

The TREE of LIFE – TREE TRIANGLE: The RITUALS

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We realised that the rituals we performed as we travelled around Australia planting trees, were just as important as creating the giant triangle itself.



On our journey, part of this became the ‘ritual of friendship’, made possible by many friends in Europe sending us their seminar ‘wrist bracelets’ to incorporate into our tree planting ceremonies: Some bracelets were loosely placed around the young trees, or planted in the earth, others were tied onto mature trees or given to children who were the ‘guardians of the trees’.



‘A KNOT of FRIENDSHIP’

WATER RITUALS



While preparing for the tree planting journey, and trying to understand why Shin had chosen the 3 particular sites to make up the points of the triangle; we discovered that perhaps our journey was going to be as much about water as it was about trees. This seems appropriate, given that trees are such an important part of the water cycle on Earth.

Across Australia, Aboriginal groups who come from different regions and speak different languages, all have similar stories about the

RAINBOW SERPENT:

As the Creator, the Rainbow Serpent is often portrayed by artists as a powerful snake who emerged from the land, travelled the landscape leaving trails of life, and then returned to the land through caves, waterholes and other sacred sites.

The Rainbow Serpent gave life to all the ancestors and all the trees, plants, animals, birds – and to the landscape itself. It is the guardian of the Law, the land, the water sources and sacred places.

We discovered that the 3 planting sites (that seemed to be indicated by Shin on our hand-drawn map) all had very big Rainbow Serpent stories, and all were associated with important water sources for the local people or for the whole of Australia.

***WE PERFORMED WATER RITUALS AT 9 DIFFERENT WATER
BODIES ACROSS AUSTRALIA:***

1) Yarra River: Melbourne (Warrandyte) - Victoria



Our first water ritual together



2) Murray River: Echuca - Victoria



3) Murrumbidgee River - New South Wales



FIRST PLANTING SITE

4) Darling River: Bourke - New South Wales



Bourke is on the banks of the Darling River (which is part of the great Murray-Darling river system, one of the longest systems in the world). The river supported many different Aboriginal groups, and is associated with the Rainbow Serpent creation stories.

Bourke also sits on the rim of one of the world's major natural features: The Great Artesian Basin that comprises 1.7 million square km of underground water that is about 2 million years old. For 1000's of years, the Basin has held the dreaming stories of Indigenous peoples that lived on it or from it. The Basin covers a quarter of Australia and contains enough water to cover the world. One story tells of a hunter who followed the trail of the Rainbow Serpent all the way to South Australia! (This is where our adventure will take us.)

SECOND PLANTING SITE

5) Lawn Hill Creek: Lawn Hill National Park - Queensland



To the Waanyi people, Lawn Hill (Boodjamulla) is Rainbow Serpent country, and the gorge and permanent spring were formed by the Rainbow Serpent. To them, Lawn Hill was a sacred place only to be used for ceremony and special celebrations. They believe that if you tamper with the water, pollute it or take it for granted; the Serpent will leave and take all the water!

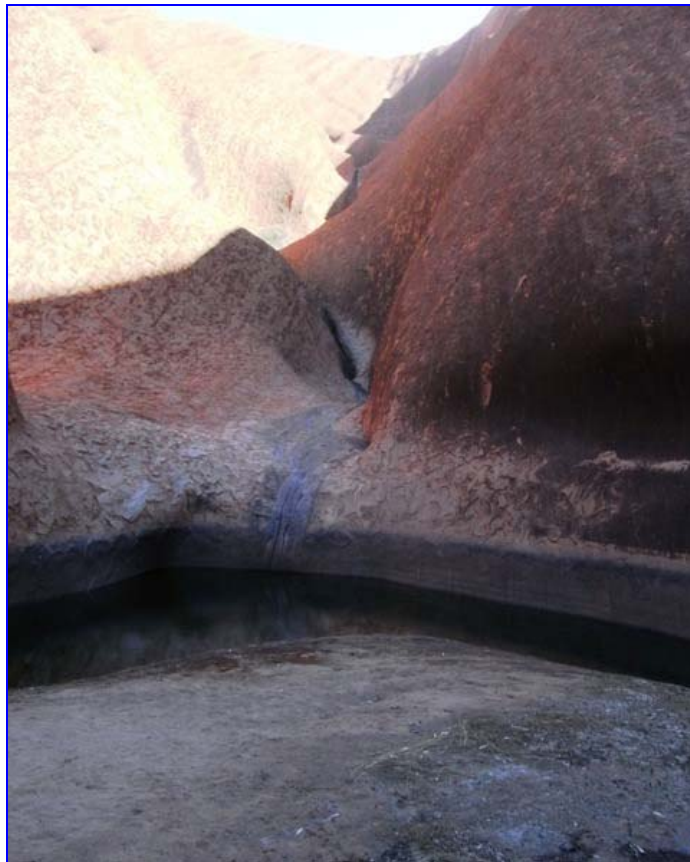


The clear, but mysteriously green-tinted waters of Lawn Hill Creek; famous for their healing powers! Look closely and you'll see the little fish in the middle.

6) Ellery Creek Big Hole: West MacDonnell Ranges - Northern Territory



7) Uluru (Mutitjulu Water Hole) - Northern Territory



The sacred Mutitjulu water hole at Uluru

*One evening we performed a lingam puja
and water ritual at Mutitjulu waterhole*



Doing the water ritual in the dark

8) Shelly Beach: Ceduna - South Australia



A water ritual on the beach



THIRD PLANTING SITE

Tjuntjuntjara Aboriginal Community



We did not perform a water ritual at Tjuntjuntjara because their water holes are sacred and you need special permission to go there. And the people are still actively involved in looking after the water holes themselves:

Even today, one of their main ‘responsibilities’ is to clean out the sacred water holes and protect the underground water sources so important in the desert – and this subterranean water is of course where the Rainbow Serpent lives.

However, we did water the young trees that we planted in Tjuntjuntjara, with special water which contained the combined waters from all the water rituals we had performed until then. It also contained water from the rivers and waterholes we had encountered on our journey, plus water from Mt Kailash.

FINAL WATER RITUAL

9) Murray River/Coorong area: Taillem Bend - South Australia



We also performed a puja with the consecrated water





The 'Mighty Murray' (River) as it is known to the locals, is unfortunately nowadays a river in distress because of the agricultural industry taking too much water out of the system, and because of years of drought. It flows out into an ecologically important wetland area and bird sanctuary known as the Coorong. It should then flow into the sea, but because of the years of insufficient water-flows reaching the end-point of the Murray, it stopped flowing, and the surrounding Coorong started to become overly salty, and the system was dying. Recent floods have helped the situation, and now the government is trying to pass new laws to stop agriculture taking out too much water.

On our journey, we did a cycle of water rituals in the Murray-Darling water basin, from higher up in the system – to the end of the system, finishing at the Coorong which flows into the sea.

We hope our rituals honoured and strengthened the Rainbow Serpent (guardian of the waters) as Aboriginal people have done for thousands of years. And we hope we helped heal the river system – so important to the majority of the Australian population who live near it.

Ritual to help cleanse MOTHER EARTH

On our journey to Tjuntjuntjara Aboriginal Community, we had to travel through the area that had been affected by the early nuclear tests done in the deserts of Australia. We felt a great sense of grief about what had happened to the earth and her people (the Aboriginal people who had been radiated by the fallout). So we performed a Lingam Puja for the Earth – which we felt made a difference.



Puja at the crossroads between Maralinga nuclear site and the Tjuntjuntjara road





Sally Duncan created this beautiful Birch ragal especially for us to use on this tree trip. It has the 3 Goddesses inscribed on it in gold, silver and copper leaf. While we were creating the Tree Triangle here, a 'twin' ragal made from the same branch as ours, was taken to Lughnasad by Sally and placed under a Birch tree, to link our activities in Australia and Europe.



(Another creation of Sally's shows the Triple Goddesses more clearly - on Cedar bark)

JYOTIRLINGAM



Our first, newly created Jyotirlingam – still wet!

Thanks to Adeshua's suggestion (read below) we decided to make a Jyotirlingam at each planting site - in the middle of each miniature triangle:

One further thought about the tree triangles: I've been reading parts of the Shiva Purana, and there are numerous references to people performing pujas with clay lingams when they want to invoke Shiva's help.

But what really struck me was the invoking or inviting of a JYOTIRLINGA, or pillar of light, which becomes Shiva's perpetual presence in a particular place. There are said to be 12 such places in India. Generally Shiva 'agreed' to remain present in a place when there was a special need and when a person or people had invoked his aid and requested that he establish himself there for the benefit of people in times to come. The ritual surrounding such occasions almost always involved the creation (initially) of a clay lingam.



1st Jyotirlingam - Bourke



2nd Jyotirlingam – Adel's Grove



3rd Jyotirlingam – Tjuntjuntjara

Our 3rd Jyotirlingam was 'swept away' after the ritual, as is the Aboriginal custom.