

Can sacred places of high cosmo-terrestrial energy in Switzerland act as a portals to the spiritual realm? An auto-ethnographic study.

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The belief in a metaphysical spiritual world in addition to our material world is shared by many scholars, and sacred places which are said to emanate special energies and be connected with this spiritual dimension are found all over the world. The aim of this research project was to investigate if such sacred places may act as portals to this spiritual realm. Four sacred Swiss sites which, according to the geologist Blanche Merz, are said to have a high cosmos-terrestrial energy were investigated in this auto-ethnographic study by obtaining a self-reflexive research approach using my body and physical and metaphysical senses. In line with Merz's measurements, I experienced those places at different levels of intensity, and it seemed to me that, in my experience, the point of highest cosmo-terrestrial energy of each selected place may indeed act as sort of a gateway to some form of spiritual realm.

Introduction

Blanche Merz claims that the earth is a living creature and that there are special places of power all over the world.¹ According to her, those sites are located on clearly identifiable locations and are specific sources of energy.² She explains that in these places there is an exchange of cosmic and terrestrial forces and that there is a connection between heaven and earth.³ In Merz's view, old sacred sanctuaries, such as temples, cathedrals, tombs or menhirs provide an indication where such places of cosmo-terrestrial interaction can be found and

¹ Blanche Merz, *Orte der Kraft, Stätten höchster kosmo-terrestrischer Energie (Places of power, sites of highest cosmo-terrestrial energy)*, (Aarau: AT Verlag 1999), p. 10 - 13.

² Blanche Merz, *Orte der Kraft, Stätten höchster kosmo-terrestrischer Energie*, p. 10.

³ Blanche Merz, *Orte der Kraft, Stätten höchster kosmo-terrestrischer Energie*, p. 10 - 11.

argues that there are holy places emanating a particular high energy which may act as thresholds to the spiritual world.⁴ The aim of my research project was to explore if such sacred places of considered high cosmo-terrestrial energy in Switzerland can indeed be sensed as acting as portals to the spiritual realm. An auto-ethnographic approach has been chosen to engage with this research question. The findings are based on the personal visits and dwelling in four such places by applying particular self-awareness techniques.

Literature review

Anthony Thorley and Celia Gunn define a sacred site as 'a place in the landscape which is especially revered by a people, culture or cultural group as a focus for spiritual belief and practice and likely religious observance.' In addition, they define a number of characteristics to satisfy this stem definition, one of which is, that 'the site is recognized as having a palpable and special energy or power which is clearly discernible from that of a similar landscape or surrounding' and another that 'it is recognized as a special place which acts as a portal or cross-over to the spirit world'.⁵ Blanche Merz detected power places all over the world that mostly agree with this form of Thorley's and Gunn's definition of a sacred site. According to Merz, those places are natural energy zones where humans can revitalize themselves.⁶ She argues that in these places there is an exchange of earthly and cosmic powers.⁷ Merz discovered those sites with the aid of a biometer scale and a subjective biophysical method where the vibration of a place, the intensity of cosmic and terrestrial exchange, is measured with a radionic pendulum.⁸ Merz explains that in radiesthesia a person's sensitive perception about an object is indicated and amplified by the

⁴ Blanche Merz, *Orte der Kraft, Stätten höchster kosmo-terrestrischer Energie*, p. 10- 25.

⁵ Anthony Thorley and Celia Gunn, *Sacred Sites: An Overview, A Report for The Gaia Foundation, 2007*, available at <http://www.sacredland.org/media/Sacred-Sites-an-Overview.pdf> (accessed: 7th January 2016), p. 76.

⁶ Blanche Merz, *Orte der Kraft in der Schweiz (Power places in Switzerland)*, (Aarau: AT Verlag 1998), p. 9 - 10.

⁷ Merz, *Orte der Kraft, Stätten höchster kosmo-terrestrischer Energie*, p. 10.

See also: Blanche Merz, *Points of Cosmic Energy*, translated by Michele Carter Burdet, (C. W. Daniel Company Limited: Saffron Walden: 1987).

⁸ Merz, *Orte der Kraft in der Schweiz*, 12 - 13.

use and movement of a pendulum which is made out of cut stone, crystal or brass or any other material to which the person doing the measurement has a relationship.⁹ By holding the pendulum over the biometer scale at the place to be investigated the quality of a physically non ascertainable vitality or the qualitative vibration of a place in numbers or Bovis units (BU) as perceived by an individual is measured.¹⁰ Merz argues that if she found with her radionics pendulum a measurement of 6,500 BU then a place has a neutral value and claims that, whereas places with lower values withdraw vitality from a person, places with higher values energize a person.¹¹ According to Rudolph Steiner, the human body is made up of several dimensions including the visible physical body and the subtle energetic bodies, one of which is the etheric body which surrounds and percolates the physical one and is a subtle double of the latter.¹² Merz explains that locations up to 10'000 BU have an influence on the physical body of a person, locations with 10'000 - 13'000 BU on the etheric body, and, as of 13'000 BU, there is an influence on the metaphysical, spiritual dimension.¹³ According to Merz, a connection to the cosmos and the divine, and even enlightenment is possible in the latter places.¹⁴ Although I am aware that there may be value in critically questioning Merz's ideas and methodology, it is not my intention in this paper to do so as my fieldwork specifically derives from accepting her techniques as a form of indicator of cosmo-terrestrial energy at a number of selected Swiss locations.

The idea that particular places are a threshold to another world, a divine realm, is shared by many other scholars. Mircea Eliade, for example, holds a similar view. He believes that there is a difference between sacred space and all other spaces.¹⁵ According to him, in the sacred enclosure, 'communication with

⁹ Blanche Merz, *Die Seele des Ortes (The Soul of a Place)*, (Aarau: AT Verlag, 2000), p. 20.

¹⁰ Merz, *Orte der Kraft in der Schweiz*, 12 - 15.

¹¹ Merz, *Orte der Kraft, Stätten höchster kosmo-terrestrischer Energie*, p. 24

¹² Rudolf Steiner, *Wie erlangt man Kenntnisse zu höheren Welten (How to gain knowledge about higher dimensions)*, (Basel: Rudolf Steiner Verlag, 2014), available at <http://anthroposophie.byu.edu/schriften/010.pdf>. (accessed August 10, 2016), p. 104-106.

¹³ Merz, *Orte der Kraft, Stätten höchster kosmo-terrestrischer Energie*, p. 24-27.

¹⁴ Merz, *Orte der Kraft, Stätten höchster kosmo-terrestrischer Energie*, p. 24-28.

¹⁵ Mircea Eliade, *The Sacred and the Profane*, (New York: Harcourt Brace 1959), p. 20.

the gods is made possible...Hence there must be a door to the world above, by which the gods can descent to earth and man can symbolically ascend to heaven'.¹⁶ The belief in a divine realm is also shared by Henry Corbin. As described by Tom Cheetham, in Corbin's view, there is a divine world of angels in the heavens.¹⁷ Corbin invented the term 'Mundus Imaginalis' and claims that this 'is a world that is ontologically as real as the world of the senses and that of the intellect'.¹⁸ Moreover, Lynne Hume also proposes that there are separate realities of the spiritual and the divine.¹⁹ She explains that certain mystery cults perceived physical locations, such as caves, as magical places allowing entrances and exits to other dimensions.²⁰

Hume argues that these other worlds can be accessed by certain aids, such as symbols, drumming or psychedelic drugs, that stimulate the senses and alter consciousness.²¹ As a means to explore these other realities she also introduces a technique called autonomous imagination which can be defined as 'the existence in the mind of a continuous stream of imaginary thought that operates mostly outside consciousness'.²² Hume claims that through certain practices, such as trance, the images can be brought to consciousness.²³ Similarly Corbin claims that the 'Mundus Imaginalis' requires its own faculty of perception, namely, imaginative power'.²⁴ Susan Greenwood is an anthropologist interested in investigating those other worlds through personal experience. Her chosen approach is participant-observation where she combines her personal experiences of magical consciousness with existing academic theories of magic from scholars such as Lucien Lévy-Bruhl or James Frazer.²⁵ According to her,

¹⁶ Eliade, *The Sacred and the Profane*, p. 25 -26.

¹⁷ Tom Cheetham, *All the World an Icon*, (Berkeley: North Atlantic Books 2012), p. 165.

¹⁸ Henry Corbin, 'Mundus Imaginalis or the Imaginary and the Imaginal', Spring, 1972, available at www.bahaistudies.net/asma/mundus_imaginalis.pdf (accessed: 6th January 2016), p. 5.

¹⁹ Lynne Hume, *Portals: Opening Doorways to Other Realities Through the Senses*, (Oxford: Berg 2007).

²⁰ Hume, *Portals*, p. 7 - 8.

²¹ Hume, *Portals*, p. 11 - 12.

²² Hume, *Portals*, p. 148 - 151.

²³ Hume, *Portals*, p. 148 - 149.

²⁴ Henry Corbin, 'Mundus Imaginalis or the Imaginary and the Imaginal', p. 5.

²⁵ Susan Greenwood, *The Anthropology of Magic*, (Oxford: Berg 2009).

magical consciousness is shaped through self-awareness and includes emotions, intuition, and, again, imagination.²⁶ She claims that imagination 'is an important tool for expanding the awareness' and working with it means opening the heart to creative possibilities.²⁷ In Greenwood's view, participation is the basis of magical consciousness, and she believes, that this approach allows one to discover the wholeness of nature.²⁸ She argues that by obtaining her approach communication links between the spiritual non-material and material domains may be established, which would not be possible by using conventional social science methods.²⁹

Methodology

As already argued, Corbin, Hume and Greenwood all indicate that non-material realities are best explored through imagination. Hence conventional research frameworks might not be appropriate to study metaphysical worlds. As the aim of my research project was to find out if sacred places determined by Merz to have high cosmo-terrestrial energy act as portals to the non-material spiritual realm, I decided to approach my research by using self-awareness and imaginative techniques as suggested by the scholars above. I chose an auto-ethnographical self-reflexive approach and worked with personal perception and experiences and their recording and analysis in order to understand the places under investigation.³⁰ My own body and its physical and metaphysical senses served me as my research tool. Greenwood claims that magical consciousness is a 'whole body participatory experience' and working with

²⁶ Susan Greenwood, 'The Dragon and Me: Anthropology and the Paranormal', *Paranthropology: Journal of Anthropological Approaches to the Paranormal*, Vol. 6 No. 1, p. 8, p. 4-24.

²⁷ Susan Greenwood, *The Anthropology of Magic*, p. 141, 68 - 69.

²⁸ Susan Greenwood, *The Nature of Magic: An anthropology of consciousness*, (Oxford: Berg 2005) p. 92.

²⁹ Greenwood, 'The Dragon and Me', p. 8-25.

³⁰ Carolyn Ellis, Tony E. Adams, Arthur P.Bochner, 'Autoethnography: An Overview', *Forum Qualitative Sozialforschung / Forum: Qualitative Social Research*, 12(1), Art. 10, (2010), available at <http://nbn-resolving.de/urn:nbn:de:0114-fqs1101108> (accessed August 10, 2016).

imagination is 'a doorway into an expanded participatory awareness'.³¹ Also, Maurice Merleau-Ponty is an advocate of the use of the body in research. According to him, perception is an essentially bodily process, the subject of perception is the body.³² He believes that 'the body is better informed than we are about the world' and therefore is a valid research tool.³³ It is obvious that when working with the body, it is difficult to verify the results as perception is individual and not easily comparable. However, it is nevertheless possible to train bodily perception. I am a 37-year old women from Switzerland and besides my work in the commercial area, I attended workshops in parapsychology at different psychic institutes in Switzerland and the United Kingdom in my free time over several years where I acquired the knowledge of how to work with such methods. Through various practical exercises I learned how to use my body as an instrument to enhance my awareness and how to develop my extrasensory perception and imagination in order to perceive and interpret intangible energies of objects, people and places and receive knowledge about them.

Application and Technique

There are no standard guidelines on how to work with imaginative self-awareness techniques, nor are there standard definitions of terms and practices. Working in this way is a highly individual matter. Each person has his or her methods, abilities and strengths which can be identified and developed through exercises and training. I am aware that it is not directly possible to verify my findings about the places studied. However, I have practiced these techniques with people as the object of study before and they, in contrast to places, can give you direct feedback regarding the information you perceived about them. The idea of this kind of work is to not actively enforce and influence results and create the information yourself, but open yourself up and make yourself receptive like a radio antenna and then passively wait for information to flow.

³¹ Greenwood, *The Anthropology of Magic*, p. 69, p. 141.

³² Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, (Routledge 2002: London), p. 380.

³³ Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, p. 277.

I decided to conduct my reflexive research by using a combination of techniques I learned and practiced in workshops over the course of several years and which, in my case, proved to be successful and deliver valid results. The chosen techniques suited my research objective and my abilities and allowed me to holistically perceive the places studied. First of all, I decided to work with closed eyes so that I was able to fully concentrate on the selected locations, and did not get distracted by the surroundings. In order to fully arrive at the place, I first perceived the location with the senses of my physical body, mainly touch (eg, a finding in this condition could be: it is cold and noisy in here). I then slowly shifted my focus from outer perception into inner perception by checking if the place had an effect on my physical body and then on my inner mental state (eg, a finding in this condition could be: my head is heavy and I feel confused). I then completely moved towards inner perception, by working with my inner, metaphysical senses and applied techniques of perception that activated and enhanced my imaginative awareness (eg, a finding in this condition could be: I see an inner image of a growing tree). In order to become as receptive as possible, I decided to perform my research in a slightly altered state of consciousness (half-trance) and, as part of the process, took the actions that for me would expand what I believe is my aura.³⁴ The aura can be defined as the human energy field that is in immediate contact with the physical body.³⁵ In this state, I consciously activated what I think of as my 'third eye' to heighten my imaginative perception even more. According to Indian traditions, the third eye is an inner, invisible eye providing perception beyond ordinary sight.³⁶ This inner eye lies between the eye brows and it is there where the imagination creates images and where clairvoyance, a form of extrasensory perception, takes place. This third eye also belongs to the chakra system, the seven vortices of energy that are part of the human etheric body located on the

³⁴ Michael Winkelman, 'A Theoretical Model and Cross-Cultural Analysis', *Ethos*, Vol. 14, No. 2 (Summer, 1986), p. 174-203.

³⁵ Ted Andrews, *Die Aura Sehen und Lesen (Reading and Seeing the Aura)*, (Darmstadt: Schirner Verlag 2007), p.12.

³⁶ Stefan Schmitz, *Transpersonale Psychologie (Transpersonal psychology)*, (Marburg: Tectum Verlag 2010), p. 80 - 83.

spine from the tailbone to the crown of the head.³⁷ It is argued that chakras are bridges between the material and the non-material world and, as the findings will show later, they played a role in my study.³⁸

In summary, I followed the following step-by-step procedure at all of the chosen places:

I sat down and closed my eyes.

I then explored the characteristics of the location with the senses of my physical body.

After that, I checked if the place's energy had an effect on my physical body and on my mental state.

I then tuned into the place by centering first while focusing on my heart region, expanding my aura into all directions and then going into a half-trance state.

Finally, I waited and passively observed the inner pictures and other expressions that would appear.

After each session I immediately recorded my experiences with my phone.

Back home I wrote down my spoken comments, in order to be able to compare and contrast them.

The chosen research procedure as performed from A - Z allowed me to study each location individually and neutrally, but made a comparison possible.

With my chosen body-focused techniques I was able to fully engage with the places I studied. Hence, my research approach may be considered as a special form of phenomenology. It allowed me to connect myself with my chosen spots and not study them detached as an external object. According to Christopher Tilley, phenomenology involves 'the understanding and description of things as they are experienced by a subject'. He explains that humans perceive the world by 'setting themselves apart from it' resulting 'in the creation of a gap', but, at the same time, connecting themselves with it.³⁹ In line with my chosen methods, Tilley claims that, the gap between the self and what

³⁷ Stefan Schmitz, *Transpersonale Psychologie (Transpersonal psychology)*, (Marburg: Tectum Verlag 2010), p. 80 - 83.

³⁸ C. W. Leadbeater, *Die Chakras (The Chakras)*, (Freiburg: Hermann Bauer Verlag: 1979), p. 55.

³⁹ Christopher Tilley, *A Phenomenology of Landscape*, (Berg 1994: Oxford), p. 12.

lies beyond, can be overcome by the means of perception using the senses, bodily actions, emotion and awareness.⁴⁰ The somehow extraordinary nature of my research project and the objects studied called for more than only visual observation or measurements, and the chosen approach proved to be suitable.

It is obvious that my chosen subjective research method and its analysis might have been subject to bias. There is no guarantee that my experiences were not more than personal fantasies with an unreal character instead of 'imaginatio vera', which Corbin explained the alchemist called the true imaginations stemming from the imaginal world.⁴¹ However, according to Corbin, one can learn to distinguish between the imaginary and the imaginal by developing his imaginal perception. Also, Greenwood believes that the development of the third eye helps to improve imagination.⁴² As I have trained my psychic senses and clairvoyance in various workshops over several years, I am confident that my experiences were not only mere fantasies. Also, I tried to approach the task unconditionally and without expectations. Nonetheless, my experiences might have been influenced by my preliminary knowledge about the chosen places, mainly derived from Merz' books, and unconscious expectations I had no control over.

Field Work Approach

As it was impossible for me to investigate sacred places world-wide for this particular research project, I decided to select and explore four places in the area where I live. The four chosen locations are taken from Merz's book *Power places in Switzerland*. She found that there is a place in a village near Zurich called 'Aesch bei Forch' that has a very high amount of cosmo-terrestrial energy in its central point (750'000 BU).⁴³ It is not a clearly defined site as it is not in an enclosed building but its centre is said to lay in a garden surrounded by fields and trees.⁴⁴ It is believed by Merz that several geomantic energy lines lead into all geographic directions from this place.⁴⁵ One of those lines connects Aesch to

⁴⁰ Christopher Tilley, *A Phenomenology of Landscape*, (Berg 1994: Oxford), p. 12.

⁴¹ Corbin, 'Mundus Imaginalis or the Imaginary and the Imaginal', p. 10 - 11.

⁴² Greenwood, *The Anthropology of Magic*, p. 65.

⁴³ Merz, *Orte der Kraft in der Schweiz*, p. 237.

⁴⁴ Merz, *Orte der Kraft in der Schweiz*, p. 246.

⁴⁵ Merz, *Orte der Kraft in der Schweiz*, p. 242 - 243.

Zurich's main landmark the 'Grossmünster', a Romanesque-style Protestant church in the old town of Zurich built in the 12th century and dedicated to

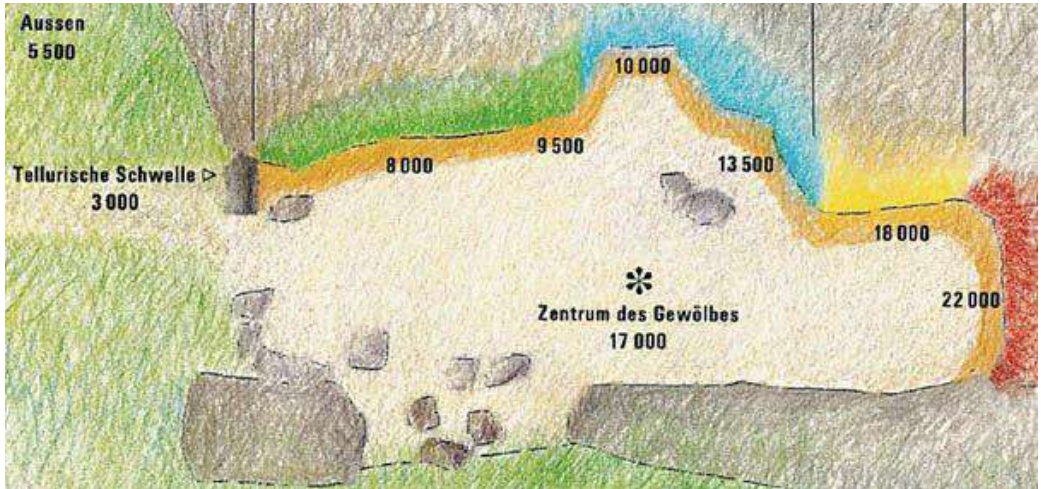


Fig. 1: Energetic map of the Emma Kunz cave showing the different energy zones in the grotto, downloaded with permission from <http://www.emma-kunz.com/home/grotte-1/>, Copyright © Emma Kunz Zentrum, Steinbruchstrasse 5, CH-5436 Würenlos

Charles the Great and Zurich's patron saints.⁴⁶ The line stretches further on to the monastery 'Königsfelden', a former Franciscan double monastery in the municipality of Windisch founded in 1308 by the Habsburgs and built where King Albert I of Austria was murdered.⁴⁷ In between, almost on that same line, Merz located another special place 'the Emma Kunz cave', situated in an old Roman quarry in a village called Würenlos.⁴⁸ Emma Kunz, the discoverer of the grotto, claimed that the rocks of this quarry are ancient and have healing properties.⁴⁹ Merz measured the BU's in and around those four sacred sites and detected that the energy level is not consistent within those places. She found that there is usually an area of low or normal energy (3000-9500 BU) and one

⁴⁶ Merz, *Orte der Kraft in der Schweiz*, p. 233.

⁴⁷ Merz, *Orte der Kraft in der Schweiz*, p. 233.

⁴⁸ Merz, *Orte der Kraft in der Schweiz*, p. 31 - 34.

⁴⁹ Anton C. Meier, *Emma Kunz*, (Würenlos: Emma Kunz Zentrum 2003).

point of highest cosmos-terrestrial energy (22000-750000 BU) in each site.⁵⁰ It is those four places, Aesch, the Grossmünster, the Emma Kunz cave and the monastery Königsfelden, that provided the basis for my research project.

I personally paid a visit to all the four sites between December 18, 2015 and January 4, 2016. In order to establish a contrast, I decided to select and explore two points at each site: the position with the lowest and the one with the highest BU's according to the maps provided by Merz (example see fig. 1). Hence, in total I explored eight spots with the above described step-by-step procedure. The findings of my research at the chosen locations are summarized and discussed in the following paragraphs.

Findings and Discussion

Not least because it was winter time, common to the experiences in all eight spots was, that it was cold and I could feel the cold on my face and hands. This was usually the first thing I noticed when I underwent the procedure described above. Also, with the exception of one spot, my eyes started flickering when entering trance state. Even though each experience was unique, it seemed to me that there was a clear difference between the high- and low-energy points of the selected places.

a) Low-energy points

The general topics of my experiences and perceptions at the selected points with lower cosmo-terrestrial energy as defined by Merz concerned rather earthly and mundane issues. The body part that was affected in most of those spots was my lower belly region including the sexual organs, and sometimes legs and arms. According to the yogic theories, this part of the body inhabits the root and sacral chakra which stand for 'instinctual need for survival' and 'sexuality'.⁵¹ At the Forch WWII memorial, which, according to Merz' measurements, is a low-energy point in the Aesch area, the latter topic was intensified by the appearance of an inner picture symbolizing excess, party and lust.⁵² At Merz's low-energy points of the Emma Kunz cave and the Grossmünster I received an inner picture of me on a spring meadow

⁵⁰ Merz, *Orte der Kraft in der Schweiz*, p. 27, 31, 230 and 237 - 247.

⁵¹ Anodea Judith, *Wheels of Life: A User's Guide to the Chakra System*, (Woodbury: Llewellyn Worldwide 2012), p. 23 - 24.

⁵² Merz, *Orte der Kraft in der Schweiz*, p. 245.

symbolizing satisfaction and being at ease with the world. In Königsfelden at the low-energy spot a picture of a street accompanied by street noise from the outside appeared. There, I also got the clear inner message of 'BE HERE', meaning 'be here on this planet earth'.

One special mentionable encounter I had at the entrance of the Emma Kunz cave, which I selected as my low-energy point in line with Merz's measurements (see fig. 1). Merz called the selected spot a 'telluric threshold', and it was in fact the only real physical entrance that was part of my chosen points.⁵³ An extract of my notes says that there 'I received an inner picture of a black creature in a futuristic armament. It was not really hostile but it looked like this creature wanted me to get up and away from this spot. Only then it began to dawn on me that this was probably the guardian of the cave and I was sitting at his doorstep.' Even though this guardian is probably not perceived by all visitors, his appearance suggested that this grotto might indeed be a sacred site and a door to another world. One of Thorley's and Gunn's additional characteristic of a sacred site is, that it is 'a dwelling place of guardian or 'owner' spirits which care for and oversee the site'. Moreover, Hume claims that passing from one world to another can be dangerous as the thresholds are guarded by frightening creatures.⁵⁴ She further explains that in Hinduism, Ganesh is the armed guardian of the threshold deciding whom to grant access.

b) high-energy points

My experiences and perceptions at the selected points with high cosmo-terrestrial energy as defined by Merz clearly differed from the lower ones. In my experience the energy at these points was generally very dense and heavy and physically sensible. I experienced it as being dynamic and, more than once, I had the feeling of being energetically 'lulled' from all sides. Consequently, my personal perception indicated that these might indeed be special locations agreeing with Merz's description of power places as sites with a particular energizing power where one can 'recharge his batteries'.⁵⁵ My experiences are also in accordance with Thorley's and Gunn's additional description of a sacred site as a site possessing a palpable energy which is clearly discernible. However, does this make these places a door to the spiritual realm?

⁵³ Merz, *Orte der Kraft in der Schweiz*, p. 33.

⁵⁴ Hume, *Portals*, p. 6-7.

⁵⁵ Merz, *Orte der Kraft, Stätten höchster kosmo-terrestrischer Energie*, p. 10.

A topic in relation to energy which would arise often at what Merz considered as high-energy points was the dynamics of the energy and the merging with everything. In the Grossmünster I described it as follows 'When I opened my eyes again I thought that everything around me, including the physical church walls, were moving, the material was bending, everything was flowing into each other. When I got up, I realized that the energy was moving me too, I was moved back and forth. This place was simply overwhelming.' In the Emma Kunz cave this energy flow was illustrated by a giant chakra in my imagination. I noted 'Then, everything started turning anti-clockwise like a huge chakra and all became one, dynamic and malleable energy. It got so intense that it physically moved me.' This experience is comparable with an incident described by Hume.⁵⁶ She writes that one night when outside in Bali, a friend of hers encountered 'a whirling world, the sensation of falling through space.' Also, the Dervishes, members of a Muslim religious order, use whirling to reach a transcendental state and the gift of enlightenment.⁵⁷

In two of my selected high-energy spots as determined by Merz I felt like I was growing and expanding. The picture of Alice in Wonderland crossed my mind, who, before, she gets access to Wonderland eats a cake and grows to a giant.⁵⁸ At Aesch I described my experience as follows '...they (the eyes) would flicker heavily and it was not only my eyes, but my whole body started shaking. At the same time, I got the feeling of me being pulled apart in all directions and growing bigger and it felt like I was expanding extremely. I had the desire to lay down and to melt, to melt with everything, because everything and all is one.' Greenwood once conducted an experiment to investigate deeper meanings of mythical tales by using imaginative techniques. The recordings of her field work regarding the goddess Freyja going into trance state to perform her divination, describe a process similar to my experience. She noted 'The warmth of the sun filled her being as she felt herself expanding outwards. She lost sense of herself into the greater cosmos'.⁵⁹

⁵⁶ Hume, Portals, p. 3.

⁵⁷ Hume, Portals, p. 67.

⁵⁸ Lewis Carroll, Alice's Adventures in Wonderland, (Boston: Lee and Shepard, 1869), p. 16.

⁵⁹ Greenwood, The Anthropology of Magic, p. 85.

A central theme of my experiences at the selected high-energy points was the upward direction, which was not only symbolized by a sense of growing. In Königsfelden 'it felt like I was drawn into an upward direction, to the sky and it got lighter and brighter. I received an inner picture symbolizing the 'view towards the gods'.' In the Emma Kunz cave at the point of highest cosmo-terrestrial energy as defined by Merz 'I felt like I was growing and a picture of 'hands up', clapping the hands upward and jumping upwards, where the light is coming from, appeared in front of my inner eye. It tore me upward in a 'pointed' way through several layers. I also received a picture of me being a pointed rocket and the hands and feet were my exhaust pipe. Dense energy collected around my lower body, like it wanted me to transport upwards' (see fig. 2). Finally, in the Grossmünster at Merz's high-energy point, an inner picture showing some divine beings calling me from above, asking me to lift my hands up and get up, appeared in front of my inner eye. Not only in the *Old Testament* it is claimed that the heaven above is the home of the divine, the angels and god, also, according to Eliade, the world of gods is the world above.⁶⁰



Fig. 2: Drawing by author, sketch of my experience at the Emma Kunz Cave high-energy point (30.12.2015)

In two cases I had the feeling of being overwhelmed while dwelling in what Merz defined spots of high cosmo-terrestrial energy. I was almost frightened, but at the same time fascinated and attracted. I particularly experienced this ambivalent feeling at the high-energy point in the Grossmünster. My notes in relation to this experience say: 'This place was formidable, somehow angst-inducing and at the same time so holy. I felt very

⁶⁰ Eliade, *The Sacred and the Profane*, p. 25 - 26.

humble and emotional and tears almost came into my eyes.' My experience seems to be in line with Rudolph Otto's description of the holy. He defines it as that which is numinous.⁶¹ The numinous is irrational and, according to Otto, it has, on the one hand, a 'tremendous' character, causing fear and trembling, and appears as a 'mysterium tremendum'.⁶² However, on the other hand, it has a quality of 'fascinans', it attracts, fascinates and enchants, appearing as a 'mysterious fascinans'.⁶³

Moreover, in two occasions at what Merz considered as high-energy points, I received the inner picture of a pyramid. In the Emma Kunz cave there was a focus on the pointedness, the upward direction again, whereas in the Grossmünster, a shiny light on the top of the pyramid was shown. The triangle shape is a symbol for trinity and the number three has been recognized as a holy number throughout history.⁶⁴ The latter picture reminded me of the Rosicrucian pyramid with the shining eye on top symbolizing God's eye.⁶⁵ Whereas the body focus was rather on the lower body parts at the low-energy points as defined by Merz, it was rather on the upper at the high-energy points, namely heart, throat and head. I twice recorded that I somehow felt a bit sick in the throat or bronchia area. The topics love, truth and intuition are attributed to the chakras located in these areas.⁶⁶

Finally, at Merz's high-energy spot at Königsfelden I received the clear inner message of 'YOU ARE', 'you are with you and with yourself'. Almost four weeks later, not having consciously in mind what happened there, Gloria Gaynor's song 'I am what I am' starts playing in my inner ear while sitting at the high-energy point in the Grossmünster. The experience in Königsfelden was accompanied by a centering heart focus. Carl Gustave Jung describes the Self in

⁶¹ Rudolph Otto, *Das Heilige* (The Holy), (München: C.H. Beck: 1979). p. 6 - 7.

⁶² Otto, *Das Heilige*, p. 13 - 18.

⁶³ Otto, *Das Heilige*, p. 42 - 43.

⁶⁴ Dieter A. Binder, *Die diskrete Gesellschaft, Geschichte und Symbolik der Freimaurer* (The discrete society, history and symbolism of the Freemason), (Graz: Styria Verlag 1988), p. 215.

⁶⁵ Binder, *Die diskrete Gesellschaft, Geschichte und Symbolik der Freimaurer*, p. 215.

⁶⁶ Judith, *Wheels of Life: A User's Guide to the Chakra System*, p. 23 - 24.

his theories and claims that self-actualization is the final goal of individuation, and that anyone who has mastered the Self becomes like God.⁶⁷

Greenwood claims that working with imagination 'brings a different, often surprising, perspective.'⁶⁸ As suggested by her, I was able to obtain very rich data with my chosen research method. It seemed to me that I was granted access to the non-material dimensions, which, I believe, would not have been possible through a more traditional approach. Some of my experiences included rather bizarre elements. Even though trance is not exactly the same as sleep, the two states are comparable, and experimental dream research undertaken at sacred sites in England showed that bizarre contents are part of most dreams.⁶⁹ However, do my experiences provide evidence that places considered by Merz to emanate high cosmo-terrestrial energy are indeed a portal to the spiritual realms?

The symbolic meanings of the inner pictures that appeared, the whirling of the energy and the melting of the non-material with the material, the upward focus and the appearance of divine beings, the experience of the tremendous and the fascination and finally, the emphasis of the Self, might all be an indication that those places of high cosmos-terrestrial energy as determined by Merz may indeed somehow be connected to the spiritual world. According to Corbin, active imagination itself is a door to the divine realms assuming that physical places are not needed in addition.⁷⁰ I do not doubt that for the ones who mastered this technique and have 'real imaginative power' it might allow direct and quick access. However, based on my experiences and perceptions at the selected high cosmo-terrestrial energy points as defined by Merz, I have grounds to believe that these may provide a means of enhancing and enforcing transition to these other realms. At least, those points might allow an insight or, if nothing else, a feeling of the other world. During my stay at the four chosen high-energy spots it felt like the curtain lifted and the portals opened, but I believe that I would have needed more dwelling time, privacy and practice to

⁶⁷ Carl Gustav Jung, *Mysterium Coniunctionis*, (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1963), p. 230.

⁶⁸ Greenwood, *The Anthropology of Magic*, p. 141.

⁶⁹ Stanley Krippner, 'Paul Devereux and Adam Fish, The Use of the Strauch Scale to study Dream Reports for Sacred Sites in England', *Dreaming*, Vol. 13, Issue 2, p. 95-105.

⁷⁰ Corbin, 'Mundus Imaginalis or the Imaginary and the Imaginal', p. 9.

actually pass through those doors and metaphysically fully enter the spiritual world.

As already mentioned above, it is evident that the findings and the interpretation of my research are subjective and might have been influenced by unconscious expectations and knowledge about the places studied. In addition, all the sites under investigation were public and, with one exception, I was not alone but felt observed and often under time-pressure. There were many distractions that might have had an impact on my experiences and findings described above. Finally, a fact not to be forgotten is, that, according to Emma Kunz, human beings first have to deal with the cosmic terrestrial energies and learn how to engage with them before they can actually use and work with them.⁷¹

Conclusion

The aim of this research project was to explore if sacred places considered to emanate high cosmo-terrestrial energy according to Merz can act as portals to the spiritual realm. Four sacred sites in Switzerland were selected and at each place one low- and one high-energy point identified by Merz was experienced. An auto-ethnographic approach, including self-awareness techniques enhancing imaginative perception, was chosen to explore those sites. As proposed by Hume inner images were brought to consciousness and rich, sometimes extraordinary, data was collected. The findings of my personal experience in these selected places indicated that, in line with Merz's measurements, for me sacred sites are not homogeneous, but consist of various energetic areas which seemed to have different effects on me while dwelling there. My stay at the investigated points of lower cosmos-terrestrial energy produced personal perceptions and inner images which appeared to refer to rather secular affairs. In the chosen areas designated as high-energy points, my experiences seemed to be in line with Thorley's and Gunn's and Merz's definition of a sacred site as there I generally experienced a clearly discernible energy. In addition, several personal perceptions and inner images that may be associated with the spiritual dimension were evoked at these high-energy points. I therefore conclude that my personal experience at high cosmos-

⁷¹ Meier, Emma Kunz, p. 46.

terrestrial energy spots of selected sacred Swiss places seemed to suggest to me that these locations might indeed provide a possible means to come into touch with some form of spiritual realm.

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