

The Rainbow Snake and the Wawilak Sisters (Seminar)

An Aboriginal Australian sacred story

Chris Knight

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Chris Knight will recount and interpret the intensely dramatic story of The Wawilak Sisters and the Rainbow Snake, told by the Yolngu people of North-East Arnhem Land, explaining why it is the most widely discussed myth in all of social anthropology. Chris will compare different recorded versions of the story, connecting them with the male initiation rituals during which the events described in the myth were traditionally re-enacted. He will argue that this and related stories about an immense rainbow which was also a snake hark back to a time when women across Australia engaged in rituals designed to synchronise their menstrual cycles with one another and with the moon.

<https://vimeo.com/1158954088>

Good evening everybody.

It's great to see you, for this, which is really a classic talk for radical anthropology.

One that I think Chris may have done 40 or more times cause radical anthropology has been going that long.

but never the same way.

This is like an elder telling stories out of a sort of epic, kind of edifice of, of stories that are building an entire cosmology and I'm sure many people here know with the Rainbow Snake is very prevalent across the Australian continent as, a fundamental aspect of Australian cosmology.

Chris is gonna be locating it very much in northeast Arnum land with the mythology of the Wawa sisters.

and the Rainbow Snake is, is something very ancient.

It's been the stories, the connections to rock art, the connections to Songlines that even went under the sea before the floods at the end of the last ice age.

These give Rainbow snake a a, a long, time depth, very long and we have other reasons to think because rain snakes in Africa among Southern African hunter gatherers are also very ancient.

That we could make comparisons between our colleague and what's has made comparisons between the Southern African rains snakes, and particularly the stories that, that Chris is talking about today.

basically the, the dragon, and rainbow snake is, is an aspect of, of the dragon, the one cosmologies, but it is very, we, we have more whereas the dragon symbolism, which is so global and takes many diverse forms in different co continents.

In the case of Rainbow Snake, we have ethnography that positions it in relation to ritual initiation, ethnography of Australian ritual practice, particularly the younger people in Northeast Island land.

so Chris is taking sort of that big view, global view, and then bringing it down, to the, the, the real specifics that are gonna teach us what is it all about? So I'm gonna Hand over.

Okay, thanks. Yes.

this term in Rag for ever since we've been going several, several decades traditionally been an intensive study of mythology.

and we've title it The Science of Mythology after C Claude Osis, A extraordinary full volume analysis of 1000 North and South American Myths.

So, mythology, the study of mythology is a science, and by mythology, TROs, and most of us, we, we mean, we don't mean, we don't, we don't necessarily include legends and stories about some hero or sort of half remember things which happened some time ago to, to be, to quantify the kind of myths that work in this way that Levi stress describes.

they have to, they have to be magical.

And, and a story isn't magical if it doesn't involve kind of the most magical trick, of all, which is to die, and then come alive again.

So, hi. Okay.

We need to just, sort of move back a little bit and because I, it is really important everyone's in the same circle for these things.

so everyone can just, especially at the back, move back and, okay.

That's, that's great. Okay.

So, a, a question.

if you had to point to one thing, one icon, one figure that tells you we're in a magical world, something which is kind of just about every magical story in the world, all continents, what is it? What is that? What is that figure creature? and as, Kim has hinted already, it's the dragon.

Any, any, every culture in the world it has has something like a magical snake, the Anaconda in South America, different kinds of serpents, swallowing pythons.

and I just want to start with that.

and I've got a, I've always had a, a kind of theory about the dragon.

and I'm always surprised that, no one else sees it.

I, I find it really astonishing.

So, I'll tell you what I think, the dragon is, a unity of opposites.

It's the ultimate assemblage of contradiction.

If you think of our sort of stereotypical image, it's the lowest of creatures.

It's a snake right on the ground.

It's the highest of creatures got wings.

it lives in water.

It breathes fire. It's human, but it's sexual appetites offer young maidens.

So it's human, not human.

So just think of the highest and the lowest, the coldest and the hottest, the wettest and the driest, all these opposites and combine them.

and you've got some kind of, how is that? What is it? And in my own view, it's quite simple.

It's an image of cyclicity, of periodicity.

The winter turns into the summer, the high turns into the low, the human turns into the animal.

Life becomes death, but death becomes life again.

As the seasons change.

Dying and coming alive again is what all things living kind of do.

Your pulse, your, I mean, so many things and of course, p, the greatest magic of all is what happens in life on this planet.

We wherever we go, we see death and regeneration.

That's what life kind of consists of.

It's like immortality through death is the logic of life on this planet.

we're designed to die in order for new life to be able to emerge.

But that's rather, abstract.

in order to really understand the dragon, we need to know why it's there everywhere in mythology, what generates it, how it all began.

and there's one part of the world, again, Clemen was touching on this, where we can get, we can, when anthropologists first went there, they could actually witness the rituals.

All myths are rooted in ritual.

They're never, they're never just sings in their heads.

Funny stories, things that people emerge.

Mythology comes out of the experience of ritual.

and, the most important rituals were always rituals of initiation and during an initiation, right? what happens is that the moral values of the community not just passed on by sort of hoping that people carry on proving of this moral system.

It's fairly fairly coercive.

a a young person coming of age has to go through an initiation ritual, and that always involves, in a way, dying and coming alive again, because you die as a child, very often, the initiation ritual is literally an experience of yes.

and you cut 'em alive again as an adult member of your, your community.

and, one place in the world where that was still happening when Western an turned up and, and made records.

So that is Aboriginal Australia.

and, because in Australia, almost nowhere else do you actually find, the dragon active, alive, doing its work, being really genuinely materially, a dragon and linking, stuff in their head stuff here on earth, embodied in, in real, real practice.

So I'm going to be reading out, the best known myth, probably in all anthropology, the myth of the two, well, sisters.

but I'm gonna not do that quite yet.

I've got a few more things to say by way, introduction.

so put it all in context and shifting completely, really.

I first became interested in anthropology.

I read, but is still one of the very best introductions to, anthropology.

That's the origin of the family private property in the state that somebody called Frederick ENGs and ENGs.

and Marx, actually, Karl Marx is who obviously, obviously worked closely together.

they argued following the founder of an anthropological of kinship theory, Louis Henry Morgan, an American business lawyer who was working on the side of the, that like the land rights of, first Americans in, in the early part of the 19th century Lewis, Henry Morgan worked among the I Choir Indians.

He was, adopted into their society and he, from the, from his knowledge of the ways of life of the Iqua, Indians who were ma local and matrilineal, he Morgan, but also s following that, suspected that the first form family wasn't a nuclear family, wasn't an individual family with mommy, daddy and the kids.

It was something like a, these Indians, who had lived in an I choir, like a long house for all the women shared childcare with each other and I'm slightly reminded of that, now with what's going on in, in the states in Minneapolis, that there's no such thing as someone else's children, as Iroquois women regarded each other's children as my child, that you a child in any of these societies, any of these undergo societies, you couldn't, a child couldn't even refer to, to mommy, my mother, without it being slightly uncertain, which, which mother the child's talking about.

Because the, the kinship terminology is of these societies, but what's called classification.

So the term mother, father, uncle, son, daughter, whatever it was, didn't, didn't, didn't describe an individual.

It referred to a category.

so, and it that came out of, collective childcare.

well, throughout the whole of the, nearly the whole of the, of the last century, that was regarded as a myth, as completely mythical.

the nuclear family is the foundation of all kinship everywhere.

it's really important that every, every parent knows their own child, distinguishes it from other children.

If, if, if you find some traditional people using a classification system, all it meant was that they were probably a bit confused and hadn't got enough intelligence to work out my child from the I child.

The real truth of it, of course, was that they didn't have private property in kids.

which is obviously, a very remarkable and healthy, view, which been profoundly vindicated by the person who today is regarded as probably the greatest Darwin since Charles Darwin.

Sarah Hery, who in her marvelous book, I think 2009, was the publication date.

The book called Mothers and others, said that we couldn't even have evolved.

We wouldn't even have the brains, the size of brains we humans have, if single mothers had had to bring up children.

These last brain babies are too costly, too burdensome to, to be able to afford to bring up if you're just a single mother.

So other parenting, collective parenting was, was the, was the, the, the social factor, social political factor, which enabled our species to even exist with the brain sizes, which, which we have.

So, that's, that was my fundamental, interest and of course, it meant that, if it was true that women had considerable leverage, considerable solidarity, considerable power, and as, as ENGs and Morgan and Marks, argued that meant that when men went hunting, for example, when we were hunters and gathered us, it, it was women who, whose solidarity made sure that a man who wanted a relationship with them would make himself useful, would go hunting and bring back the meat.

and, and in those early days, the hunting would've been collective.

So an element of, of kind of matriarchy, not quite the right word, foundational early human, society.

So I, I was very interested in that and I couldn't understand why nearly all the Marxists in my, in my circle, and then I've had Marxists all over the place, and not just Marxists of course, but so many people just took that idea, as itself, a myth completely untrue and nearly all feminists, academic feminists said, it's just a myth.

It's just untrue. the idea that women had considerable leverage and power in many ways equal to that the power of men in in early human society, right? One of the, one, one of the, readings i, I did back in, I dunno, sort of 75, 6 7 or something, was an article by she b Ortner, is male to female as nature to culture and he argued that, in order for patriarchy to be overthrown, you would have to overthrow culture itself.

That being very unlikely male dominance, patriarchy is just a permanent thing and the reason why, it's because it's kind of natural that women who have to look after children are through looking after children.

They're, they're drawn away from, separated from the political sphere, leaving men who are free to not a man doesn't have to be with his children he can go off somewhere or, or he can be very influential in, in organizing political stuff.

Males will dominate females cause females are held back by their biology into, primary responsibilities for childcare and for some reason it was just almost completely missing the insight.

The childcare itself can be collect, can be communal, collective, and a source of political, power.

So I was thinking, well, if there any sort of fo the logic of, Lewis, Henry Morgan and Engles and the other thinkers of that, that early period, the late 19th century, did it realize that there was a possibility that you as a woman could be politically powerful, not despite being a woman, it could be politically powerful, but precisely because you're a woman, because your body just male bodies are very obviously features, which seem to be allow them to be, powerful.

But I said, why hasn't no one thought that being female can also connect you with others, produce, be a reason for, and a source of, of solidarity? so for some reason that idea didn't seem to be around very much.

I not, when I say feminist, I mean, if it's a particular kind of feminist, everyone in that period in the seventies knew that you have kind of academic feminists.

We used to call them bourgeois feminists.

We have to be careful of using those, those terms these days and that would mean people who want to fit into become a banker, become a whatever it is, you your ambitions lead you to completely different feminists that I was more close to, was that actually overthrowing patriarchy means changing the whole world on the basis of, of, of women's solidarity.

and thinking about all that, coming to dragons at a moment were exists.

Myth thinking about all that, I was just, I was fascinated by something which is, again, becoming clear all around the world.

Wherever you have a male monopoly over literally power, so you have a men's house, only men are allowed in it.

The men have they, what they do is sacred.

they exclude women from their power, and they say, when you ask them, they say sometimes to the anthropologists, it's a kind of secret among themselves, but they don't say much about this to women.

We stole these things from women.

All the things which we do in the men's house, and what the men do in the men's house.

They, they, they claim to be women with that, with their rituals.

So, for example, they will bleed.

Cause the nose bleed, various other ways of bleeding and they say, when we bleed, we're menstruating.

and we stole this trick, which makes us very powerful from women when we give birth.

Because what they would do, the men in these cultures, they would, they would say that when women give birth, they just give birth to sort of flesh.

to be properly born, you have to be twice born and the second birth has to be coded out by men and of course, Christianity does that, doesn't it? You know? But, but now again, even to this day, almost the only standard reading on myths of matriarchy, myths of primitive matriarchy saying that women once ruled the world, but they don't rule the world anymore because they were overthrown by men almost the only text on that, if you look it's one, it's a text by Joan Bamberger.

and, her argument was, you can look it up, is that, these myths of matriarchy, were just designed to justify, the naturalness of male dominance that, so, and it's true that the stories, they, they, they say, and they were almost identical around the world.

They say, when women ruled it was a disaster, because women were very, very cruel. They made men do all sorts of things.

They made men, men, nurse babies, perhaps even breastfeed and there was also, and there were, there was, there was deceptive.

The women would come out to the, the men.

What's now the men's house. It was a huge menstrual house and there again, the women would burst outta this menstrual house, pretended to be spirits, pretended to be God's terrifying the poor men and ba ba Berger argued that we should just ignore those because they're just patriarchal propaganda and all the time I was thinking, well, actually you can rather in a rather different way over here in the west, mostly the view is that male dominance is natural, because after all, men are a bit stronger than women.

They better at athletics, better at violence, for example, various other things.

now those other cultures, those cultures of men's houses, no, no, no.

They think the exact opposite.

They think that they, they argue in the stories that women, when women did rule, it's because women have an unfair advantage.

they, they can use witchcraft, and the witchcraft comes from their bodies and it comes from the fact that they not only menstruate, but connect up their menstrual cycles and do so in, in synchrony with the moon and it is really difficult, really difficult for men to menstruate.

and because we men can't find it really hard to menstruate quite painful as well, you've gotta cut yourself in some way.

it's, it's, it's, it's, it's, it's, it's, it's completely reversed.

Men in order to have power according to his list, women, men have themselves have to, have to menstruate.

While, while I was reading all this stuff, something else was happening, I just mentioned kind of two things.

One, my, somebody who became a, a good friend of mine, James Woodburn, he was the, some ways the founder of Hunter Gather ethnography.

He told me at a conference, I think it was 1984, he said, Chris, among the hazer, these are Tanzanian hunter gatherers, bow arrow, hunters, in some ways the last surviving people who still lived by hunting and gathering large game animals, in more or less the way we humans did, as we became modern homo sapiens, he said, among the hats, sir, the men all tell me that every dark moon, women all bleed together in synchrony with one another.

And, I thought that's, that's, that's very interesting.

and, at the same time, the word menstrual, synchrony first appeared in the scientific literature in an article in nature, something called Martha McClintock and said that women who work together live together, pyramids, these chemical signals actually bring women into, into synchrony.

now you can argue with both those arguments secret, you can say probably, it wasn't, it wasn't true that that had their women all synchronized with their menstruation,

every dark moon, and it, and it, and it had been very substantial criticisms of Martha McClintock's, scientific paper.

But anyway, the what became known as the McClintock effect, that women who come close to one, one another tend to synchronize their periods, sort of tallied in my head, at any rate, with James Woodburn account telling me that actually that's, that's a kind of belief, perhaps a myth, but perhaps just with some reality in it, among the, among the, the, the had.

then, I'll just say one or two other things.

There was a lovely, book, about, K Harry people who would say a woman told, marriage structure stuff, a woman when she menstruates, she knows that it's contagious.

And, and if one, one woman sees a bit of menstrual gut and another woman's legs, she will start menstruating as well and that, that, again, is a very common idea in different parts of the world, among the young Austral Peru lovely book about Janet Siska.

And, even if you tell a story about the moon hoarding women to menstruate, if, if a girl who's underage is like, she's only a sort of 15 or 16 or something a bit young, a bit young, just for her to hear that story, the story is such a powerful one and mind and body are sort of so interconnected that will cause her to menstruate as well, which, right.

Okay. Now let's change completely, and I'll, I'll read out some of the, some of the myth.

So this is, this is the story of the two wock sisters from Northeast Arland to Australia.

It was recorded by several different anthropologists, before the Second World War in the, in the thirties.

and you had a map when Australia here, and we got, now here, got west, you've got, west Australia here, you've got Northeast Ireland, and up here, and it's here.

Not a particularly useful diagram, but it's maybe gives you some so idea.

So now I better put my glasses on.

Now I'm gonna read out some of this story in the kind of the original, and, perhaps I should say as well.

the story was never just told, you had to live in the culture and you had to do different things.

You had to give birth, you had to have sex, you had to, you had to come of age.

But in the course of life, the, the details of the story become apparent to you.

It's very much like this Christian story, the story of Jesus.

You don't just tell the story of Jesus you, you've gotta be christened, you've gotta be a harvest festival.

You've gotta all these, you, Christmas and Easter.

You've gotta go through all these experiences and through those experiences, cause each one has, maybe has a particular part of the, the story of Jesus aspects of the, of the story get internalized.

So it's a bit like that. But, but, the amazing, anthropologist, Lloyd Warner sort of had so many different versions of the story and he put together this, this, connected version, The two AK women first movement, the coming of the sisters.

It was the mythological period, the dream time when Wonga men as dream time men walked about and modern men had not yet appeared.

Everything was different. Animals were like men.

Then those two Wawa sisters had come a long distance.

They were coming from the far interior of the A to the Araf sea up of the, of the north.

They'd come from the Klan territory of the Du Moty, from Ka Kado, the country of the Wak people.

So the, the whole society, is organized into two halves called moti, and ua and this is a structure of internationalism.

It just means that wherever you are, you are either er or reia and it's, and you, you don't have, you don't have average patch territories.

It's not like an Englishman's man. Home is its castle.

It's like, it is much more like a, a chessboard.

If you do, your home is here, here, here, here, here, because you are the black color and if you are eure, which is a larger color, where's your home? Here, here, here, here.

Brand spatial, right across the right across the landscape.

So it's the exact opposite of, territorialism and there's no question we evolve with that kind of territorialism, despite the fact that the mainstream seemed to be thinking that we, we were constantly engaged in warfare.

We were like chimpanzees because we were related to chimpanzees.

Chimpanzees, of course, do defend their territories and everyday line, again, a bunch of males with us for launch an attack against and their neighbors and try to kill some individual, that they find, very, very different here.

the worker, a young woman who's not had a child, was pregnant.

So that the, the goman, a woman who has had a child, the giver, they call her cause she's given a child to the community.

It isn't really hers anymore.

It's, it's, it's kind of socially owned.

She carried her own baby under her arm in a paper bar cradle.

It was a little male.

The two women carried stone spears and Hawkes down and bush cotton.

You hear that as an aborigine.

You see, it's the women carrying stone, spears, men's weapons, and bush cotton decorations.

Again, today, most of the society in Australia are male dominated and it's only the men who move around with these bush cotton decorations, cotton stuck on with, with, usually with, with blood as the, as the glue.

they, they killed iguana, aum and bandicoot for their food, and gathered yams when they killed the animals, they gave them the names that they bear today, they did the same for the yam.

They gathered all the plants and animals that are in the GaN country.

They said to each other, they killed or gathered.

You'll be Marra sacred. by, by.

So they kill the animal, and as they kill the animal, they make this prophecy.

You'll be sacred. You'll, you'll be a totemic creature and dad with some kind of divinity.

But they, but that's gonna happen in the future. Not happen.

It's not happening just yet.

And, and I, I, I, obviously, I can't read the whole story as slowly as this, so I'll have to stop in a moment.

When the two sisters started their journey, they talked down later round bongo, and still later jba.

Then they talked wack and finally li they named the country as they went along. so these two sisters goddesses, if you like, you, they invent language.

They give names to the, to the things they come across, the different animals, the different regions of the, of the country.

In the WAC country, they coated where the wgar men, these men were er, and they were, er, this was very wrong.

So again, it's very paradoxical, because the, the two sisters have sex with their brothers, not biological brothers.

Of course, it is, it is a, it's a, if you are doer, when it, your formal sexual relationship should be with somebody in called you marry out.

But here, the er sisters only only move over dur territory and kind of for that reason, if they're gonna have sex, it's gonna be with fewer men and it's through that blood relations was the title of my book.

But it's through that kind of almost excessively intimate blood relations that their babies are born.

this was very wrong.

The two women stopped to rest for the younger, felt the child she was carrying move inside her.

She knew her baby would soon be born.

Yepper sister, I feel near my heart, this baby turning, she said, the older one said, then let us rest.

They sat down and the older sister put her hand on the abdomen of the younger sister and felt the child moving inside.

She then massaged her younger sister for she knew her labor pains had commenced.

The baby was born there.

So again, the male theory is that women shouldn't get their close to each other.

don't, I don't quite know how uniform this is, but in this part of, of Australia, which is not so severely patriarchal, is in Western Australia, in the desert and other places, when a woman feels her baby coming on and she's gonna give birth, supposed to, ideally, as far as the men are concerned, at any rate, she's supposed to just go off into the bush all on her own without even her mother near and, and give birth to the baby and then she's supposed to come back, and, and carry on as normal, even though she's just given birth to a baby.

and you might think, well, why is that? Well, I've kind of pat on it earlier talking about these men's houses.

It's because if a woman who gives birth while giving birth, going through a ceremony and is celebrated as she comes back to the, to the group, always helped by other women as she's giving birth, that validation of her fertility and giving birth and shedding of blood would be at the expense of what happens when men give birth give.

So in order for men to be able to make a lovely, amazing song, song and dance about the fact that they've just given birth, which of course they do during their initiation rituals, it would, it, the, the, the, if we like, the real giving birth by women would undermine the symbolic giving birth by men and the blood shed by the women, in, in giving birth would lessen the splendor and value of the synchronized menstruation of, of men when they go through their initiation rituals.

And, and the I I, I'll just get to this.

Otherwise we speak loud.

What happens is that, this is a male initiation ritual.

At a certain point, there's a, there's a RAs roaring sound, and it's just away from where the women in their camp, are living and usually just down a bit of a dip.

Woo, the men wearing their bull rulers.

and, one, one man comes rushing into the women's camp saying, oh, oh, the rainbow snake wants blood.

What's a child? What's the swallowing that, what's sort of one of one of your kids? One of the kids? And, you've got the thing to do is to feed the, the, the rainbow snake, the swallowing, Python feed one of the kids to, this python.

maybe he'll be satisfied with that.

So the whole little boys are the 9-year-old boys are sort of p*****g themselves with, with terror.

The women are holding onto the boys.

But, but the men come and just grab one of the boys, take take him down outta sight where this roaring sound can be heard.

And, and the, and he's blindfolded and it's in the dark and, for about three or four days and he goes through the experience of death, put into a trench, covered in mud.

There's this roaring sound all the time, what the men are doing cut.

They're cutting one another's, arms and as they woo, woo woo, sound again, the pulse boom, whoa, woo.

The blood is coming out. And then the blood is poured over.

The boys who are kind of in the womb, of this en norm.

I mean, the whole, the whole rainbow snake is a kind of massive womb.

And, in this part of the world, there's two huge, in huge column.

It's about this thick, about out of three people on standing on each other's shoulders.

And, at the climax of the ritual, the, the, the bandages are taken off the eyes of the boys.

Several boys have been, maybe nine or 10 have been initiated together.

And, in the firelight, they see these huge pillars, memorable pillars with great serpentine red lines in blood.

Ooh, like that. And they fall over the boys and they, at that point, they feel, their last moment has arrived, the moment of absolute terror and then, they're told the truth.

And, it's like, yeah, we, you thought this was a, the giant rainbow snake.

But look, it's actually these, these bullroarers, which we use that's all watch, we turn them around and they make woo woo woo sound and these big, big things, snakes falling over, you look, they're just, they're just made out of wooden bush cotton.

So they're, they're told all the se all the secrets.

What is so important is that they're also told never breathe a word of all this to the women and so the fact that actually all those things which the men do, they say they stole from women.

So women invented all those things and it does seem lightly, doesn't it? I mean, I would've thought, I, I remember thinking this, well, menstrual synchrony is power.

Hmm. I wonder who invented that? men not all that lightly and so I just thought when the men say we stole these things from women, unlike every other antibiotic, I, I knew, and even today, I think only rag agrees with this, when the aborigines say, we stole these things from women, guess what? I think they did. I think they were stolen from women.

I can't think of any other explanation which makes a slight as good a sense.

Male menstruation just by, just by menstruating.

Men are stealing something from women if the menstruation is powerful.

And, and why would men, why would men want to imitate menstruation of childbirth and doing, and why would they want to do that collectively? And there's some form of collective menstruation of childbirth was, was prevailing in the period before, which would then mean that those matriarchy myth saying, we stole these things from women.

why not give them the credit that they benefit of the doubt? To me, well, it does look very much like those to me, just men menstruating to together and deriving power from it is stealing something from women and, and men, men making sure that women themselves, although they've gotta actually do the menstruating and do the childbirth, when men prevent women from exercising power from being female, that's something which, um I can, I can believe men really did benefit from.

So what, I can guess just go back to what I said earlier.

I mean, our, in our culture, I suppose pretty much all men, all al patriarchal cultures, certainly you've got cities and states and stuff.

We just take a granted that we've got male dominance.

It's sort of natural because of biology.

but what's so clear is that in these other cultures where men say, we stole things from women, they're thinking the exact opposite.

They're thinking women have natural superiority for men because they can really synchronize menstruation with the moon, which is kind of very, very magical.

You know, your, your, your body is, when you connect, you are connected, this incredible round, silvery object in the sky.

it just seems to be kind of, kind of straightforward that men doing that really are stealing something from women and that women would've been doing all that kind of thing.

earliest, beforehand.

Now, I'm gonna go, I think to, my book here, ions right? All this down. I'm gonna gonna read a much the second I've, I've shown you the, I've read out to you the first part of the story that we've got to the point where the two sisters, are about to give birth.

One of the's about to give birth one's got the baby and the other's about to give birth and the two and the older sister down in the stomach, the tummy of the, of the younger one.

so, as the sister helped by her companion began to give birth after birth, blood began flowing into the sacred pool, arousing the snake.

So inside the pool is, a, a snake.

And, it loves blood. It's a blood thirsty snake.

My government is, it's not just loving blood, it's actually made of blood.

It's when, when blood flows connect up, they turn into what the Arab Aboriginal is conceptualized, metaphorically, the snake, a rain cloud, lightning flashes, and a rainbow appear in the sky.

The serpent is emerging in anger from its whole, unleashing the season of rain, floods and storms.

cause in that part of Australia, the monsoon period, you can predict it almost to the hour.

But suddenly, the, the, the sky on this horizon, you see all these lightning flashes.

It's very, very dark, and it comes like a kind of lid, over a copy and it's like over, over the people.

and because they can predict it, they time the, the blood shedding rituals, which we enact the story, to coincide exactly with the onset of these, these rains.

So on unleashing the, the season of rain floods and storms, the night was dark except for the thin curve of the moon.

As the women's blood flowed, all cooking fire became suddenly ineffective.

The animals and plants, which the women had hunted and gathered, you remember, they, they, said they had spears, which is gender ambivalence.

They spear the animal, they make this prophecy.

You will soon become sacred as you die.

So it's in dying that these animals become godlike, become, sacred.

So the animals and plants, which the women had hunted, refused to cook, jumped up a line from the fire in which they had been placed and dived like men into the blood streak, waterhole.

So this is, they kind of die, in the pool, and then they come alive again.

And, but the way they come alive is that they refuse to be cooked and jump from fire into water.

So this is another example of what I was talking about earlier.

Just think of all the opposites, fire and water, deaths and life, male and female, raw and cooked, just and imagine them alternating high and low.

You know, that, that the dragon embodies those opposites, those contradictions.

The well waters began to rise, go away, go away.

Kit, per the sisters cried as they became aware of the immense snake in the sky, sead with fear.

They danced to make the snake go away.

But the dancing only brought on the second sister's menstrual flow, attracting the serpents to more the waterhole began overflowing, flooding the dry land all around.

Now, I should just say again, across the world, even where you don't have water nearby or certainly not ties, and, and, and the seacoast nearby, the idea of the flood is the same as the Noah's Ark myth, myth of the flood.

But the idea of the flood is present.

Kim mentioned in introducing all this, but of course, at the end of the Ice Age, all, all the Mel melting ice led to many ways, many regions catastrophic floods.

So greater Australia connected before that period and then these floods connect disconnected Australia from the, the other islands, to the north.

And, je s flood and many other archeologists have traced the way that the, the aboriginals have retained a memory of the underwater landscape between what we call Australia, and the New Guinea and Indonesia and the various islands to the north.

So it's, it is, it's astonishing crew, really not the ability for these aboriginals to be remain faithful to their stories, passing them on, passing 'em on, passing them on.

Lastly, through the initiation rituals.

But as I said earlier, you, everyone sort of learns the details of their stories through life, through the different aspects of ritual life that, that, that they all, share and, and which they preserve thanks to their initiation and rituals.

So the water hole began overflowing, flooding the dry land all around now, filled with foreboding a despair.

The sisters fled into the little menstrual hut they had built.

So they go together into a menstrual house, and they, and they, and they say to the rain, go away.

Go away. and, but by doing that, by being together in the blood after birth, blood menstrual, blood intimacy between women in the blood, while they, there's the bit, Ty are saying, go away, go away to the rain.

Of course, it has the opposite effect, it brings on the rain and up, right up above them is this dark, cloud.

So, so now filled with foreboding a despair, the sisters fled into the Mensa heart.

They built, but at this point, inside the heart, they were both shedding blood and as they sang out the words, you are longer and menstrual blood.

Now, the, your longer is the name for the terrifying monstrous, snake.

You are longer. But they put his name together with the words menstrual blood, and of course, that that kind of does it.

So they sang out the words, Yung and Menstrual Blood, the most taboo and potent of the songs known to them.

It, it is a repeated song, Yung Menstrual Blood.

They're putting these two things together, the serpent thrust its nose into the Hut, and swallowed the women and their children alive.

Black clouds now brought it out the sky and rain crushed down in a terrible storm.

As the waters enveloped the women and their babies, they bled still more and began undergoing a change of name and they move into another realm beyond death and what happens is that the snake carries on singing these taboo songs.

When I say taboo, these are songs which today only very highly initiated, men are allowed to sing.

Women must never sing those kind of songs.

and, and, and these, these men who've been initiated several times, they've, they've died and come alive again, died.

What? So these, some of these old men, they death, who cares? You know, I've, I've, I've, we, we've died lots of times and we there's always something next after death.

But at this point, black clouds blotted out the sky and rain crushed down in a terrible storm.

And, at this point, the two sisters are turned into a snake.

So the, the snake has come risen so high, it's up in the sky, nothing out all, any light.

And, and you, you listen and you can hear from inside the great snake.

the sisters still singing the song, go away, go Away to the Rain.

so, in the Voice of Thunder, the great snake, roared.

And, and according to one of the versions, this was the spirit of the two sisters who were speaking out of his mouth.

We are here now. The sisters said The snake has eaten us.

We are the marra, the sacred knowledge of witty the snake.

Our spirits talk through him for another country, as the snake became erect like a tree.

Its head stretching high into the clouds.

The sisters in this way continue to give names to the world, snakes from neighboring countries, because that, that area is all covered in water rising and falling, of course, with the, with the tides and there's all sorts of inlets and estuaries and rivers.

Again, there's the rivers are sort of, every river's sort of made by a and meandering, serpentine, version of the snake, because the, the snake comes together as one.

But there are local snakes which need to come together at the climax of one of these, elements as the snake became erect like a tree.

So the snake is a, is a womb when it becomes a wreck, like a tree, like a penis, huge penis.

But it's a very paradoxical penis, because it's a penis which swallows.

and all over Australia, when you find these got, its like figures, it's, it'll be, it'll be often male, but, it's a male with breasts.

You, so it's so gender ambivalence, switching of gender, shifting of gender.

Paradox, paradox, paradox is the essence of these, of the, of these snakes.

snakes from neighboring countries joined in the roaring and name giving all together inaugurated the great rituals, which today bind in solidarity tribes far and wide, despite their linguistic differences.

So again, it's like, it reminds me of the town of Babel because, the stories say, one of the snakes says, oh, we all seem to, you all seem to speak different languages.

Nevermind, we can all roar together and the sound of thunder is this universal language, the sun, the sound of thunder being the, the, the, the sound of the pulse, the sound of the, of, of the blood.

am I going on too long now? Yes, nearly.

I've got five minutes. Okay.

so link up to the initiation. Yeah. Right.

So during the initiation, which reenacts this story, and I, I think I can, get to that as, as well, no, during the initiation, what happens is that, the boys are swallowed up.

and, one man after another, one of the elders already initiated after another, sheds his blood.

So what happens is that you might be an elder initiated, and, you, you get into, a pit in the ground hidden from the women, but they can hear the, as I mentioned earlier, they can hear the, the bullroarers.

And, so it might be sort of me shedding this boom, boom, boom, boom.

So the, the, the ballers are passing, it's, and it is the sound of the heartbeat, the sound of the pass.

So when you hear the ballers, like you've heard this sound before.

cause when you are a baby in the boom, you went, whoa, whoa, woo, woo, woo, huge sound in your ears.

The, the blood comes out, whoa, whoa, whoa, whoa and it's, very, intimate.

The men are very physical with each other, holding each other, encouraging each other, saying, that's good, that's good.

and then the ophthalmologist was, was told when we shed our blood, we are those two sisters shedding our blood, in, the hut, the sound you hear is, is the sound of the pulse.

and the end of the story is that, some wgar men, some ancestral men noticed as they were walking over the area where this disastrous cataclysmic event happened, they, they noticed things, they noticed tracks.

It looked like there'd been a huge struggle.

There was, there was snake markings in the, in the sand, some blood.

and, um and, and one of the men said to the other, quick, quick, quick, quick take that, take that basket paper, ba basket, but as much blood as you can find in it, and, carry it back to our camp.

And, and they say ever, ever since that time, we have used that same blood.

The blood of the, of the WWE sisters to, perform our most sacred, bare is these ceremonies being the practices, the ritual practices carry on our culture down through the generation.

So it's thanks to those two sisters doing these wrong things that we are here today with our, with our culture, both.

So what, what, what the men are saying is we have to do lots and lots of wrong, wrong, wrong, wrong things, all the wrong things the sisters did.

Somehow the things which were wrong when the sisters did them are wrong, but strangely, right? And when men do those very same, very same things, right? I I, I've tried to sort of, maybe we've got a bit of time for, for discussion, what is the dragon? It's, the ritual logic of synchronized menstruation, connected to the moon, which of course moves through its cycle from dark to light, from light to death and as soon as you realize that, as you think about it, you just think, well, of course that's why dragons often have many heads, is women in solidarity with each other, with their blood celebrating fertility around the world.

We, I mean, in, in the West it's a little bit different.

Our patriarchy is so sort of become so severe and so sort of confident that under, under Christianity, perhaps, especially you have good versus evil.

So so you need to slay the dragon.

So you have St. George who's good and the dragon is bad.

but what you notice is that even under Christianity, somehow the serpent, I mean, for example, the serpent is the genesis story.

I mean, the serpent is the first creature to speak, and it's got an intimate relationship and a prior relationship with womankind.

But then when you look at all the other versions of these stories about serpents and dragons, you just realize the serpent is the enemy of marriage in order for, the world to be safe for patriarchal, married and the family, some heroic figure, some in George some patriarch with his sword has gotta kill the dragon.

and it's very difficult at first because in the, so many Greek myths, the patriarch tries to kill the dragon, but he's got the dragon's got so many heads, and each time we, you chop one of the heads up more blood spurts out.

So, and that's just telling you again that the dragon is this many headed, bleeding, but powerful coalition and it's sort of gotta be there.

The dialectic has gotta be there.

The opposition between George and the dragon between life and death, fire and water, all those opposites.

cause without those oppositions, you haven't got simplicity.

and without simplicity and the turning of the seasons, the turn, the changes of the moon, the changes of the moon reflected in the body of ones of women, We don't have life at all.

Okay, Well done. Thank you, Nick. Thank you.

Question, right question.

Come across the idea if you, the ground and mapping the ground, there's snake that's used in the name of the stored is Qap the snake.

Yeah. So just one Yeah. Mapping the ground for patriarchy. Yeah, yeah, yeah.

Mapping it all out, George being back.

Yeah, obviously I'm saying that is a metaphor for killing the solidarity of women, the many headed solidarity in solidarity, blood solidarity for women.

There's no, I don't think there's any other way of explaining the dragon in the first place and I, I mean, I, maybe you want, maybe some of you might want to know about alternative theories about the rainbow snake.

I mean, one theory is that it, it's, it's a sexual signal.

It's a pianist. yeah, I mean, and what you find is that people, an anthropologists who've in the past tried to explain the rainbow snake, they always want to reduce the rainbow snake to something familiar to us in the west already.

So we all know about in, in in the, in the Australian huge parts of the continent of Australia, water is very valuable.

R the rainbow snake is a water symbol.

said it's a weather symbol.

So we all know about the weather, we all know about water.

I, I mean that sort of, those sort of, there's a recent book on the dragon around the world which says it's, it's the rainbow and we all see the rainbow.

Okay? So it's the rainbow. I don't know, it is just, why do we try to, given that it's such a valuable, well guarded secret, it's given that it means so many connected things, since the logics sort of worked one way and not the other way.

I mean, for example, in this book, a Blood Medic, I, I, I said, I said, well, what if this model about women together with their own blood were correct? What features would we expect of the dragon? for example, could you have a dragon getting married? I mean, what's your answer? Could you have a fairy tale when her dragon gets married? Well, no, several, sorry. No fairy tale.

When the the, when the princess is, they can end it.

It's a kind of bite, my kind of white, but is it really a Very intimately connected, it's never a wedding ceremony and the, and the dragon won't have conjugal rights in the, in the woman is because you The I'm just, yeah, but I'm saying because the dragon always has a prior connection with a young woman, a connection before she came of age.

You can sort of see it. It's, it's not, it's not marriage.

It's a, an intimate relationship, but that intimate relationship has to be severed or marriage in the family marriage with a, in a patriarchal conjugate, right, in a private rights in a woman for that to be established.

The collective relationships, blood relationships between women and their, and their kin has to be popped up.

Question about the rainbow snake, but maybe it's me who didn't get it.

It seems that when the rainbows snake comes and it two sisters, it deduct it from this kind of like appetite or loss or, or quality even like all this kind Yeah.

Negative thanks to, but if the, if, if the dragon and the ram, if the rainbows snake is their representation of the, as the many headed solidarity and kinship among women, the rainbows two sisters, we also some kind of like salvation act of like taking them in, in art of like securing them because That's absolutely right.

Perfect question. And I just told Zoom that because they can't hear what you said.

So, yeah, it it's good.

I did close on the question, so don't your name, but I don see Lucia had this, lovely observation that's the, the re snake.

It seems to be so threatening, it seems to be so horrible swallowing the women and the babies, but also maybe it could be turned around as something that is actually guarding and securing.

So Chris, do you want to Yes. I mean the, the inform that Lloyd Warner in this amazing book, a Black Civilization, published, he, he asked his best friend aboriginal friend.

So what is it like to be, inside, the snake? And, the answer was, we feel so safe.

We feel like a long last we come home that that's a, yeah, we, we we're with our own blood.

So, so that's that safety and protection inside the body of the snake, which to the women outside the, the, the secret circle, if you like, literally put outside by the men being swallowed by the snake is a complete cataclysm.

It's an absolute disaster. They're swallowed alive.

It's a but for the men and every single level, it's the exact reverse.

We are with our own blood, we're safe, we're secure.

and, and, and they, and they sort of say that the, the sisters were safe and secure.

They can't quite deny them.

They can't quite tell the story and yet deny it, but somehow everything which is good for the men was wrong for the women to do and it's, it's, it's, it's, you can just tell that it's male ideology.

It's a beautiful metaphor, but it just, it's just men's way of trying to, excuse, the way they're excluding women from power and solidarity and pride in being female and my own, my own view is that something like that continues everywhere today in that, in the sense that there's something about education.

I mean, initiation is an education system, this aboriginal education system, it's just designed above all things to prevent women from recognizing their own power.

All this power which we men have got, we've taken from you, it's yours.

Well, Christianity does that.

It's, Christianity does exactly the same thing.

It says to a woman who's just given birth you need to be church'd.

So you, you might have given birth, but where's the soul? You know, so they've gotta take some man, gotta put a sort of second mother, gotta take that baby, dunk it in the font, leave it there for a bit, take it out.

Alright? Now, so, so all of us, if you're Christians, you've gotta be twice born because women can only produce flesh.

So it's just, you can just find all, I mean, and, and of course Helena here is, is doing some work on Jesus and his blood and the crucifix and all those, you've gotta have blood.

But the reason why in Christianity, women couldn't be in church, couldn't be priest is because there's nothing more threatening to the male blood of, of Jesus than like the real thing women's blood.

So keep women outta the church and I, I, I hate it to say that I think actually the, the real Jesus, I'm quite confident he was a Palestinian, revolutionary against the occupation of by the Romans.

But, but obviously they since get mythologized and, and, so the, the myth is all about as if Jesus wanted to be a human sacrifice, wanted to be a sacrificial lamb, wanted to shed lots and lots of blood, all that, obviously that's complete nonsense.

But, pets need that nonsense.

They always have needed it because otherwise, otherwise women might start to feel that they can mobilize power by being women.

Whereas of course, the official, the official feminism, I I, I was taught this many years ago by other feminists that I got to know Denny Arnold being, being one of them.

But I mean yeah, these sort of official academic feminisms, they they just want to find, I've gotta be really careful what I say about any kind of feminist, and I am fairly careful.

It's just like you, you can, you can sort of be a certain kind of feminist, by, by just saying, well, I can be powerful as long as I act like a man I'm on the pill.

Or I don't, I don't recall.

And, and, and real, that always seemed to be as, as it was to all my women friends at the time years ago.

This was that, real liberation would be feeling empowered, not despite being female, but through being female because the, the human female body can, unlike by the way, chimps and other great, we have great apes.

Technically chimps have a 36 day cycle, but I was, have a 40 day cycle.

They couldn't even be, they couldn't synchronize even if they want to.

We are the only great ape with the exact length of cycle, which would be compatible, synchronizing, using the moon as a clock.

Could you say something about the, the myths where the dragon winds, the moga, I mean, this would be another brand view of the rainbow snake and the women being guarded exactly the same, From the same rough area of, Northeast Aland, Northern Australia, this wonderful, wonderful myth.

It's in, it's in this book here, I think it's in my as well, but it's about the MGA Monga girls.

And, so the Monga Monga girls are in the, in the water in a big billabong, alongside their snake looking after them, the rainbow snake, and they're all keeping, he's protecting them all.

Then what happens is that one day, a man who, who keeps looking at them, he, he really he, he's, he's fascinated by these female bodies, and he's, oh, I want one of those.

And, he, he's very brave.

He goes into the water and he snatches one of the monga monga girls and takes her away.

and as he takes her away, he's for, I think for quite a long, it's lengthy period, he's very, very careful about one thing.

Don't let this woman go anywhere near water.

Keep her near fire, keep the fire burning, keep her near the fire, because if she goes anywhere near any kind of water, she's gonna connect up with the water and her sisters and, and the, and the, and the snake that's protecting them.

So he keeps her, he keeps her away, keeps lighting a fire, keeps keep away, that goes, and great detours to all go anywhere near water and then one day he, he trips up and he's camped quite near the water, and she goes to the water, and then she escape and then, and then the girls, they all come outta the water.

There's this sister, sister come back to us, come back to us.

Oh and they're so, and they take her back into the water.

and, and she's with them all singing together now, and her sisters are so, they're rejoicing and they're like a complete idiot.

This man isn't happy about that and he, and he goes into the water to try and drag her back and he's crying and crying.

He's banging his head and shedding blood from his head.

He is so, so, so upset and he goes back into the shallow water, and the robo snake isn't happy at all.

Robo said, grabs him and then shakes him side to side of the river of the, of the, and, okay.

So that's, he is the dragon, of course.

and he wins quite a lot of the stories aren't quite sure which side they're on.

Any questions on Zoom? Anybody tell, or when you were ready, when you began, read the first bit out, we almost finished with, the, bit where the women and sisters are having sex with the wrong white, their own.

Could you explain what, which is completely what they ought not to do? Could you explain what the SIGs significance of that is? Well, it is very significant.

So, what it used to be called, there's a lot.

It's a, a long book by, I won't go into the, it's about ignorance of paternity.

In Aboriginal Australia. There was once, a theory among anthropologists that for some strange reason, aboriginal people didn't know that if a male and female have sex that leads to, a baby, there's ignorances of paternity and that's because the Abes themselves traditionally would say that a woman gets pregnant by passing near, a, a waterhole filled with spirits and it's by going near to a certain place with a full of spirits and then you have a dream.

And, and through the dream, this spirit of fertility makes you pregnant and so they would deny that having sex with a man makes you evident.

You might say, oh, I wonder why that is and it's soon as you think of the politics you realize is because ab ABT didn't have marriage, they had what's called bride service and again, nobody seems to know this. It's maddening.

All hunter gatherers, they have that, their system of what gets called marriage, it has nothing to do with a man going through a wedding and having conjugal rights and a woman, it's called bride service and bride service just means that a man, a young man, a young hunter who wants a sexual relationship is gonna prove himself useful.

So he has to visit his, his sweetheart.

He's, he's living with her mum and her sisters and her brothers and in order for, to, for him to keep them all happy, he's gotta be very good humor, very generous, very caring, and he's gotta go hunting and not just cheat by eating the meat out in the bush.

Somebody's gotta come, bring back the meat.

Now, can you see, and, and, and what happens with Bri is every now and again is, and that rep applies to that little quote.

I, I didn't quite finish the quote, but Engles and Morgan Iqua, if a man is useless or lazy, or even just perhaps a, a bit unlucky for too long, he's out on his neck, his bribes, and her mother and a sister.

And, and, and brother would just say back to mom and that, and it can, it can happen that a, a woman will have, one of these young men as a partner, and then

another, and then another, maybe quite often actually, every every child has a different, what we would call, a dad.

But can you see how is it in the women's interest if they want to keep getting rid of a man, not to allow him to have claims in the child, they've got to say, this child comes from our blood.

That blood would include the brother, the child comes from the brother, the sisters the mother.

The blood children don't come from guys having sex with you.

cause if they, if the guys think they're the dad, and that, that gives 'em, right, you a woman's got this guy, you can't get rid of him and then, and then, but of course, this thing you can't get rid of him is exactly what happens when patriarchal marriage gets established because the dragon has been slave.

So what's the significance of, the one, the wa the wa will like sisters? Well, I'm what I'm saying, what I'm saying is that patriarchy will call their relationship with their brother sort of sexual intercourse.

It's a normal kind of intimacy that kin have in the blood is it's one, it is one more of these, lies, if you like, that patriarchy tells about women and their brothers is if, if a woman's too close to a brother, she's having sex with them.

But, but women need their brothers to prevent themselves being harassed by, by husbands.

So it's, it's a women's interest.

And, and the myth is kind of saying that it's, it's everything that women do is wrong.

Is it really wrong? Right? Yeah.

But, but in order to make it sound wrong, you, you call it, incest.

Hmm. If, if I can bust in a little bit, on the detail of the initiation rituals for now pp and, that are played out in relation to the Ack story, but you haven't had time to really get into all that detail, which, are referencing all these kind of set all these kind of things that women have done wrong, these systems have done wrong.

but the boy initiates as they are led as you've explained, they're put into that great big trench in the beginning having been snatched away and the boys are really put through a terror, Reggie. Yeah.

Yeah. that great trench in the be in right there.

But this, this event is happening over a series of moons in relation to the appear.

Each new moon. Yeah. It's, it's being organized by that and the trench itself is in the shape of a giant crescent That's right.

With these two mighty pal white painted with the red ochre or blood, swirls on them, these mighty pillows and then the, the boys have these pillars falling down on top of them when they're actually being cut.

they also go through an episode when they're enacting the lodge poles of the hut that the, the women were supposed to be way hiding in from the, well, from the, mate,

as they got more and more terrified singing and actually summoning the snake rather than sending it away.

Yeah. But, but what is important about those ceremonies, also, we've got it as a lunar cyclical organization of the, of the time.

But there is this, what you talked about, er and er and doer has all these, it is associated deeply to the wlac, to menstrual blood, ancestral blood incest, all of that, and kinship.

So it's fits with the whole idea of the incest with the wonga man.

by the contrast is dry, dry, everything is white or light.

so that, and it's more to do with marriage and, and, and, and husband and wife.

Yeah. So you have this alternation going on, UA richer, UA richer being played out in these long, several weeks of, of these complex ceremonies.

the men, having epi having episodes where they are taking all the blood and the wetness, whilst women are supposed to have a paper bark and cones and hats, which mean the men actually come as if they're a snake, to see have those women got any blood and no, no.

Those women, they haven't got blood. We we've got the blood.

Yeah. But there is one particularly interesting episode where the women almost stage a rebellion and come into the dance ground.

Yeah, yeah, yeah. And where they are doing the calling like, like the go away, the calling words, which are meant to, tell ung to go away, but of course it doesn't and at that point, right, at that particular point of the ceremony, when women are in a solid group on the dance ground, the men have to look away and down because if they saw if, or if they spoke those words, it says the men would get pregnant, they would fall pregnant.

Yeah. So it's like a, there's a real gender conflict being enacted.

Yeah. In right in the core.

That, that was my memory of K in, in the burning.

can you bring any, In Chris's book or It's, but it, the actual burn ethnography, and, and Chris's work on it in his thesis as well.

yeah.

So it's there, there is, when, when you're talking about the as if the Aboriginal cultures like yogo as bad as Christianity in terms of patriarchal control of women, well, it's pretty strong.

But there's also, there's also significant fema.

There's a push pull, which of course we know so much from African hunter gatherer rituals that there's this oscillation of power there.

Can I, can I emphasize what Kim has just said here by reading it out? It'll take about four minutes. Yeah. Good.

It's just beautiful stuff. Say it because it is in Aboriginal Australia, then the snake is nothing other than women's culture creating menstruation, synchronizing dance.

A dance ground is a snake's body writes the ethnographer of Warner as if in confirmation and it is usually thought of as having the women and children inside it.

But although mythology knows that the snake and women's dance are one and the same male initiation, ritualism as we have seen inverts all this attempting to exclude women from their own dance, which must now be monopolized by men.

Aboriginal men who dance themselves into a snake know that they first learned to do this in the past when they stolen scare quotes, women's secrets long, long ago in the mythological past and they know it with quiet confidence because much things do not change.

You're still doing it. But today, bring out the ultimate paradox, which all this involves.

Let's conclude this chapter by checking once again with a ritual that reenacts the w Alexis myth.

Just before the, the y una ceremony begins, your long go snake is heard roaring some distance away, she or he 'cause it's always gender ambivalent can smell blood.

The weird sound of those Boros Warner comments is a kind of bellowing roar like that which one imagines a wounded dragon would make the terrified boys due to be snatched from their mothers and slaughtered have been smeared with red ochre mixed with arm blood.

The snake-like dancing, possession of men carries them away, taking them to the male sacred dance ground whose inside or secret name is mother's uterus.

At the same time, however, the dancing men come up to the boys', mothers and female kins surrounding them, pointedly the men refuse to swallow.

These is what Kim was mentioning.

Ronald Reynolds, burnt Comments is another author of another version.

He comments, the dancing men symbolize ung surrounding the women, the AK in the mens hut.

But these are not swallowed.

Does none are menstruating or have a after birth blood.

The men dancing around are swelling, but they smell no o odor of blood.

Can you see what's happening? The men want to be monopolizing the blood.

So when the Dancing men approach the women and children, they discriminate against, they discriminate against the women and girls resolving to swallow only male offspring on the paradoxical grounds that their women folk are not bloody, whereas their sons are.

We have then the insistence that present day women in contrast to their mythological ancest at the crucial moment, neither menstruate nor smell of blood and therefore must be excluded from the heart of the ritual.

Meanwhile, men and boys can be swallowed because they do menstruate, induce amount of blood.

The dialectical inversion is complete.

Yet, if anything is truly extraordinary about these rituals, it is the extent to which the men are aware of what they're doing.

They seem to be consciously tricking the women who in turn seem to be clued to some extent with a certain collective awareness of what is going on.

The sexes are contesting their respective rights to a power whose basic nature is understood.

They are struggling for the snake and both sides know in essence what this means.

Sometimes the women are permitted to gain the upper hand, while more often they concede victory to the men.

But at y color in the lush game, rich region of Northeast, which is the Y people's home, women's solidarity is still very strong.

Menstrual blood is regarded as sacred in a strikingly positive way and the struggle for the snake is therefore a very real living sexual political fight.

I want to just, can I carry a bit longer or, okay.

Two or three nights before the finale of the Kuna Peepee at year color, after the boys have passed through the core of their kuna creepy experience and being swallowed into the uterus of the mother, all the women dance into the men.

This is what Camilla was mentioning, the women.

This is a women's fright back now, all the women dance into the men's sacred ground.

Some are painted with red ochre and decorated to dance for Corus.

This is incestuous corus.

It must embody the blood unity, which is the snake.

It is the women themselves who now hold the power invading the men's sacred ground and forming themselves into a snake of their own.

The women have their own secret name for this snake with which they're supposed to deceive the men and as they call out this name kitchin, they warn the men not to get too near or your bellies will come up like pregnant women.

The men sit down quietly with head bent.

Only once is snake power of the women themselves has been established that the conditions are felt appropriate for the climax of the ceremony.

Collective inter horse within the dance ground, or symbolic womb following this genuine expression, blood return to the womb, initiates or removed an imitation of childbirth from a large menstrual heart represent, representing the one in which the two sisters were swallowed at the beginning of time, burnt male informants observed in words, which seemed to display astonishing consciousness of the fact that all this is something which women should really be doing and this is, the quote is such a marvelous quote.

It says, everything an Aborigines telling, the author telling, Warner.

But really we have been stealing what belongs to them, the women.

But it's mostly all women's business and since it concerns them, it belongs to them. Men have nothing to do really except Copulate.

It belongs to the women. All that belonging to those, the baby, the blood, the yelling, they're dancing, all that concerns the women.

But every time we have to trick them, women can't see what men are doing, although it really is their own business.

But we could see their side.

It is because all the dreaming business came outta women.

Everything. Only men take picture for that lango.

They make an artificial replica of the snake.

In the beginning, we had nothing because men had been doing nothing.

We took these things from women, and I've just written here it is one of the severe indictments of 20th century anti eist, evolutionist anthropology, but it's models of lead ethnographers to dismiss such profound aboriginal insights as scientifically valued us.

So they just take all that stuff about, we still up from women, it just say, oh, it's just mythology.

We want. Mary, did you wanna ask question? yes, yes, please. thank you very much, Krisa.

it was, so great.

I just realized that so far I had missed the part where women have to hide to give birth has to not undermine the ritual giving birth of men.

So it makes me question this, this image of women giving birth by themselves that I, I never really understood.

Why wouldn't they be surrounded by mom and by the sisters? So I understand from what you say that this may have been kind of imposed on them and has never been, willingly done by women.

Would you agree with that? And let me just read this out and here we have, another anthropologist talking about, Queensland Tribe.

No woman must see a baby born except her own.

Nobody except the mother of the child must be present at the birth.

When a woman knows she has to have a baby, she goes away to a place she has picked for that purpose and there she makes a large fire.

She has to have plenty of ashes to clean herself and the baby when it arrives after the baby is born, she returns to the camp and then it can be seen by all.

She must have no help or aid from anyone.

I mean, the effort that men had to go to, to isolate women in menstruation and childbirth, mean huge efforts.

and I, and even that quote, I think there's probably just a sort of some male informant telling the ethnographer about what would be ideal.

I can't myself quite believe that women always, conceded to all that and obey that ridiculous thing.

But, but once you've, once you realize women are not supposed to have any help, you realize this, the beginning of the story, oh, this is shocking.

You know, a woman's helping her sister in childbirth.

Oh my God, they're gonna get some power from that.

That's very dangerous. I Question there and then with, just to take it like kind of away from the detail and more back to the global good, point of view.

Lovely. Yeah. Yeah. obviously it seems now that like the male ideology has really spiraled up, spiraled out of control and like yeah, it's just causing so much like the end of what feels like the end of the world.

I wondered like how you would answer Horner's point about how we can overthrow patriarchy and basically bring back a snake in a nice, series of actionable steps.

I've gotta leave that to you. Like, Okay, I've got some ideas.

So tell us, tell us ideas.

Well, I was thinking that we need to maybe get back in some case, I thought maybe abolishing menstrual shame to begin with.

I mean, that's what she absolutely feel so ashamed to bleed.

and also just the fact that tampons are like full of toxic chemicals as well.

Like the whole thing just feels Yeah. Yeah.

Like painful, uncomfortable that, women complain of PMS and like PMSing before their periods, preventing them to go to work or like they start to work despite that again, like they divorce from their body and like they have to be in their head.

They have to be girl boss feminists in order to have power in patriarchy.

so I guess refusing to work Oh, well done.

Very good step. Yeah. Right. Direction. Yes.

Maybe getting together with the girls will sync up well, maybe many sexual partners given the baby thing being bad.

Girl, you have got, yeah.

You get, you got f fantastic. Yes.

Yeah, I mean, it's worth saying.

there's gonna be a lecture in, what is it? It's today the 27th.

There's 1, 2, 3 weeks is Tuesday Dark Moon, the lunar New Year, every Dark moon.

For the past, over the past year, we have been doing menstrual hu a London Menstrual Hut to it as a little step and there may be sooner South London and a North London hut and we are hoping it's gonna go into various places.

But yeah, come and step into one of those and give us some more ideas, would be a good way to start.

and that rag in, yeah, that three weeks time with Rag is I, I'll talk about why the moon actually runs all the religions in the world, actually, because that is not a sa lunar New Year, Hindu bud and so on.

But it's also the moon of Ramadan.

So an anthropologist would ask the question, surely, well, why is it that all these religions, I mean Judaism and Christianity, and they all are organized and dates and, and feasts and particular occasions organized by the week.

So was that as, as Chris said menstrual synchrony, well that wasn't invented by men, was it? Exactly. Not really. Not very likely though.

This Nooner calendar aspect of religion, it is there a religion without it? Not really when you go to indigenous religions.

and there's a lot more to say if you go to hunter gatherer religions, because the moon will be the organizing principle and, and especially the, that Chris mentioned.

So yeah, let, let's think about, and what you say is it's about reclaiming time.

It's about saying, well, this is our, my time, our time, and let's actually just stop now.

Let's just stop. Let's think about what happened in Minneapolis Yeah.

Last week that they, people who were so appalled, so outraged said, well, we stop.

We're gonna stop. We are not gonna work.

We're not gonna shop, we're not gonna go and this is up stop and if that is going to punch those patriarchs in the face, nothing better can do. So let's just, Of course, mens menstrual seclusion was strike action.

The reason why women went into seclusion was because they needed to reclaim their bodies and say, if we say no, it means no you men, you don't have conal rights and us, which mean we can't even go on strike.

What, how can you have a, a system where you're not allowed to, where you don't even have ownership of your own, your own bodies? So I mean, everything you said was, I dunno, as Camilla said, it's just, exactly what needs to be done.

But of course it's, it still seems a huge, huge leap.

But, somebody else who I think must have been coming to rag after you stopped coming, Lex, Frankie, she's, she's got exactly the idea.

You have her back a way of getting rid of the shame.

and it's, it's to make sure that we have a rather expensive, rather lovely, wonderful present to give to your daughter. Oh, The is here L and the answer as well, of course, the answer.

Did you say anything? Yes, the answer.

So is the idea is to, instead of letting menstruation seem to be a curse, make it a blessing, celebrate with a particular party.

And, and Lex, the answer's on the same wavelength.

John, her own Mike. Yeah. I dunno if the Answer was organizing the Red Thread Club with the idea of, do you the answer? Do you wanna say something? Yeah, no, sure. So I'm, I'm trying to organize a, a kind of comic book, like a, a comic book, stroke family, ultimate family album, stroke workbook, to go into, a gift box for young girls starting their period and it's really trying to retell, the, Chris and Camilla and Ian's work.

So, and yeah, it's taking a long time, but it's getting there and I think it's exactly the things that you were saying, actually though, we need to remove that shame first and then we can get on with the other stuff.

So thank you. Thanks for giving me a plug.

What we were saying, the simple terminology the curse.

Yeah. I got, as a young man, I got tired of a girlfriend saying, you only up to bed or something.

It's the got the curse.

So you just you don't discuss it and as a slightly older young man work or whatever, oh, why is Mary not in the meeting today? Today? Oh, women's problems.

Why the f**k is it the problem and why couldn't someone explain it to me properly at the time, knew what they were talking about.

But it's some business of, putting everything down.

Wonderful thing about, I'm not an, I'm not very religious.

I brought up a Catholic, but I'm basically an atheist, I suppose.

But I mean, the wonderful thing about all the world's religions is this fundamental idea.

things are sacred, and if the body's not sacred, get it.

Nothing else is gonna be sacred and above all, women need to be able to assert the moment my blood makes me sacred.

because otherwise you, you are bound to be you taken, taken for granted by the patriarchy.

So the idea that some things are sacred, the blood is sacred, that, I mean, of course, that all the world's religions have some such idea about the, the significance of blood because we, we, we were involved with hunters and gatherers, we sending blood all the time in, in the hunt and if, if you kept mixing out human blood with animal blood and all those things, we wouldn't be here.

I mean, the, the discovery of tools wouldn't have been this man, the tool maker.

It would've been a discovery of weapons, of mass destruction.

We would've, we would've killed each other.

So the idea of establishing women's blood as right, that's the red line that makes you, that's sacred, that enabled the rest of symbolic culture and any kind of moral system to get off the ground.

And, and as Kim was saying about what's happening in Minneapolis now, it's all very it's digestive. It's somehow The way that it's reiterating the human revolution with the slogan of the no, no such thing exists as other people's children is, is almost the slogan that created us as humans.

Yeah. So it's, it's extraordinary. Andrea, you wanted to Yes, Chris, that was an incredibly suggestive lecture.

I wanted just answer our, our comment sister's friend here, she said, how can we stop things and get out is like menstrual shame.

And, being provocative, you can can put it in a nutshell, you need to do, involve with both consciousness things that we need, the, biological substrate that creates petly.

That's what polite way of saying we need to dissolve fiction.

That to be human means that we are locked into this dimorphic human species sapien sapiens and as I was discussing with Camilla Las, it could come up with a

perfect, a perfectly valid decomposition abolish homosapien sapien and come up with two monomorphic species.

I mean, a Sapien Pacific tricks and the sapiens parasite to be, gee and you can then see these two species have been locked in a host parasite relationship for million years and once you've dissolved the typical patriarchal capitalist false consciousness that makes people think that's a valid unified species, then everything becomes possible to, to going back to your symbolic snake.

I offer you a sort of four called analysis of what the snake needs.

So on the one hand, it's first of all just the assertion of the reality of matriarchy, and it's the assertion of the importance of menstrual power.

Then it's the assertion of your political force through moon locked coordination of menstruation.

But then it's kind of the assertion, what have I just said, which is it's the emancipation of matriarchy and of unified menstrual power into a kind of dominating female political or shakti infused reality and that's a more polite way of saying what I just said, which is if you realize that in defense, say all reality is Shakti power, female creative power in motion, and that physical reality is sort of what they call baram, which is just static potential female hack power, then that that is a completely non patriarchal, this non patriarchal Abrahamic monotheistic conception starting out with an incredibly female positive conception of the whole of the world.

You're, you're not starting proposition of HR called capitalist repression or HR called false compliments.

You are right in the midst of an extremely female positive model of the whole of reality.

And, just to pan that out, there's a, a very different mythology, which you can see from Ali Ma or de Durga, which has all to do with the handling of blood, some sort of would be demon says one the God I think is braa.

How can I become immortal? Bara says, well you need to decide what your immortal against, but, and so ethics wrapped to be, fails to consider the power of femininity or a female and so he thinks he's immoral because he thinks if anyone's trying to kill me, my blood is spilled on the ground.

I'm constantly reborn in a thousand demons. But what are, Are the other people saying? Wanna hear that zoom? Can you hear Andrea here? not that well, really not that well.

It's why couldn't Peter, you're scratching a, a lecture in a lecture and I've got dar nave to ask something quite interesting as well.

That's cool. Is there a question or? Yes, there is a question. Have you given much consideration to the Carly Ma myth that he has to drink the blood of the demon who no one previously can kill? Because she has the power to drink every blood of every drop of blood that is spilled by decapitating him.

So normally no one succeeds because whenever you cut his head off, there's a thousand blocks of blood, the blood seed, and they produce all demons.

But she is able of, we've been quickly enough to drink all the blood, all the demons who pass off.

I say, if you have ring hanging out power to try and put a narcissistic arch called supremacy by drinking the blood of every demon.

Yeah, it's just not, We should do. I haven't Considered it. I, Christine bid, who's here with us, did a beautiful imitation, Christine, of, Kylie, in a wonderful film of paralytic Cookery, wasn't it? You Menstrual and Naked, which was shown in the National Theater in, beautiful film show of women in revolt not long ago.

So Dasha, could you contribute, please? Yes. Thanks so much, Chris, for another, engaging, storytelling.

I really enjoyed it. my, concern for, the patriarchy run amok.

I think, we've identified along as a transdisciplinary insight that one of the main problems is that boys have been under nurtured for quite a while.

Their brains mature more slowly.

They're more stressed by social humiliation, and they have less built in resilience and yet in patriarchal societies, typically they're given less nurturance and so they get stuck in the prehuman primate orientations of dominant submission.

cause they don't really grow their full human nature, which mostly happens after birth, from all the social engagement that is species normal.

So I think part of the issue is that women feel resentful, of course, at the loss of power over generations and then mothers aren't nurturing their boys enough.

I know the feminist will go nuts here.

I'm a feminist, but a holistic one, that we have to come re return to nurturing and, realize what people need and give them what they need and boys need more, young boys need more and if we don't give it to 'em, we're gonna end up as we are in the states where we're the least nurturing of babies, maybe in the world, in the culture and you see what happens. You got all these dominators. So that's my comment.

Thank you. Thank you very much.

S my question colleague Jerome Lewis.

He just says that among the baka a little baby, it never, it is never on the ground.

It just came from one arm to one, one sort of maternal figure, male or female to another, to the nurturing is just continuous.

The, the little kid just never feels abandoned because it never is abandoned.

It's got so many mothers of had sex and we know that, that neurobiology is really significant in those first months, days, months, and years of life shaping the trajectory of health and sociality and morality. So I'll stop.

Thank you. Okay.

We've had a lecture with you around this and no that, I mean, we have had a real lecture with, with Dasha, which is on our rag Vimeos, for people to go and look at.

cause DA's famous for, series around the evolved nest and, and what Pretty much best seller's.

Not quite ell I suppose not not the right term, but hugely popular books about nurturing.

I think I Does anyone, is anyone burning with another question or shall we wrap up and think about moving to pub? I wanted to just say, for next week, we have a wonderful speaker, Morner Finnegan, whose title, Fitz very much with what, and Dasha, you've spoken alongside Morner, haven't you, met her and, and, her title fits very much what Dasha has been saying just now.

The title is Corpor Real. Morality is the Antidote to War.

so morality that is born outta our bodies, out of the sensations and the, the our, our bodies in conjunction with each other just, you don't want, you don't want what's going on comes of the US Civil War for sure.

now B Mona, what's gonna come down from Edinburgh, but she's, because of health and family reasons, I'm asking her to do Zoom.

So she'll be here zooming.

But we also hope to have Ingrid Lewis here as a live anchor at this end and Ingrid has done, much work with ba bako benje, women, and we'll be speaking from, they'll, they'll be kind of speaking together with that.

So I hope people will find it, really interesting, even though we've got one on Zoom.

One is wonderful speaking on Zoom actually.

anyway, she's just a wonderful speaker.

so I hope you'll be able to come back just to say the week after that, on February the 10th, we have a really notable lecture with Stephanie Lotter, who is doing significant research on, dignity, not danger on the menstrual rituals of Nepal.

And, she's going to be locating that within an, a cosmology of architecture, what happens with young Nepal girls and where they're placed and located when they're menstruating.

now this is something that a lot of people have, have had a lot of concerns about.

Stephanie's doing deep going research on that.

That is the week after, next week, two weeks from now.

So anybody interested in this story of the will definitely be interested in Stephanie Nots work? Yeah, I just say one thing about the actual snake.

Chris knows a bit about what I'm gonna say, but, humans crypting all this, and everything into sort of a fiction that suits our society or men and women and so on.

But there was an actual snake, a giant snake in Australia 55, 50,000 years ago when they first got there and if they have this ancestral memory of the flood, which is maybe not as old as that, I can't see why there isn't one of this giant snake living in Billabongs that's Interesting from Archeological evidence.

So two species much, much bigger than the, that now live in Australia.

So if you're sort of wondering where did the dragon come from? Where does this come? Why is it a snake in you? Email us the, I have no difficulty Email, Chris. I have no Difficulty from looking at that from a biological point of view.

You know, I want to know about It's that is it, it's like using, it's a metaphor.

Yeah, but it's not just about, He didn't come outta nowhere and he didn't just come out of the bodies Environ. And There were really giant snakes at the time that people first entered into sale was, very, very big boa constrictions who would indeed swallow people, hardly just penises not so funny because all that.

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Chris Knight
The Rainbow Snake and the Wawilak Sisters (Seminar)
An Aboriginal Australian sacred story
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