

Evaluation (www.aboriginallandcultuurkunst.nl)

This publication, as book and on-line entitled 'Australian Aborigines: different country-different culture-different art', is unique in three ways:

1. It illustrates that during the course of thousands of years the Aborigines developed a distinctive system of food collection. The author calls this (nomadic) 'fire-land care' in contrast to what in many other cultures -including the European- is called (settled) agriculture. The book also shows that concepts such as 'land, culture, art' and 'religion, time, possession' have a completely different meaning in these different life situations. (This is described in detail for the concepts 'land, culture, art' included in the title of the book.) According to the author, an agronomist himself, by identifying and describing the '**fire-land care**' system the Aborigines get their own separate place among the many peoples of the world.
2. In its chapters and annexes, this book presents the indigenous elders, children, contemporary city dwellers, poets, story-tellers, painters and others, all in their own voice. After reading the text and commentary, the curious reader can go on to discover for him- or herself this different, great spiritual, indigenous culture. Eight years ago, the author was recognized by Aborigines as a **fellow-Aborigine**. Since that time, he has devoted himself to exploring indigenous thoughts and ideas to contribute to better understanding of the people and their culture(s).
3. The book is written with a multifaceted, even *comprehensive* approach. This was achieved as a result of the many years of experience the agronomist-author had already gained in several African and Asian countries before he started his studies of the Aborigines at the age of 71. In addition, in his retirement between 1993 and 2007 the author carried out nine extensive private study tours to Australia (page 28). Between these study tours the author lectured to various audiences in the Netherlands, for which he was well qualified as a result of his long experience in leading and conducting Adult Education courses, and of teaching at the University of Amsterdam and the Tropical Agriculture College in Deventer. The participants of the study groups have contributed through their questions to further research in Australia, and led the author to pay attention to frequent prejudices and misunderstandings.

Two concepts, mentioned in Latin, draw the attention: 'homo sapiens' and 'curiositas'. The first knows no partitions, the second exceeds divisions between disciplines. Together they reflect the **integral approach** of the document.

Comment from the author

Ad page 3. 'fire-land care'/fire-land management system

Our imaginary ancestors, homines sapientes of many millennia ago achieved in the European part of the world a different way of survival in nature than the same homines sapientes in the separate part of the world, Australia. Through chance and curiosity, the European ancestors developed forms of agriculture and animal husbandry based on particular wild plants and animals. More often, they obtained the plants (crops) and animals (cattle) from Asian neighbouring people. The Australian ancestors had no plants or wild animals suitable for domestication (hence for agriculture and animal husbandry) on their enormous, isolated island. However, there homo sapiens -early on and millennia before his European colleague- found other effective ways to survive in his particular nature and it was through the help of fire. Not just any fire, but completely controlled crawling fire, returning every few years. This 'fire-land care' system ultimately created a solid, healthy food- and survival basis for nomadic tribes of Aborigines with each people roaming around in their own territories.

Ad page 20.

In Australia, therefore, homo sapiens remained dependent on collecting food from nature while roaming the land. However, this elementary system of survival evolved over the course of millennia into such a clever, flexible and sustainable system that a stable and varied supply of food was achieved in spite of the unpredictable Australian climate and even in the desert-like parts of the country. This approach to survival gave rise to a great spiritual culture.

The three main components of this system are as follows:

- A huge, contiguous network of tracks, their density linked to the supply of food, over the entire 240 roaming territories of the continent.
- Carefully passing on from each generation to the next the knowledge and skills attained on the roaming tracks; an older Aborigine always had "a mental road map, a baedeker and a vade-mecum" in his mind.
- The periodic, systematic 'fire-land care' through which they got an ever finer network, food gathering and hunting became more effective, and the food supply (i.e. flora and fauna) was affected in the desired direction. The system requires that everyone, both small and grown-up, can walk well. Aboriginal women continue to nurse their babies for years and the resulting spreading of births implies that never more than one child had to be carried on the back. Famine because of population growth was so also avoided.

indigenous quotations

(page 7)

"Burn grass time"

This is the time we burn our country.

It is part of our responsibility

In looking after our country.

If you don't look after country

Country won't look after you.

(page 13)

Dr. Irene Watson:

From an indigenous perspective art is an integral part of our culture, for it is not seen as being separate. The commercialisation of indigenous art has brought to us another way of viewing art. However, from an indigenous perspective, art is culture, it is law, it is Dreaming, it is land, and it is also who we are. It is part of the whole circle of indigenous being...

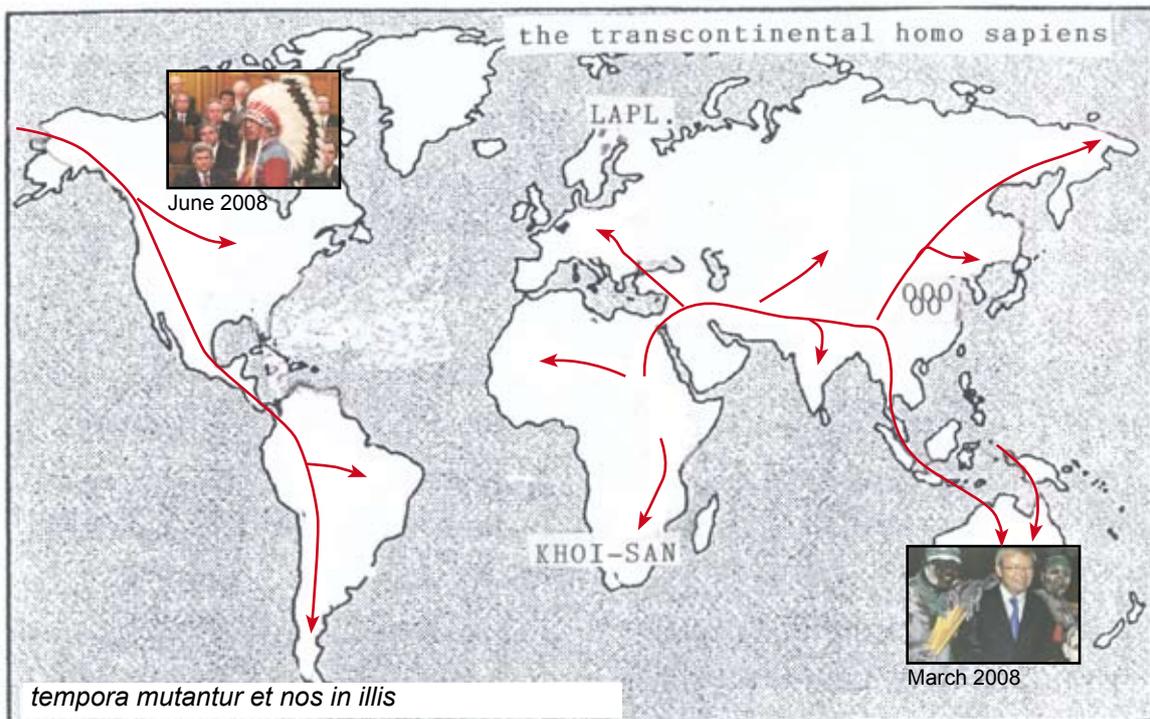
(page 37)

"Aboriginal voices"

Had they bothered to study the culture that was there they would have discovered that it was a highly developed and sophisticated culture, that this culture had developed to the highest level that it could have, given there were no crops, foods or animals available for domesticating for an agricultural society to develop. Agriculture is the basis for European culture, it implies you're static and that you can start collecting information -and keeping it in one spot...

But the Aboriginal people had to carry their information about the land all around with them, so consequently they had stories and dances to transmit instead...

These notations of Aboriginal culture and other indigenous cultures around the world as primitive are due to the idea of progress and of modernism...



Further publications

The reader, who read from front to back of the book all quotes, stories, poems, clippings from newspapers, etc, and looked at the many illustrations of art and maps, realizes that (s)he came in contact with an autonomous, strong culture. This reader will need a complete translation of the book; however, after 14 years, the author stops with it. But he'll make sure that the book will remain available on the internet for many more years.

Moreover, *times are changing and we with it*. This book will not remain an isolated event; in the course of coming years one should expect further publications like this one.

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