Australia History

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Wikipedia

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Australia

Officially known as the Commonwealth of Australia

The world's sixth-largest country by total area

1606 - European discovery of the continent by Dutch explorers

1770 - Australia's eastern half was claimed by Great Britain in 1770 and initially settled through penal transportation to the colony of New South Wales from 26 January 1788

1901 - An additional five self-governing crown colonies were established. On January 1, 1901, the six colonies federated, forming the Commonwealth of Australia.

The population of 24 million is highly urbanized and heavily concentrated in the eastern states and on the coast.

Australia is has the world's 12th-largest economy.

Name

The name Australia is derived from the Latin Terra Australis ("southern land").

1824 - The Admiralty agreed that the continent should be known officially as Australia.

National Holiday: Australia Day - January 26, 1788

European Arrival

1606 - The first recorded European sighting of the Australian mainland.

The Dutch charted the whole of the western and northern coastlines and named the island continent "New Holland" during the 17th century.

1770 - James Cook sailed along and mapped the east coast, which he named New South Wales and claimed for Great Britain.

With the loss of its American colonies in 1783, the British Government sent a fleet of ships, the "First Fleet", under the command of Captain Arthur Phillip, to establish a new penal colony in New South Wales. A camp was set up and the flag raised at Sydney Cove, Port Jackson, on 26 January 1788, a date which became Australia's national day, Australia Day, although the British Crown Colony of New South Wales was not formally promulgated until 7 February 1788. The first settlement led to the foundation of Sydney, and the exploration and settlement of other regions.

Separate colonies were carved from parts of New South Wales: South Australia in 1836, Victoria in 1851, and Queensland in 1859.[42] The Northern Territory was founded in 1911 when it was excised from South Australia.[43] South Australia was founded as a "free province"—it was never a penal colony.[44] Victoria and Western Australia were also founded "free", but later accepted transported convicts.[45][46] A campaign by the settlers of New South Wales led to the end of convict transportation to that colony; the last convict ship arrived in 1848.

Indigenous Aboriginal People

The indigenous population, estimated to have been between 750,000 and 1,000,000 in 1788, declined for 150 years following settlement, mainly due to infectious disease. Thousands more died as a result of frontier conflict with settlers. A government policy of "assimilation" beginning with the Aboriginal Protection Act 1869 resulted in the removal of many Aboriginal children from their families and communities—often referred to as the Stolen Generations—a practice which may also have contributed to the decline in the indigenous population.[51] The Federal government gained the power to make laws with respect to Aborigines following the 1967 referendum.[52] Traditional ownership of land—aboriginal title—was not recognized until 1992, when the High Court case Mabo v Queensland (No 2) overturned the legal doctrine that Australia had been terra nullius ("land belonging to no one") before the European occupation.

Colonial Expansion

A gold rush began in Australia in the early 1850s[54] and the Eureka Rebellion against mining license fees in 1854 was an early expression of civil disobedience.

Nationhood

1901 - On 1 January 1901, federation of the colonies was achieved after a decade of planning, consultation and voting. This established the Commonwealth of Australia as a dominion of the British Empire.

Capitol

1911 - The Australian Capital Territory was formed in 1911 as the location for the future federal capital of Canberra.

Melbourne was the temporary seat of government from 1901 to 1927 while Canberra was being constructed.

1914 - Australia joined Britain in fighting World War I

Of about 416,000 who served, about 60,000 were killed and another 152,000 were wounded. Many Australians regard the defeat of the Australian and New Zealand Army Corps (ANZACs) at Gallipoli as the birth of the nation—its first major military action.

1931 - Britain's Statute of Westminster 1931 formally ended most of the constitutional links between Australia and the UK.

Australia adopted it in 1942, but it was backdated to 1939 to confirm the validity of legislation passed by the Australian Parliament during World War II.

The shock of the United Kingdom's defeat in Asia in 1942 and the threat of Japanese invasion caused Australia to turn to the United States as a new ally and protector.

Since 1951, Australia has been a formal military ally of the US, under the ANZUS treaty.

After World War II Australia encouraged immigration from Europe.

Since the 1970s and following the abolition of the White Australia policy, immigration from Asia and elsewhere was also promoted.

As a result, Australia's demography, culture, and self-image were transformed.

The final constitutional ties between Australia and the UK were severed with the passing of the Australia Act 1986, ending any British role in the government of the Australian States.

Government

Australia is a constitutional monarchy with a federal division of powers.

It uses a parliamentary system of government with Elizabeth II at its apex as the Queen of Australia.

The federal government is separated into three branches:

The legislature

The executive

The judiciary

In the Senate (the upper house), there are 76 senators: twelve each from the states and two each from the mainland territories.

The House of Representatives (the lower house) has 150 members.

There are two major political groups that usually form government, federally and in the states: the Australian Labor Party and the Coalition which is a formal grouping of the Liberal Party and its minor partner, the National Party.

Julia Gillard became the first female Prime Minister in June 2010.

The most recent federal election was held on 7 September 2013 and resulted in a majority government for the Coalition.

Liberal Party leader Tony Abbott was sworn into office as Prime Minister by the Governor-General of Australia on 18 September.

In September 2015, Malcolm Turnbull successfully challenged Abbott for leadership of the Coalition, and was sworn in as Prime Minister on the 15th.

With five Prime Ministers in as many years between 2010 and 2015, with most of those leadership changes occurring through leadership spills rather than general elections, Australia has been described as the "coup capital of the democratic world".

States and Territories

Australia has six states—New South Wales (NSW), Queensland (QLD), South Australia (SA), Tasmania (TAS), Victoria (VIC) and Western Australia (WA)—and two major mainland territories—the Australian Capital Territory (ACT) and the Northern Territory (NT).

Foreign Relations and Military

Over recent decades, Australia's foreign relations have been driven by a close association with the United States through the ANZUS pact, and by a desire to develop relationships with Asia and the Pacific, particularly through ASEAN and the Pacific Islands Forum.

Along with New Zealand, the United Kingdom, Malaysia and Singapore, Australia is party to the Five Power Defense Arrangements, a regional defense agreement.

A founding member country of the United Nations, Australia is strongly committed to multilateralism and maintains an international aid program under which some 60 countries receive assistance.

Australia's armed forces—the Australian Defense Force (ADF)—comprise the Royal Australian Navy (RAN), the Australian Army and the Royal Australian Air Force (RAAF), in total numbering 81,214 personnel (including 57,982 regulars and 23,232 reservists) as of November 2015.

In the 2015-16 budget, defense spending was A$31.9 billion or 1.92% of GDP, representing the 13th largest defense budget.

Australia has been involved in UN and regional peacekeeping, disaster relief and armed conflict, including the 2003 invasion of Iraq; it currently has deployed about 2,241 personnel in varying capacities to 12 international operations in areas including Iraq and Afghanistan.

Geography and Climate

Australia's landmass of 7,617,930 square kilometers (2,941,300 sq mi) is on the Indo-Australian Plate.

Surrounded by the Indian and Pacific oceans.

The world's smallest continent and sixth largest country by total area.

Australia—owing to its size and isolation—is often dubbed the "island continent", and is sometimes considered the world's largest island.

The Great Barrier Reef, the world's largest coral reef, lies a short distance off the north-east coast and extends for over 2,000 kilometers (1,240 mi).

Desert or semi-arid land commonly known as the outback makes up by far the largest portion of land.

The driest inhabited continent, its annual rainfall averaged over continental area is less than 500 mm.

The population density, 2.8 inhabitants per square kilometer, is among the lowest in the world, although a large proportion of the population lives along the temperate south-eastern coastline.

Eastern Australia is marked by the Great Dividing Range, which runs parallel to the coast of Queensland, New South Wales and much of Victoria.

The name is not strictly accurate, because parts of the range consist of low hills, and the highlands are typically no more than 1,600 meters (5,249 ft) in height.

Environment

Australia has the greatest number of reptiles of any country, with 755 species.

Australian forests are mostly made up of evergreen species, particularly eucalyptus trees in the less arid regions; wattles replace them as the dominant species in drier regions and deserts.

Among well-known Australian animals are the monotremes (the platypus and echidna); a host of marsupials, including the kangaroo, koala, and wombat, and birds such as the emu and the kookaburra.

Australia is home to many dangerous animals including some of the most venomous snakes in the world.

The dingo was introduced by Austronesian people who traded with Indigenous Australians around 3000 BCE.

Many animal and plant species became extinct soon after first human settlement, including the Australian megafauna; others have disappeared since European settlement, among them the thylacine.

Many of Australia's ecoregions, and the species within those regions, are threatened by human activities and introduced animal, chromistan, fungal and plant species.

All these factors have led to Australia having the highest mammal extinction rate of any country in the world.

The federal Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999 is the legal framework for the protection of threatened species.

Australia was ranked 3rd out of 178 countries in the world on the 2014 Environmental Performance Index.

Economy

Australia is a wealthy country; it generates its income from various sources including mining-related exports, telecommunications, banking and manufacturing.

In terms of average wealth, Australia ranked second in the world after Switzerland in 2013.

Australia is the world's fourth largest exporter of wine, and the wine industry contributes $5.5 billion per year to the nation's economy.

Demographics

For generations, the vast majority of immigrants came from the British Isles, and the people of Australia are still mainly of British or Irish ethnic origin.

In the 2011 Australian census, the most commonly nominated ancestry was English (36.1%), followed by Australian (35.4%), Irish (10.4%), Scottish (8.9%), Italian (4.6%), German (4.5%), Chinese (4.3%), Indian (2.0%), Greek (1.9%), and Dutch (1.7%)

Following World War II and through to 2000, almost 5.9 million of the total population settled in the country as new immigrants, meaning that nearly two out of every seven Australians were born in another country.

Australia's population density, 2.8 inhabitants per square kilometer, remains among the lowest in the world.

As such, Australians have more living space per person than the inhabitants of any other nation.

In 2011, 24.6% of Australians were born elsewhere and 43.1% of people had at least one overseas-born parent; the five largest immigrant groups were those from the United Kingdom, New Zealand, China, India, and Vietnam.

Following the abolition of the White Australia policy in 1973, numerous government initiatives have been established to encourage and promote racial harmony based on a policy of multiculturalism.

The Indigenous population—Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders—was counted at 548,370 (2.5% of the total population) in 2011, a significant increase from 115,953 in the 1976 census.

The increase is partly due to many people with Indigenous heritage previously having been overlooked by the census due to undercount and cases where their Indigenous status had not been recorded on the form.

Indigenous Australians experience higher than average rates of imprisonment and unemployment, lower levels of education, and life expectancies for males and females that are, respectively, 11 and 17 years lower than those of non-indigenous Australians.

Some remote Indigenous communities have been described as having "failed state"-like conditions.

In common with many other developed countries, Australia is experiencing a demographic shift towards an older population, with more retirees and fewer people of working age.

In 2004, the average age of the civilian population was 38.8 years.

A large number of Australians (759,849 for the period 2002–03; 1 million or 5% of the total population in 2005) live outside their home country.

Largest cities or towns in Australia

June 2014 Australian Bureau of Statistics estimates

Rank Name State Pop. Rank Name State Pop.

1 Sydney NSW 4,840,628 11 Hobart TAS 219,200

2 Melbourne VIC 4,440,328 12 Geelong VIC 184,182

3 Brisbane QLD 2,274,460 13 Townsville QLD 178,649

4 Perth WA 2,021,203 14 Cairns QLD 146,778

5 Adelaide SA 1,304,631 15 Darwin NT 140,400

6 Gold Coast–Tweed Heads QLD/NSW 614,379 16 Toowoomba QLD 113,625

7 Newcastle–Maitland NSW 430,755 17 Ballarat VIC 98,543

8 Canberra–Queanbeyan ACT/NSW 422,510 18 Bendigo VIC 91,692

9 Sunshine Coast QLD 297,380 19 Albury–Wodonga NSW/VIC 87,890

10 Wollongong NSW 289,236 20 Launceston TAS 86,393

Language

Although Australia has no official language, English has always been entrenched as the de facto national language.

According to the 2011 census, English is the only language spoken in the home for close to 81% of the population.

The next most common languages spoken at home are Mandarin (1.7%), Italian (1.5%), Arabic (1.4%), Cantonese (1.3%), Greek (1.3%), and Vietnamese (1.2%); a considerable proportion of first- and second-generation migrants are bilingual.

A 2010–2011 study by the Australia Early Development Index found the most common language spoken by children after English was Arabic, followed by Vietnamese, Greek, Chinese, and Hindi.

Over 250 Indigenous Australian languages are thought to have existed at the time of first European contact, of which less than 20 are still in daily use by all age groups.

About 110 others are spoken exclusively by older people.

At the time of the 2006 census, 52,000 Indigenous Australians, representing 12% of the Indigenous population, reported that they spoke an Indigenous language at home.

Australia has a sign language known as Auslan, which is the main language of about 5,500 deaf people.

Religion

Australia has no state religion; Section 116 of the Australian Constitution prohibits the federal government from making any law to establish any religion, impose any religious observance, or prohibit the free exercise of any religion.

In the 2011 census, 61.1% of Australians were counted as Christian, including 25.3% as Roman Catholic and 17.1% as Anglican; 22.3% of the population reported having "no religion"; 7.2% identify with non-Christian religions, the largest of these being Buddhism (2.5%), followed by Islam (2.2%), Hinduism (1.3%) and Judaism (0.5%).

The remaining 9.4% of the population did not provide an adequate answer.

Dreamtime (Aboriginal Spirituality)

Before European settlement, the animist beliefs of Australia's indigenous people had been practiced for many thousands of years.

Mainland Aboriginal Australians' spirituality is known as the Dreamtime and it places a heavy emphasis on belonging to the land.

The collection of stories that it contains shaped Aboriginal law and customs.

Aboriginal art, story and dance continue to draw on these spiritual traditions.

The spirituality and customs of Torres Strait Islanders, who inhabit the islands between Australia and New Guinea, reflected their Melanesian origins and dependence on the sea.

The 1996 Australian census counted more than 7000 respondents as followers of a traditional Aboriginal religion.

Since the arrival of the First Fleet of British ships in 1788, Christianity has grown to be the major religion practiced in Australia.

Christian churches have played an integral role in the development of education, health and welfare services in Australia.

For much of Australian history the Church of England (now known as the Anglican Church of Australia) was the largest religious denomination.

Education

School attendance, or registration for home schooling, is compulsory throughout Australia.

Children are required to attend school from the age of about 5 up until about 16.

Australia has an adult literacy rate that was estimated to be 99% in 2003.

Australia regularly scores among the top five of thirty major developed countries.

Australia has 37 government-funded universities and two private universities.

Australia is among the most expensive nations to attend university.

38 percent of Australia's population has a university or college degree, which is among the highest percentages in the world.

Health

Australia has the third and seventh highest life expectancy of males and females respectively in the world.

Life expectancy in Australia in 2010 was 79.5 years for males and 84.0 years for females.

Australia has the highest rates of skin cancer in the world, while cigarette smoking is the largest preventable cause of death and disease, responsible for 7.8% of the total mortality and disease.

Ranked second in preventable causes is hypertension at 7.6%, with obesity third at 7.5%.

Australia ranks 35th in the world and near the top of developed nations for its proportion of obese adults and nearly two thirds (63%) of its adult population is either overweight or obese.

Total expenditure on health (including private sector spending) is around 9.8% of GDP.

Australia introduced universal health care in 1975.

Known as Medicare, it is now nominally funded by an income tax surcharge known as the Medicare levy, currently set at 1.5%.

The states manage hospitals and attached outpatient services, while the Commonwealth funds the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme (subsidizing the costs of medicines) and general practice.

Culture

Since 1788, the basis of Australian culture has been strongly influenced by Anglo-Celtic Western culture.

Distinctive cultural features have also arisen from Australia's natural environment and Indigenous cultures.

Since the mid-20th century, American popular culture has strongly influenced Australia, particularly through television and cinema.

Other cultural influences come from neighboring Asian countries, and through large-scale immigration from non-English-speaking nations.

Arts

The rock art of Australia's Indigenous peoples is the oldest and richest in the world, dating as far back as 60,000 years and spread across hundreds of thousands of sites.

Traditional designs, patterns and stories infuse contemporary Indigenous Australian art, "the last great art movement of the 20th century"; its exponents include Emily Kame Kngwarreye.

During the first century of European settlement, colonial artists, trained in Europe, showed a fascination with the unfamiliar land.

The naturalistic, sun-filled works of Arthur Streeton, Tom Roberts and others associated with the 19th-century Heidelberg School—the first "distinctively Australian" movement in Western art—gave expression to a burgeoning Australian nationalism in the lead-up to Federation.

While the school remained influential into the new century, modernists such as Margaret Preston, and, later, Sidney Nolan and Arthur Boyd, explored new artistic trends.

The landscape remained a central subject matter for Fred Williams, Brett Whiteley and other post-World War II artists whose works, eclectic in style yet uniquely Australian, moved between the figurative and the abstract.

The National Gallery of Australia and state galleries maintain collections of Australian and international art.

Australia has one of the world's highest attendances of art galleries and museums per head of population.

Many of Australia's performing arts companies receive funding through the federal government's Australia Council.

Media

The Story of the Kelly Gang (1906), the world's first feature length film, spurred a boom in Australian cinema during the silent film era.

After World War I, Hollywood monopolized the industry, and by the 1960s Australian film production had effectively ceased.

With the benefit of government support, the Australian New Wave of the 1970s brought provocative and successful films, many exploring themes of national identity, such as Wake in Fright and Gallipoli, while "Crocodile" Dundee and the Ozploitation movement's Mad Max series became international blockbusters.

More recent successes included Shine and Rabbit-Proof Fence.

Notable Australian actors include Errol Flynn, Judith Anderson, Geoffrey Rush, Nicole Kidman, Heath Ledger and Cate Blanchett.

Australia has two public broadcasters (the Australian Broadcasting Corporation and the multicultural Special Broadcasting Service), three commercial television networks, several pay-TV services, and numerous public, non-profit television and radio stations.

Each major city has at least one daily newspaper, and there are two national daily newspapers, The Australian and The Australian Financial Review.

In 2010, Reporters Without Borders placed Australia 18th on a list of 178 countries ranked by press freedom, behind New Zealand (8th) but ahead of the United Kingdom (19th) and United States (20th).

This relatively low ranking is primarily because of the limited diversity of commercial media ownership in Australia; most print media are under the control of News Corporation and Fairfax Media.

Cuisine

Most Indigenous Australian tribal groups subsisted on a simple hunter-gatherer diet of native fauna and flora, otherwise called bush tucker.

The first settlers introduced British food to the continent, much of which is now considered typical Australian food, such as the Sunday roast.

Multicultural immigration transformed Australian cuisine; post-World War II European migrants, particularly from the Mediterranean, helped to build a thriving Australian coffee culture, and the influence of Asian cultures has led to Australian variants of their staple foods, such as the Chinese-inspired dim sim and Chiko Roll.

Vegemite, pavlova, lamingtons and meat pies are regarded as iconic Australian foods.

Australian wine is produced mainly in the southern, cooler parts of the country.

Sport and Recreation

About 24% of Australians over the age of 15 regularly participate in organized sporting activities.

At an international level, Australia has excelled at cricket, field hockey, netball, rugby league and rugby union.

The majority of Australians live within the coastal zone, making the beach a popular recreation spot and an integral part of the nation's identity.

Australia is a powerhouse in water-based sports, such as swimming and surfing.

The surf lifesaving movement originated in Australia, and the volunteer lifesaver is one of the country's icons.

Nationally, other popular sports include Australian rules football, horse racing, basketball, surfing, soccer, and motor racing.

The annual Melbourne Cup horse race and the Sydney to Hobart yacht race attract intense interest.

Australia is one of five nations to have participated in every Summer Olympics of the modern era, and has hosted the Games twice: 1956 in Melbourne and 2000 in Sydney.

Australia has also participated in every Commonwealth Games, hosting the event in 1938, 1962, 1982, 2006 and will host the 2018 Commonwealth Games.

Australia made its inaugural appearance at the Pacific Games in 2015.

As well as being a regular FIFA World Cup participant, Australia has won the OFC Nations Cup four times and the AFC Asian Cup once – the only country to have won championships in two different FIFA confederations.

The country regularly competes among the world elite basketball teams as it is among the global top three teams in terms of qualifications to the Basketball Tournament at the Summer Olympics.

Other major international events held in Australia include the Australian Open tennis grand slam tournament, international cricket matches, and the Australian Formula One Grand Prix.

The highest-rating television programs include sports telecasts such as the Summer Olympics, FIFA World Cup, The Ashes, Rugby League State of Origin, and the grand finals of the National Rugby League and Australian Football League.

Skiing in Australia began in the 1860s and snow sports take place in the Australian Alps and parts of Tasmania.

Significance of The Snake (Rainbow Serpent) in Australia

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rainbow\_Serpent

The Rainbow Serpent or Rainbow Snake is a common deity, often a creator god, in the mythology and a common motif in the art of Aboriginal Australia.

It is named for the obvious identification between the shape of a rainbow and the shape of a snake.

Some scholars have suggested that the link between snake and rainbow suggests the cycle of the seasons and the importance of water in human life.

When the rainbow is seen in the sky, it is said to be the Rainbow Serpent moving from one waterhole to another, and the divine concept explained why some waterholes never dried up when drought struck.

There are innumerable names and stories associated with the serpent, all of which communicate the significance and power of this being within Aboriginal traditions.

It is viewed as a giver of life, through its association with water, but can be a destructive force if angry.

The Rainbow Serpent is one of the oldest continuing religious beliefs in the world and continues to be a cultural influence today.

Names in Different Cultures

The Rainbow Serpent is known by different names by different Aboriginal cultures.

The Rainbow Serpent (or Serpents if there are more than one) is known as Borlung by the Miali, Dhakkan (or Takkan) by the Kuli, Kajura by the Ingarda, Goorialla by the Lardil people, Kunmanggur by the Murinbata, Ngalyod by the Gunwinggu, Numereji by the Kakadu, Taipan by the Wikmunkan, Tulloun by the Mitakoodi, Wagyl by the Noongar, Wanamangura by the Talainji, and Witij by the Yolngu.

Other names include Bolung, Galeru, Julunggul, Kanmare, Langal, Myndie, Muit, Ungur, Wollunqua, Wonambi, Wonungar, Worombi, Yero, Yingarna, and Yurlunggur.

Development of Concept

Though the concept of the Rainbow Serpent has existed for a long time in Aboriginal Australian cultures, it was introduced to the wider world through the work of anthropologists.

In fact, the name Rainbow Serpent or Rainbow Snake appears to have been coined in English by Alfred Radcliffe-Brown, an anthropologist who noticed the same concept going under different names among various Aboriginal Australian cultures, and called it "the rainbow-serpent myth of Australia".

It has been suggested that this name implies that there is only one Rainbow Serpent, when the concept actually varies quite a bit from one Aboriginal culture to another, and should be properly called the Rainbow Serpent myths of Australia.

Similarly, it has been suggested that the Serpent's position as the most prominent creator god in Australian mythology has largely been the creation of non-Aboriginal anthropologists.

Another error of the same kind is the way in which western-educated people, with a cultural stereotype of Greco-Roman or Norse myths, tell the Aboriginal stories in the past tense.

For the indigenous people of Australia the stories were "Everywhen" - past, present and future.

Characteristics and Associations

Dreamtime (or The Dreaming or Tjukurrpa or Jukurrpa) stories tell of the great spirits and totems during creation, in animal and human form that moulded the barren and featureless earth.

The Rainbow Serpent came from beneath the ground and created huge ridges, mountains, and gorges as it pushed upward.

The Rainbow Serpent is understood to be of immense proportions and inhabits deep permanent waterholes and is in control of life's most precious resource, water.

In some cultures, the Rainbow Serpent is considered to be the ultimate creator of everything in the universe.

In some cultures, the Rainbow Serpent is male; in others, female; in yet others, the gender is ambiguous or the Rainbow Serpent is hermaphroditic or bisexual, thus an androgynous entity.

Some commentators have suggested that the Rainbow Serpent is a phallic symbol, which fits its connection with fertility myths and rituals.

When the Serpent is characterized as female or bisexual, it is sometimes depicted with breasts.

Other times, the Serpent has no particular gender.

The Serpent has also been known to appear as a scorpion or another animal or creature.

In some stories, the Serpent is associated with a bat, sometimes called a "flying fox" in Australian English, engaged in a rivalry over a woman.

Some scholars have identified other creatures, such as a bird, crocodile, dingo, or lizard, as taking the role of the Serpent in stories.

In all cases, these animals are also associated with water.

The Rainbow Serpent has also been identified with the bunyip, a fearful, water-hole dwelling creature in Australian mythology.

The sometimes unpredictable Rainbow Serpent (in contrast to the unyielding sun) replenishes the stores of water, forming gullies and deep channels as the Rainbow Serpent slithers across the landscape.

In this belief system, without the Serpent, no rain would fall and the Earth would dry up.

In other cultures, the Serpent is said to come to stop the rain.

In addition to the identification with the rainbow, the Serpent is also identified with a prismatic halo around the moon that can be regarded as a sign of rain.

The Rainbow Serpent is sometimes associated with human blood, especially circulation and the menstrual cycle, and considered a healer.

Thunder and lightning are said to stem from when the Rainbow Serpent is angry, and the Serpent can even cause powerful rainstorms and cyclones.

Quartz crystal and seashells are also associated with the Rainbow Serpent and are used in rituals to invoke it.

The identification with quartz crystal presumably results from its prism-like appearance.

Serpent Stories

Stories about the Rainbow Serpent are often passed down from generation to generation.

Serpent stories vary according to environmental differences.

Tribes of the monsoonal areas depict an epic interaction of the sun, Serpent, and wind in their Dreamtime stories, whereas tribes of the central desert experience less drastic seasonal shifts and their stories reflect this.

It is known both as a benevolent protector of its people (the groups from the country around) and as a malevolent punisher of law breakers.

The Rainbow Serpent's mythology is closely linked to land, water, life, social relationships, and fertility.

The Rainbow Serpent often takes part in transitions from adolescence to adulthood for young men and swallows them to vomit them up later.

The most common motif in Rainbow Serpent stories is the Serpent as creator, with the Serpent often bringing life to an empty space.

The most common Rainbow Serpent myth is the story of the Wawalag or Wagilag sisters.

According to legend, the sisters are traveling together when the older sister gives birth, and her blood flows to a waterhole where the Rainbow Serpent lives.

In another version of the tale, the sisters are traveling with their mother, Kunapipi, all of whom know ancient secrets, and the Serpent is merely angered by their presence in its area.

The Rainbow Serpent then traces the scent back to the sisters sleeping in their hut, a metaphor for the uterus.

The Rainbow Serpent enters, a symbolic representation of a snake entering a hole, and eats them and their children.

However, the Rainbow Serpent regurgitates them after being bitten by an ant, and this act creates Arnhem Land.

Now, the Serpent speaks in their voices and teaches sacred rituals to the people living there.

Another story is from the Great Sandy Desert area in the northern part of Western Australia.

This story explains how the Wolfe Creek Crater, or Kandimalal, was created by a star falling from heaven, creating a crater in which a Rainbow Serpent took up residence, though in some versions it is the Serpent which falls from heaven and creates the crater.

The story sometimes continues telling of how an old hunter chased a dingo into the crater and got lost in a tunnel created by the Serpent, never to be found again, with the dingo being eaten and spit out by the Serpent.

Another legend from Western Australia tells of how Rainbow Serpents, or Wagyls, smashed and pushed boulders around to form trails on Mount Matilda, along with creating waterways such as the Avon River.

A myth from the Northern Territory tells of how a great mother arrives from the sea, traveling across Australia and giving birth to the various Aboriginal tribes.

In some versions, the great mother is accompanied by the Rainbow Serpent (or Lightning Snake), who brings the wet season of rains and floods.

Some Aboriginals in the Kimberley regions believe that it was the Rainbow Serpent who deposited spirit-children throughout pools in which women become impregnated when they wade in the water.

This process is sometimes referred to as "netting a fish".

A more children-friendly version of the Rainbow Serpent myth tells of how a serpent rose through the Earth to the surface, where she summoned frogs, tickled their bellies to release water to create pools and rivers, and is now known as the mother of life.

Another children-friendly tale is told in Dick Roughsey's children's book, which tells how the Rainbow Serpent creates the landscape of Australia by thrashing about and, by tricking and swallowing two boys, ends up creating the population of Australia by various animal, insect, and plant species.

Possible Origins in Nature

Wonambi naracoortensis and Thylacoleo

The Carpet Snake is considered a form that the Rainbow Serpent can take by the Walmadjari people.

Furthermore, three snakes may have served as inspiration for the Rainbow Serpent.

These three snakes are the rough-scaled python, the taipan, and the file snake.

Each of these snakes possesses a characteristic that was associated with the Rainbow Serpent.

In Queensland, a fossil of a snake was found, and they believe that it came from the prehistoric family of large snakes that inspired the Rainbow Serpent myth.

Wonambi is a genus that consisted of two species of very large snakes.

These species were not pythons, like Australia's other large constrictors of the genus Morelia, and are currently classified in the extinct family Madtsoiidae that became extinct elsewhere in the world 55 million years in the past.

Aboriginal people describe this serpent as having "hair" around its head and face.

Role in Traditional Culture

In addition to stories about the Rainbow Serpent being passed down from generation to generation, the Rainbow Serpent has been worshiped through rituals and has also inspired cultural artifacts such as artwork and songs, a tradition which continues today.

There are many ancient rituals associated with the Rainbow Serpent that are still practiced today.

The myth of the Wawalag sisters marks the importance of the female menstruation process and led to the establishment of the Kunapipi blood ritual of the goddess, in which the indigenous Australians allegorically recreate the Rainbow Serpent eating the Wawalag sisters through dance and pantomime, and can be regarded as a fertility ritual.

Female menstruation is sacred to many indigenous Australian cultures because it distinguishes the time when a female is capable of bringing life into the world, putting a woman on the same level of creative abilities as the Rainbow Serpent.

It is for this reason that men will attempt to mimic this holy process by cutting their arms and/or penises and letting their blood run over their own bodies, each other’s bodies, and even into a woman's uterus.

Men will sometimes mix their blood with a women’s menstrual blood, letting them flow together in a ceremonial unification of the sexes.

The earliest known rock drawings of the Rainbow Serpent date back to more than 6,000 years ago.

Because of its connections with fertility, the Rainbow Serpent is often illustrated as a vagina, and vice versa.

Some rock art has been discovered in which the Rainbow Serpent was drawn mouth open and tongue out to represent the vaginal opening and streaming menstrual blood.

The Rainbow Serpent is also identified as a healer and can pass on its properties as a healer to humans through a ritual.

Influence in Modern Culture

Sidney Nolan's Snake (1970-72), held at the Museum of Old and New Art in Hobart, is a giant Rainbow Serpent mural made of 1620 painted panels.

The Rainbow Serpent, in addition to the continuation of traditional beliefs (which can be the subject of religious controversy), is often referenced in modern culture by providing inspiration for art, film, literature, music, religion, and social movements.

For example, The Rainbow Serpent Festival, an annual music festival in Australia, and the Rainbow Serpent Project, a series of films which document the filmmaker's journey to various sacred sites around the Earth, are both inspired and named after the creature.

Furthermore, the Rainbow Serpent is used in art as a subject, even as an assignment in art classes.

For children, it is often used to teach colors and symbolism; for older art students, it is used to teach painting techniques.

Many Aboriginal Australian artists continue to be inspired by the Rainbow Serpent and use it as a subject in their art.

The Rainbow Serpent has also appeared as a character in literature.

The Lardil people's Dreaming story of the Rainbow Serpent was retold in Dick Roughsey's award-winning Australian children's book The Rainbow Serpent; the Rainbow Serpent has also appeared as a character in comic books such as Hellblazer.

The Rainbow Serpent can still serve a religious role today, particularly for Aboriginal Australians, but some Aboriginal Australians who are Christians reject the belief and resent its identification with Aboriginal culture.

Some New Age religions and spirituality movements around the world have now also adopted the Rainbow Serpent as an icon.

Similarly, the Rainbow Serpent can inspire social movements.

Art historian Georges Petitjean has suggested that the identification of the Rainbow Serpent with various genders and sexualities helps to explain why the rainbow flag has been adopted as the symbol of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender communities.

Politically, for example, the Rainbow Serpent was adopted as the symbol of an anti-uranium mining campaign in Australia, using the notion that the mining would disturb the Serpent and cause it to seek revenge as a metaphor for environmental destruction.

Notes: Serpent Stories

The Rainbow Serpent's mythology is closely linked to land, water, life, social relationships, and fertility.

Role in traditional culture

In addition to stories about the Rainbow Serpent being passed down from generation to generation, the Rainbow Serpent has been worshiped through rituals and has also inspired cultural artifacts such as artwork and songs, a tradition which continues today.

It is for this reason that men will attempt to mimic this holy process by cutting their arms and/or penises and letting their blood run over their own bodies, each other’s bodies, and even into a woman's uterus.

Men will sometimes mix their blood with a women’s menstrual blood, letting them flow together in a ceremonial unification of the sexes.

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