

Journey of the Soul

Pure Ecologists: Pitjandjara

Lesson 3

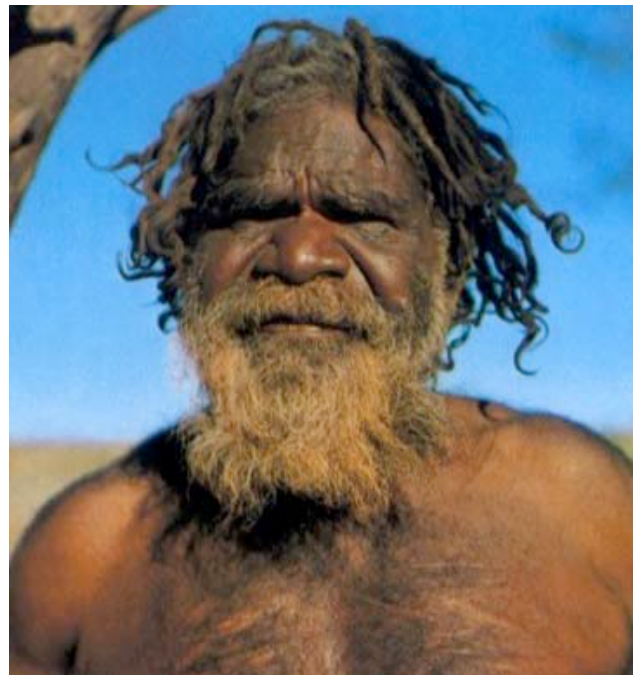
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It was an unforgettable experience to have lived among a people whose laws were so kindly and well-balanced that there is no need of warfare to maintain social equilibrium.

~ Charles P. Mountford, *Brown Men, Red Sand*.

Who are the Pitjandjara Aborigines of Australia? They are pure ecologists according to Charles P. Mountford. The following are Mountford's impressions based on his study of their culture, living and traveling with them, and upon the many courtesies and help he received from them:

They are not, like ourselves, "lords of the creation," but a part of creation itself. The great "Dream Time" progenitors of the animals, the birds and the plants, are also the progenitors of the people; the same kuranita (mysterious life essence) which vitalizes all living things also provides the Aborigines with vitality. The natives are an integral part of life around them, no greater and no less than any of its components.



The Pitjandjara do the least to disturb the environment.

The Aborigines do not destroy it beyond their immediate requirements. They are too much within the orbit of nature to understand, much less to get pleasure from useless killing. So that, although the brown men have lived in the desert country for unknown generations, away from the settlement of white man, nowhere is there any evidence of destruction by human beings; no hill - sides stripped of trees, no flats turned into dust bowls, nor are the creatures exterminated.



Seeing the unity of life links Pitjandjara to their environment.

A culture with tools so simple that the gaining of a livelihood in that desert environment is a remarkable achievement; a culture with a code of laws so well balanced that the people are at peace with each other, and in harmony with their surroundings.

Nor were the Aborigines living crudely or brutishly, as many would have us believe, but following a way of life rich in philosophical thought, in cultural expressions and communal living.

The desert is a hard taskmaster.

Although the social conditions of the desert Aborigines are almost Utopian in conception and operation, the physical conditions are strenuous, harsh and full of privation.

The Pitjandjara met the hazards of life with five simple tools, gained a livelihood with extremely limited food-gathering equipment and quickly and intelligently responded when faced with an emergency. The Pitjandjara gain an adequate livelihood in an arid environment where no white visitor could live unless he took food with him. where no white visitor could live unless he took food with him.

