

At the end of their creative period, the beings simply reabsorbed themselves into the landscape at places of their particular creativity thus becoming indissolubly associated with particular localities and landforms.

Aboriginal spirituality is thus strongly influenced by animistic beliefs where all of nature and the environment is imbued with spiritual forces.

There is little evidence for a single overarching creative power or ancestral being despite early missionary efforts to identify such. In the eastern part of the continent some sources suggest that the ancestral figures called Baiame (NSW) and Bunjil (Victoria) approach the notion of a dominant creator being, but it is difficult to unravel what was reality, and what was projected by the zeal of early missionaries to identify a creative force onto which they could graft the Christo-Judaic God. Some scholars argue that the almost universal prevalence of the Rainbow Serpent in Aboriginal Australian Dreamings amounts to a prototype of a single creative power. The search for such manifestations smacks of ethnocentric projections onto a spirituality which sought no subservience to any one source but rather celebrated all being as part of the great cosmic order.

There is little of the dogmatic context, structured hierarchy and separation of the sacred and the profane that pertains to conventional religion. The Dreamings are both accessible and transcendental in their everyday bearing on those who live the Dreaming. In David Hope's unique synthesis of Aboriginal spirituality, Aboriginal people are archetypal exponents of menticulture, that is a state of mental or spiritual connectedness to the land and its transcendent meanings which can only be activated by a detailed and cumulative cultural "reading" and bonding with the land, nature and all expressions of the physical environment as encapsulated in the Dreaming.

The stories of ancestral wanderings are perpetuated in vibrant oral histories or Dreaming stories, songs, dances and ceremonial cycles also referred to as Dreamings, which are handed down from generation to generation giving each group their distinctive historical, cultural and spiritual framework. While each Dreaming story is firmly anchored in its local area, many stories extend beyond the boundaries of any one language group, and like the *Seven Sisters Dreaming* or the *Rainbow Serpent Dreaming* may extend across several language groups or even traverse the continent.