ABORIGINAL SPIRITUALITY

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* Physical
* Spiritual
* Ceremonial

DREAMING

* Aboriginal belief system that encompasses a holistic approach to their spiritual and social worlds
* Involves all knowledge and understanding in Aboriginal societies
* Inextricably connected to the land, as the land is the physical medium through which the Dreaming is communicated
* It is a metatemporal concept 🡪 incorporating past, present and future as reality
* The influence of the Dreaming is embedded in all aspects of Aboriginal life
* The Dreaming is communicated through
  + Art
  + Song lines
  + Dance
  + Story
  + Ritual
  + Kinship systems
* Impacts of three areas of Aboriginal life
  + Kinship
  + Obligations to the land and people
  + Ceremonial life

KINSHIP

* Kinship refers to a complex system of belonging and responsibilities within a clan
* Based on one’s totem
* Kinship ties govern day to day life of aboriginal people by determining issues from whom an individual is permitted to talk to and marry
* Kinship ties = identify a complex system of belonging, relationships and responsibilities within a clan that are based on the Dreaming

OBLIGATIONS TO THE LAND AND PEOPLE

* Aboriginal people have traditionally regarded the land as their mother and hence have worked to deepen their understanding and appreciation of the land
* The Land acts as a dwelling place for ancestral beings
* Aboriginal people have special ritual responsibilities to take care of the Land and more importantly the sacred sites
* Balance rites 🡪 Don’t take too much off the Land

CEREMONIAL LIFE

* Art
  + Art is a way of communicating the Dreaming because it illustrates the actions of the ancestral spirit beings in the Land
  + Art has multiple levels of meaning 🡪 on a deep level art offers a narrative representation of the activity of an ancestor upon the Land
* Stories
  + Primary way of expressing the Dreaming
  + Another wat of explaining various aspects of law and tradition
  + Used to teach children of right and wrong behaviour in society
* Rituals
  + Involves the reliving of a story in a powerfully sacred way
* Totems
  + The embodiment of each individual in his or her primordial form
  + Totems carry with them ceremonial responsibilities 🡪 commonly known as balance rites
  + Balance rites = aim to assist the proliferation of a particular species , which embody an individual’s ancestral spirit being as they exist in the Dreaming

CONTINUING EFFECT OF DISPOSSESSION

* Separation from land as a result of dispossession is synonymous to a loss of identity
* This leads to the ever-present burden of not being able to fulfil ritual responsibilities
* Two main impacts
  + Separation from land
  + Separation from kinship groups
* Process went:
  + Colonisation – destruction of Aboriginal lifestyles
  + Missionisation – children into missions
  + Separation/protectionism – separation from white society
  + Assimilation – ‘breeding them out’
  + Self-determination – Aboriginals could finally decide themselves

PROTECTION POLICY

* Paternalistic policy in mid-1880s
* Aim was to ‘remove Aboriginal people from unsuitable environments’ 🡪 put them in the protection of the state by detaining them in Christian missions and government reserves
* The actual intent was to isolate Aboriginal people from the rest of the community, until their culture died out
* The restriction of the practice of the kinship system, totems and ceremonial rituals, effectively meant that an Aboriginal person’s link with their spirituality was severed
* Some benefits of the Protection Policy was the provision of healthcare and education

POLICY OF ASSIMILATION

* Government attempted to assimilate them into the white community 🡪 helping Aboriginal people would eventually ‘forget’ their cultural identity and become part of mainstream Australian society

STOLEN GENERATION

* Refers to the Aboriginal children who were removed from their homes between 1900 and 1972 in an attempt to assimilate these children into white Australian society
* Effects
  + Loss of language
  + Loss of kinship
  + Loss of traditional ceremonies

THE LAND RIGHTS MOVEMENT

* A means of addressing injustices of the past
* An important movement in helping Aboriginal people re-establish spiritual links with the land
* As Land is of significant importance to Aboriginal Spirituality, it cannot be underestimated how important the Land Rights Movement was to Aboriginals

MABO

* June 1992 the High Court ruled in favour of Eddie Mabo
  + Ruled that Aus. was in fact occupied Land at the time of British settlement in 1788
* Overturned the legal fiction that Aus. was “Terranullius”
* Ruled that a form of title (Native Title) existed under Australian law 🡪 land with ‘freehold Title’ meant Native Title couldn’t be claimed
* Native Title refers to communal or individual rights or interests of Aboriginal people in relation to Land or waters
* 1993 Native Title Act was passed
* Native Title assisted some Aboriginal groups to gain economic or social independence, so they can preserve their culture in their own way

WIK

* 1996 high court ruled in favour of the Wik people who claimed Leasehold Title may not automatically extinguish Native Title
* Native Title amendment Act 🡪 Ten Point plan (Howard)
  + This legislation effectively cut off the ability of many aboriginal groups to claim Native Title (many Aboriginals could not afford the litigation fees involved in Native Title claims)

ABORIGINAL RECONCILIATION

* + - Reconciliation = an aim of the “Aboriginal Deaths in Custody Report 1991”
    - 1991 Council for Aboriginal Reconciliation (CAR) was established to investigate “an instrument of reconciliation”
    - The Jewish faith has no history of negative interaction towards Aboriginals
    - Reconciliation involves the acknowledgement of ‘past wrongs’ (stolen generation)
    - The practice of the Christian Church toward Aboriginals were referred to as the “Hamitic Curse” or social Darwinism 🡪 inferiority of non-whites

Nominal Theology = Aboriginal people were converted to Christianity (usually through force)

* + - Belief that Christianity was the only important belief system

Liberal Theology = mixed beliefs, the blending of both Christianity and Aboriginal spirituality

Aboriginal Theology = More focused on Aboriginal beliefs (some Christian beliefs however)