dominated by those not originally native to that land. The International Labour Organization of the United Nations defines them as the descendants ‘of those who inhabited a country or geographical region at the time when people of different cultures or ethnic origins arrived, the new arrivals later becoming dominant through conquest, occupation, settlement or other means.’⁸ In other words, indigenous groups are by descent those who are original or first peoples AND have been colonised. This excludes indigenous peoples who are original inhabitants but have not been colonised, and it excludes indigenous peoples who are no longer colonised. Therefore, the people of Britain are not, in this sense, ‘indigenous’. An anthropologist at the University of Edinburgh, Alan Barnard, says: ‘We can speak of... the population of Ghana as indigenous to Ghana, or fishermen from Scotland having indigenous Scottish fishing knowledge. But when we call a people “indigenous” we imply much more.’⁹ He then refers to Norwegian anthropologist Sidsel Saugestad’s four criteria: that the people referred to as indigenous are ‘first come’, non-dominant, culturally different and self-identify as indigenous. Alan Barnard sees this as largely an ethnic definition, and is distinguishable from other ethnic minorities with the criterion of ‘first come’. However, it is interesting that the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples published in March 2008 does not explicitly define ‘indigenous peoples’, but it does imply they have been colonised.

These definitions place an emphasis on difference, setting up a co-dependent binary between indigenous and non-indigenous, which is also inherent in the category ‘indigenous religion’ as it represents a class of ‘religion’ within a wider typology that privileges ‘world religions’. Indigenous religions belong to the group of ‘other

⁶ Armin Geertz, ‘Can We Move Beyond Primitivism? On Recovering the Indigenes of Indigenous Religions in the Academic Study of Religion’, in Jacob K. Olupona (ed.), *Beyond Primitivism: Indigenous Religious Traditions and Modernity* (New York and London, 2004), pp. 37-70

⁷ James Clifford, ‘Indigenous Articulations,’ *The Contemporary Pacific*, 13 (2001): p. 472.

⁸ International Labour Organisation, Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, *Indigenous and Tribal Peoples Convention* (1989), article 1b, <http://www.ohchr.org/english/law/indigenous.htm>.

⁹ Alan Barnard, ‘Kalahari Revisionism, Vienna and the “Indigenous Peoples” Debate’, *Social Anthropology* 14/1 (2006): p. 1.

religions' marginalised in the academic study of religion. As Jacob Olupona noted in his Preface to *Beyond Primitivism*, '[w]hile the "world" religious traditions of Buddhism, Judaism, Hinduism, Islam, and Christianity are amply studied and represented in the academy, the study of "indigenous" religions is speciously cut off from religious studies. Routinely, indigenous religions are restricted to anthropology or folklore.'¹⁰ James Cox explores this problem throughout his book *From Primitive to Indigenous* and offers practical solutions in an effort to promote the inclusion of Indigenous Religions in Religious Studies curricula.¹¹ While acknowledging that 'it soon becomes evident that to speak of Indigenous Religions as a single category is highly problematic, particularly since there are as many indigenous religious traditions as there are indigenous peoples'¹² (implying that the one is necessarily connected to the other). While recognising the contested nature of the category in Indian and African contexts, Cox examines various definitions of 'indigenous religions' and offers one himself, which I will come back to later.¹³ It is clear that the category has entered academic and wider discourses and therefore the assumptions and implications underlying present usages of 'indigenous religion' need to be explored. In response, the definition I propose is partly to highlight these assumptions as well as to offer a different type of definition, from one that purports to identify objects to one that refers primarily to a relationship.

Defining Indigenous Religions

In Theology and Religious Studies, indigenous religions were previously categorised as primitive or primal religions, defined using evolutionary models popular in the late nineteenth century. They were seen as either basic in terms of development or foundational in the theological sense. Promoted in the 1970s by Harold Turner and Andrew Walls in Aberdeen, 'primal religions' were viewed as the basis of all other religions.¹⁴ Then the term fell out of use in the 1990s as 'indigenous' became the preferred term. The Indigenous Religious Traditions Group at the American Academy of Religion was established in 1992 following a series of workshops under the rubric 'Primal Spirituality', but the work that came out of them went by the name 'indigenous religious traditions'.¹⁵ At the University of Edinburgh in 1999, 'Primal Religions' was changed to 'Indigenous Religions' when James Cox was appointed as convenor of the Religious Studies Subject Group, with the view of developing it as a major subject of study.¹⁶

Current definitions of 'indigenous religion' have begun to take on board the views of indigenous peoples themselves who have raised their concerns in United Nations forums about dispossession at the hands of nation-states, thus aligning themselves more with the political agendas of indigenous peoples. The two types of definition reflecting this political usage are those based on ethnicity or locality, or a combination of the two. An ethnic-centred definition is represented in Ann Marie Bahr's volume on *Indigenous Religions*, which states that they refer to the religions of

¹⁰ Olupona, *Beyond Primitivism*, p. xiv.

¹¹ James Cox, *From Primitive to Indigenous: The Academic Study of Indigenous Religions* (Aldershot, 2007), p. 169.

¹² *Ibid.*, p. 1.

¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 69.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 22-26.

¹⁵ Mary MacDonald, 'The Primitive, the Primal, and the Indigenous in the Study of Religion,' *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 79/4 (2011): p. 820.

¹⁶ Cox, *From Primitive to Indigenous*, p. 27.

indigenous peoples. The introduction begins with a summarisation of the United Nations definition of ‘indigenous’ and then, regarding ‘indigenous religion’, she writes: ‘Typically, only a small percentage of indigenous populations practice the religion of their *preconquest ancestors* exclusively.’¹⁷ Therefore, she asserts that an indigenous religion originates from a time before colonisation, which excludes any ‘new’ indigenous religions, and that they are practised by those who have a minority status, although she says she includes African ones because they have enough similarities to indigenous religions to be included.¹⁸ She reinforces an ethnic definition by saying that ‘[t]he term indigenous religion as used in this book means the entire set of religious beliefs and practices that belong in some distinctive way to an indigenous group.’¹⁹ Other definitions are not usually as explicitly ethnocentric as this, but may imply such an understanding.

In *From Primitive to Indigenous*, James Cox argues that the category ‘indigenous religion’ has merely replaced ‘primitive’ and ‘primal’ while retaining their philosophical essentialisms that ‘cannot be supported empirically, and in many cases conceal theological assumptions.’²⁰ He attempts to resolve this by offering an empirical definition based on locality and kinship. Cox adapts J.G. Platvoet’s earlier attempt at defining indigenous religions as ‘community religions of oral societies’ by identifying three main characteristics: that they are local, based on kinship relations and transmit traditions orally.²¹ Cox also supports Graham Harvey’s definition of indigenous as ‘belonging’ to a place, which avoids employing the term ‘indigenous’ as defined against western colonisation.²² Harvey includes relations to ‘other-than-human beings’ in his definition of ‘kinship’, a phrase taken from the work of Irving Hallowell, and regards indigenous peoples as those originally from or belonging to a locale.²³

If we accept that indigenous religions are kinship-based and belong to a locale, the question remains whether these are determined by blood-ties and birth-rights alone, or if kinship can be regarded as a way of relating to a place and its beings, which is closer to Hallowell’s portrayal of Ojibwa ontology. By proposing that Druidry is an indigenous religion, we would need to put aside certain preconceived notions of what that category includes and excludes. If we are speaking about the religion of indigenous people, a definition that privileges an ethnic criterion, then it would be difficult to include Druidry as there is no requirement to be ‘indigenous British’ or descended from so-called Celtic peoples, although many individual Druids say that is a factor for them in terms of why they follow Druidry and not something else. Additionally, many Druids themselves are promoting Druidry as an indigenous religion (see below), which raises questions about how ‘indigenous religions’ are defined and by whose criteria.

The definition of indigenous religion I propose is hinted at by Vine Deloria Jr in his book, *God Is Red: A Native View of Religion* (originally published in 1973), saying that ‘each land projects a particular religious spirit, which largely determines what types of religious beliefs will arise on it.... The fact that Druidism is once again

¹⁷ Ann Marie Bahr, *Indigenous Religions* (Philadelphia, 2005), p. 4.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 3.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 4.

²⁰ Cox, *From Primitive to Indigenous*, p. 141.

²¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 61, 65.

²² *Ibid.*, p. 69.

²³ Graham Harvey and Charles D. Thompson, Jr, ‘Introduction’ in G. Harvey and C.D. Thompson, Jr (eds) *Indigenous Diasporas and Dislocations* (Aldershot, 2005), p. 4.

rising in parts of Europe may indicate that those lands, in largely determining the shape and beliefs of religious experiences, are Druid lands.²⁴ Addressing the issue of authenticity in Druidry as it is practised today, he says:

We do not have any exact knowledge of what Druid religious beliefs and practices were. Whether present practitioners are precisely following ancient religious practices is less important than the fact that religion has contemporary followers who are attempting to make the proper connections with what has gone before. That religions change is a foregone conclusion.²⁵

On the whole, Druids who spoke at Druid Conferences held in Glasgow in 2004 and 2005 said they do not wish to reconstruct ancient Druidry in its entirety but to have a living Druidry that relates to today's people, society and environment. Several said a Druid is one who connects with the ancestors or spirits of place, person and tradition, or variations of this. Graham Harvey affirmed that Druids are 'expected to respond to the inspiration of Awen and to be in touch with the ancestors and the spirit of the age... respectful of particular locations and human belonging in them.'²⁶ At the Druid Network conference in November 2010, 'spirits of place' was mentioned by several speakers. In the opening ritual for the Druid Network's Annual General Meeting in February 2011, founder Emma Restall Orr acknowledged the spirits of the land around the centre near Birmingham where the AGM was held. Spirits of the ancestors are also invoked during ceremonies by some Druids, often in connection to place.

With these comments in mind, combined with Deloria's statements, I propose that an indigenous religion is that which relates to the land, the people (including other-than-human-persons, to use Irving Hallowell's phrase) and that which has gone before. But one might ask, what about Druidry outside of Europe? If they are making a proper connection with the land, or spirits of the land, as well as the spirits of their ancestors and the tradition, then a Druid could practise anywhere. Deloria does not elaborate on what he meant by 'proper connections', but I would suggest it means with respect to the environment and to the guardians, spirits and earlier occupants of the land. Illustrating his respect for place, Arthur Pendragon of the Loyal Arthurian Warband said that he would not wear a sword in Ireland because 'in Irish tradition faeries don't like steel so one can't be a Swordbearer and a Druid.'²⁷ If following this model, Druids in North America or elsewhere would respect the land and the people there before them whilst also honouring their own heritage and ancestry.

Druidry

John Aubrey and his companions were thought to be the first to start wearing robes and conducting 'Druid' ceremonies as early as 1694, 'reviving' a Druid society called the Mount Haemus Grove. Members of this society went on to form other ones.²⁸ Another strand of Druidry that survives today began as a fraternal society in

²⁴ Vine Deloria Jr, *God Is Red: a Native View of Religion* (Golden, Colorado, 1992), p. 288.

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Graham Harvey, *Listening People Speaking Earth: Contemporary Paganism* 2nd edition (London, 2007), p. 20. Awen is generally translated from Welsh as 'inspiration' or 'flowing spirit'.

²⁷ Arthur Pendragon, speaking at the Council of British Druid Orders meeting, Harrogate, 6th March 2005.

²⁸ Ronald Hutton, *Blood and Mistletoe: The History of the Druids in Britain* (New Haven and London, 2009), pp. 125, 127.

London at the King's Arms tavern, on the 28th November, 1781. The commemoration plaque on the pub today states that the Ancient Order of Druids was *revived* on this date – clearly implying that they were reviving the ancient Druidry of two thousand years before. According to current members of the Ancient Order of Druids, the founders saw themselves as reviving a pre-Christian religion associated with Stonehenge, which they believed to have been constructed by the Druids.²⁹ The fraternities that emerged in the eighteenth century marked a change from an antiquarian fascination with ancient Druids to self-identification as Druids in the modern world. Members of the Ancient Order of Druids were consciously connecting to Britain's pre-Christian, pre-Roman heritage. The eighteenth century also saw a revival of Welsh culture. Edward Williams (1747-1826), who went by the name of Iolo Morganwg due to his strong identification with Bro Morgannwg, the Vale of Glamorgan, familiarised himself with Welsh Bardic literature and 'revived' the open air meeting of Bards called a *gorsedd*, originally referring to a mound or hillock.³⁰ Many features of contemporary Druidry, including particular prayers, derive from Iolo's work and, although he claimed they were from ancient sources, he was inspired by his place of birth and its literature, which proved influential for the development of contemporary Druidry.

Druids today are quite diverse; some join orders and more informal groups to celebrate seasonal changes and participate in *gorseddau*, while others are solitary, following their own study or practice. One person attending the Druid Network conference on the 20th November 2010 thought people were attracted to Druidry because it gives a sense of belonging to place. Examples of contemporary orders I visited include the Druids of Albion in the west of Scotland who were, at the time, holding public rituals in cooperation with Muirshiel Country Park in Renfrewshire, which were listed in the park's schedule of events and open to all. Wight Druids are affiliated to the Druid Network and, in announcements for their rituals, say 'all will be welcome who approach with open heart, and mind and in the spirit of mutual respect that is the Druid ethic.'³¹ They meet for the seasonal celebrations on the Isle of Wight at the Longstone, the remains of a burial cairn near Mottistone. Although there are hereditary Druids, or claims for such, for the most part anyone can self-identify as a Druid and start a Druid group. There are debates about whether someone can call themselves a Druid if they are not recognised as such by others or initiated into the 'Druid Grade' (following that of 'Bard' and 'Ovate'), although not all Druid groups have grades.

Druidry as an Indigenous Religion

The words 'indigenous' and 'native' have begun to appear in articulations by British Druids themselves when describing Druidry. For example, 'The British Druid Order teaches and practices Druidry as a living native spirituality for the 21st century.'³² On information pamphlets produced by the Druid Network, one says: 'For many, Druidry can be simply defined as the native religious tradition of the British Isles. As it was for our ancestors, Druidry's practice is both an expression of reverence and the search for the wisdom of the natural world.'³³ On another pamphlet,

²⁹ Three members of the Ancient Order of Druids gave a talk about their Order at the Druid Network conference near Birmingham, 20th November, 2010. It is still an all-male fraternity.

³⁰ Hutton, *Blood and Mistletoe*, pp. 151, 156.

³¹ Wight Druids' winter solstice announcement, 20 December 2009.

³² British Druid Order, Facebook Group page, 'Description' [accessed 24.11.10]

³³ The Druid Network, 'What Is Druidry?' picked up at the 2010 Druid Network conference.

it says: ‘Rooted deeply within the heritage of the British Isles, Druidry has evolved naturally over millennia, adapting with the ever-changing dynamic that is the relationship between people and the land.’ Additionally, it says: ‘As Druids face the challenges of the contemporary world, the Druid Network celebrates the continuation of this ancient tradition.’³⁴ These descriptions imply a continuous tradition reaching back to ancient times. Many prominent Druid groups are thus representing themselves as the native tradition of Britain equal to and analogous to other native traditions.

There is a general understanding that to qualify as an indigenous religion it not only ought to pre-date colonisation, as Bahr above implied, but that it is an oral tradition, a characteristic included in Cox’s definition. A statement from the website of the largest Druid order, the Order of Bards, Ovates and Druids (OBOD), attempts to give this impression on the page introducing their correspondence course:

As with most other streams of indigenous wisdom, the Druidic tradition has always been predominantly an oral tradition. Whether in a forest grove or sitting in front of a crackling hearth, the Druid tradition is a mouth-to-ear transmission of an ancient ‘practical mysticism’ that can guide and inspire us to live with the earth in harmony. With the OBOD Bardic Grade teachings on audio, students of Druidry - new and seasoned alike - now have the opportunity to work with the ways of the Druid tradition in a fresh, relevant, but also traditional manner. Imagine standing in an expansive forest, or even sitting in your private garden, with a CD player or an iPod, being guided deeply into a communion with the old Druid spirit, your spiritual senses awash with spoken-word teachings, practices, poetic meditations, and heart-stirring soundscapes. This is what awaits you.³⁵

It stretches the concept of oral tradition a bit far to include listening to someone speak on a CD, but there are Druid groups that do face-to-face instruction, usually in addition to written sources, such as the Irish College of Druids that I visited in 2009. Some Druids try to emphasise oral elements of the tradition in *gorseddau* and rituals, which can include teachings, but many gain their knowledge of Druidry from books, websites and other text-based materials. However, it is generally stated that Druidry is not dogmatic and has no central texts. When members of Druid forums for the Druid Network and the British Druid Order ask for recommendations for reading, they receive a few suggested titles along with the advice to go out into nature. When I first began to investigate Druidry as an indigenous religion in 2008, I contacted Wight Druids by email. In one reply, the correspondent summarised his view: ‘To me, Druidry is experiential and above all, is a way of living with respect and honour, with and within a beautiful, wonderful living landscape. Nature and the wild teach me far more every day than I have ever gained from a book.’³⁶

To gain an insight into what members of Druid groups think Druidry is and how it is distinct from other Pagan traditions, I created a couple of questionnaires, the first one in 2009 when I visited the Irish College of Druids and the second one for members of the Druid Network in 2010. The Irish College of Druids in Northern Ireland (which closed in 2011) was run by Lucie Eva and her husband, Christian, who

³⁴ The Druid Network, ‘Introduction to The Druid Network’, picked up at the 2010 Druid Network conference.

³⁵ Endorsement written by author Frank MacEowen, Order of Bards, Ovates and Druids, <http://www.druidry.org/join/membership-orders-training-course> [accessed 6.8.12].

³⁶ Personal communication, 18th June 2008.

stressed the importance of oral tradition. I introduced myself and the short questionnaire to the group and allowed them to take their time to write out their answers during the weekend of the summer solstice in 2009. Lucie's own well-articulated response to the questionnaire highlighted elements that would fit a definition of indigenous religion. To the question, 'How is Druidry different from other pagan or alternative traditions?' she replied:

In Druidry we can still find elements of the ancient spiritual knowledge of our ancestors that has been protected by old orders and hereditary druids. Much of this is still in the folk memory, and people in this land still visit the holy wells and the fairy thorns, many remember the sidhe and the good neighbours. Druidry has no dogma or centralised organisation.

Born in Northern Ireland, she described her ancestry/heritage as 'Celtic'. To the question about her interests, she answered 'I am interested in Celtic mythology and the realisation of the truths it tells about our past and our spiritual heritage.' In defining Druidry, she wrote that: 'It is not a religion but a living spirituality that is indigenous to the Celtic people and lands.' Some of her students echoed this in their own answers. One defined Druidry as a 'spiritual connection with nature, healing for the earth and all beings,' while another wrote that 'Druidry is a way to express traditionally my love of the land and God/Goddess.' One wrote simply that Druidry is 'the indigenous spirituality of this land.'

On the questionnaire, one surprising set of answers came from how members described their 'ancestry/heritage', which I left deliberately vague to allow for a range of interpretations. A man in his forties wrote 'Irish', and one in his fifties put 'Ulster', the name of the old kingdom in the north of Ireland. Another man in his fifties wrote 'Gaelic', referring to the language or culture. One woman in her thirties wrote 'loosely Protestant' while another woman in her forties wrote 'Catholic.' This highlighted one potential role of Druidry in Northern Ireland as a bridge between different social groups as an ostensibly pre-Christian tradition that is inclusive of Christians from different denominations. Verbally, many spoke of healing the land, sometimes indicating also the people of Northern Ireland, in reference to the Troubles. On the way to Donegal, where the ritual would take place, a few members stopped at a 'healing well' near Limavady to collect water to be offered in the summer solstice celebration. Derry/Londonderry, where I stayed for part of my visit, is a deeply divided city near the border with the Republic of Ireland. My host who was a member of the Irish College of Druids took me to the pre-Christian wells and stones that are now incorporated within Christian sites with possible links to Saint Columba. These early sites act as a symbolic source for both Irish Druidry and a Christianity that predates the Catholic/Protestant divide. It was not clear from the questionnaire whether or not members were attending churches as well as participating in Druidry.

In terms of learning the original language of the land – Irish Gaelic – only one participant had pursued it to near fluency and he was born in England, although of Irish ancestry. During the outdoor ritual at the summer solstice in 2009, he spoke his part in Irish Gaelic, which was welcomed by the group. During the preparation for the ritual, consultations with the current landowner were made, who was invited to the ritual and made an honorary Druid (and attended wearing full-Ulster regalia, which garnered no comment) and they investigated the site's histories, recent and ancient. One could say they were trying to make the proper connections to the place and what has gone before.

When the Druid Network gained charitable status in September 2010 for furthering religion, Teemu Taira and I devised a questionnaire to gauge reactions to this from its members and I added a few other questions about their views of Druidry itself, similar to those I asked in Northern Ireland. We introduced ourselves and handed out the questionnaire in person to those who were attending the Druid Network conference in November 2010. Only a few were returned, so I placed the questions on the Druid Network Forum in March 2011. Following the set of questions related to the registration, the next question asked: ‘What is Druidry for you, or what aspects of Druidry do you think are distinctive?’, which drew these responses: (1) ‘It is a contemporary reimagining of a native spiritual tradition’; (2) ‘Modern Druidry to me is an Animistic Tradition that has evolved from both the Pre-Christian Celtic ancestral Traditions and the spiritual relationship with people and the land’; (3) ‘well my understanding of my faith (in layperson terms) is that I live within Gaia and I am part of Herne and as Druidry is of these isles’; (4) ‘By building relationship with what I see as “the bigger picture”, by seeking to reinforce those tiny moments of communion with the ‘verse [universe], by seeking to live with integrity’; and a member in the USA wrote: (5) ‘Druidry focuses on nature which by its own character is ever changing’; and, finally, one wrote (6):

I think more and more that Druidry is to England (and maybe Britain) what I see when I look at indigenous peoples in the world and what they are to their lands – it may be our version of a religion that was part and parcel of a life when we respected each other and our world more. It feels very very British to me, which is the right path for me as I am British(!).

Several of these responses were part of more lengthy accounts, which I have edited for this chapter. This obviously represents only a small sample of members who are living in England and Wales, apart from the one in the USA, but there is a consistency in the responses that indicates that, for many Druids, Druidry relates to nature or the land and, for some, the land of Britain in particular.

Conclusion

This chapter discussed different types of definitions of indigenous religion, including those based on ethnicity and locality, and proposed one that is more performative in nature, highlighting aspects that emphasise a person’s intention to be in relationship to the land and those who have gone before, in terms of heritage and investigating local histories, and that this outlook is a strong motive for those choosing to follow Druidry. The main challenge to the view that Druidry could be considered an indigenous religion is that it is not a continuous, community-based tradition. Despite some claims to the contrary, there is a disjunction between ancient Druids and contemporary ones. Although the Druid Network and other groups encourage Druids to form communities, they are often temporary and spread over large areas. Several groups I visited are no longer functioning.

The invocation of the spirits of ancestors and place in contemporary Druidry could be accused of being merely rhetoric in order to claim an authority in matters to do with British heritage or the environment, although these do not appear to be the aims of members of Druid groups who responded to the questionnaires. However, if an indigenous religion can be defined as that which relates to the land, the people and that which has gone before, as I propose, and if many who identify with Druidry are consciously making these connections, then Druidry could be regarded as an indigenous religion.

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