

***The Pleiades and the Dreamtime: an Aboriginal Women's Story and  
Other Ancient World Traditions***

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*For Bruce I chose a story connected with stars, as his pure eyes always shone with  
crystal light and deep heartfelt welcoming.*

It is never simple to *read* sacred stories, narrations and belief systems of different cultures without running the risk of ‘appropriating’ and incorporating these stories and systems within your own, thus perpetrating a form of intellectual colonialism that has created and is still creating so much suffering (Hodge & Mishra 1991). One needs to be aware of many differences and nuances in meaning when handling myths, words, ideas, concepts, stories belonging to a different culture. On the other hand it would be wrong to follow the idea that certain subjects can be treated, read, analysed only by those who ‘belong’ to that culture. As Raimon Panikkar (2007: 80 ff.) says, *interculturality* is an imperative since *monolingualism* and *monoculturalism* (like *globalism*) are always instrument and ideology at the service of the *dominant* power in order to submit and exploit. Whenever we lose touch with the depth and riches of other cultures, our own is impoverished, and the world at large too, for only in relationship and dialogue of word, poetry, myth and song can the world *be*. Thus, following the (*song*) lines of the *partnership* literary theory as implemented by the Partnership Studies Group (PSG) at the University of Udine<sup>1</sup> in order to treat all creative and literary material with attention, care, respect, in partnership and equality, we can notice how, according to Eisler’s *Cultural Transformation Theory*:

underlying the great surface diversity of human culture are two basic models of society. The first, which I call *dominator* model, is what is popularly termed either patriarchy or matriarchy — the ranking of one half of humanity over the other. The second, in which social relations are primarily based on the principle of linking rather than ranking, may best be described as *partnership* model. In this model — beginning with the most fundamental differences in our species, between male and female — diversity is not equated with either inferiority or superiority.” (Eisler<sup>2</sup> 1987: xvi, my italics).

In our partnership line of interpretation, diversity is not equated with inferiority or superiority, nor is analogical thinking better or lesser than logical thinking, rather they are both necessary in order to fully *comprehend* the wholeness and complexity of reality, as is obvious in the most advanced fields of science, like quantum physics and non-linear or chaos theories (Kellert 1993). Aboriginal lore is very close to the

interrelatedness of things purported by quantum physics, for their songlines interweave sky and earth along ancestral paths that are timeless and everpresent, creating a *web of life* (Capra 1997). where everything is interconnected and has a 'butterfly effect' on everything else. This also happens in the case of many other world ancestral traditions that are connected to the Aboriginal one, not as a way of omogenising and generalising, but rather as a clear stance of how everything is related to everything else in the sense of non linear theories. Aboriginal texts embedded in 'native' oral traditions and narratives, as many other mythological traditions, work within an *analogical* rather than a predominantly *logical* framework. Since our established Western research methods tend to resist non-Western or non-linear (or poetic and analogical) modes of knowledge, when reading a text from *an-other* culture, we need to find a language in order to 'understand' what is relevant and common to many different areas of the world, what is specific and local but at the same time finds many echoes somewhere else. Therefore the knowledge of language studies, anthropology, history, mythology, cosmology, religious studies, and so on, needs to be re-located in a partnership relationship with the *other* that can produce a participatory research, able to cross thresholds and travel across geographical, time and cultural boundaries, in order to retrace the steps of us humans as all children of the same planet, swiftly spinning together with other stars and planets in our galaxy, within other galaxies and so on and on, back to the beginning of time, forward to the beginning of another time, so that we can recapture our own 'dreaming' (Stanner 1979). Myth is our sail across these worlds and words.

In myths all ages, societies and cultures of the world, celestial bodies, with their movements, itineraries and transits are of fundamental importance for structuring beliefs and weaving meanings into our everyday life. This essay focuses on the symbolic and archetypal features of an ancestral Aboriginal women's story, as it was transcribed by Katie Langloh Parker<sup>3</sup>, in order to study the symbolic relations and archetypal consonance and connections it has with analogous stories and myths of other traditions dealing with stars and constellations. In the Aboriginal world there are many different narrations dealing with the Pleiades, and "Where the Frost comes From" (Lambert & Parker 1993: 44-50) is an interesting example. We are told about the *Meamei*, or Pleiades, the seven beautiful sisters with long hair and resplendent bodies that shining with the many icicles that composed their bodies. A group of young men, the *Berai-Berai* used to follow the *Meamei* everywhere, always leaving special gifts for them, they brought in particular honey, as they were experts in finding beehives. The *Meamei* appreciated and ate the honey but resisted their courting. One day the old Ancestor of fire *Wurrannah* kidnapped two of the beautiful girls, trying to "warm" (44) their icicles, but the only result was that his own fire was extinguished. The two were taken to the sky, but the intensity of their shining is less than that of the other sisters, who also have become stars in the meantime. The young men let themselves die for love and they too were turned into stars: we know it as Orion's belt (Tilak 1955), but for the *Daens* (Aboriginals) it actually is the *Berai-Berai* brothers. In the sky the *Berai-Berai* continue to find honey for the *Meamei*, and, in exchange, they sing for the brothers wonderful songs as sweet as honey. In order to remind the *Daens* that in the *Dreamtime*<sup>4</sup> they had originally lived on the earth, the *Meamei* take off from their bodies some ice and let it fall upon the earth. Thus, when they see the frost the *Daens* celebrate the seven beautiful shining sisters and use the icicles to anaesthetise young boys and girls whose nose has not been pierced yet. They use the ice and then insert a magic bone, as sign of initiation into adulthood. In the meantime *Wurrannah* is still running in a fury, in search

for the sisters, and this provokes the roaring laughter of *Daendee Ghindamaylannah*, the laughing star (Venus), a relative of the *Meamei*. According to the *Daens*, when in Winter thunder is heard, this indicates that there will be rain in three days' time and that the *Meamei* are playing and jumping clangorously in the water, like *Daens*' children do: the one who makes the most noisy dive wins. This is the Aboriginal story. Let us see how its symbolism is related to other world traditions and in different epochs.

Human beings have always looked for a correspondence between micro and macrocosm in order to find spiritual explanations for natural phenomena, for the different dimensions of their earthly existence and its mystery, so that external and inner worlds could resonate in a unique galactic harmony (de Santillana Giorgio and Hertha von Dechend 1969). As for the noisy dives of the *Meamei*, deities connected to thunder, rain and vegetation are tied to the symbolic lunar and feminine cycle and in many cosmogonies they are related to the Moon; in Australia the Goddess of Storms is often portrayed while She sails on a boat which is shaped like a crescent. In ancient times the thunder was connected to the rumblings of the earth's bowels and only later it becomes the attribute of an irate male patriarchal God (Javhé, Zeus, etc.). Ancient civilisations of all the world have analogous stories describing the origins of the Pleiades; it seems that different and distant cultures have created similar motives in a similar and synchronic way, which also reminds us of the coincidence of constellations with climactic changes and seasons. The Pleiades are the meeting *place* in the skies of mythology and science and most earth peoples consider them as centres of divine energy. From time immemorial this group of stars is associated with festivities, rites and solemn ceremonies, especially at midnight on 17<sup>th</sup> November when the Pleiades reach their culmination, many were the celebrations, in different parts of the world: at Busiris in honour of Isis; in ancient Persia in that night no petition went unheard; Druids and Celtic Goddess's Priestesses led midnight rites and auspices, in connection with the midnight rising of the Pleiades. In the Tonga islands seasons run according to the rising and setting of the Pleiades in connection to the sea: the *Matarii i nia*, or season of the 'Pleiades above' begins the night when the stars appear at the horizon, and it lasts as long as the stars stay above the line of the horizon; the *Matarii i raro*, or season of the 'Pleiades below', begins when they are no more visible after sunset. Hindu imagined them as Fire, connected to *Agni* (Staal 1983), and called their month (October-November) *Kartik*, the month of the stars, celebrated in *Diwali*, (or *Divali*, or *Dibali*), the feast of lights, with gratitude and joy for the arrival of the Seven Sisters marks the beautiful and dry season (Waldherr 2006)<sup>5</sup>.

According to the *Mahabharata*, the Great Bear were originally seven *Rishi*, or sages, married with seven sisters called *Krttika*, who happily lived in the Northern skies. One day *Agni*, god of fire, emerged from the flames of a *Yajna* (sacred fire ceremony where herbs and incense and petals are offered) performed by the seven *Rishi* and he fell in love with the *Krttika*. Trying to forget his love for them, *Agni* roamed in the forest, where he met *Svaha*, the star Zeta Tauri. *Svaha*, to conquer the God's love transmuted herself in six of the seven *Krttika*, since the seventh, *Arundhati*, was so devoted to her husband that it was impossible to imitate her. Son of this love is *Skanda*, known in Tamil as *Murugan*. The *Rishi* believed their wives had betrayed them and so six of the seven *Krttika* were repudiated and fled away, becoming the Pleiades.

In another version of the mythical tale *Skanda*, also called *Kumara*, or *Subrahmanya*, Hindu God of war and first-born of *Siva*, was born to eliminate the daemon *Taraka*, who could be killed only by a son of *Siva*. *Skanda* was raised by the six wives of the *Rishi*, the *Krttika*, whence the name *Karttikeya* (“son of the *Krttika*”); he developed six faces to be able to drink the milk of his six wet-nurses.

The Maori called them *Matariki*, and their rising marks the right moment to sow the crop and to instruct the young in their traditions. The *Matariki* rise before sunrise at the end of May and at the beginning of June, and mark the end of the old year and the beginning of the new. The moment for celebration varies according to the different Maori peoples, some celebrate immediately, others wait for the full Moon or the dawn of the new Moon. There are two possible etymologies of *mata-riki*, small eyes, or *mata-ariki*, god's eyes; in both cases it means that sacred starry eyes observe and protect the Maori from above. In New Zealand there have been many attempts to render the *Matariki* an official festivity and in 2001 the Commission for the safeguard of Maori culture stressed the fact that *Matariki* is a fundamental event to preserve and give value to the different Maori languages and traditions.

At Lewis, in the External Hebrides, also the Callanish stones circle seems to be connected to the Seven Sisters<sup>6</sup>. The circle is made of a hard rock, known as “Lewisian Gneiss”, that can be found almost exclusively in the island itself. A legend says that St. Ciaran<sup>7</sup> tried to build a church in the place where the stone circle is situated asking for the help of some giants who refused; the saint transformed them in stones and called them “Fir Chreig” or “False men”. It is said that at midsummer sunrise the main Callanish stone, known as “The Shining One”, goes for a walk along the central alley, hailed by the cuckoo's song. All the Callanish could be defined “the shimmering ones”, since their crystalline and silver structure reflects the light in a special way, in particular at dawn and sunset, when the stones, protruding like long fingers pointing at the sun, seem to open a threshold between worlds; and the Callanish stand there, the iridescent priestesses and custodians of the door between worlds. Moreover and most importantly, the stones are connected to ancient Goddess rites, in fact there is an remarkable mountain (called in Gaelic 'na Mointeach or the Old Woman of the Moors) that forms the profile of a sleeping woman-goddess when viewed from the Callanish stone circle. She is now called “Sleeping Beauty” or “Sleeping Mother” but the definition that most clearly explains its role in ancient rituals is “Sleeping Goddess”. Here too we can experience the motion of stars and moon since at the major southern standstill of the moon, every 18.6 years (the last event was in 2006), the moon appears to rise out of the Goddess's legs, creep low along her body, silhouetting first one part and then another, hang low over her breasts, and then disappear behind a hillock, only to reappear inside the circle of stones at the foot of the tallest central one and at the head of the burial cairn. This spectacular sight is a perfect blending of magic, astronomy, ritual, landscape and megalithic Goddess mythology.

Connected to the changing of seasons is the first cuckoo's song that according to Celtic folklore saluted the first sunrise of the first midsummer's day. The cuckoo is considered as an emissary of “Tir na nOg”, the Land of youth, which corresponds to many *other* worlds of ancient mythology: the Greek Elysium, the Celtic Avalon (the Reign of the apple), the Platonic Atlantis, the biblical Garden of Eden.

Until recent times the “First Cuckoo Day” was celebrated in all of Great Britain on the first Monday, eight days after Easter. Another legend says that Jesus asked a disciple to fetch him some bread, but the baker refused to prepare it; on the advice of the baker’s wife, her daughter stole a loaf of bread from her father and gave it to Jesus, who, as a reward transformed her into the Pleiades; the baker became the cuckoo who is said to appear when the constellation shines in the sky.

The cuckoo, like the Pleiades, symbolises the arrival of Spring and its disappearance during the Winter months marks the absence of the sun for the Northern peoples. Many believed that the cuckoo disappeared in the “Land of fairies”, or middle world, or became the falcon, solar bird associated to the Egyptian god Ra, and to the Greek Apollo.

In Greek mythology the Pleiades are a group of virgins who flee from Orion the hunter and are akin to the doves of the rock (*péleiádes*) into which they transformed in order to fly in the sky<sup>8</sup>. One of the Pleiades’ function is that of taking the rejuvenating ambrosia to Zeus. In more recent times the dove is emblem of feminine virtues, but in Greece it was used to interpret the auguries and prophesise in Dodona forest where the Goddess Dione was adored, successively displaced by Zeus (Durand 1963)<sup>9</sup>. The oracular responses were emanated listening to and interpreting the rustling of foliage in the oak where doves sacred to the Goddess lived. The speaking plank of the ship Argo came from a Dodona oak<sup>10</sup>. In ancient times the dove was Aphrodite’s bird and it was given as a gift to lovers, as a spiritual and sensual love token. Some scholars derive the word Pleiades from the Greek *peleiades*, ‘flock of doves’, because of their mythological transformation; or from *pleos*, ‘full’, appropriate for the star cluster, or from *pléion*, ‘plus’, for they are numerous, like in the biblical *Kimah* or in the Arabic *Al Thuruyya*, the group<sup>11</sup>; others think the name derives from or from *pléin*, to sail, for the heliac rising of the stars in May marked the beginning of the sailing season for the Greek and its setting in late Autumn (November) indicated its ending. Moreover it is possible to connect their name to Pleione, the nymph who was Atlas’s bride and mother of the seven sisters, thus making Pleione the ‘sailing queen’ and her daughters the ‘sailing ones’. The cluster’s conjunction with the sun in spring and opposition in fall marked the start and end of the summer sailing season in ancient Greece.

In ancient Egypt the Pleiades were the Goddess *Net* or *Neith*, the divine mother or Lady of the skies; in China they were the Stars of Blooming or the Head of the White Tiger; for the Pitjantjatjara they are *Kungkarungkara*, the ancestral women; for the Adnyamathanha they are *Makara*, the wives of stars; in Japan it is Subaru, collected together, or *Hoki Boshi*, gouts of paint in the sky, or brush stars; for the South African tribe Khoikhoi they are *Khseti*, the stars of rain; for the Aztecs *Tianquiztli*, marketplace or meeting place (Carrasco 1999; 2002), for the Incas it is the Sower; the Hens and Chicks in ancient English and German, in Russian, Czech and Hungarian; for the Vikings they are Freya’s hens; the Greek astronomer Eudoxus of Cnidus (c. 400-350 BCE<sup>12</sup>) saw them as a true constellation (Evans); the ancient Paraguayan tribe of the Abipones adored them as their ancestresses.

In the Jewish and in the Hindu traditions the Pleiades constitutes the central group of sidereal symbolism, they indicate the septenary, that is the image of space, sound and action (Mertens 2000). For the Celts their disappearance indicated the opening of the

threshold between worlds when the living could see and talk to their ancestors: it is *All Hallows Eve*, later Christianised in All Saints' day (Taraglio 1997; Cattabiani 2002: 357-58). The seven sister is a very common definition and we find it in the Aboriginal story and also in English poetry, from Chaucer's "Atlantes doughtres seven" by, to Milton's "Seven Atlantic Sisters" (remindful of the Virgil's "Eoæ Atlantides"), and Keats' "Starry Seven, old Atlas's Children".

Therefore, the antipodean story "Where the Frost comes From" is full of consonances with all the other myths dealing with the Pleiades. In the Aboriginal world view this is explained with the concept of *Songlines* (Bradley 2010, Breen 1989, Robinson 1970, Ryan 1990, Sutton 1988, Watson 1989), lines or paths of the songs, that are intimately connected with the electromagnetic lines of the Earth that cross and form a web of poetic meaning that also ties us to the cosmos. This because their 'country' is a multidimensional reality consisting of animals, peoples, minerals, plants, herbs, waters, earth, sea, air and sky: "If a sea country is an unexpected concept, 'sky country' may be even more so. For many people this is where the lightning men and women live, where their dead relations may be living, and where creative beings have travelled and stopped" (Bird Rose 1996: 8). Fred Briggs, a Ngeamba man from what is now called New South Wales describes the link between sky and earth country and the changing of seasons:

#### *The Star Tribes*

Look, among the boughs. Those stars are men.  
There's Nginty, with his dog, who guards the skins  
of Everlasting Water in the sky.  
And there is the Crow-man, carrying on his back  
the wounded Hawk-man. There's Kapeetah,  
the Moon-man, sitting in his mia-mia.

And there's those Seven Sister, travelling  
across the sky. They make the real cold frost.  
You hear them when you're camped out on the plains.  
They look down from the sky and see your fire  
and 'Mai, mai, mai,' they'd sing out as they run  
across the sky. And, when you wake, you find  
your swag, the camp, the plains, all white with frost (Robinson 1970: 25).

The events in the sky find consonances and harmonic correspondences with what happens on the earth; the world of the Ancestors interweaves with the contemporary time. Tracing the steps of their mythical ancestors, Aboriginal peoples enter these stories through the telling and the singing in order to re-make the sacredness of their paths and the land they are custodian of. This ancient tradition was also alive for many peoples of Ancient Europe (Gimbutas 1982, Adams 1993, Rigby 2001). In Pre-vedic India (Klostermaier 1998) the Pleiades were also called the Seven Mothers of the Sky and they were equanimous priestesses of justice. We find this equanimity and detachment in the *Meamei*, who as priestesses of the Goddess can accept human devotion and love, even the sexual love of the young *Berai-Berai*, but cannot accept to marry them, they need to stay 'virgin' that is totally free (Bolen 1985). The young men offer them honey (symbol of sexual pleasure and joy), often assimilated to the divine ambrosia that in Greek mythology the Pleiades give to the child Zeus, in a modern

patriarchal and androcratic (Eisler, 1987) overturning of the ritual offering to the sacred feminine (mettere in nota alla fine For the symbolism of honey and bees see: Cattabiani 2000: 49-61; Cattabiani 2001: 157-64; Chevalier and Gheerbrandt 1969).

Honey is the symbol of feminine sensuality, of the physical and spiritual nourishment given by the Goddess. Virgil calls it the celestial gift of dew, since dew, like the frost of the Aboriginal story indicates initiation, supreme spiritual bliss; it is a sacred contact, refreshing and rejuvenating between the sky and the earth, the god and goddess. For Hindus it is *soma*, the drink of goddesses and gods that renders humans immortal; in the *Atharva Veda* (91) it is said: "Oh, Ashvin, pour on me the bees' juice, o lords of splendor, so that I can address towards human beings a word full of light" (Miller, 1974, 1985; Panikkar, 1977; Zimmer 1946). The role of honey is always connected to milk and both are gifts of the Mother Goddess (Pattanaik 2000): milk is the essence of the intimacy created between mother and child, honey which can be found in the cavities of trees is, as the *Upanishad* say, the symbol of the heart of things (Radhakrishnan, 1952; Raphael 1992). Milk and honey belong to maternity, while wine is more connected to the Dionysian principle. The queen bee represents both the luminous and tenebrous aspects of the Goddess. Cybele was depicted like a Queen-Bee (Ferrari) because she enclosed her lover in heather, a favourite flower for bees, and also because Her priests castrated themselves to become Her bridegrooms, like the drone is castrated by the queen-bee after mating. The bee has a luminous aspect, for it travels among flowers following the position of the sun, it produces honey which has the same colour of the sun. For the Celts bees are messengers travelling along the paths of sunlight towards the spiritual reigns; they are creatures associated to the knowledge of the future and to spiritual inspiration. Symbol of regeneration and epiphany of the Goddess of Regeneration, according to Porphyry, bees were the souls of priestesses who had served Aphrodite (or Venus) especially in the temple of Erice, where she was represented by the honeycomb. According to Bachofen (1988), the life of bees represents a gynaeocracy in its clearest and purest configuration: every hive has its queen; she is mother of the whole progeny, then there are the male drones, involved only in reproduction. Therefore the bee appears like a representation of the natural feminine power, of terrestrial matter and of the laboriousness that artistically creates things. Thence the importance of honey and its connection with maternity in different cultures: according to Heraclides, the women of Siracusa used to prepare bread with honey that had the form of female genitalia; Indian women used to sprinkle honey on the genitals of the bride in occasion of her wedding; in Germany the flower of Melissa was called herb-mother and was considered particularly effective to cure the problems of the feminine genitalia; *melissae*, or bees, were the priestesses of the Goddess Artemis in the Ephesus temple; they were accompanied in the ceremonies and rituals by eunuch priests called Essenes, or drones (Walker 1983; 1988: 414 and 488). The symbolism involving honey is subtle, complex and articulated. Water can be blended with honey before consuming it and this is one of the reasons of its sacredness: it perfectly represents the marriage between dry and moist. Honey often appears in myths as an alimentary metaphor for sexuality and being greedy for honey, like the *Meamei* appear to be, corresponds on the nutritive plane to a great sexual desire, and may be the myth also indicates this meaning and is connected to and evokes the sacred sexuality of the Goddess's priestesses, who were totally free from marital ties, that is they were 'virgin' in the original sense (Bolen 1985). Also in Italy there are young women who are 'mad for honey' and the 'honeymoon' is a happy period, associated with an intense and

joyous sexual activity. In primordial times, when a stable union between the dry and moist principles (or the sky and earth) governed the planet, human beings could count on an infinite supply of 'honey'. Honey, together with wine, is also used as an intoxicating and ecstatic substance, it is a 'divine filter' that had the faculty to reanimate, give enthusiasm and sexual power, warmth, and immortality. For the ancient peoples the process of wine production or whiskey or hydromel was so mysterious and the final product so sacred (like any other substance that could induce modified states of consciousness) that every phase was always preceded and accompanied with sacred rituals. For the ancients the fermentation process was similar to the spiritual transformation taking place during an initiation ceremony; fermentation seems to be a specular image of the transformation occurring in the participants to the sacred mysteries. For this reason alcohol is also called 'spirit'. In different traditions a state of inebriation allowed the transition, it bridged the ecstatic conscience of the participant across the threshold between worlds (Abraham; Ferraro; Gimbutas; Markale).

Thus, the death of the young *Berai-Berai* in their pining love corresponds to this passage: it is the yearning of the human soul for the disembodied state, represented by the sister who have been transmuted into stars; in the end the young men join them, thanks to their intense devotion and love for the feminine principle.

This sacred bond is contaminated by the attempt to rape two of the sisters by the old *Wurrunnah*. The rape of young beautiful women/priestesses on the part of elderly 'gods' is often represented in myths and it represents the attempt on the part of 'dominator' or 'androcratic' (Eilser 1987) religions to disparage, debase and vilify through physical violence the divine feminine power of ancient Goddess priestesses.

*Wurrunnah*, like *Agni*, tries to 'heat' the icicles of frost of the two sisters he kidnapped, succeeding only in extinguishing his own fire. Like in Tantra or Tao, the heat and power of sacred sexuality can be activated only by the feminine principle, otherwise true initiation cannot happen. The true union is accomplished only through and in the physical body, in the sidereal and partnership conjunction of male and female, sky and earth. The frost composing the bodies of the seven sisters indicates the crystalline purity and energy of purifying water. Stars and crystals are a concentration of celestial fire that has 'crystallised' in visible light, in extremely high temperatures and in unimaginable and remote times. Frost too is in consonance with this cosmic harmony; it shows maximum purity and unity in its every molecule and atom, a mirable perfection that can reflect the purest white light. This scintillating beauty bedazzles human beings that feel ecstatic and in awe at the same time. Like the sunflowers (*Heliantus annuus*), affable and smiling giants, turn towards the Sun and are inundated and intoxicated with light, so the *Berai-Berai* carry honey and dance in their nightly ceremonies for the *Meamei*, who correspond and sing in gratitude for the brothers, thus reawakening in us the memory, yearning and nostalgia for our stellar existence – crystal light and heartfelt welcome.

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<sup>1</sup> For the PSG: [http://all.uniud.it/?page\\_id=195](http://all.uniud.it/?page_id=195); for the book series: <http://www.forumeditrice.it/percorsi/lingua-e-letteratura/all/?text=all-english>. See also Riem and Albarea 2003, Riem 2004, 2007B, Riem *et al.* 2003, 2007, 2010.

<sup>2</sup> Riane Eisler (1987, 1995, 2000, 2002, 2007) is a social scientist, attorney, and author whose work on cultural transformation has inspired both scholars and social activists. Her research has impacted many fields, including history, economics, psychology, sociology, and education. She has been a leader in the movement for peace, sustainability, and economic equity, and her pioneering work in human rights has expanded the focus of international organizations to include the rights of women and children. Riane Eisler was born in Vienna, fled from the Nazis with her parents to Cuba, and later emigrated to the United States. Eisler is the only woman among 20 great thinkers including Hegel, Adam Smith, Marx, and Toynbee selected for inclusion in *Macrohistory and Macrohistorians* in recognition of the lasting importance of her work as a cultural historian and evolutionary theorist. She has received many honours and is included in the award-winning book *Great Peacemakers* as one of 20 leaders for world peace, along with Mahatma Gandhi, Mother Teresa, and Martin Luther King. See: <http://www.rianeeisler.com/> and <http://www.partnershipway.org/>; see also: [http://www.forumeditrice.it/percorsi/lingua-e-letteratura/all/il-calice-e-la-spada/il-calice-e-la-spada/libro\\_view](http://www.forumeditrice.it/percorsi/lingua-e-letteratura/all/il-calice-e-la-spada/il-calice-e-la-spada/libro_view).

<sup>3</sup> The version of the story used here is that collected by Katie Langloh Parker in 1898. Katie Langloh Parker was saved from drowning by an Aboriginal girl and from then onwards Kate took a deep interest in Aboriginal culture. Aboriginal women trusted her, thinking she was a curious and respectful friend; for this reason she was among the first among the whites to be able to hear and transmit in particular Aboriginal women's sacred and secret stories, that would have never been told to white male anthropologists as they were often secret even to Aboriginal men of their tribes. Johanna Lambert (1993) collected, commented and published some of the stories transcribed by Langloh Parker, like the story "Where the frost comes from" (44-50) which I use here. For the analysis of other stories from Lambert's

volume see: Riem 2003A-B-C, 2006, 2007A. Some other works by Katie Langloh Parker 1905, 1896, 1918; on her life: Muir 1982.

<sup>4</sup> On the *Dreamtime* see also: Cowan 1989, 1991, 1993, 1994 (with a good bibliography on anthropological studies); on the 'feminine' *Dreamtime* see: Bell 1983.

<sup>5</sup> According to other traditions, *Divali* is also the Triune Goddess's festival: she is represented by *Sarasvati*, *Brama's Sakti*, *Laksmi*, *Visnu's Sakti* and *Kali*, *Siva's Sakti*. See on the subject: Waldherr 2006.

<sup>6</sup> For a discussion on astronomical alignments see: Roy 1980, Hawkins 1965.

<sup>7</sup> Christianity reached Ireland some years before Saint Patrick and it is said that Ciaran is one of the first Irish saints. Of royal birth, he was born on the island of Clear, in the south of Ireland. He had a special affinity with animals and the legend tells that he Ciaran prayed for a little bird taken from its nest by a falcon. The falcon let the little bird that immediately revived at Ciaran's feet. After studying in Rome, where he became Bishop, Ciaran choose the life of a hermit in the Irish Midlands, where animals were his only companions; it is said that a wild boar helped the saint to build a shelter for himself. Ciaran later founded the monastery of Saigher; he was a sort of shaman priest and could carry on miraculous healings and also throw spells: he showed his disapproval to King Alill rendering him mute for a whole week.

<sup>8</sup> The Pleiades had the following epithets: *Atlantiades*, as Atlas's daughters, and *Vergiliae*, maybe from the Latin. *vergo*, decline, swoop. Among the many works where the Pleiades are mentioned, we remember Hesiod's *Works*, the *Fables* and *Poeticon Astronomicon* by D. C. Hyginus; the *Phenomena* by Aratus and the *Fasti* by Ovid.

<sup>9</sup> According to Durand, the dove is Venus's bird, and it is often found in ctonic and sexual contexts; at the same time it is the Holy Spirit, the mother of the word or *Sophia*. In Christian mythology the sexual role of the dove is totally sublimated.

<sup>10</sup> See: Homer, *Iliad* 16.233-5, *Odyssey* 14.327-8; Erodotos 2.55; Apollonius of Rhodi, *Argonautics* 1.527; Pausanias, *Description of Greece*, 8.23.5, 10.12.10. See: Graves, March.

<sup>11</sup> Cattabiani, 1998: 63-66; on p. 65: "In realtà le Sette Sorelle [...] sono oltre novecento, se ne vedono col binocolo alcune decine, ma a occhio nudo sei o al massimo sette [...]". "In reality the Seven Sisters [...] are more than nine hundred; you can see some dickers with a binocular, but only six or maximum seven with the naked eye." (my translation).

<sup>12</sup> See Stefano Mercanti's Partnership Glossary : <http://www.partnershipway.org/about-cps/foundational-concepts/the-challenge-of-language/SACRED%20PLEASURE%20glossary%201oct.pdf/view>: "BCE: in order to promote partnership values, "BCE," "Before the Common Era," is used instead of the patronizing "BC" to respect all the world's spiritual and religious beliefs. The same is true for "CE," "Common Era," instead of "AD."