

# Decolonising Time

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# Contents

- Introduction . . . . . 3
- The Hourglass . . . . . 4
- Religion . . . . . 7
  - Christianity . . . . . 8
  - Bushmen Religion . . . . . 9
  - Jesus Christ is a trickster . . . . . 10
- Religious cosmology . . . . . 11
  - Malobe . . . . . 15
  - Epeme . . . . . 16
- In Conclusion . . . . . 18

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She is currently writing *The Revolutionary Sex*.

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[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2Bw\\_Q9EnHsw](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2Bw_Q9EnHsw)

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## Introduction

So thank you very much for me to talk to this group, Ecodemia. It sounds like a very interesting and important forum. So I'm very excited to do this.

For 2020, the phrase or slogan that captures the experience of 2020 most of all is I can't breathe or we can't breathe.

For many reasons, of course, the terrible death of George Floyd and the uprising of Black Lives Matter in response, but also because of COVID, because it has literally killed people who can't breathe.

But I'm talking about it today in terms of we need a breathable rhythm for our planet. And in order for that to happen, I'm arguing we need to decolonize time, time itself.

The ultimate expression of white supremacy is control of time.

It comes through the Gregorian calendar of man-made months, which subdued cosmological and ecological time.

For sure, no indigenous people before They were being colonized from the West, from European white Europeans and European descendants.

No indigenous people ever used such a calendar of man-made months.

They used earth, moon and sun systems which aligned activity and social life to the cosmos.

I'm going to especially today emphasize the moon.

Of course, it's in relation to the earth and the sun, but somehow the moon is the one that's always forgotten.

And I'm going to argue that there is a special relationship of humans to the moon that has inscribed our bodies and our minds in the course of evolution and in the creation of human culture.

When the conquistadors and imperialists from Europe turned up on every continent, to conquer and extract resources from the indigenous peoples, they were intent, their express intention was to rob and steal.

They above all attacked and bust up the indigenous peoples' cosmological ways of measuring time.

And it is, and the dissent from that system is the capitalist system itself, which if it robs us of anything, above all, it robs us of time.

The more that any particular person has their time stolen, this is a measure of the inequality of the system and of where, of how unequal and how poorly treated they are by the capitalist system.

Karl Marx said; 'All forms of economics can be reduced to an economics and time'.

And what it is that a society values, how a society organises time, is inscribing in every waking and sleeping moment what it is that a society values most and emphasises most and prioritises.

So this aspect of the stealing of time has, remember Benjamin Franklin's dictum, time is money.

When the conquistadors and the imperialists rolled up to rape, loot and murder indigenous peoples, no indigenous peoples had ever expressed notions like time being wasted or time being spent, which are metaphors of time as money.

But this was, of course, completely unknown amongst most indigenous peoples, that time would be something which was balanced harmoniously with societies aligning their activities with the cosmos.

And so that balance is something inherent to their religious and political and social understandings, you can't imagine time being spent or wasted.

That was particularly a concept of the \*\*\*\*\* plundering European and European descendant colonizers.

Let's just go through a little history, just a summary of the ways in which capitalism and its forerunners of colonialism have measured and imposed time.

It gives us a few clues of just how bad it is getting to this day.

And then maybe we can discuss how we can try to resist and what would be the sources we would turn to, ways to resist the colonisation of time.

## The Hourglass

And really this starts with the hourglass measurement.

I think you had a talk here with Kofi Kluw from Extinction Rebellion.

Wonderful organization and wonderful work being done by those guys.

But it's very sad to me that they have chosen the emblem of the hourglass because I'm afraid this is a representation of European Christian patriarchy big time.

And the hourglass really comes from a monastic original measurement, the monks in the Christian monasteries, who were dividing up their day in kinds of ritual terms of hours for prayer, hours, the morning hours or the evening hours for prayer.

But this got taken into the hours of the feudal nobility, of the aristocracy, living a life of luxury on the back of their peasantry in the feudal system.

And of course, they were stealing the time, the hours and the days of those feudal peasants who were supporting the nobility.

But even worse, the hourglasses were taken, they were the form of measuring time on the ships, the ships that went out from the European ports to the Americas, to Africa, to the east, to the east of India and the Southeast Asia, on those voyages of conquest and colonization, they needed as close as possible measurement of time that would enable them to keep track of time in the home port to be able to measure their longitude, the degree to which they were west or east of that port.

So really these forms of measurement of time, this hourglass was the initial way in which the voyages of conquest and colonization were imposed on the rest of the earth.

So this was the first means of expropriation of time from native populations.

Now in the era of the initial colonizations, we can think of the Spanish colonizations of the great, the silver mines of Latin America.

where people's whole populations were literally worked to death in those, the Potosi silver mines in Bolivia, et cetera.

If you, if the conquistadors enslave peoples, there's no measurement of time, there's no need to measure the time that's being used in labour, because those conquistadors are working people to death, they're robbing them of the whole time of their lives.

But as we go towards the Industrial Revolution, and we start to get this finer and finer measurement of time with clocks, with hours, minute hands, especially this was developed the late 18th century.

Again, it was for these voyages of conquest to be able to measure longitude, the voyages of the British Royal Navy, Greenwich.

the observatory, the Royal Observatory of Greenwich on the zero degree Greenwich Meridian.

This is the point of the kind of zero measurement of time ordained by the great imperialist British Royal Navy.

So this is where the very first clocks with a very fine degree of hours, minutes, seconds were being developed to enable those great voyages.

And of course, this got extended into railway, the time for the railways as they were developed in the early 90s, and the factory time that was imposed on the peoples that were driven into the factories of the early industrial revolution in Manchester, Northwestern England, and soon right across Europe.

So there was the great battleground of the 19th century, which we've heard about from Karl Marx, and Ashley; how workers were literally fighting for every minute, hour of the day against capitalist bosses, how much of their day, how much, how long was the working day to be, how much could they keep for themselves.

And the great, the enormous mechanization of those factories, meant that machines had to be switched on, switched off in very strict sequences.

The workers themselves became as if part of those machines, mechanized with those machines, their time increasingly mechanized by the hour, by the minute, clocking on, clocking off.

The West, European and Euro-American West, has kind of become post-industrial, lost its manufacturing heartland.

That, of course, is now exported all around the world in the export-free zones to the workers of Southeast Asia or every continent, Africa, every continent.

Again, fighting those battles for literally every hour and every minute and every second of their day. 12-hour shifts, 16-hour shifts with time only for maybe sleep in crowded dormitories, having to sleep in the dormitories next to where I was just reading some material on Philippines workers' conditions, sleeping right in the COVID from the next shift.

So these great factory organization processes had to be kept running like, well, is kept running like 24 hours a day with workers slotting into those shifts.

So it should be really clear how just on kind of industrial time, capitalism has robbed humans of their time.

But now if we come back to the West, what we're experiencing here for workers here after losing sort of manufacturing economy, it's now gig economy.

where it's going beyond hours and minutes to surveillance of workers under the second.

So we had this through our COVID lockdown earlier this year.

Delivery drivers coming with the goods to people's doorsteps, having to literally throw the goods down at the doorstep because they're the next address for the next address.

Every move they make, every moment that they're driving the van, every moment that they're trying to deliver, running up and down the stairs is under surveillance.

So the gig economy is taking it to seconds.

And the most kind of enormous expression of inequality of all is a control of nanoseconds, which, of course, occurs in the enormous global exchanges.

And this is where capitalism's real inequalities and control of time are expressed, that huge fortunes can be made by the one moment to the next, with the hedge funds and the vulture capitalists making their, shorting the markets, making their bets from one price at one point in time to the infinitesimal next point in time.

So having control of the time to the point of nanoseconds can, with a keystroke, with a computer keyboard keystroke, wipe out livelihoods of whole economies, of people the other side of the world, your capitalist profiteering.

So we've gone to the point where control of the tiniest fractions of time that can be even measured are creating profit and destroying people's whole lives and enterprises at just for the sake of gambling for profit.

So I hope I've made clear just to the extent of capitalist control of time and just how, you know, this is something that the planet at this stage, with everything that's happening in degrading the planetary environment, with the extraction of resources, this is something that can no longer be put up with.

The planet needs to breathe, we have to slow time down in some way.

It's not only about rewilding the planet's space, but it's also about rewilding the planet's and ours' time.

We need to restore some element of cosmological, ecological time, not just some element, but we need to restore our understanding of that.

## Religion

Now I'm just going to ask, is there actually nothing left within capitalism, within the experience of capitalism around the world of the measurements of cosmological time.

And I'm going to say that actually that there is still, it still exists, but it's kind of in a domain compartmentalized, put at the side.

It runs alongside capitalism and it has some sort of relationship to capitalism, but it's a kind of exceptional area.

And what I'm talking about is religion.

Because if we look at religions everywhere in the world, and whether we're talking about religions that are quite indigenous and local, or whether we're talking about world religions, all of them are organized on a basis of cosmological time.

And it's not just any sort of mixture of cosmological time.

Actually, there is one form of measurement of time which organizes religion in general, religion universally.

And this is the time given by the moon.

All religions operate in some sense around lunar calendars and lunar organization of time.

This is quite a remarkable fact that we can say that universally.

I'm an anthropologist and I'm particularly interested in the variety of human culture all around the world.

But when we examine religion, ritual for almost every human culture, it comes down to that.

You can start thinking about that in terms of the recent world religions.

When I'm saying recent, for my time scale, I work with hunter-gatherers and I work on human origins.

So my time scale is 50 or 100,000 years.

It's going right back to the beginnings of human species.

World religions known today have Judaism, Hinduism, maybe 4,000 or 5,000 years history.

Christianity a couple of 1000 years, Islam even less than that.

So some of these religions, they're really very young.

They're young religions.

They're also pretty patriarchal and hierarchical religions, maybe not in their origins, but they have become so as they have become institutionalized.

So it's rather remarkable that these religions, if they have that patriarchal aspect, how did they have the moon at the heart of their calendars? where did that come from? And my answer to that is it doesn't, it wasn't invented by the patriarchal inventors of these religions.

It came from, it was inherited from previous religions.

Now, some of the immediate predecessors of the world religions today were probably also pretty patriarchal in the Neolithic as agriculture emerged.

But if going back, if we keep going back, we go back to the time beyond about 10,000 years ago when all human beings on the planet essentially were hunting and gathering peoples.

Now, from my knowledge of hunter-gatherers and what I've learned from hunter-gatherers in Africa, that is where this lunar organized time frame and cosmology, that is the source for where that came from.

I'm going to show you and talk about a few examples of that.

## **Christianity**

Let's just, for a moment, think before I go to hunter-gatherers, just think about Christianity.

Some of you may not be convinced, for instance, Christianity is actually a lunar religion.

I think there's not much argument about Judaism or Islam or Buddhism, Hinduism, but Christianity.

Some of you might think Christmas, solstice, It's obviously based on some pagan, sun connections, but the key, most important ritual sequence for Christianity concerns Easter, Eastertide, the run-up to Easter.

Easter really is what organizes the Christian calendar.

And of course, there have been big wars and fights in Christendom between the East and the West over the organization of this calendar, but the moon is always crucial.

It's the moon in relation to the sun, but the moon defines the date of Easter, the preceding period of the Lent going up to Easter.

So Jesus's death and resurrection is defined in accordance with the moon, and then the subsequent movable feasts afterwards in relation to the moon.

Now, Christians have often tried to get rid of this moon, but they've been trying for 1000 years and they can't.

I think Tony Blair was one of the, ex-Prime Minister Tony Blair, invader of Iraq, was one of the war criminal invader of Iraq, I should say.

He was one of the last people to have a go at getting rid of Easter, trying to fix it in the calendar so that all the bosses knew exactly when the workers were going to get time off.

It didn't work.

You can't do it.

You've got to stick to the tradition.

That's what religions are good for.

They're good for sticking to tradition.

So, okay, Christianity 2, organized by the moon.

Now I want to start talking about the Bushmen.

## **Bushmen Religion**

Christianity, as I say, only 2,000 years old.

Bushmen religion, which I've, Bushmen from Kalahari areas of Southern Africa to this day.

Bushmen religion, I've studied A lot.

I haven't been in Bushmen areas.

I've worked with Huds of people in Tanzania, and I'll talk a little about them as well.

So their religious traditions, going back 100,000 years, 50 or 100,000 years, that's what we're talking about.

They're not, they don't have books, they don't have religions of the book.

They do things by singing, by dancing, by trancing, by healing.

It's a very corporeal bodily.

religion, a very extraordinary religion to experience, but it's very old.

When the missionaries turned up and met the Bushmen, they found out about Bushmen beliefs in spirits, particularly spirits connected to healing.

One sort of spirit that we can talk about in terms of trickster, the generic name might be trickster.

And in many ways, Trickster is a, I don't even want to call Trickster a god, because the Bushmen are very egalitarian people.

And Trickster is kind of a god for egalitarian people.

The healers of the Bushmen laugh at Trickster.

They swear at Trickster.

They aren't taking commandments from Trickster.

It's not like that.

The relationship between the Bushmen and Trickster is not like the relationship with the God of the Old Testament say.

## Jesus Christ is a trickster

When the missionaries started to teach Bushmen people or started to try and convert Bushmen people to Christianity as the devil.

And that's the usual way that missionaries do their procedures, that they go to the heart of the religion of the indigenous people and start to diabolize and so on.

But the Bushmen thought about it.

And they started to say and think about it amongst themselves.

And the more they heard about Jesus Christ, the more they realized, no, the trickster's not the devil. Jesus Christ is a trickster.

And the reason for that is quite simple.

They're hearing about this God, Jesus Christ, dying and coming back to life again in time with the moon.

And that's what Trickster does.

Trickster is organizing time by the moon and he often dies and he comes back to life again.

So there's other things too that Jesus does, that Trickster does.

Jesus, for instance, goes and chats up women by waterholes or wells.

Well, Trickster does that a lot too.

They both have been concerned with healing and medicine.

So Jesus and Trickster, really quite similar.

And the Bushmen realized that, and they weren't having what the missionaries were saying.

But above all, what it is that Jesus and Trickster do, both of them, is they're organizing the time in a certain way.

Jesus' death, the Trickster's death and resurrection is organizing the time.

In many ways, Trickster is this expression of organization of time.

It's a kind of periodicity, an oscillation, a balance.

So part of the time, Trickster is regarded with a kind of awe during the phases of ritual, particularly the healing rituals or the rituals I will talk about, the rituals for menstruating girls.

Trickster is a big, awesome power of taboo.

Taboo on game animals, the animals that are hunted, taboo on menstrual girls.

So people have a kind of, it's kind of an awesome power.

But then change the time and the trickster becomes a figure of fun that people tell stories and they really love and they're just making fun. So it's like making fun of God.

So half the time it's a powerful force, cosmic force, half the time making fun.

And it keeps, the time keeps sort of changing between these two phases with Trickster.

## Religious cosmology

Okay, what I'm going to try and do now is show some pictures of really old religious cosmology. And we're going to start getting an idea of how old and where does this lunar periodicity actually come from.

Right, so I have a couple of examples of really, of what I think is religious ritual iconography.

Left hand is from Europe, is a famous carving, sort of relief carving in the surface of the rock in France, in the Dordogne, known as the Venus of La Salle.

La Salle is the place in France.

And Venus is, again, importing ideas about gods of later civilizations.

But this is a very famous image of the Upper Paleolithic period that is probably 25,000 or 26,000 years old.

Now, on the right-hand side is a picture from the rock art of ancient Bushman people.

This is from an area of Zimbabwe, the Matapos Hills, not far from Bulawayo.

Now, these are images that are separated by 5,000 miles, 8,000 kilometres distance, perhaps, France to Zimbabwe, and thousands of miles, probably, thousands of years, probably different.

And yet, I hope you can see that they immediately have significant common features.

In fact, I point out there's common features and there's more than even you can see directly.

So even though the Venus of Lo Cella is perhaps older, the Matapos Hills image from Zimbabwe, we don't know quite how old.

It's going to be very old.

It's very hard to date African rock art.

It comes from time of the great hunting cultures of Khoisan peoples before there were farmers or herders.

So it is thousands of years old.

We just don't know quite how many thousand.

It's possible that the Matapos Hills image is not as old as the Venus of La Salle, but what I'm saying here is that the cosmology, what it's representing is closer to the source, the original source in some ways.

of the first religion, if you like, because Khoisan Bushmen peoples have kind of the most original lineage of humanity in terms of the living in one part of the world for the greatest length of time.

So, the Matapos Hills image is probably closer to the original source.

The Venus of La Selov image is more derivative.

It will be a derivative of that original source.

So we're talking here about the time periods when we're over 100,000 years ago, when it was Africans colonizing Europe.

That really happened about 40 or so thousand years ago.

So what is shared in these images? They are images of very powerful females with emphasis on genital region, on female reproductive power.

And the very large, the fatness of the females is the emphasis of their power.

We know this and can understand this from speaking with and learning from Bushman people in the present day in relation to rock art that has been produced by them in recent past.

You can see that both of these images, these female images, they're holding these crescent shapes, which are also linked in significant ways.

The Venus of La Zelle, her crescent, is an animal horn, in fact, marked enigmatically with notches, 13 notches, in fact, which may have direct reference or indirect reference to the moon.

The crescent being held by the Matapos Hills figure, again, very probably has a reference to the moon.

And what the whole figure, the whole panel may be referencing is the experience of ritual initiation, particularly first menstruation ritual for a girl in Khoisan culture.

And I'll show you a bit more about that in just a moment.

But we can see directly with these big arching rainbows of blood coming from between the legs of the Madapos hill figure and also her companion who's next to her.

Don't forget, she also has rainbows of blood that pass up between the horns of these mighty game antelope, antelopes such as Eland or Hemsbok, which were the desired hunted animals.

So be clear, these are products of art from civilizations which were hunting and gathering civilizations at the prime time of big game hunting, both in Europe and in Africa.

Now, not only are we linked with the powerful female figures, the emphasis on their reproductive powers, this lunar emblems of horns, animal horns, but also the red blood, the Venus of La Selle had red ochre stained on her, which is not very visible here, but is quite visible under a microscope in examination of the rock shelter.

When humans, the first Homo sapiens, human beings, moved out of Africa, we're an African species and we evolved in Africa 2 to 300,000 years ago.

We've been in Africa for three times as long in Africa as anywhere else on the whole planet.

But when we started to move out of Africa, what we carried with us as the sort of signature of human culture as humans moved around the planet was a red tide of ochre, ochre being a mineral pigment, iron oxide, and it produces a blood-coloured red stain.

And this was like the hallmark, the mark of the very species, Homo sapiens.

And it's the Khoisan painting, the Bushman painting is painted.

The woman here is painted in red ochre with her companion and the antelopes.

They've had subsequent black pigments painted over them.

The Venus of La Salle in Europe had this red ochre staining all over her.

So we're looking at this imagery, religious cosmology of very ancient times in both Europe and Africa that goes back deep time linking the bodies of women, their blood, to lunar time, to the culture, the economics and the culture, the religion of those hunting cultures.

Now this image of rock art, and I've just left it with the rock painting itself rather than an outline, so you may have to look quite hard at it.

This is again Bushman rock art from Drakensberg, Natal, South Africa, Natal Province, South Africa, from the Drakensberg Mountains.

And it's from a people, a bushman, mountain bushman people, who were literally hunted to extinction.

It's a horrifying thing to say that they were driven out, killed off, their culture destroyed by the incoming white colonisers and farmers and so forth.

But they've left this record of beautiful, extraordinary and haunting rock art.

And we can ask Bushmen peoples that still have their cultures in the Kalahari, that's still living in the Kalahari, to help us to understand and interpret this art.

Now this particular painting at a place called Fulton's Rock, We don't know how old it is.

It may only be a few 100 years old.

We don't actually know.

We can't date very well.

But it is still showing us a ritual, a ritual known as the Ilambul dance, which is very probably the oldest ritual that still is performed on this planet today.

And the Ilambul dance, I would guess it is 70 to 100,000 years old, at least.

It is the ritual of a girl's first menstruation.

And you're seeing an outline with that circle is like a little menstrual hut that would be built for the girl.

And this figure under that cloak is the girl herself in a seclusion of menstruation.

And around her dance, a whole ring of figures mostly women who are posturing and posing with their buttocks are actually naked as they bend down back towards her because they're imitating the movements of elands.

Elands are these beautiful big antelope that the Bushmen love to hunt.

And they're pretending to be elands in this dance.

And the girl herself is made out to be the bull eland, the male eland, which is the most desired.

It's a sacred animal for the bushman.

And there are figures in this ring who have horns.

We were looking at the horns of the antelope in the previous images.

and the horns of the bison or the ibex from the Upper Paleolithic of Europe.

But here we have e-land horns being used.

And just below the ring of figures, there is an e-land, a sort of spirit e-land, that body below, you may not be able to see very clearly, but that is an e-land which is being lured towards the girl and towards the people.

by the singing and the music that would accompany this ceremony.

This is some of the oldest documented music in the world.

That is to say, it is documented today, and it probably comes from very ancient times indeed.

Now, around the edge of the picture, there are hunters who have taken away their weapons.

And these are men and they're hunters, and the men have to go right away from the girl.

They have to take their weapons right away from the girl who is the Ilambul because of her power, because of her potency.

Now, if they observe these rituals correctly, then everything is going to go well.

The animals will grow fat.

The hunting will go well.

The girl herself will grow fat and fertile, and the whole world will be fertile.

But if anything goes wrong, well, at the very least, if a hunter should see the girl in her hut, she will turn him to stone.

We have here a reversal of the idea of male gaze.

This is the girl's gaze will turn the hunter to stone like that.

Everything would go catastrophically wrong if the girl's menstrual ritual was not observed.

So this ritual is at the heart of Bushman religion and all their ideas of cosmology.

The girl's bleeding is believed to open a passageway to what is really the Bushman dreaming.

It's called first creation or the 1st order of existence.

And all the actions of the people surrounding the girl, the girl herself, is to facilitate this opening, this passage into that time, a time before time, when there was no death, when people were animals, when nothing was fixed in its form.

And the reason that the Bushmen so much want to go back to that time is it is the way to affect healing.

for themselves and all the people, all the community.

And necessary for this is the women's extraordinary polyphonic singing.

It's an extraordinary and beautiful music that the women perform.

So we're giving, we're seeing here, now it may not seem, that the moon is obvious in this particular case, but in fact, the girl's ritual is always organized in relation to the lunar cycle.

And she can only be released from her menstrual seclusion when the moon is visible, the new, the young new moon is visible, and she and the moon and the E-land are going to grow fat together.

So they must wax together with their powers, their fatness, their really their power.

So this is implicitly linked into that lunar cyclicity that was being referred to in the previous images from ancient Europe and from ancient Africa, Zimbabwe.

## Malobe

Now I'm just going to move to Central Africa just quickly.

And here we have an image which you probably can't see very well.

It's dark and it's amazing we can even see anything.

We really shouldn't be able to see anything.

But what is being shown here are forest spirits.

that have been lured.

This is now moving to Central Africa, to the Bayaka people.

And this ceremony is known as Malobe.

And again, it is a ceremony of women's beautiful, elaborate, polyphonic singing.

Now, in these, the most sacred rituals of the African hunter-gatherers, always there should be darkness.

It is the dark time of the moon.

that people use to connect to their ancestors and the spirits.

So the women are singing above all at this time, the darkest time, the darkest night, and they're luring the spirits from the forest to the camp to start to dance in front of them.

And they can only really see the spirits because there's a kind of bioluminescent phosphorescence that's been applied.

It is, in fact, men who are dancing as the spirits in response to the women's beautiful, alluring singing.

This singing of the women, this polyphonic singing, is some of the most ancient music of humanity.

And in fact, it may be older than even the human species.

The women of the Bayaka say that they must sing in the deepest, darkest night when there's no moon in the sky, And the reason for that is they say they are singing for their lives.

Why? Because in the deepest, darkest night, that is the time when there's most risk from predators, lions or leopards, big cats can see in the dark.

They can see beautifully in the dark.

Whereas humans, we don't have very good night vision.

So in order to feel safe, women with children will gather together in groups.

and they will sing out with many voices.

So their polyphony makes it sound as though they have a big group.

And that is what scares the lions and the leopards to stay away.

So using this technique in the deepest, darkest night with the moon no longer above the horizon is something that may be absolutely ancient in our evolution on the African continent.

Even today, in a country like Tanzania, There are records of when are people attacked by lions, and it will be in relation to the light of the moon, because when the moon is above the horizon, lions actually don't do much hunting.

But when the moon is out of the sky, lions can see and they will hunt, whether it's humans or other prey animals, they will hunt.

This is expressed by Hadza hunter-gatherers in Tanzania, that a man will not go hunting when there's no moon in the sky, because the lions would see him and they would attack him.

So there's a kind of shift system, which is an expression of this half and half time.

Lions will hunt when there's no moon in the sky.

People, men will go hunting when there is light in the sky.

So this is very important for them.

In this ceremony, Malobe, for the South African Bayaka people, women have mystical conversations to the moon.

They are in a very euphoric and ecstatic frame of mind as they're singing with the moon.

The moon is construed by their biggest husband, women's biggest husband, is the moon.

And the moon governs their menstrual cycles.

They are said to be akila, that is, in the moon when they are menstruating.

Men have akila in terms of hunting luck.

The whole idea of akila— akila belongs to women as menstruation, to men as hunting luck, to animals as a kind of power and force.

But the whole idea of akila is one of balance and properly.

It regards the forest and the forest spirits as yielding and abundant and kind of generous.

And as long as everyone maintains Aquila, maintains their balance, maintains the proper sharing, then all will be well.

Otherwise, the forest will no longer give, will no longer give food, will no longer give the people what they need.

## **Epeme**

One last example coming from where I've been able to research with hunter-gatherers in Tanzania from the Hadza people, and this is again an example of their sacred ritual called Epeme, is run only when the night is dark.

Either the moon, either late in the moon, the third quarter of the moon, before it rises late at night, or at the dark of the moon, an early new moon after it has set in the sky in the West.

For running Epemere, there can be no moon in the sky.

So all that is seen is the beautiful stars of the Milky Way.

And again, it is women's polyphonic singing.

that are calling out to the spirits and men that dance as those spirits as a matter of healing, as a matter of medicine, and as a matter of bringing...

good luck to the hunt and good life to the people.

So every moon, every dark moon, there will be in, these are different camps, have different at different times here, but through that dark moon period, we can see that they're having these.

So we have a rhythm of the dark moon as the time of taboo, And we could say the time of blood, it's linked to, that dark moon is linked to women's menstruation.

Men do not hunt while the moon is dark because the lions can see them.

Instead, the men hunt, particularly they do waterhole hunts at the time leading up to the full moon when they have light in the sky.

And they bring the hunt back at the time of the full moon when people, everybody shares, just like Aquila with the Bayaka people, Everybody shares what is.

No woman, no child, nobody can go without if there's been a kill or in a Hadza camp.

Okay, I've given some examples of how the moon really organizes life, religion, ritual, and the economy for these African hunter-gatherer peoples.

And it does seem, because we have this in East Africa and Central Africa and Southern Africa, from very ancient hunting peoples, that this must be something similar to what was the source of religion for humans, for humans in the very 1st place.

We call, this is not a religion of patriarchy.

It isn't even, I mean, we heard Chris Knight last week, some of you would have heard Chris Knight last week talking about matriarchy.

We like to call this lunarchy, that it's a kind of balance of power between the women in the phase of blood, the women when they're menstruating at this time of the moon, and then giving way to sort of surrendering to the men after the full moon so that There's a kind of sex strike or taboo, menstrual taboo, with women's very fierce and militant dancing, taking control of the camp.

Wonderful examples from Central Africa of Ngoku, where the women just flood into the camp and put the men absolutely at the side.

The men have to sort of hide in the huts while the women start their dancing.

And then after full moon, The men come back with the meat and everybody can eat.

And then after that, everybody relaxes and there's a relaxation.

So we have this balance of women taking the power and then surrendering, men taking back the power, but then surrendering as women come back again with the dark moon.

So we're talking about lunarchy as something that is really very basic to the balance of power between the genders, between the sexes, and between the ages as well, parents and children, the generations, as well as between the sexes.

## In Conclusion

My last image there is just another image to show a lunar calendar from the Upper Paleolithic, just to emphasize this share, this measurement of time through the moon, also the emphasis of the dark phase of the moon, whereas the recent patriarchal religions tend to emphasize let there be light, It's quite clear from these African hunter-gatherer rituals of great antiquity that it is the darkness that is the time for the connection with spirits.

Okay, I'll come out of those pictures now and just start to ask questions about what could we do with this understanding of lunacy? Particularly for those of you who are academia comprising people who are designers, architects, people who are thinking about environment and ecology in the present day, with humans who are living in cities.

We're half of us, half of humanity living in cities now. And cities above all fragment our experience of lunar time.

I haven't gone into the biology sufficiently, but the moon is not just a spiritual metaphor, the moon inscribes women's bodies. Women have a reproductive periodicity.

If you add enough menstrual cycles together with data from menstrual apps, you get a lot of menstrual data.

It is quite clear that the average of women's menstrual cycles is the lunar number 29.5, that is the length of the lunar, synodic lunar cycle.

And pregnancy is 9 times that length.

Women's reproductive, evolved reproductive cycles are lunar.

The moonlight has had a big impact on our evolution.

And if it's impacted women's bodies, then it's impacted children's and it's impacted men's as well.

We are, in some respect, a lunar periodic species.

So we're living in these cities today, cut off from the moon.

not just cut off culturally, but cut off in terms of physiologically as well.

You can hardly ever see the moon in the sky in the city.

It's cut off by buildings.

Children are growing up today who not only have not seen the Milky Way, they've never seen the dark sky.

They don't know where the moon rises or what phase.

When does the full moon rise? Where do they see it? When does the new moon set? Where do they see it? They don't know those things.

We are cut off and alienated from.

the moon completely, and yet it was an integral part to our evolution and our development as Homo sapiens.

We had visitors from the Hadza hunter-gatherers come to London some time ago, and we invited them for a month in London.

So they spent a whole moon in London.

We invited them to talk about their culture and their understanding of religion, the moon, and humanity.

And They were, the Hadza are very canny in modern environments.

They experienced the bush, they experienced towns in Tanzania, and they didn't mind about London.

They could navigate London quite well.

But what they told us, and it was a worry for them, what they told us was, but in London, you just have fake moons.

And what they meant by fake moons was we have pictures of the moon on Power-Points, but we can't see the moon in the sky.

And this was a real worry for Hadza people, because Epimeh, the healing ritual of Epimeh that must be held in the time of the dark moon, it is a matter of health.

It's a matter of welfare, of mental health and welfare.

I think the Hadza are right, that by cutting ourselves off from the moon, as we have in modern times and environments with lights, that are blaring 24-7, so you watch the picture of the lights across the face of the planet, and they're there like 24-7, glaring, stopping people from even seeing the Milky Way, stopping them from knowing where the moon is in the sky.

How do we reconnect? Because it is through that reconnection with cosmological time, I can promise you, the moon is anti-capitalist. It is the time that will reconnect women's bodies to the cosmos, to the planet, to the animals, to our whole kind of essence as humanity.

How do we do that? This is something that, you know, architects, designers, ways of experiencing our environment, it isn't just a matter of space. It's also a matter of time and the phases of the moon.

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Camilla Power  
Decolonising Time  
Oct 30, 2020

Ecodemia.org.uk, Commons Talk. <[www.youtube.com/watch?v=2Bw\\_Q9EnHsw](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2Bw_Q9EnHsw)>

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