Dream Trackers: Yapa Art and Knowledge of the Australian Desert

Yapa is a central Australian word for 'indigenous people'. The Aboriginal notion of jukurpa is the dream as a parallel space-time, a past, present and virtual memory of the earth and the cosmos. It manifests itself as Ancestral and Eternal Beings, the myths of their adventures, the trails of their travels, the rituals, sites or sacred objects that embody their living presence.

Developed for the Lajamanu Community of Central Australia by Virtuel Bazarr and Dr Barbara Glowczenski, senior anthropologist at the Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique (CNRS), France, with support from the Institut de Recherche et Development (IRD), the Direction de la Musique et de la Danse du Ministere de la Culture and the Muret du Quai Branly, Paris, France.

Using Macintosh (Mac/PC) and French or English on the same disc.
14 hours of navigation, 500 photos, 3 hours of songs and stories in Warlpiri, 1/2 hour of film.

As part of its initiative Local and Indigenous Knowledge Systems (LINKS), and in association with the Warnayaka Art Centre and the French anthropologist/producer Barbara Glowczewski, UNESCO presents this outstanding CD-ROM, the result of her many years of work with the Warlipiri people of the Lajamanu community.

This CD-ROM represents only a fraction of the complex cultural, ritual and ecological knowledge of the Warlipiri people. It is based on the network of the fourteen Dreamings most often painted by the people of Lajamanu. In fact, all named things in nature and culture have a Dreaming, or jukurrpa, so there are thousands of stories and named Dreaming places marking the Warlipiri land, their “living book”, as they call it.

The transposition of Aboriginal cognitive mapping into an interactive map allows the user to experience the interconnectivity of indigenous cosmology, emulated by the logic of CD-ROMs or the Web. Unlike conventional linear tools, multimedia is an ideal tool to convey the dynamism and wealth of oral traditions. By strengthening the dialogue between elders and youth, it reinforces the transmission of indigenous knowledge.

TRAVEL IN THE DESERT COUNTRY OF THE WARLPIRI MEN AND WOMEN

DISCOVER THE MANY LINKS AMONG ANIMALS, PLANTS, PLACES AND PEOPLE

EXPLORE HUNDREDS OF DREAMING STORIES, SONG-LINES AND PAINTINGS

READ THE SIGNS PAINTED ON BODIES, BOARDS OR CANVAS

STUDY FILMS OF SAND STORIES, HAND SIGNS AND RITUAL DANCING

LEARN WARLPIRI WORDS AND MEANINGS

SEARCH NOTEBOOKS ON ART, COLONIZATION, HEALING OR LAND-RIGHTS

UNDERSTAND THE TABOO ON THE DECEASED’S NAMES AND PICTURES

The author has succeeded in untangling the skein of myths based on the Dreaming (jukurrpa in the Warlipiri language) that govern the life of Aboriginal people. But the dreaming in question is different from the one known to Westerners: dreaming is a “virtual space-time” in which all that exists on earth has been created at the onset by totemic heroes – plants, animals or representations of rain or fire. As they travelled, the ancestors left many traces of their passage in the form of hills, rocks or waterholes… All people that exist are thus the incarnation, the heroes, of these myths. But they must practice rituals in order to “reanimate the principles of these dreamings”, a virtual matrix of life and forms.

Christiane Galus,
Le Monde, August 2000

Minimum system requirements:
32 MB RAM, colour monitor 600 x 800 pixels
PC: Windows 95/98, 16-bit monitor
Mac: OS 8, PowerPC processor, thousands of colours