

The White Lions of Timbavati

by Robert Powell

In a small and remote area called Timbavati, located in the northeast region of South Africa next to the world famous Kruger National Park, [what many people believe to be] the most sacred animal on the African continent, and perhaps on the planet, has re-emerged after centuries of invisibility. The first reported sightings of this seemingly mythical creature occurred in the 1930's but were disregarded as pure fantasy. It was only in 1975 that Chris McBride, an animal biologist, officially verified their existence through photographic evidence after his family stumbled across a miraculous occurrence—white lions with coats as pure as the whitest snow.



African Sangomas (indigenous priests) have long since recognized White Lions as the direct messengers of the divine, embodying a sacred essence that balances our planet's ecosystems, and brings true leadership among living beings. White Lions are said to have been the first animals created on Earth and [it is said that they will be] the last ones to roar if our times were to come to an end. Significantly, the precise location of their emergence, Timbavati, is in exact longitude alignment with the Sphinx, humankind's oldest lion riddle.

Timbavati means "the place where the star lions came down." The local Shangaan tribesmen believe that the White Lions came down from the stars to herald a new era for humanity and the Earth.¹

White lions are said to be indigenous to the Timbavati region of South Africa for centuries, although the earliest recorded sighting in this region was 1938. Regarded as divine by locals, white lions first came to public attention in the 1970s in Chris McBride's book *The White Lions of Timbavati*. Up until 2009, when the first pride of white lions was reintroduced to the wild, it was widely believed that the white lion could not survive in the wild. It is for this reason that a large part of the population of white lions are now in zoos. Another large part, however, are bred in camps, for canned hunting trophies. The white lions of the Global White Lion Protection Trust (WLT) have been reintroduced into their natural habitat and have been hunting and breeding successfully without human intervention for a significant amount of time. White lions in South Africa are currently being bred almost exclusively for hunting, but Linda Tucker (the founder of WLT and author of *The Mystery of the White Lions: Children of the Sun God*) and her team are trying to change the South African hunting laws.²

As Linda Tucker says, we need to get our strength back. The real strength we can gain is from reconnecting with Nature, and the White Lion is a most powerful symbol of enlightenment,

¹ From the website of the Global White Lions Trust—www.whitelions.org.

² From the Wikipedia article: The White Lions of Timbavati.

strength, and leadership. If we connect with this symbol and become part of its protection, we will be empowered as individuals.

The lion is often referred to as the “king of the animals” (there are few animals that would dare to challenge a lion). Being special among the lions, the white lion has been referred to as “king of kings.” This name brings the white lion into association with Christ, as this is also a designation given to him: “On his robe and on his thigh he has this name written: KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS” (Revelation 19:16). In this meditation we shall explore the Christ-Lion association further.

The Lion of Judah—representing Christ Jesus, who was from the tribe of Judah—is mentioned in Revelation 5:5: “Then one of the elders said to me, ‘Do not weep! See, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has triumphed. He is able to open the scroll and its seven seals.’” How may we understand the relationship of Christ to the sign of Leo—that is, to the constellation of the Lion—and to the mystery of the white lions of Timbavati, the place where the star lions came down to Earth?—the “star lion” understood archetypally as the constellation of Leo.

In his manifestation as the Cosmic Christ to John on the island of Patmos, he introduces himself with the words, “I AM the alpha and the omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end” (Revelation 1:8). With these words he indicates that he is the overseer of the entire evolution of the Earth and humanity, from Ancient Saturn, the first stage (“alpha”) of cosmic evolution, when the rudiments of the physical bodies of human beings were created and established, until Vulcan, the octave of Ancient Saturn, the final goal (“omega”) of cosmic evolution, that of resurrection, with the resurrection body as the spiritualized physical body permeated and transformed by the power of divine light, divine love, and divine life.³ Long before the Earth physically existed, under the guidance of the Cosmic Christ, the Ancient Saturn stage of evolution began with the in-streaming of cosmic forces from the heavenly sign of Leo to create the spiritual archetype of the human heart. It is through the organ of the heart, and through the constellation of Leo, that every human being is connected, from the beginning, with Christ. And this connection is the focus of part (5) of the meditation described in five parts below.

The profundity of Christ’s relationship with Leo is indicated by considering that two of the seven miracles described in the Gospel of John—the healing of the nobleman’s son (10½° Leo) and the raising of Lazarus (3° Leo)—were fulfilled when the Sun was in this constellation, the raising of Lazarus from the dead being the greatest of all of the miracles performed by Christ prior to the Mystery of Golgotha. And, moreover, the Moon was in Leo at three great and significant events: the baptism of Jesus in the River Jordan (16° Leo), the raising of Lazarus (4½° Leo), and the descent of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost (25° Leo).⁴ It is noteworthy that at Christ’s greatest miracle, the raising of Lazarus from the dead, it was New Moon, i.e. the Sun and Moon were together in Leo, in conjunction, in close proximity to the star Regulus (5° Leo) marking the heart of the Lion,

³ Robert Powell, *Cultivating Inner Radiance and the Body of Immortality* (Great Barrington, MA: SteinerBooks, 2012), chapter 5, describes the stages of cosmic evolution from “alpha” to “omega”.

⁴ Robert Powell, *Chronicle of the Living Christ* (Great Barrington, MA: SteinerBooks, 1996) gives all the zodiacal longitudes indicated here, with scientific confirmation of their validity.

Regulus being a most significant star in relation to the mystery of the white lions, since Regulus, as well as participating with the other stars in Leo in forming the physical heart, is directly associated with the heart chakra.

As described in my book *Cultivating Inner Radiance and the Body of Immortality* referred to above, the era in which we are living since the 1930's is the time of a new manifestation of Christ—now in an etheric body, in contrast to his incarnation in a physical body two thousand years ago—and this time his coming is not just for human beings but also for the world of Nature. Signs of renewal in Nature can be anticipated as an expression of the coming of the Etheric Christ, and the first sighted appearance of a white lion in Timbavati in the 1930s can be seen as just such a sign of renewal, bearing in mind the association of Christ, as the Lion of Judah, with the lion. In support of this, knowing that Christ's etheric return is for the world of Nature—for the spiritualization of the Earth and, ultimately, for the creation of the "New Earth" (Revelation 21:1)—and holding in consciousness the role of lions at the apex of the animal kingdom, the appearance of the white lion is indeed a sign of Christ's return to the Earth.

It was with great anticipation that the Sophia Foundation made this pilgrimage to South Africa, the central focus of the trip being the encounter with the White Lions of Timbavati. For the Sophia Foundation was founded in dedication to Divine Sophia, who holds the overview of the Divine Plan of spiritual evolution in her being. It is Sophia who indicates to us the "signs of the times," among them the special sign of the first sighting of a White Lion at Timbavati in 1938, at the very time of the onset of the reappearance of Christ in the etheric realm.⁵ The unearthly appearance of the White Lions, known also as "Ancestral Bringers of Light" and "Children of the Sun," leads us into inner connection with the Etheric Christ as the Light of the World, the Sun Spirit, now bearing spiritual sunlight not only to humanity, but also to nature.

Against this background, the following meditation in five parts, culminating in part (5) with the second verse of the Foundation Stone of Love, helped us to prepare for our pilgrimage to South Africa. As background to this meditation, let us recall that Judah, one of the twelve sons of Jacob-Israel, displayed great courage in Egypt at the time when he and his brothers were sent there by their father to obtain food from the Pharaoh, when Judah offered himself as hostage in place of his brother Benjamin. His courage was born of compassion for his father Jacob, whom he knew would be heartbroken if his sons returned from Egypt without Benjamin, his youngest son, the brother of Joseph. (Joseph and Benjamin were the two sons of Jacob's wife Rachel, who had died in giving birth to Benjamin.) Jacob, like his eleven sons, was living in the belief that Joseph had died. Judah's courage gave rise to his free decision to sacrifice himself, and, in turn, this decision was born of compassion. Compassion—freedom—courage: it is this that connects Judah with the sign of Leo, whose virtue is "compassion becomes freedom." Here, now, with the meditation—drawn in parts (1) and (2) from Valentin Tomberg's words:

⁵ Rudolf Steiner, *Isis—Mary—Sophia* (Great Barrington, MA: SteinerBooks, 2003), p. 213: "Christ will appear in spiritual form during the twentieth century not simply because something happens outwardly, but to the extent that we find the power represented by Holy Sophia."

(1) Christ is here for nature. He is present in the kingdoms of nature, filling nature with a blessing she has not experienced before. Through the presence of Christ, nature is becoming good, again radiating trust and kindness toward human beings.⁶

(2) Christ is called the Lion of Judah. This speaks to us of the courage he bestows—the courage to toil, to bear suffering, and to face death. He, the Lion of Judah, is the source of courage.⁷

(3) The White Lion is his representative in Nature, speaking to us of Christ's etheric return. The whiteness of the lions is an expression of Christ's divine light ("purest outpoured light"), and the lion nature communicates strength and courage as well as other heart qualities to us. And the gaze of the blue eyes of the White Lion speak to us of Christ's love, a love which communicates itself to the human soul, a love for the whole of creation, of which the White Lions are the pinnacle here on Earth—of the animal, plant, and mineral kingdoms.

(4) The White Lions of Timbavati, some 24½° south of the equator, appear on the same longitudinal meridian, 31° east of the Greenwich meridian, as the Sphinx, which lies 30° north of the equator. As Rudolf Steiner indicates in his lectures on *Egyptian Myths and Mysteries*: "Where the 'I' grew strong, a being evolved that should actually be called a union of the three other natures, for the 'I' harmonizes all three members. In this group the clairvoyant actually has before him what has been preserved in the *Sphinx*, for the Sphinx has the lion-body, the eagle-wings, something of the bull form...and then at the front there is the human face, which harmonizes the other parts." The White Lions lead us in a living way to contemplate the mystery of the Sphinx, one level of which has to do with the 'I' harmonizing the will (represented by the Bull), the feeling life (represented by the Lion), and the thought life (represented by the Eagle).⁸

(5) In relation to humankind, the mission of Christ with his etheric return, his second coming, is to awaken the seed of the higher or spirit self by harmonizing—through the I AM presence of Christ in the human 'I'—the soul faculties of thinking, feeling, and the will. The mystery of the Sphinx, understood in relation to the manifestation of the White Lions of Timbavati, speaks to us of the human being of the future, in whom the I AM presence balances and harmonizes thought, feeling, and will. In the words of Valentin Tomberg from his *Studies on the Foundation Stone*, a meditation given through Rudolf Steiner to humanity by Christ in order to call forth the spirit self at this time of Christ's second coming: "The significance of the Foundation Stone for the animal

⁶ Valentin Tomberg, Diary entry for June 3, 1933—*Mitteilungen über das Geheimnis des ätherischen Christus* ("Communications about the Mystery of the Etheric Christ"), translated and published in: Robert Powell, *Hermetic Astrology, vol. 1: Astrology and Reincarnation* (San Rafael, CA: Sophia Foundation Press, 2006), pp. 324-327.

⁷ Valentin Tomberg, from the *Lord's Prayer Course* (translated by RP and available in installments from the Sophia Foundation—www.sophiafoundation.org).

⁸ The Bull, the Lion, and the Eagle are three of the holy living creatures around the throne of God (Revelation 4: 7). The fourth holy living creature is the one with a human face, corresponding to the zodiacal sign of Aquarius, the Water Bearer. Similarly, the Bull corresponds to Taurus, the Lion to Leo, and the Eagle to Scorpio, which in ancient times was seen as an Eagle. In other words, the four holy living creatures are the divine beings (Seraphim, Cherubim, Thrones) belonging to the four fixed constellations of the zodiac: Taurus, Leo, Scorpio, and Aquarius. Something of the mystery of the Sphinx, as a composite of the four holy living creatures, is called forth in contemplating Ezekiel's vision: "Out of the midst thereof [of the brightness] came the likeness of four living creatures....And every one had four faces, and every one had four wings. As for the likeness of their faces, the four had the face of a man, and the face of a lion, on the right side: and the four had the face of an ox on the left side; the four also had the face of an eagle" (Ezekiel 1: 5, 10).

kingdom is that the verses allow the primeval picture of the 'bull', the 'lion', the 'eagle,' and the 'human being' to arise from the depths. Work on the Foundation Stone is fundamental to beginning the task of freeing the animal kingdom, not simply because it is a meditation...but because it also contains in its four verses the spiritual forces of redemption of the archetypal beings of the animal kingdom. Thus the first verse of the Foundation Stone is the verse that carries the force of redemption for those animals representative of 'metabolism'.⁹ The second verse relates to those animal beings who have their characteristic attribute in the 'breast system'.¹⁰ The third verse has significance for the part of the animal kingdom that has found its origin in the one-sided forming of the 'head organization'.¹¹ The fourth verse, however, relates to the part of humankind that now stands in danger of gradually losing its humanity, allowing a future animal/human kingdom to arise.¹² The animal kingdom is transformed inasmuch as it is freed from spiritual sunlessness through the efforts of the advanced part of humankind." Here the task of human beings is indicated: to participate with Christ in his second coming in the redemption of the kingdoms of nature, a work that can only be undertaken in love, and hence the importance of the Foundation Stone of Love, the second verse of which relates to the mystery of the White Lions, who manifest here on the Earth the majesty of the "beat of heart and lung"—

Human Soul!

Thou livest in the beat of heart and lung
 Which leads thee through the Rhythm of Time
 Into the realm of thine own soul's feeling.
 Practice *Spirit Awareness*
 In balance of the soul,
 Where the Surging Deeds
 of the World's Becoming
 Thine own I
 Unite with the World I.
 And thou wilt truly *feel*
 In Human Soul Weaving.

For the Christ Will

 in the encircling Round holds sway
 In Rhythms of Worlds
 Bestowing Grace on the soul:
Kyriotetes, Dynamis, Exusiai!
 Let there be fired from the East
 What in the West is formed.
 This speaks:
In Christo morimur.
 The Spirits of the Elements hear it:
 In East, West, North, South –
 May human beings hear it.

⁹ Traditionally represented by the Bull.

¹⁰ Traditionally represented by the Lion.

¹¹ Traditionally represented by the Eagle.

¹² On this account the fourth verse is directed to Christ, who is the bearer of the true 'I' according to the words of St. Paul: 'Not I, but Christ in me.'

Commentary:

The whole Foundation Stone of Love meditation given by Rudolf Steiner in December 1923 was suitable as a meditation for this pilgrimage, whereby Valentin Tomberg's *Studies on the Foundation Stone* offer a path of entry into the Foundation Stone of Love in a living way.¹³ For our meditation for South Africa, it was especially the second verse of the Foundation Stone meditation that was important, as it relates to the "lion nature in us" and also, as described by Valentin Tomberg, to the freeing of the "those animal beings who have their characteristic attribute in the 'breast system'," represented archetypally by the constellation of the Lion. By living intensively with the second verse, the possibility is given of uniting with the Christ Will now enveloping the world, active in the Earth's etheric aura, manifesting outwardly in the White Lions of Timbavati (to name but one manifestation). The Lion of Judah, indwelling each human being in the "beat of heart and lung," is revealed on the physical level by the White Lions as a sign of Christ's presence on the Earth now for the redemption of Nature, a work of salvation embracing the human, animal, plant, and mineral kingdoms—addressed in the five parts of the meditation outlined above.

The content of the second verse of the Foundation Stone meditation is also elaborated upon in the book *Meditations on the Tarot*¹⁴—in the first chapter (on the first Arcanum), where the practice of *spirit awareness* is called *mysticism*, through which we unite with the divine love of Christ now streaming into the world. The first Arcanum of the Tarot—the second verse of the Foundation Stone meditation—the mystery of the Sphinx—the White Lions of Timbavati—Children of the Sun God—Star Lions come down to Earth—the Sign of Leo—the Lion of Judah—all weave together, thus forming a magnificent tableau that became content for our meditation by way of preparation for our pilgrimage to South Africa, with its focus upon participation with the Etheric Christ in his work of redemption on behalf of Nature. The White Lions responded to us, enabling us to deepen into the impulse of the Etheric Christ, brining it alive in our own "beat of heart and lung" as love, pure love. This was our focus on our journey to South Africa, to the White Lions of Timbavati. In conclusion, our heartfelt gratitude is extended to Linda Tucker for her courage and dedication along her path of activism on behalf of these sacred animals.

¹³ Valentin Tomberg, *Studies on the Foundation Stone Meditation* (San Rafael, CA: LogoSophia, 2010).

¹⁴ *Meditations on the Tarot: A Journey Into Christian Hermeticism* (New York: Tarcher / Penguin, 2002).

Timelessness & Connections in South Africa

musings by Sue Gimpel

Oh, how I wish for the skill of a poet to express the joyous and most humbling meeting of the Etheric Christ, effortless and profound on this beautiful and holy land. The etheric memory reveals peoples, animals, and events of days and eras, long since past.

- *Remembering the beginnings of humankind from the visceral experience of Gaia's rising fuchsia forces ascending through my legs and loins, meeting the radiant electric blue of the Cosmic Christ descending through my crown into my heart and out my arms, at the entry stones of Adam's calendar.*
- *Imagining the initiation of the young sangoma, Credo Mutwa, during the "Ringing out of Prayers" at the center sounding stones of Adam's Calendar.*
- *Being with the 3,500 year-old Baobab tree; is it plant, mineral, or animal? The fecund smell of the surrounding earth. Bark feeling like stone, curves looking like limbs and trunks of elephants. Surrounded by its fallen limbs, sensing its antennae-like branches receiving Chronos / Saturn, elephantine limbs storing the memory of wars fought in its midst, and the passage of nomadic tribes finding refuge within.*
- *While dancing with a "lioness-faced tree" in the Tsau Conservancy / Camp Unicorn: The surface of the earth spins backwards beneath my feet, swiftly travelling to days of bushmen hunting on the bushveld, in a land we were yet to step upon ourselves, while exploring the hills around Leshiba Lodge.*
- *Mandla, exquisite and sublime being from the stars; sorrowfully confined, yet maintaining your majesty. Dear White Lion, messenger of Orion, may every human being come to know and also accept the Divine connection you so sweetly share with the Cosmic Christ.*



The White Lion – Makhalishe School

Hilary Rivers and the Eco Cub students of Makgahlishe Primary School

When the sun sets and the moon rises
The king of Timbavati comes alive
It is the white lion, so big in size
With his roar he lets you know he has arrived

The white lion is the king of all kings
His coat is white and his eyes are like blue skies
With all his power and beauty he brings
Wisdom and knowledge to make us wise

His presence is like no other
We tell the white lion our strength is upon you
We shall love and protect you like you are our brother
Our commitment to you will always be true

The love of God surrounds him
In a world that doesn't make sense
With all this love and support the white lion will always win
One day he will not live behind a fence

When you roar the whole world smiles
The world stops to show you respect
Because you can be heard for miles and miles
And when we look to the stars, your beauty will reflect

We honor you white lion, with your courage and your hope
We will forever be your friend
And with you our love will always float
Until all time has come to an end

Pilgrimage Report

by Robert Powell



Dear Friends of Sophia,

It was with great anticipation that a group of fourteen traveled together on the Sophia Foundation pilgrimage to South Africa in September 2012. The rich itinerary began with a visit to a site of ancient star wisdom, Adam's Calendar, which was discovered only a few years ago, in 2003, by pilot/ firefighter Johan Heine. The book *Adam's Calendar* by Johan Heine and Michael Tellinger describing this discovery was published in 2008.

This remarkable stone structure of Adam's Calendar was identified by way of satellite images to have originally been a large circular structure somewhat resembling Stonehenge and possibly many thousands of years older. Its original shape is still clearly visible from the satellite images. Moreover, Adam's Calendar (30E46) was created close to the 31° East longitude meridian on which the ancient ruined city of Great Zimbabwe (30E56) and the Great Pyramid of Giza (31E08) are located.



The stones are arranged on the precipice of the Transvaal Escarpment overlooking the Waterval Boven Valley. The stones are all dolomite, weighing up to five tons each, and are claimed to have been transported from a distance to the site as the Escarpment itself is composed of Black Reef Quartzite, rich in gold. It is believed that the stones originally stood in a circle, and that certain stones denoted the cardinal points (now off by 3°) as well as the rising/ setting points of the solstice sun. In the centre of the stone circle are two upright stones, which—in terms of their shape—show signs of having been worked upon by human beings.

Accompanied by Linda Tucker and a guide, Enos Zulu, who was authorized to take us to the site (not usually open to the public), we had a remarkable experience at this ancient stone circle that has been named Adam's Calendar. Our time there culminated with an invocation made by each participant, one after the other, while standing between the two central stones. The invocations entailed a wide variety of prayers and blessings. It was extraordinary to be standing at the center of this ancient site—perhaps the most ancient stone circle in the world—that, according to Johan Heine and Michael Tellinger, was built in alignment with the three stars marking the belt of Orion. Thereby we were reminded of the structure of the three pyramids at Giza, $55\frac{1}{2}^{\circ}$ further to the north, which were erected in the third millennium BC to mirror these three stars in the constellation of Orion—stars that were associated with Osiris (in fact, Orion was viewed by the Egyptians as the abode of Osiris).



The central focus of this pilgrimage was a visit to the white lions of Timbavati, to the Tsau Conservancy established by Linda Tucker and Jason Turner as part of the Global White Lion Protection Trust, which they founded in 2002. Tsau, meaning *Starlion* in the language of the Bushmen, is the location where Linda Tucker began her work of reintroducing the white lions into their natural habitat. The Tsau Conservancy is located $24\frac{1}{2}^{\circ}$ south of the equator and at a longitude of 31E08, exactly on the same meridian running through Giza, where not only the three pyramids but also the Sphinx is located. Our drive to the Tsau Conservancy took us through the famous Kruger National Park, where we saw a rhinoceros, elephants, giraffe, buffalo, and many other animals roaming in the wild.

It was already dark when we arrived at Camp Unicorn in the middle of the Tsau Conservancy, where we were to spend the next six days, becoming acquainted with the white lions, who sometimes could be heard roaring at night as they hunted antelope or wildebeest or other wild animals on the land surrounding Camp Unicorn. Here we acquired first-hand experience of the white lions described by Linda Tucker in her book *Mystery of the White Lions*. She describes how the white lions, in precise alignment with the Sphinx due north, were birthed here by a miraculous natural occurrence. Indeed, she points out that this very location was long ago declared a sacred site by the African kings. Here we were at the heart of the white lions' sacred territory. As Linda indicates, the name Timbavati means *the place where the star lions came down*.

Several days were spent in early morning or late afternoon white lion tracking. Sometimes the search was unsuccessful. But usually our search was rewarded with success. Then there were those special moments when we—seated in open vehicles—came upon the white lions and were able to spend time in quiet contemplation and meditation with these magnificent creatures ... precious, unforgettable times.

At other times, back at Camp Unicorn, Linda shared her knowledge of the white lions with us and indicated the possibility of receiving messages from these sacred animals. Also, Linda and Jason shared with us something of the challenges they had faced, and continue to face, in protecting the white lions, which were effectively extinct in their natural endemic territories due to trophy hunting and forced removals to zoos and circuses around the globe. Through Linda and Jason's endeavor the project of reintroducing the white lions into the wild has achieved a certain degree of success. The total number of white lions in the world is estimated to be between three and five hundred, and now (2012) the White Lions Trust has seven white lions on its lands—three at the Tsau Conservancy, and four elsewhere, on nearby property that the Global White Lion Protection Trust has been able to acquire.

Some of us were blessed with receiving messages from the white lions. On one occasion, when contemplating the three white lions at the Tsau Conservancy, I was told, very distinctly, "We are messengers of Christ." This became an experience for many of our group when on our last evening at Camp Unicorn, on September 11, we celebrated the *Liturgy to Christ in the Etheric* around an open fire. Positioned on one side of the fire, the choir sang the prayer sequence composed by Marcia Burchard, and on the other side of the fire were gathered those of us who did eurythmy to the singing of the prayers. In between the singing of each prayer, a text honoring the Etheric Christ was read out. Before we began, I asked Linda if she could invoke the white lions for us. She stepped forward, raising her hands, and began to speak. At that moment the lions began to roar in the distance. Their roaring continued periodically throughout the evening, weaving in and out of our celebration of this Liturgy. Linda told me afterwards that this was a special sign, which had happened only once before—at another sacred event that had taken place at Camp Unicorn.

On our pilgrimage, we had many other extraordinary experiences at other locations as well. Before describing these, however, it is helpful to deepen into Rudolf Steiner's indication that Africa is the continent representing the heart in the organism of Mother Earth. The heart is shaped from the cosmos by the constellation of Leo, and the lion is the animal on earth representing the cosmic forces of this constellation (the heavenly Lion). The appearance of the white lions in Timbavati is a sign to humanity from the Mother. Africa is even in the shape of a heart! It was the experience of a lifetime to honor—in the name of Sophia—this heart connection with the Mother by visiting South Africa on this pilgrimage.

Relative to the heart being the center of the human being, with the rediscovery of the Nile meridian, widely regarded as the earth's central axis in antiquity (instead of the modern, arbitrarily chosen Greenwich meridian through London), this visit to the region of Timbavati on this central axis was very special—especially celebrating the *Liturgy to Christ in the Etheric* accompanied by the roaring of the white lions. As Linda Tucker writes concerning the Nile meridian in her book:

Significantly, the course of the Nile follows a longitudinal line...For the ancients this meridian represented zero degrees. That is, the line by which they began measuring longitude...Naturally, the ancient Egyptians would not have chosen Greenwich as their touchstone, but rather the Nilotic Meridian...The fact that this very meridian is the prime meridian at the centre of the earth's landmasses underlies the strategic nature of the ancients' identification of this specific line...From the Nile delta...with its pyramids and Sphinx...step by step, due south, until I reached my special kingdom of lions...If the Giza plateau was a perfect star map on earth, and Timbavati was in perfect alignment with it, what is the significance of the White Lion's birthplace located precisely here on our globe? ...Timbavati's furthestmost corner extends out to a point which is in almost perfect alignment to the pyramids at the apex of the Nile Delta: 31°14' east...Why should today's living lion legends align with the lion monument [the Sphinx] of ancient days?...Timbavati's White Lions are an integral part of the Sun God mystery known to the ancient Followers of Horus.¹

Exploring this mystery was an important aspect underlying the pilgrimage, which we were privileged to do under Linda Tucker's guidance at the Tsau Conservancy that she founded for the protection of the white lions. From the Tsau Conservancy we drove northward to Mapungubwe. Late afternoon we arrived at a panoramic reserve on the borders of Zimbabwe and Botswana. Apart from being a most important site of ancient culture of African antiquity, the Mapungubwe National Park is a World Heritage Site, home to the elephant, the rhino, and the most impressive forests of Baobabs in the world—remarkable trees that are ancient ancestral presences (some are over four thousand years old). At dawn the next day we set off on an excursion in an open truck, with enough seats for the whole group, and then we continued on foot to the spectacular hilltop site of the location of the thirteenth century Kingdom of Mapungubwe, an ancient civilization site of Southern Africa, where the fabled “gold rhino” was found. On the walk with indigenous trackers some of our group were fortunate to see a large herd of elephants and also some lions running in the distance. At this remote location, a spectacular and unspoiled archeological site, as we gazed down from the hilltop to the valley we saw a lone elephant walking graciously toward us through the valley down below (see Aileen Niessen's report). And so, of course, we sang whilst beholding this majestic sight.

After this beautiful experience, we walked back to the truck and drove to the museum to see the “gold rhino” and other artifacts from the ancient site of Mapungubwe. (The “gold rhino” that we saw in the Mapungubwe museum was a copy, as the original is now housed in a museum on the University of Pretoria campus.) Mid-morning we departed from the Mapungubwe museum and drove southward again, to enter traditional Venda territory later that day.

The Venda are a proud yet hospitable people who still uphold—relatively intact—their traditional culture. Some of Africa's greatest wood sculptors are Venda. Toward the end of the day we arrived at our destination at the Leshiba Lodge located in a valley near the top of the Soutpansberg

¹ Linda Tucker, *Mystery of the White Lions* (New York: Hay House, 2010), pp. 253-256.

mountains. The area, Leshiba wilderness, surrounding the lodge where we stayed for two nights, was some six thousand acres large, where rhinoceros, leopards, giraffe, zebra, as well as a variety of other wild animals, live. Leshiba Lodge is developing a Permaculture garden as the first step in creating a space that will be used for growing organic food and as part of an ongoing effort to bring sustainable ways of living to the local Venda community. It was, among others, the vision of Noria Mabasa, a Venda medicine woman and artist, to develop this lodge. Noria was born in 1938, but it was not until the mid 1970s that she started to learn clay pottery and woodcarving. Noria Mabasa's clay pieces and carvings reflect the rituals and traditions of the Venda people, as well as the Shangaan and Zulu cultural traditions present in the communities of the region.

The next morning, guided by botanist Peter Straughan, we were led through the Leshiba wilderness to an ancient rock site discovered by Peter, displaying art of the Koisan Bushmen, the oldest living indigenous people of Africa. That afternoon we celebrated the *Liturgy to the Earth*, to honor not only the paradisiacal place in which we found ourselves but also the whole Earth. At the end of our celebration, we walked the Leshiba Lodge labyrinth together, singing a traditional African song as we went. After dinner we were treated to the music of a Venda jazz band playing traditional hand-made instruments.

On the following day we drove back to Johannesburg and spent the night there. The day after was our last day in South Africa before flying back home. After checking out of the hotel, we visited the Rosebank Covered Market, where every possible African art, craft, and produce was on display. On the square outside of the market, an African Marimba Band was playing with extraordinary enthusiasm and spontaneity. Not to be outdone, when the band took a break, a group of Koisan dancers—young men and women from the Bushmen tradition—danced some of their traditional dances, again with great joy, zest, and enthusiasm. This was a beautiful send-off at the end of our 14-day unforgettable stay in this remarkable land.

It was, above all, the meeting with the white lions that represented the pinnacle of our experience. Also the meeting with many people of this beautiful country, who manifested to us courage, nobility, gentleness, and kindness, will live on. Through our singing and the sacred dances of eurythmy, and through the two liturgies we celebrated there—imbued with our love of Sophia—we connected with this “heartland” of the Earth on a very deep level. It was an important connection established there at this time by the Sophia Foundation in serving the arising of the future Rose of the World as a culture founded on love and wisdom. A seed was planted in this “heartland” as part of the growing worldwide temple—a temple invisible to physical eyes, but a reality for the eyes of the spirit—the temple of Divine Sophia now taking shape in preparation for the Rose of the World. And in resonance with this spiritual reality, at the very time—during the middle—of our pilgrimage to South Africa, the founding of the Sophia Foundation of South Africa took place in Cape Town on September 8, 2012.

An African Pilgrimage: White Lions and the Lion of Judah

by Christine Holmstrom



Not ten feet in front of our open safari vehicle, one of two bachelor white lions lies sprawled across the red Timbavati soil, seemingly oblivious to our presence. Less than twenty feet away, the other male lounges in the rutted dirt road to our left. The late afternoon sun illumines their pale coats and straw colored manes. Occasionally, the males awaken, sometimes yawning lazily, other times alert to the sounds of potential rivals in adjoining preserves. They stand briefly to assert their territorial claims with a series of deep roars that resemble a baritone practicing kundalini breath of fire.

It begins to grow dark, and we hear an ominous roar directly behind our exposed exterior bench seats mounted on the truck's rear chassis. It's Nebu, the white lioness, announcing her presence a few feet from the vehicle. We sit quietly, excited and slightly nervous. Lion ecologist Jason Turner, Senior Scientific Advisor at the Global White Lion Protection Trust (GLWPT), whispers, "We may be spending the night." Lions have the right of way here, and we are not to intrude or disturb their rest by driving around them. As dusk deepens into night, I feel alone with the lions, far removed from human habitation.

In the intensity of the encounter, it is easy to forget the electrified fences that surround the GWLPT. Fences are everywhere in South Africa, keeping intruders out of leafy suburbs and tribal areas, preventing migrations of wildlife out of national parks or escape from private preserves, marking the borders of the tin-roofed shantytowns on the outskirts of Johannesburg. Razor wire barricades pierce the landscape like a crown of thorns twisting over the bushveld. Barbed wire and electrified barriers crisscross the landscape, imprisoning animals and compartmentalizing nature, without really protecting wildlife. Even in South Africa's famous Kruger National Park, poachers slaughter endangered rhinos for their horns, leaving the massive carcasses to rot under the African sun, a feast for jackals, hyenas and vultures. In Timbavati, wealthy hunters patronize nearby "game preserves" advertising "the Big 5," the premier game species of Africa. Hunters with the monetary resources can "take" a lion, an elephant, or other trophy mammal, scheduling the "hunt" like a business meeting, shooting a confined animal with no chance of escape. Lions in the game preserves generally are hand-raised and used to humans; they have no natural wariness. The magnificent felines are fenced in and often lured with bait, making them easy targets for men with big guns and big money who value the animals solely as trophies.

Eventually, Nebu and the bachelors move away from our vehicle, Jason starts the engine and we bounce through the darkness back towards our lodging at Camp Unicorn. I think about the GWLPT and its mission to protect the white lions, which are regarded by local Shangaan tribespeople and their *sangomas* (shamans) as messengers from God who have come down from the stars to herald a new era for humanity and the earth. Linda Tucker, CEO and founder of the GWLPT is a lioness in human form. She moves with feline power and grace, focusing her energy

on the protection of the white lions and the indigenous African culture that holds them sacred. The two trackers and our expert guides, Harmony and Justice, are equally committed to preserving the lions and their essential habitat.

At night, Robert Powell speaks to us about the connection between the Sphinx, resting enigmatically among the Giza pyramids near the Nile, and the reappearance in 1938 of white lions in Timbavati, which lies on the southern end of the Nile meridian. Their appearance is a sign of renewal, both for humankind and for nature. The lion is often called “the king of beasts,” the apex of the animal kingdom. Christ is King of Kings, the Lion of Judah. The Cosmic Christ, overseer of human evolution, was present when heavenly forces streamed in from Leo, creating the spiritual archetype of the human heart. Through our hearts and the constellation of Leo, we humans are connected to Christ, who performed His greatest miracle, the raising of Lazarus, when the sun was in Leo. Robert has written that the white lions, known as the “Children of the Sun,” can lead us to an inner connection with the Etheric Christ, who radiates spiritual sunlight.

One night, a raging storm blows in and Camp Unicorn is suddenly in the midst of a Walpurgisnacht frenzy. Thunder cracks overhead and brilliant flashes of lightning illumine the interior of our thatched roof rondavel. I awake with a scream as a deafening roar fills my ears and blinding light pierces my eyes. Startled, I sit up. Amidst the storm’s cacophony, thoughts spin like a whirlwind inside my head. I contemplate the suffering of African wildlife, crowded, fenced, poached, captive, restricted by stakes, razor wire and electrified fences into unnatural containment where well-meaning tourists can gawk and take photos and rich hunters can take lives. And I think of the animals in my own country that suffer because of human ignorance and indifference – millions of unwanted companion animals euthanized annually, farm animals clustered in unnatural conditions in factory farms, wildlife trapped and hunted as vermin, habitats destroyed to build another subdivision or shopping mall. We are all responsible in some way for the suffering of animals and the pain inflicted upon our dear earth.

While the small group of white lions at the GWLPT is protected, they are restricted by electrified fences, wear radio collars and their breeding is carefully managed. Many other lions are confined to zoos or sold for canned hunts. The contradictions and connections envelop me. Dreamily, I envision Christ and the lions striding across the red Limpopo clay soil, calling on humans to awaken. Barbed wire fences puncture the landscape like the crown of thorns pressing into Jesus’ flesh; Judas flings aside the purse of silver coins as a hunter poses proudly next to the bloodied corpse of a magnificent lion whose vacant eyes reflect a camera’s flash; the cock crows three times and we stand in silent denial, Pontius Pilate washes his hands, the crowd screams “Crucify him!” and we turn away and hide, condemned by our cowardice.

If the white lions are the children of the Sun God, will we heed their message? Will we stand with the Etheric Christ, joining in His radiant blue stream? Or will we symbolically wash our hands like Pontius Pilate, as though we can escape the karmic consequences of our inaction?

Pilgrimage to South Africa

by Aileen Niessen

This journey encompassed many and manifold impressions. Any attempt to capture them cannot really suffice. Nonetheless, may these few examples be tiny windows behind which the grandeur can be sensed.

Golden levity

It was the first day after arrival day. We had passed between the wild guardian horses, experienced Adam's Calendar, and eaten a sumptuous meal, as we set out to the Unicorn Portal. The path wound its way up between rectangular, gray boulders of every size and arrangement. A drizzly mist had come over the land and dusk would soon follow. In this somewhat dismal atmosphere, I inwardly practiced the eurythmy gesture for the sound "C" (corresponding to the sign of Libra). In response, golden levity came up out of the earth—golden, liquid, protecting levity. With each "C" it lifted and carried me forward up the hill. The thought crossed my mind: I am experiencing a REAL "C" for the first time! Was that golden levity a gift from the substance of the Golden River along the first meridian of time, the meridian running through that location close to Adam's Calendar?

Giraffe greeting

We had just exited through the gates of Camp Unicorn, leaving behind us the terrain of the white lions, the area around Camp Unicorn. On the other side of the road, a hug male giraffe with particularly dark markings stood as if waiting for us. We pulled over and watched. With stately movements, he turned and showed himself from the side in his full majesty. Then, with his uniquely African gait, he walked serenely around a clump of bushes, came directly forward toward us, separated his front legs to form the eurythmy gesture "A" extended downward (in eurythmy the sound "A" is pronounced "Ah"), and in bowing his head graciously made a perfect eurythmic "V" gesture down to the earth. That done, he lifted his head, brought his legs into place, and slowly disappeared among the trees. It was done with such purpose. Was he greeting us? Did he thank us?



Camp Unicorn

Leo

On the last evening of our stay at Camp Unicorn the *Liturgy for the Etheric Christ* was celebrated. It was already dark when we gathered—the time of activity of the lions. Beforehand, at Robert's request, Linda Tucker stood to invoke the white lions roaming in the area surrounding Camp Unicorn. Beginning with a prayer, she placed her feet apart, standing firmly on the earth, stretched her arms up and to each side, her chest full of strength and concentration. The gesture she made was similar to the gesture for the sign of Leo in eurythmy. Although outwardly not quite the same, I have never experienced such a powerful Leo gesture. Miraculously, the lions answered. They roared in response to the



invocation. If we would make our Leo gestures with such intensity, would a lion somewhere in the world roar and answer, maybe a white lion?

African threefold walking

Standing in Mapungubwe National Park on the royal hilltop of a lost culture, we were surrounded by red brown earth and a rocky landscape. Below us, an elephant walked gracefully across the abandoned valley toward us. He was one with the cosmos above and one with the earth below. Every muscle of his huge body was part of his movement, was listening to his movement. In the wake of this profound experience of watching the elephant's walking, while making our way back to the jeep across the valley on the other side, it was then possible to BE threefold walking. The vertical held by the zenith, the heart and the lungs held by the horizon, and every muscle feeling the movement and its relationship to the earth.



Mapungubwe Hill

It was indeed a remarkable trip permeated with awe for the wonders of creation.

“Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of time.”

by Linda Delman



The spiritualization of all matter – mineral, plant, animal and human – came alive in my experience in South Africa. The earth spoke ancient messages of deep peace and endless time, plants were living chalices of receptivity, the animals were beings of pure love, and the people were the soft rain after a drought and the essence of Joy.

Fourteen people from the Sophia Foundation went on pilgrimage with an intention of giving our blessings to the animal kingdom and listening with open hearts to their messages. We spent our first week with the white lions of Timbavati. I experienced many deep lessons directly from the white lions and from one in particular named Mandla.

Mandla, born in the free state of Bethlehem, is the white male lion who has the purest genetics in the lineage of white lions. He had been stolen from the wild and forced into a canned hunting lodge, where lions are bred to be hunted and killed for large sums of money. The lions are in small enclosures and are “hunted” there. Mandla was being used for his genetics to breed other white lions, as they are highly valued. He was used and abused for many years in conditions we can never imagine.

Linda Tucker, head of the Global White Lion Protection Trust, was able to free him and bring him to his rightful place on the lands of Timbavati, which is the only place on earth where the white lions have been born by natural occurrence. It is said when the King of the Lions is in his rightful place, all else comes into alignment. Mandla came home to his lands, and animals began to return, to have offspring and to thrive. It is also said by the medicine healers that the white lions come from the stars, and bring messages from the stars.

We were able to be with Mandla at least once a day. We were often quite close to him and were able to send our love, to sing to him, to receive from him, and to just “be” with him. When I was able to enter his eyes and he mine, I felt his weariness, sadness, and quiet peace. It was a lesson for me that no matter how much suffering he had endured, no matter how weary, he never failed to find the strength to give his love and to acknowledge our presence there with him. He never failed to stand, and often gave us his great roar! There was a dignity in his endurance and a sense of endless generosity.

His quiet power, his animal nature, his deep peace, and his mystical presence live deeply in my heart, and I am forever grateful for this experience and for all the blessed experiences we shared on our journey.

With love and gratitude to my fellow pilgrims and all they gave to the Earth and to the Sophia Foundation and its great mission.

Impressions from South Africa

by Russell Delman

As many of you know from my last writing, I recently journeyed to South Africa. I have been home a week now, and here are some lasting impressions.

In the morning light a wild giraffe, attracted to our singing and our welcoming invitations, comes toward us, looks intently, and actually bows, legs splayed, forehead to the ground. It then lifts its head, again looks intently and walks slowly away with graceful dignity, a behavior never seen before by our experienced guide.

Here in the Cradle of Mankind the vibrant earth, simultaneously ancient and fresh, has an unusual potency. Connecting to the ground, one feels a rare, living quality. From atop an outcropping of rock, actually the ground of an ancient civilization, we see lions running and elephants grazing. Again, as if attracted to our singing and our prayers, one elephant walks directly toward us, ears flapping gently, unhurried, taking steady steps.

And the white lions of Timbavati... According to the shamans (*sangomas*) of South Africa, these are mystical Beings who have important messages for humanity. Credo Mutwa, the greatest living *sangoma* in Africa, claims that they carry messages from the stars for humanity's survival. They seem to appear and disappear through different eras of history. Currently, there are stories throughout our planet of the recent appearance of "white" animals—alligators, hummingbirds, dolphins, donkeys. Again, according to indigenous wisdom traditions from various cultures, these are messengers from the animal kingdom. Can we sense these messages? Also, is it possible that the earth itself speaks to us, if we can learn to listen?

All of this is new to me. As a scientifically trained Westerner, I like to go very slowly, approaching as Buddha taught, empirically, mindfully with an open heart/mind. I do know that our bodies are our direct connection to nature. I know that we can open our bodies to inner messages and experience a permeability to the world around us. The wisdom of our bodies is inseparable from the wisdom of nature. We are an expression of the natural world. How tragic that through disconnected thinking, we often alienate ourselves from this world, and find ourselves living in a narcissistic, mechanistic universe. Setting aside my beliefs, I open to the world.

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The dawn air on the South African plain tastes like a nourishing meal. Singing birds dance amongst the trees as the prey animals wander, feeling the relief of surviving another night. Each evening the dusk air is filled with the awakening sounds of lions and other nocturnal predators; a poignancy and aliveness radiates. Mandla, the large, dignified male white lion named for Nelson Mandela was rescued from a "canned hunting" farm where so called "hunters" pay as much as \$165,000 to put a white lion's head on the wall. He shows us his huge teeth. His roar, a low, earth-shaking rumble, alerts the world to his kingly presence. He, along with the other white lions are part of the White Lion Trust (www.whitelions.org) that is attempting to save these great animals from the powerful, insatiable greed of the hunting industry. A bit further north, 10,000 elephants

(25,000 internationally) were slaughtered this year for tusks and many, many rhinoceros left for dead so that their horns could be sold as a potency supplement. We humans have abandoned our stewardship of the animal realm.

We visit two underprivileged South African schools. Due primarily to HIV-Aids, the orphan rate is 70%, and households are often parented by eight-year-old children. Amazingly, the vitality of the self-described "learners and educators" is infectious. Such smiles, such voices, as we share songs and dances together. The educators move with such exuberance that we are caught up in a dance just saying "hello." High-fiving the children as we ask for their names fills me with longing for an exchange. Can our children be exposed to this natural, spontaneous élan, and can the children here receive the nourishment and material support that our culture can offer?

In both the animals and the people I sensed a distinct dignity and vitality. These qualities were palpable. When reflecting on the lions, I would also add the quality of courage. The courage to be the "king." The courage, dignity and vitality that it takes to be a true king creates the revered "heart of the lion." This quality speaks to me as I sit here writing now.

As I am adjusting to my life back home, filled with emails, electronics and new opportunities, I also long for these days when the natural world was omnipresent. Here in my rural home, I am committed more than ever to sense the offerings of nature, especially at dawn and dusk. What about people living in urban environments? Even in the city, this rhythm of the earth, moon and sun can be sensed, more challenging but always present. This is why the great meditation traditions encourage us to settle down at these times. Can we sense these movements? Are we *a part of* or apart from this resonance with Life?

Honing this capacity for bodily listening seems essential to me. In this way, no matter where I am the natural world speaks to me. Listening with consistency takes commitment. The reward is immeasurable. South Africa awakened something vital in me, and I am excited to experience where this will lead.

