

Batek Shamanism: weaving time through cosmopolitics (Seminar)

Dr, Ivan Tacey, University of Plymouth

27 Feb 2024

Contents

Audience questions 25

Ivan Tacey (Plymouth) researches the relationships between humans and the environments they live in, and has worked with Batek hunter-gatherers of Malaysia since 2006.

Ivan writes: "This talk draws upon longterm ethnographic fieldwork among Batek Dè' and Batek Maia hunter-gatherers and post-foragers living on the edges of the tropical rainforests of Peninsular Malaysia. I present the principal activities of shamans and the vivid cosmotopographies revealed in their soul journeys which, I suggest, reflect longterm historical relations with a variety of outsiders and the influence of Malay, Arabic and European ideas and imagery.

By incorporating the perspectives of Others and drawing upon the perceived power of specific entities and places (human and nonhuman, local and faraway), shamans re-configure their contemporary and historical relations within a realm where they hold considerable power. The creative potential of mythopoetic story-telling and embodied shamanic experiences does not refute modernity or obliterate history. Shamans draw upon the power of modernity and history to remake socio-spatial and temporal relations with an array of human and nonhuman others.

<https://vimeo.com/919509108>

Welcome to everybody on Zoom for another radical anthropology seminar. Welcome to everybody who's made it, we've got a really good full room.

Tonight we have a very exciting lecture, from Ivan Ta, who's come all the way from Plymouth today. Ivan is lecturer at Plymouth in anthropology, sociology & criminology.

He has done more than nearly 20 years worth of work, field work, work with Malay Peninsula Batek hunter gatherers and post forages and we are particularly fond of Ivan because he started his anthropology journey with us at the University of East London and he is gonna be applying still some of those old University of London lessons on sex-strike theory to some of his field work. But I'm gonna hand over now to Ivan to take over.

Okay, thanks a lot for inviting me today, Chris and Camilla. My name's Ivan Tacy. I work at Plymouth. I work with Batak hunter gatherer collectors in Peninsula Malaysia.

I'm particularly interested in animism shamanism, but relationships, humans relationships with their environments, including non human others. So of course, the various animals and spirits people share the world with.

I'm also very interested in both violence and peace ability, the biotech, being a gender egalitarian, very, one of the very few, very, very nonviolent societies on this planet and I'm particularly interested in how shamanic and animistic relations with spirits and the landscape are transformed through, contemporary change, including

globalization and deforestation, extractivism, incursions of tourism, and so, tourism and so forth.

And, as you'll hopefully see in my lecture today, I'm interested in kind of multimodal anthropology, which in, in today's work will include various images from a graphic novel I'm working with, with the artist John Herford, which should hopefully come out one of these days.

Okay. Carrying on. So who are the batek of Malaysia? So there are various, various different biotech groups They live on, peninsula, Malaysia, which is just south of Thailand, north of Singapore.

They the main area, if you like, encompasses this green area on the map, which is where my hands are moving over here, which is the protected area of Tam Nara National Park.

Tam Nara means national park, this white area outside, right up to here.

This is still a Batek village down here, in this red box here is Batek Maya territory.

I worked very much in this area camping, Tom ki Ying, which sometimes called, I call tampon batang, various names.

S but I'm particularly interested in what goes on, on the edges of the forest in this kind of zone of interaction, if you like, between, the forest outsiders areas where the forest is disappearing.

Mines are opening, sacred sites are being threatened.

So it's an area of rapid change. right.

I'm clicking the wrong computer. Okay. So who are the B'Tech? well, there's two.

There's, there's, there's different groups.

You've got B'Tech, eager B'Tech Day, B'Tech, Maya, B'Tech, nog, B'Tech.

but mainly if we go back to this map, most of these groups speak a similar Batek Day language, and they recognize a certain affinity between them, whereas this group are considered quite different.

Batek Maya. Okay.

So there are differences there in Shamanic and Animistic practices.

Both groups have historically been gender egalitarian, though things are changing with religious prose, elitism, and resettlement.

They are categorized by anthropologists and the Malaysian government as boring athlete, which the term that translates as original peoples.

They speak Otro, Asiatic or Mami languages, which you find kind of up in the, in former Indochina.

you find Somem languages in, India.

so you've got this scattering of, of ostracized asset languages in, south Asia and Southeast Asia, the animists with some nominal conversion to Islam.

The population's probably a bit more than that now.

It's probably around 2000 bak day around 300 bak Maya and it's a kind of what I'd call an anarchic socialite organization where, there's very, very high levels of mutual aid sharing.

but there's extraordinary high levels of individual autonomy.

You cannot boss people around.

So you can, you can't coerce people to do things, but you have the obligation to share.

So it's an anarchic in that sense.

cha challenges, as I've mentioned, deforestation mining, islamization, they have a complete lack of land rights.

they're politically marginalized, and as people are resettled in forest edge settlements, they can't access the forest so easily and so rely on government handouts, wage labor, cultivation of, well, fruit trees or rubber tapping and so political and economic marginalization.

So these are on the, on the left slide here, we have, batik friends on the co river in Callanan who've just, who have just collected this tortoise that they're gonna probably cook up.

this guy on the right, he passed away a few years ago.

He, he's moved from a Batek Maya village into a temporary forest camp there.

These are batek, Maya women preparing a, a hire, which is a lean to a shelter for a shelter, kids playing the trees.

The reason I'm showing you these pictures is this is how most bataks want to live.

This is how most Bataks lived or could choose to live until the very recent past when people have been, since, say, then late 1970s, pushed off their lands into, into resettlement villages.

However, even people in those resettlement villages do return to the forest.

So it's kind of semi, it's kind of what you could call a post forger lifestyle or a mixed economy where it alternates for many groups between foraging in the forest, relying on hunting, gathering, collecting of plants for trade, and then returning to settlements.

Okay? And some groups that would live in the forest full time, of course.

So one thing that you should, you should, you should remember is BX are by no means, especially now, isolated from the, outside world, but they haven't been for a very long time.

They, they're more accurately described as hunter gatherer collectors.

So collecting of forest, fauna and flora for trade has been extremely important for a very, very long time.

Okay, so I'm not gonna read through all these quotes, but here you have trade routes that cross the Malay Peninsula and BTech territories here.

So major trade routes crossing these areas and as such, you see, it's kind of Batek relied on that trade as part of their socioeconomic, practices.

When they wanted to trade with outsiders, when there were peaceful relations, they would come and exchange goods, that they'd collected for rice, salt, other things that they wanted to get.

But they would sell things, as I've said here on the slide, scented words like gaharu, ebony, rat hands and they still do this today.

Gums and resins, spices, various fruits and in the past, ivory and rhinoceros horns and, horn bill beaks, for example.

But when, relationships with outsiders changed, and, and because they're often relationships, outsiders were marked by, episodic periods of violence, they could, they could move off into river valleys and escape outsiders.

Do you see what I mean? So they were trading and dealing with outsiders on their own terms and that's something I'll come back to shortly. Okay.

So some of the evidence for their long term contacts with outsiders linguistics in Baek Maya language, 16% of their basic vocabulary drawn from, Malay and Austronesian languages, their economic forms, they're opportunistic foragers, but they rely heavily, heavily on, collecting forest goods for trade, their societal patterns.

They can, they can slip away and break up into small groups at a moment's notice and then come back together.

so they've got this kind of, way of the first thing if one, if I'm with the Batik friend from a, a northwestern part of the forest, and then he comes down to the southeast part, the forest, the first thing they'll do is kind of establish relatedness.

So it's a very extensive kinship.

You want to have as many relatives as possible.

They reckon kin bilaterally if you bilaterally through both sides.

we also see it in as, and I'll talk about this a lot today, their religious forms.

various non-humans, especially monstrous non-humans tend to kind of, I would argue, embody external powers and we see traces in their names of that, but also their practices.

We also, find archeological evidence right up these Batak river valleys, going back 2,300 to 1,500, years before the President period found right up in Batak territories.

So we know they've been trading for a very long time and also, most importantly, the Batak and other or other groups in a similar position, say, of course, yeah, we've been dealing with outsiders.

We, these trade routes, we used to be able to go all the way down to Singapore, or all the way up to the, Thai border and those ancient trade routes, they're actually the same way.

Some of the ones that cut through, for example, Batak Maya and Batak Day Territories as now where the British had built a train line up through.

Okay. And once that train line was built up through that, opened the landscape up to outsiders, and really changed relations quite significantly.

Okay. So I don't know if any of this book by James Scott.

It's well worth reading.

the art of not been governed, but like many groups in upland Southeast Asia, a Batak could choose to trade with outsiders, as I said, but they could choose to evade them.

So this kind of, what you could call tribal as a way of state avoidance.

You know, you want to keep the state off your back.

You want to maintain your autonomy, maintain your freedom.
You do not want to be transformed into a peasant.
That's a choice. It's not like Bat X or other hunter gather groups are left behind somehow, can't realize how to, to, to grow, to grow crops.
Of course, they know how to grow crops.
Of course, they know how to live sedentary lifestyles, but they don't want to.
Okay. So it's all about, that choice. Okay.
so I mentioned about how things are changing.
This is a, a company about gilan, a resettlement, a batek Maya resettlement village.
The Batak Day ones look very much like this.
They're government built buildings, tin roofs.
there's not enough housing for the, for the people live there often.
Um several families living in one house.
they also do kind of build their own add-ons like you have here.
Ang she's actually moved slightly away from that village.
Her and her sister say, live on the edge of the forest or edge of a plantation here.
Sorry. you get a lot of people, I mean, to get to the forest from here quite a long way, you can walk to a few remaining areas of forest.
But really to get to larger areas of forest, you need to take a, a scooter and there's one car now in the village.
So people in these villages, they get really bored. Okay.
Right. I'm gonna skip through cause I think, are you keeping on the time Chris? Got masses of time. Masses of time, really. Okay. Right.
Well, I will go through this. You've done about f you've done about 13 minutes.
Oh, okay. Well, I'll go through this quickly then.
So, the principle problems that they're basic at the moment, deforestation conversion of, former forester oil pumps.
This is preparation for an oil palm plantation here.
Mining and quarrying political violence.
So a lack of land rights displacement from their traditional territories, bullying, contemporary experience of violence.
So sometimes they're threatened quite violently.
For example, the Batek Maya back in the nineties were, they were threat, threatened to be killed unless they converted to Islam.
you get, you get all sorts of threats, made, made by neighboring groups, including immigrant workers on the palm oil estates.
there are highly armed, gangs of international poachers now moving through Tamra targeting, tigers and elephants.
and, and this is that bat ex are, are understandably very worried about outsiders.
Okay? And in the past, right up to 1920s, 1930s, put malaise bataks from Sumatra ties, rowers were coming into bac, not just BAC communities, many, many orang communities across the peninsula, executing all, all men in the village and then kidnapping,

children and young women at, for slaves and this wasn't stocked until the British put an end to it, roughly 1920s, 1930s.

so they've got these periods of extreme violence that they live through and this contemporary violence, although less extreme, in some ways, less extreme violence enacted on bodies.

I mean, it's the tearing apart of the world in front of your eyes through deforestation.

Okay. So shamanism, this is what you've come to hear about, I imagine.

so I'm just gonna talk briefly.

for those of you who are not aware of the term, Sam was originally used by a venki people in Siberia.

It signifies someone who is excited, moved or raised.

It's often associated with what people at Mercy Elliot would call ecstatic states.

Okay? So shaking, moving, getting into a, an altered state, and the batek term tween, parti used by, by both of these group BTech Day and Bat Maya, but particularly by Maya means, to enter to, to, to rock, to shake, and to trance.

It means all of those terms. Okay? So, Jo Jock, who's written a fantastic book that highly recommend about Yami shamanism rights shamans are specific individuals capable of not only perceiving, but also manipulating the intangible essence of things.

They are the mediators between the visible and the invisible in that linen means invisible, the generally known, and the largely unknown.

So all of that kind of applies, as you can see here, to, to the Siberian shamans, to batek shamans to yami shamans in Amazonia.

But BTech call their shamans Halach, okay? So halach basically translates as shaman, but also, halal al asal means original.

So halal means original creator beings and hale's kind of a difficult word to translate.

So it's kind of like this force, this power.

It's genderless, but it's magical.

You know, it's the other world, and it's somebody that can shift between, this world and that world.

Most batak really tend to conceal their ident, batak shamans conceal their identities as shamans, from outsiders and so you can't really identify someone as shaman.

They might look like a completely normal person.

They don't dress up in all this regalia like that a guy before.

they don't have this ritual, dress.

They tend to be very down to earth amongst BTech day groups.

In fact, everyone's considered a, a little bit halat.

Yeah. So I think the easiest way to understand that is, let's imagine you four could all play guitar.

Okay? Chris can play like wild thing and a few other songs like that.

But you can play flamenco and all this crazy Jimi Hendrix style stuff.

you can compare that to shamanism.

So Chris could do a little bit of shamanism, but you are kind of a, a halat bo a big shaman.

another way to think about shamanism is thinking about plumbing.

Yeah. So imagine, let's say now, you are a plumber and we all live near you.

Oh, my, can you come around and help me? You know, my toilet's blocked, or, this is not working.

Something's wrong. If you've got a, if you're a doctor or a plumber or something, a really useful member of society, everyone's hassling you all the time.

So a lot of people who are very gifted shamans might choose not to take up that role because they want a bit of their own time.

Do you get what I mean? It's quite interesting, but I think it's quite, with the Batek day, the fact that so many different people have different, everyone learns from their parents how to dream lucid dream, how to trance.

some people, like I say, are better than others and some people will take on this role more than others.

Amongst the Bak Meyer, it's somewhat different.

It's generally one person is recognized as a shaman in the community.

Okay? Right? Where am I? Who's about either men or women? Ah, it's ge the ones that I know. Okay.

It's a really good question, are men.

But we're gonna come to some interesting stuff about that shortly.

Okay? We're all gonna die.

We're all gonna, oh, sorry. Yeah, we're all gonna die one day, not today.

Don't worry, it won't be today. Okay? So I'm gonna start so we can get into kind of understanding their relationships with the other world, their shamanic journeys, these kind of what I would call cosmo topographies.

I'm gonna talk about their cosmos.

So this is a picture my mum made eventually.

So this is how Btex think about, the organization of the cosmos.

This we live on earth, which for Batek is concealed as a kind of disc covered in forest, which is on the back of this ginormous, NGA or turtle snake, okay? That lives underneath the world and holds back this underground sea.

If she gets angered, she'll r and move and let loose the, the, the, the underground, the underworld waters, which cause catastrophic flooding.

Okay? Above that, there is a sky, God, I'll come to him shortly, either called Batek de gobar, batek Maya Kai, I mean, it's a shared cosmology amongst many, many ing groups and they see the sky wilds a dome and up in the sky world, you've got these fruit blossoms, and that's where, and the, and the stars are hanging like that.

But I'll get into more detail in a sec.

Wrong computer, right? So before we come back to that, I'm gonna tell you a story, a creation story and these are images from, the book that hopefully will come out soon.

So my friend, ow, a batek Maya man living at Campon batter Geelong said, and they always start stories like this.

Wow. I don't know, I don't know much, but the, I don't know much.

But these stories, I'm telling you, these are the ones my mother, my father, my grandparents told me.

It was long ago, Kai lived with his brother Lue and their mother Chapo, here on earth.

When Kai lived on earth, he cultivated various crops such as bananas, cassava, yams, and rice.

Just like the malaise. His brother Lue was different.

He lived like a ack.

One day when Lue was out hunting, Kai became sexually aroused and raped his mother, Chapo.

When Lue returned and discovered what had happened, he became furious.

As the two brothers began fighting.

Kai took a torch and tried to burn his brother.

Loe fled, but then returned and now he's transforming into his form of the honeybee and he flew. He, he, he flew around Kai, stinging him, and causing his, body to get covered in bumps.

And he's in real pain now.

Kai, Kai, eventually, he fled 'cause he was getting stung too many times, and he took up his current abode in the sky world.

So this is Kai becomes the thunder God. Okay? The, remember he's associated with Malay social forms.

He's associated with incest, the act of raping his mother.

So he's off on his own, up in the upper world.

then Lue also ascended to the upper world, but to a different place.

Okay? their mother Chapo, the earth mother, the earth deity, she descended into the subterranean depths below the underground sea, and she became the earth and she's very much associated this grandmother figure with the nga, the underground rainbow snake.

Sometimes they're kind of seen as different versions of the same person.

So Kai became the thunder Lord, when angered, he takes the forms of fierce animals, elephants, rhinoceros, honey bears, unleashing devastating storms and winds, and the sound of his thunder, and the flashes of his lightning, Herold, the start of the fruit, a flower and flute season.

Okay? Chapo lives below Bji, the rainbow serpent who holds the world on her broad back.

And, and as I've said before, angering her makes her rock and ride releasing this underground sea, which actually, it doesn't just cause flooding.

It can cause earthquakes, landslides and if, if she's, if, if, if she's below, for example, Japan or Indonesia, she could call v volcanic, eruptions or earthquakes.

Okay? the rainbow snakes particularly interesting.

cause sometimes it's considered as one.

Sometimes it's considered considered as a multitude and across BTech, my landscapes, you still these, fantastic limestone casts.

And, one interpretation people said B Oh, they're the, they're the bones of ancient nga.

Yeah. So I'll come, she'll come back again and again.

So to, to go over that once more.

Here's, they often, Batek will often say there's this kind of central column, if you like, linking the three, the three or four levels, if you like.

It's really three. 'cause this is part of that.

and you've got a tiger cave in the middle, fruits fruit blossoms, and bees are stored in a cave on this pillar at the top lips go bar the thunder Lord.

then we have these halal or, bat mud called Chanel original crater beings.

The land, they end up there, the sun and moon move across the top and down below the turtle dragon is the underground series, the turtle dragon, the same as the rainbow snake.

Yeah, it's the rainbow snake. Same thing. Yeah.

Oh, all across Southeast Asia.

When we talk, I mean, in South Asia as well, we hear about nagas.

Nagas are often, um we think about, we think about dragons or serpents, but often they're, they're perceived as kind of a cross between a turtle and a dragon.

Often they've got these horns on them too. Okay? It depends.

It, it's a variation of a theme across a large area. Okay? So things to remember.

Rainbow serpent lives in the underworld and can, can release these subterranean waters When we see a rainbow in the sky, that's a reflection.

That's her rainbow. Now, that's her, that's her, that's her soul.

That's her soul. Okay? the word ang is what Batek used for, for, shadow soul.

But I think it's quite, if you've read a David au book, he uses the term image.

So it's like image. 'cause it's also reflection image.

It's difficult to translate you.

It's like this double it double of you.

you can't point at the rainbow.

Like you can't point at the moon. It's strictly taboo, okay? It's very much associated with the earth mother or earth grandmother, and has celestial counterpart, if you like, who if you break taboo, they both punish you, Kai, the thunder Lord from above, and the rainbow serpent from below. Did you say you can't point at The moon? You cannot, you definitely cannot point at the moon.

You definitely cannot point at the rainbow and that's even, I mean, even pirates went along with the rainbow pointing thing.

That's a common taboo for, on, on, on boats as well.

and you find that in many other places too. Okay? Batek Maya shaman's claim to be able to even ride or tame this nga and I'll tell you a couple of stories about that in a bit.

So here, I mean, we are talking, I've talked to you about Batek Maya Batek day.

I've said this cosmology you find among many other orley groups, but you also find very, very, very similar stories in Australia, okay? So, as Chris has written, aboriginal legends frequently depict the world as having been created by the moon, by a great snake, or by an old mother, or a semi human, immense entity who combines lunar title features with snake-like mother like, and or rainbow like ones.

So you see, that's quite interesting, isn't it? You know? it's a completely different part of the world, okay? It's, but very similar, which you might think, well, Australia's not that far from Malaysia, but you find it also in South America in Amazon, as s.

Yeah. but you find it all in many places. Okay? so Roe describes what he calls, serpentine world views in Amazonia.

You also find this tripartite cosmos.

during the day, the sky is the realm of the rainbow as great snake tempest with rain and or hail, lightning flash and thunder clap.

So it's interesting there.

They haven't got the thunder, but the rainbow snake is kind of in the sky and in the underworld in Amazonia at night, this realm becomes Milky way.

It's self gigantic.

Snake subterranean worlds in Amazonia, primarily sub aqua and feminine.

And, AIA bae writes a cross-cultural snake-like theory of blood articulated around the notion of change in skin body.

That is key in Amazonian perspective, perspective of shamanism and cosmology.

So if you think about, change of skin snakes, it's this changing of skin they can take it off and change it their perspective, by definition, if you like, in that sense, this shifting, changing, but this will make more sense a bit later.

Okay? Anyway, rainbow snakes in amazonia are associated with anacondas hynens turtles, piranhas, arm headed catfish, pink freshwater dolphins in, me, in amongst the BTEch, they'll be associated with crocodiles, large snakes, entries to, the underworld are often, magical pools, if you like, and associated with these kind of animals and in Australia, the rainbow snakes also equally associated with crocodiles, large fish, et cetera.

13 minutes. Okay, that's good.

So here's, the thunder, Lord, he lives alone.

He's feared, but also ridiculed.

He punishes humans for raking taboos like incest, that in the batek may version of the story, he initially committed by releasing storms.

and I would argue he's really associated with otherness and we can see this in that Batek Maya origin.

But he's associated by his form, if you like, here.

John has painted in this kind of c man-like form some and pictures we saw earlier he could be look like an elephant like this.

So when he's angered, he's a dangerous, large, powerful monster.

When he's calm, he looks like a Malay. Yeah and not just Batek Maya say that various other groups living in the area use that temi often use, Malay terms to describe him as a kind of a Lord.

so he's got an ambiguous alternating appearance, and I think that mirrors this episodic violence that I described earlier today, okay? That punctuated b Malay relations. Okay? You've got to remember, neither of these beings, the thunder Lord or the rainbow serpent, embody evil.

They're not considered evil at all.

They punish people who deserve to be punished, people who break taboo.

often nowadays, this, the anger of the thunder Lord or the rainbow snake, is directed at non-VA for violence, warfare, deforestation, et cetera.

Okay? So I'm gonna tell you another story from a B, another B may myth.

In the beginning, there was one thread.

So this thread, it's like Kang, it's a magical, luminous, multicolored thread.

This thread connected the upper worlds to the world of earth and the lower worlds.

Since then, our shamans have been continually weaving more and more threads together to create the invisible fabric of the cosmos.

Weaving these multicolored threads is one of our shaman's most important activities.

Shamans are given the threads by their spiritual allies, the, a gym to weave into gigantic webs that provide the architecture of the cosmos.

These webs and threads are used to hold the rainbow snake badgi in place, in a underworld abode, and they prevent her from moving upwards and causing calamity.

One supports the earth to stop it, falling into the underworld sea.

Another holds the upper world in place to stop it crushing down to earth.

Another separates the rainbow snake from Chipo, the old woman who lives directly below the rainbow snake.

During storms, shamans quickly weave the multicolored threads up through large rainforest trees to prevent them being knocked over and collapsing on a camp.

So if a storm breaks out, that's one thing a sha will do.

Immediately following floods, storms, and earthquakes, shamans must rebuild the web, holding the rainbow snake in place.

Threads also serve as pathways for the a HM to travel down between different worlds.

Okay? So it's very interesting imagery there and I think the threads mirror all kinds of different things.

It can be river eye networks, it can be, kind of like song lines.

cause songs and spells form kind of trajectories like maps through the cosmos.

There's many other, it kind of links between humans and animals.

it's blood, like if you like these threads, right? Another story. I've gotta get my book for this one. Okay? So this is a story, from Ang a Batek de Sharman and it's quite interesting.

It's how, it's the first time he kind of had this, trancing experience.

Experience, and he entered into another world.

So he is a Batak day Charman.

He was living at Kuala Co in Callanan and this is back in 2013, right? Okay, so I'll read through what I've written.

In the early 1960s, when he was about 18 years old, ALA Lang began entering altered states during which he visited fantastic areas of the cosmos.

On one of his first journeys, he's, he embarked upon a strenuous underwater journey to the realm of the Naga, the original rainbow snake, to reach the depth of the underworld.

He swam for 24 hours, passing many things of beauty, snake-like beings, and huge fish.

I saw many, many Naga.

It was really different, difficult, the fish in the Naga, he'd eat us.

When he arrived in the un in the subterranean realm, a lang walked along a narrow path between lines of enormous Naga who had the bodies, the sizes of mountains, eyes of fire, and huge teeth.

They were huge and could easily have eaten me after his voyage to the underworld and this took him days to swim down there, he said, it's days and days of swimming down to the sea.

After his voice, through the underworld, he flew upwards to the celestial realm.

He passed through various sky worlds, traveling great distances with the aid of small whirring wings attached to his ankles.

A bit like the ones, you see on Hermes he eventually reached the realm of gobar, the thunder deity, due to the powerful flashes of lightning, which were emitted from Go Barr's eyes.

It was impossible for ail Lang to see his true form from the heavens.

A lang looked down on the entire world, and its peoples Malaysia, England, America, Africa, China, and India.

Up in the sky, I saw Cota barrow.

This is a huge, or a large city in, in northern Malaysia, up in the sky, I saw Coto barrow and England and from above, they looked tiny.

They were so near, but so small, even if they're big.

From up there, they looked tiny.

I could see America, it was so close, I could see it.

I could see, oh, whoa, he contrasted the sky world to his forest home.

There were no trees in the upper world. It was like a beach.

There were no animals either.

He described the celestial realm as populated by collectives of strange human animal hybrids.

In other human-like beings, some had monkey's tails, they were just like batak, but with tails.

Others were like birds, but human, they were good.

They had their own languages.

He also described seeing bi bipedal beings with hairy bodies, but no hair on their heads, a bit like me.

these frightening beings had sharp claws and were addressed in rags.

A lang described how they got excited when they caught the scent of a human, and how he was worried they would hunt him down with the intent of devouring him.

They wanted to eat people like tigers do.

He also saw strange negros.

It's, he's, he's using the English term, not me, living in territories close by, noting we can't be friends with them.

Negroes here on earth are fine, no problem.

But the Negroes there, we can't befriend. They could eat us.

He, and this could be images of kind of pap and cannibals, or we don't know.

Yeah. He described how he could go somewhere, access all these places on Earth from his celestial position.

I could go wherever I liked, but if I went to the place of the Negroes, I would die.

I could see the Chinese Indians, Pakistanis, and white people down below.

It was a long, long time ago. So he's come back.

Now, I forgot my own language. I forgot how to speak Bak.

I went to 12 countries. I was up there for about a week.

When he returned to Earth, he found his BAK camp so noisy, he had to run away to the forest and suffered from sporadic convulsions caused by the powerful spirits he had encountered.

So it's a really full on psychedelic journey through the cosmos, right into the underworld, right up into the upper world.

Okay? So what it's kind of quite confused from, it's an initiatory journey, if you like.

Often, bak shamans will describe, the change when they become shamans.

So their normal warm red blood is replaced by moon, which is kind of immortal Jew Morning Jew.

So you get this clear, translucent blood, but they don't talk about that in violent way.

But if you read stuff about Yami shamanism from South America, that geo ic book that I, recommended there, you've got these kuru spirits coming in, tearing out your soul, ripping it to pieces and putting it back in you and it's through very violent kind of ayahuasca.

So you get tons of drugs blown up your nostrils for days on end.

But it's very similar.

cause in that sense, your soul is remade.

You're given an immortal soul.

So there's parallels between the two.

But the bak ver version, although this kind of fear and elements of violence in there, it's much more peaceful.

So I would argue that ala Lang's account through the cosmos fuses traditional, animistic imagery with images of places and people that have held key importance in the history of the Malay Palencia.

During his initiatory journey to the invisible world, he visited and drew upon shamanic power from places and beings imbued with potency, number one, the nga.

Okay? The source of power, extraordinary power. Okay? so, down to the sub sun rail, okay? Next upwards to go by the Lord of storms, thunder and lightnings and finally, from his kind of synoptic position in the up to upper world, he looked down and traveled on this horizontal access to visit center of powers of earth.

So Malay cities co bar, 20 minutes left. Yeah. Okay.

China, this is another major power in the Malay world.

You know, they've been trading with for, for, for centuries.

India, another major regional Power England colonized the country in America, places that they know through television, extraordinarily powerful.

Okay? so I think these kind of sequences of events kind of testify these historical influences of encounters with outsiders.

Okay? I will come back to discuss that slightly more a bit later, but let's keep going a bit more.

So, okay, so as I said earlier, many individuals considered a little bit halak, but some these powerful chars halat beau are great chars, knowledge of dreaming pass from parents to children, but in your dreams, this is what I mean.

That's an initiator experience.

After this, you can do lots of other things, okay? So you generally meet human-like persons, which B day called Halla al original creator beings, which appear to you as extraordinarily beautiful members of the opposite sex.

So, I will dream of beautiful women.

Camilla will dream of these gorgeous men, and then you form friend.

It doesn't have to be a romantic affair, but it could be okay, or it could be a friendship.

Okay? And then they will teach you songs, medicinal knowledge.

spells and medicinal knowledge is often medicinal qualities of plants.

so particular barks, roots, leaves, juice, and how to prepare them.

Okay? There's all kinds of other magic.

For example, most many people who are not chars know how to cast spells to stop storms, to stop winds, to stop rain.

That's not real shamanic power.

and many normal people, if you like, know healing practices of plants.

But shamans do a lot more than that, okay? So, as I've kind of alluded to bat ex the souls of animals, plants, landscape features are considered as constant agents.

You meet them like you're meeting persons and this was reiterated to me again, again, it's just like meeting a real person.

You know, you talk to 'em.

If you are late, they get annoyed with you, okay? And they take on these beautiful appearances. Okay? So this is another painting here of kind of the, the crocodile spirit, which was said to reside along this kind of stream through a granite, pass there.

but yeah, so you'll, you'll, you'll enter into a dream.

You'll meet the spirits.

Not every day you'll do this, it will happen sometimes, okay? But then you'll journey around.

But shamans are particularly good at doing this, okay? So, so in a dream, you are, even if you are not in a kind of lucid dream, a tween if you like, and you're not really aware of what's happening, your soul, your ang if you like, will leave your body and wander around the local environment.

It can meet if it could meet Halal a Jim, but Batek Maya claim your souls can be predated upon by dangerous soul of Bowery Penate.

Okay? I'm gonna keep going cause I've kind of said that already, I think.

Okay. But it's not like I'll, no, I'll, I'll just summarize the last point here.

It's not like BX always think all animals are persons, okay? Personhood of animals or plants only activated under certain circumstances.

So for example, let's imagine Chris has dreamt Chris is a bat.

He's dreamt of tiger, of a turtle woman. Okay? So he's met this beautiful human who's got some trace of turtle on her, maybe a kind of turtle like pattern on her back or something like that and then, she will teach him knowledge after he's met turtle woman, he cannot eat turtles anymore.

So they become taboo to him, but not to the rest of the group.

So, powerful shamans will have all, a high number of food taboos alongside other taboos they cannot eat, right? What else do I need to tell you that another thing worth remembering.

So shamans, the more they learn, the more power they get.

They're given, if you like, cloaks by the halal or the, or the Chanel, which they can put on like, a jacket you're putting on your jacket, but that will be put on the tiger one.

You become tiger, you can transform into a tiger and bat acts are renowned across peninsula Malaysia.

For tiger charism, you could put on an elephant cloak and you become elephant or a snake cloak, and you become snakes.

So this is, this transformational ability is very important for shamans.

Just get it clear. You're not just looking like a tiger.

You are a tiger. You really are a tiger as real, As a tiger Is real.
 Yeah. That's what they say. Yep. Okay? So another thing that you need to remember is about conceptions of salt.
 So bak day. So each human has a lee body Yeah.
 Which is animated by a wind life force.
 Now, engine engine means wind, nawa means soul, if you like, and a shadow soul.
 So two different conceptions, soul, which is this reflection image, double Yeah.
 Alongside humans, all animals is said to have now, this sole breath, light force, which is considered to be homogenous, limited and recyclable.
 Okay? Ba are a mirror of the body, reflection, shadow and image.
 The ba leaves leaves, the body in dreams of trances.
 But bat ex charmin do, do not invite when they enter trance states, other entities into their bodies.
 Okay? And this is a key difference between Bak day and Batek Maya.
 Charman, shamanism, batek ma do invite these other beings, that age of allies into their, into the higher in their hearts.
 I'm gonna skip that one, okay? another thing to remember is blood.
 What they call ya is central to batek ritual.
 So if a storm does break out and you want to stop the storm, you take a machete, tap it on your leg, you've got small, small rep, receptacle, you put some, blood in there with water, then you'll throw some up for the Naga, some up for the thumb, Lord, some down for the Naga, and some left and some right in your encounter spell.
 So, so it's, and it's said to be the smell of the blood that goes down.
 So blood is used as a way of, communicating with various spirits.
 you use blood, it's, there's all kinds of blood abuse.
 Menstrual blood, of course, can go into any water sources, the blood of certain animals like pigtail.
 My cat cannot go into water.
 So you've gotta clean it well away from rivers.
 and also blood is seen as a substance through which many food types were originally created.
 Okay? It's a myth of out the slaughtering of a, a gigantic bear, bearcat, and its skin became the elephant.
 Its tendrils became this, and this became another animal, a tiger, et cetera.
 so I'm gonna skip that one too.
 There's too much, there's about 15 minutes left, I imagine.
 Yeah. Okay. Right. Okay.
 So, one thing I should have mentioned there, though, your, your shadow, your soul, your awa soul is very much seen as, concentrated in your head, your heart, and in the place of the body where your blood flows.
 So, soul stuff, if you like, and blood in some ways interchangeable and so I'm gonna quote, valand again here, the blood, let by this is, she's talking about amazonia.

But I think the ideas work equally well in Malaysia.

The blood let by people has a transformational effect upon lived experience and opens the curtains of communication and perception, usually separating daily experience from other cosmological space times its interconnection with shamanism is therefore fundamental throughout Amazonia Letting Blood is the change of skin, body par excellence and it is women who most saliently bring it about in their menses and Shava.

So we're gonna probably come back to this, and she talks about that cross-cultural snake-like theory of blood, okay? Right? Batek Maya is very similar to batek.

They're slightly different. They don't use that word, ang or an they just call all Sega one soul, if you like.

they befriend these age spirits, which are very similar to the halal asal in their dreams.

But when they enter trances, they invite these aum spirits into their head souls and their heart souls and once there's a lot of spirits in, in, in the shaman's body, it's then that his soul will leave his body and then together with all his, his, his spirit friends, they journey through the cosmos together.

Okay? So most animals, large animals particularly are considered to have souls and can be encountered as aum.

But the most powerful spirits are the souls of l oi, or souls of mountains, which we call lang oi, which are a type of a Asian, the soul of water aum, tom, the rainbow aum Jakob the rainbow snake aum, baji and the earth agent tick.

But most shamans couldn't, couldn't, couldn't deal with such power entering their bodies.

It's incredible. It could just drive them insane.

Okay, done that. Okay? So this is a kind of this idea of a, putting on the cloak of the tiger and, and becoming tiger.

And, in the past, all Batek May was said to be able to do this and they talk about events where they're being chased by Malay slave raids running through the forest.

They get to a particular place, I think it's battery bte, it's called and then they suddenly all become tiger and scare away the malaise.

So shamanisms often associated with, what I've called in the original version, kind of shamanic warriors, if you like, and that's something they've come to.

Another very important shamanic practice is during the fu fruit rituals.

So both groups, batek may and Batek day, in February, they hold these rituals where they go up to the o, upper world and they kind of ca bag, demand, blossoms from the Halal, and they bring them to down to earth.

So when, when the, when the, if you get a really, if you steal enough or get enough blossoms, then you'll get a great fruit season and then they hold another ceremony then where they're thanking, if you like, they're thanking the gods for a, bountiful harvest, but they might also be doing rituals of curing and it's a time where lots of people come together. Okay? So this is a, a batak day, can sing what they call it, a fruit ritual.

So people decorate their hair with, flowers and various sleeves from the forest.

Women will take these bamboo stompers and they'll be making the rhythm here.

This is, my friend, he's playing a pencil, which is a, like a nose.

It will go, like I get about that, sorry, sorry, the sound of this nose fluke and his wife's playing one as well and then him, his wife, maybe his brother will enter into a trance, okay? And then they'll journey off through the cosmos.

There's lots of other cool stuff going on here.

This is preparation.

It takes several days preparing all these beautiful adorning bodily adornments for the, for the sing.

you make this original hire, they call it, the first thing you do was we'll cook up some original food from the forest, like different yams and things that you'll eat. often.

This, this man here, he's, he's making a little toy boat for the kids to play with while the ritual's going on.

there's barak again, chilling out, practicing what he's gonna play later in the day and there we've started to kind of get ready.

So they're playing this thing, and then you, this is really interesting.

So you start dancing and it's a bit like, I'm not a very good dancer, sorry, but it's like swaying very much like, come here, courtly dancing.

Do what I mean? You know, that you, you see in Cambodia and places it's very slow move.

It starts like that. Yeah.

Then it gets a bit, well, and then this is unbelievable.

Suddenly we start doing the Congo like you do, you can do a European wedding or something.

So in that, I think particularly interesting is one, we've got these traces from ancient trade routes.

So the, these groups were trading with the come and I think we've got traces of their, of their dances there.

also, I mean, the reason Batek Day Batek Meyer speaking these, these Northern Australia azi asic languages is to do with that ancient trade.

But then I think this is a kind of a, it's very much a kind of rainbow snake like dance through the forest, or one interpretation at least.

Okay? This now is a Batek Maya fruit ceremony.

So you've got the shaman in the middle of the group surrounded by women, okay? The women will be singing a coral, responding to hyn, and they've decorated it with beautiful smelling plants.

People decorate their hair with beautiful smelling plants to invite these spirits.

So the women are inviting the spirits down.

The male shaman is inviting down and eventually when the, when they've reached this kind of tween state through rocking and moving and singing all of them together, I mean the, the shaman accompanied by these female chorus, all their souls leave their bodies up together.

So, which I find very quite fascinating, and I think, I think this is something that anthropologists need to look into more in shamanic rituals.

cause we're always talking about male shamans, but here it's very much countered by this collective female power.

Okay? so they go up into, into this upper world and it's overflowing.

They described it's kind of rivers or streams of fruit, and then they would take them and take them down to earth, okay? Shaman's as warriors, I'll return to this now, five minutes.

Oh, it's fine. I should get that. Okay? So I'm not gonna read all that. Don't worry, worry.

It's from the, so this five minutes, seven minutes, okay? So now someone's fall.

Let's imagine you fallen nail, you've come back to the village maybe after walking through the phone, really? I, and I'm the shaman, I say, oh, wow, I think you've probably been attacked, or you might have woken up.

You know, really, I, you might have been attacked by a pena kit, one of these pen gym or appendic Batak, okay? so I enter a trance state, get all my, a gym, bend into my body with me, and then I fly off and I look for this penia kit when I find it looks like this kind of monstrous entity.

Okay? Then, he then this guy, this monster's taken your soul.

He's taken it back to where he lives, and he's gonna cut it up at ture double and then if he starts eating it, if, if he consumes you, you are dead.

So the shaman has to come there, and then his agent friends will blow these invisible darks at him, kill him.

Then the shaman takes your body and takes it back. Okay? Interesting thing about the pen penya kit.

Is it Malay L term, which means disease causing entity, but batak, okay, pen batak, that's one type of penya kit.

Batak are the slave raids from the past.

So for me, again, it's a transformation, if you like, of this period of extreme violence into a monstrous entity that's causing disease and remember as well, when outsiders, like when Europeans arrived in Amazonia, the diseases proceeded, Europeans.

So this was very similar while outsiders started moving into, batek, bak areas, countless groups of batek died from infectious diseases.

So's conflation of kind of violence and disease there.

Pen gin is course from the Arabic term gin, genie in say English.

Okay? This is an interesting shamanic warrior story.

So, this point, the British, army has come in, and is firing mortars on a Chinese communist camp situated very near the Batak camp and the batak are being these huge mortars are being fired on them.

This is, say, 1960s. Yeah.

So everyone's in a panic in this bat. Maya, Maya village.

And getting ready to run the sha says, no, no, no, it's okay.

I can hold them off. And he conjures this magical shield up and it stops the mortar.

Okay? Other things in Batak day, they'll say that during, when they were being attacked by different groups, their shamans would teleport around and blow piping people.

But ang asley groups, when they were confronted with violence through outsider, had to use kind of gorilla warfare.

It's interesting how, shamanic skills get involved with, gorilla warfare.

There's all kinds of stories like this. This is a great one.

and definitely the, I think these violent experiences have shaped batek cosmologies.

You can't really, I don't think you can understand batek shamanism, animism or cosmologies without thinking about the really deep past, okay? What made us human in the very first place, okay? Rainbow snake, being central to that.

Okay? I think that is the, the ultimate being for Btex and we'll come to that at the very end of the talk.

Hopefully Chris will be able to say something or illa say something about that.

but also all these historic periods of violence.

one, have I got what time for one story or not, Troy? Is it the end? 5, 3, 4 minutes. Three four minutes. Okay.

So this is, this is another story.

You know, this is my fieldworks coming to the end.

A wow again, he said, oh, shaman, he went to Japan today.

He looked down at the earth, the earth of there's damage.

This is following the Japanese tsunami. Yeah.

and he looked at the earth below Japan.

There are many agent spirits over there in the underworld and the upper world.

The shaman took threads.

Remember these magical threads I mentioned earlier, and, that were given him to agent spirits.

There was the huge tsunami, the earth was damaged.

Our shaman tied the threads together to hold badgi, the rainbow snake in place.

He, he also, he kind of wove them together like a spider's web.

He saw the broken earth and he wove it together.

So now he's in this fiery underworld in Japan. Okay? That's what our shaman did there in Japan. Okay? So they're doing this and they said, now the, the Japanese are okay.

The badgi is held in place. keep a lookout.

He said, it won't happen again.

The shaman has said it is safe now.

So, and they're really proud of this act of going over to this other place.

Another thing, if we talk about if we wanna think about shamanism or it's not, yeah, it's kind of charism as well.

Many people in this village were getting these dream revelations of President Ab Barack Obama, who was in power at the time, coming and visiting them.

Yeah. At this time, they're completely disillusioned with extractivism industries in the area.

Rampant mining, forced conversion to Islam, et cetera.

But, Obama would visit them and he said, look, look, we are gonna, we're gonna work together.

We are gonna be partners.

We are gonna kick the malaise out of the country, and we are gonna establish a new, a new equal partnership.

We, we can do some logging, but not too much, and we'll share the profits and we'll, we'll create this new political order.

So it's this kind of Arian encounter.

and that people would say, look at the papers.

You can see Obama's coming, ? so it's really interesting because it's this way.

They also, they talk about, they do talk, remember when they, when remember that slide where show showed you the deforestation? That's what they see every day.

That's what they've been witnessing.

It is the apocalypse for them. Really, really is and they do have these apocalyptic visions.

They'll say that, um things carry on like this.

The world's gonna end. There'll be a massive flood.

Everyone on earth will be killed except us because we will enter this cave.

We'll join the ancient spirits. We'll be fine.

This has happened in the past.

Many b other bad ex talk about the cataclysmic flood.

but we'll be okay.

so they, but then they've got this more utopian vision.

If we change everything, we could be okay.

You know, and they know that they can't change the whole world on their own.

So they're always right. It's not all restricted.

I'm talking about shamanism. They do very practical stuff.

They ask me constantly and other people to deliver letters to the American government, the Chinese government, an amazing government, NGOs, we need help.

We need to stop deforestation.

So it's kind of, it's not all fantasma kind of shamanic stuff staff.

There's very real world action going on as well.

But anyway, hopefully I've told you.

so these are the kind of floods they see you've got huge flooding now.

Sorry, it's the very end of the slides now.

that's the Japanese tsunami. Okay. I can skip these.

Okay. So just to conclude. Yeah, well, I, I would say don't, I mean, even though I did say it, not everyone else, but the perspective is I'm think on the previous slide.

That's interesting.

Okay. Okay. Very quickly then.

So, being Amazonian, studies of animism and shamanism, people like Philippe Descola, Ester Castro, Fausto argue that hunting forms the central metaphoric template for predatory animistic relations and shamanic practices.

Okay? So they're saying it's all about hunting.

It's a kind of, everything's about, everything's based upon this hunting model.

But none of these anthropology, my opinion, are considering history.

There's long-term histories in Amazonia.

You know, we know there were large city states that even if we go back before the pre-colonial period, and then during colonialism, all kinds of things have changed.

They don't consider gender at all.

They don't really talk about ritual at all, and they don't talk about politics at all.

So there's something really, there's a lot, there's a lot, there's a lot missing in my, my opinion.

So, 0.1, these are problems I think that arise in current ideas about shamanism and animism.

these frameworks used to understand these new animism frameworks remain completely apolitical, a historical, and do not consider gender at all.

There's a lack of dialogue between people interested in, animism shamanism and ritual theory.

we find these kind of relationalologies, or very similar, like I, I kept comparing animism in, amazonia with B stuff.

We've got the rainbow snake South America. Okay.

Why do we find such similar practices in completely different parts of the world? Okay. But there's no, that nobody's giving, any plausible explanation of why these forms, prohibitions and rituals are so similar in geographically distant regions, apart from people like Chris and Camilla.

Okay? So I highly recommend that you look at their work if you wanna understand any of this.

Okay. and they're completely gender bias.

So you, you are missing half the world's population, right.

Okay. I can skip that copy.

Agree with the last bit. Yeah.

You want me to read that? No, no. Okay. Right. Okay.

So, one, this is a question that I think I'd like to discuss if we have any time today.

If, and it depends on what people are interested in, the audience of course, as well. But can sex strike theory help us understand perspective animism shamanism? Okay. I think as, I'm, I hinted at in the slides, these serpentine worldviews, Amazonia, Southeast Asia, Australia, and elsewhere can best be understood as snake-like theory of blood.

I think that, and I, I mean, I I'm yet to write an article on it, but transformational animism, shamanic shedding, menstrual prohibitions, moon and dragon myths and rituals, and the thunder complex should all be under understood as variants of, of the same thing.

Okay. It's not saying, it's not du reducing it down to, it's all about ancient history, like I said.

No, this is this. We're talking about the present.

We're talking about the ancient path, and we're talking about the future.

So it involves a complex rethinking of questions, rating to time too.

Okay. And how certain myths can endure for so long and have so many layers of meaning on them.

Okay. Myths and rituals. Okay. Okay. So the last point.

Animism blood rituals and shamanisms must be understood as politics.

Okay. Fundamentally political, whether in ancient times in terms of a human symbolic revolution, or in today's world, marked by ferocious state capitalist violence, the anthrop scene and environmental collapses.

Okay. Lots of references there.

I don't know if they're, you really need them, or some of my publications.

Thank you very much. Done.

Audience questions

Chris: So many specialists in that area tell us that there's almost no ritual in that part of the world.

That you have all these incredibly complex what of shamanism.

You do get initiated, but you don't get initiated by the community through an initiation ritual.

We just had an amazing dream Mm-Hmm and yet you've shown us this, summer fruit, ritual really looked like a real proper ritual.

Yeah. Yeah. I mean, that surely that needs to be highlighted.

Ivan: Yeah and I think that I could say a few words about that.

So, fruit for Batek is their favorite food.

I mean, the fruit you get in the tropical rainforest is bloody delicious.

You know, really amazing fruits and, and there's tons of it.

So people just live off fruit, for, for you could, for, for a couple of months, if you like and it also often coincides with the honey season, which is another delicacy and so, I mean, it's very interesting.

Well, because I've talked to Vivek Van Tarman about this, and actually you'd think eating all this sugary fruits and honey's probably quite dangerous for your body.

but actually it seems like human bodies are quite designed to be able to take massive intakes of sugar in a short period. It's just, you don't wanna have that all year, all year long.

So during these rituals, normally people are quite dispersed and they would've been much more so in the past throughout the forest, but people will come together during these fruit rituals.

They can become quite, quite large. You know?

Can I ask about the relationship of menstruating women to the fruit?

Yeah, I was gonna try and link it to that slightly. So, it's definitely not as clear as you would get in, African hunter gather as managers.

Because a menstruating woman with the Hadzar would not go to collect any fruit or any honey berries or honey. She would destroy those.

Okay. Yeah, for sure. So yeah, if you are, if you are menstruating, or you're pregnant, you, you can't be moving through the forest because the game animals will smell you straight away and dangerous animals could attack you. Okay? So when my wife was pregnant, when I was doing field work, they said, well, you can't come to the forest anymore cause you'll have her odor on you because odors can be shared like that and odors like blood are a principle means of communicating with all kinds of other non-human.

But I was thinking, going back to the, the fruit thing. When, when, when Batek, they say they go to the upper world.

Many people, when I ask them, they say, well, I dunno what happens when you die, because I've never been dead.

Okay. But when people do describe what they think happens, they'll say that when you're in the upper world, this is kind of, it's a bit like this desert it's, there's no trees in this heavenly world.

It's really weird. But people are singing all there, and you are your young, beautiful self, and you, you made immortal and you eat fruit all day long and you don't need blood anymore, they'll say you don't need meat. You don't, you just eat fruit. But, I think, it's a difficult one for Batek. It's just fruit is incredibly, incredibly important. But it's difficult to link it explicitly there.

The idea that, you don't need love and link to this anxiety about killing things or recognition of your extinguishing a form of life which is regarded as a higher Repeat the question.

Yeah. As you talk Yeah. Say, but one more time please.

This, this anxiety, this, the idea that when you go to heaven, you don't need, You don't need to kill anymore.

You don't need to kill, that's right. Yeah.

So there's a, there's an anxiety about the killing process of hunting.

Is that, does that make sense to You? Yeah, it does make sense to me completely.

But I'm not sure if it's that you've, I, I guess you've escaped this cycle, if you like, of killing.

You don't need to. You just simply don't need to eat.

You don't need meat and blood to nourish you at all anymore.

yeah, it's a difficult one. I couldn't really say.

Yeah, yeah. Sorry. Yep. Oh, How do it, how does the, like, cosmology kind of reinforce the gender egalitarian, Repeat? How does ec cosmology Yeah.

Reinforce gender egalitarianism? yeah, it's a really good question. Especially the photo of the shaman with all the women around him.

Yeah. What you're thinking about.

I think for me, that was a really important point.

The fact that normally in the descriptions that are written by, I mean, you had anthropologists working with Batek and, and laboring groups since what, the end of the 19th century, particularly 1920s, thirties and then Kirk Kennedy cop in the 1970s, I, up in the nineties, nobody had described that thought in a book with, BTEX Sharman surrounded by these co I was really excited when I found out and they said, eh, this is this how we do it.

You know? so I think that's really important because I think Chris, Camilla and I were talking before, I mean, often in popular literature, shamanism is made out to be the oldest religion.

I don't bite that at all. Okay.

I think that shamanism, it's typically performed by men.

Yeah. And it's an appropriation.

If you think some of the things that the B might, I'm going down and I'm riding this subterranean naga, I can strain it.

I so and so, it's often associated with men all across the planet.

You know, shamanism, and Batek Maya Batek day are, are really, really gender egalitarian.

So the fact they've got these shamans that you do see a gender inequality there and I think the fact that you've got these female chorus, so with the shaman, it's a way of tempering, if you like, controlling somebody who you get outta control and there's another example, I, I'm sorry. It's for you.

It's a repetition. But, often when people talk about tiger shamans, okay, because the baek is so peaceable, it's like the, the, they say, oh yeah, when we become tiger shamans we just kind of patrol the area and we protect our camps from other dangerous animals or outsiders, et cetera.

So it's all very good. And they're actually often, nowadays contrasted to what we call sai pangan, which are malay weir tigers.

So this is malaise who become tigers, but then attack and devour people.

Yeah. So the bat tigers, but I always thought, well, hang on.

If someone can transform into a tiger or any powerful animal, I'd be pretty worried about them.

You know, that's pretty scary stuff, if you like and then one day a wow, the guy that I've mentioned told me lots and lots of different stories, he said, well imagine if I'm a shaman and someone in the village has annoyed me, I could become tiger and just really scare him.

Yeah. And if he really p****d me off and I really didn't like, might kill him, ? So of course that I think people realize that.

And, and, and, and amongst, who does Rosemary work with, the semi, you have a, you have the shaman trancing, and you have someone playing the drum and the drum is controlling where the shaman's moving because you can't get the shaman out of control going too far, if you like.

So that's a really good question.

There's, there's, hopefully my answer helps a little bit toward that.

But I think that maintaining gender egalitarianism is, it's in language, it's in every-day social relations.

It's taught to children, it's in economic practices.

It's on multiple layers it's not like one, one thing.

It's very, very difficult thing to do.

You know, the same with maintaining very high levels of individual autonomy with mutual aid and sharing.

You know, that's quite a difficult trick to pull off, really and stopping anyone to emerge that wants to take over.

Yeah. You know? Yeah. Any other questions? Go with Catherine, then we'll have from Zoom. Yep.

Thank you. So, so you said you don't think shamanism is the oldest religion.

Not at all. I don't think, What, what do you think is the oldest religion and, and, and to link it to the, what phrases are there in this? Are we, are we talking about the, the snake myth and that Sort of thing? For sure.

I think certainly.

I mean, I studied back with Chris and Camilla in the nineties.

Yeah. And then I'd heard a lot, a lot about rainbow snakes and sex strike theories and I stopped doing, I stopped being an anthropologist for a while, and then I picked up my studies in France for years later and then I went off to do my field work in Malaysia and I, I was thinking, ah I, I wasn't thinking about sex Right Theory.

I thought I, I, it's all there.

I'd read all about it. I thought, I'm not gonna find that and that's not what I was looking for at all.

But then suddenly, first thing I hear about rainbow snakes, menstrual taboos, links between, the blood of women and the blood of gay addict.

Everything that they taught me about at UEL was like, wow, it's there.

You know? And then if you read about Amazonian Cosmologies, it's all about me. Men, men doing sham menstruation. Australia, same thing.

Pap again, wherever you look on, I was in Malaga last week.

You go into a Catholic church in Malaga, and you've got a woman, not Mary, 90 women standing on standing Crush With a moon.

Yeah. With a moon with her. Everywhere. It's around you.

I mean, the evidence for, it's so powerful, this stuff.

It's imbued in any kind of religion you can see almost anywhere on the planet. I think you weren't asked a question, what was the oldest religion? Well, can I ah, put it? Well, Just to, I think that's what, But there wasn't, I've been saying that's what red cake, Rainbow Cake.

I mean, it's the emblem of the sex strike.

Women's collective sex strike and scheme Collective, No ritual action.

Ritual Action, I would say, or to, for sex strike.

So women in Relation to menstruation or sham or cosmetic coalitions.

So how do you say no with wrong sex, wrong species, using, using the imagery of blood and blood flow and I was just gonna bring in Africa, because you left out African Yeah, I was just gonna mention, I'm up on it just so well, the, just, just Brad's, discussions of the equivalency of healing first menstruation ritual, first kill rituals, and the movement into first creation.

So the, just this discourse of blood and snakes.

cause of course, the girl's first menstruation, she's opening the vortex to first, first creation with healer, who is usually man.

So this is Kalahari or, and other, ang groups and using the bleeding of the ear for everybody cutting the blood so that everybody goes together.

Yeah. So you were describing this thing of everyone going together, the women and the, the shaman.

Yeah. So it, it is very much resembling. Right.

This is very much resembling also, the descriptions of the threads and the ropes are tied into koan, shamanism, koan, healers, ropes to the sky.

Sure. Which may be portrayed as giant snakes. Yeah and also periodic blood flow from women's. Yeah, yeah.

Well, giant sort of female snakey entities of the skull.

So that, if we are talking about this, where does all that shared imagery come from? Imagery. Obviously you'd wanna go back to Africa, of course, for the relationships of snakes, women, bloodshed, and, and that as a sort of mirror of the healers when it's an equivalency.

Yeah. Very often in koan rock art, there is this equivalency of the women in their blood and the healers shot with arrows.

Yeah. It's very, it's very strong.

One, one way of answering the question, what was the first religion? The world's first religion is ruled by the moon.

Ruled by the moon. Yeah. Mm-Hmm.

Yeah. If you think about, okay.

There's a few other things I could sound that one, humans are a really young species.

You know, what, how long, what would we go back? 300,000 years? Yes. I'd say roughly currently. Yeah.

Currently we're saying about 300,000 years when homo sapien sapien with symbolic culture, language, ritual art, the being, et cetera, The full scale symbolic culture, we may say 160.

Right. And it's building up.

Yeah. Somewhere we could say somewhere, even if you went, pushed it back to 300, it's not very long.

Yeah. It's not long. Okay.

secondly, you said, most important thing, the moon.

Well, if you, even in the B-Tech stories, the, or I, I might have skipped over that one.

So it's a few I skipped over.

The original soul BX have is called awa tom.

Okay. Water life, soul or nawa bolan, the moon life soul.

Okay. And at that time, people would live, with, with the mood, and then they would die.

Okay. Then they would live, and then they would die.

Then they would live, then they'd die.

But as they're living, having more and more children, yeah.

So eventually the world becomes too overpopulated.

So Han the creator said, whoa, there's too many of you.

You're gonna eat everything, ? So he changed.

Now boan, now Tom doesn't matter two words for the same thing, but now ang the banana life soul and then after that, when, when you die, you're dead, but you kind of live on through your children.

Okay. but it's very interesting. It's alternation.

In the beginning it was like this, ? Yeah.

A fluctuating launch.

So would you think that that relates to things about changing from hunting and gathering to agriculture, banana life? No. I, I don't think so.

I think it's sort of, because it's not, there's other things.

Well, they'll say half the people became trees.

I think it's, just because it's their way of explaining how there's not too many people.

Sure. But I think it's back to an origin time where things were different, ? Yeah. And also, like I said with the, with with the blood stuff to communicate with, with the spirits you wanna stop the thunder or stop the snake, you've gotta bleed.

You know? So this is a kind of, I think, somewhat sham menstruation, isn't it? It's a way of people bleeding. The language, language of power that would, Yeah. but I mean, remember, okay, so even if I say humans are a young species, 200,000 years, and people moving from Africa out through, um across the code, That that movement's only 60,000.

60,000. Yeah. And, and in peninsula about 60,000 years.

Yeah. Australian Aborigines 60, 50, 60, roughly.

Yeah. 60, quite a long time ago.

But remember these, and people, they're living quite different places.

The aboriginal Australians over the whole continent.

They might be trading sex with each other, but they're not really having much dealings with people in Africa.

Definitely not with people in Amazonia, and not people in Malaysia.

But you've still got the serpentine mythology. Yeah and it's not staying static.

Of course, not so in, in, in amongst the ba the B-Tech ideas of the nga, even the term of course, is taken on the Hindu, Sanskrit term, Naga and it will also be influenced by Chinese, dragon myths.

But it's a layering on top of these different things.

So you're bound to expect slight different things, but the fact is, you've got it in all these places that, I mean, what, there's, to me, there's not another explanation, really. So, Manhego, yeah.

Did you wanna say really Quickly my relations? I, I said that in the beginning, we didn't have religion, but we did have magic.

Yeah. Hmm.

Manhego, do you wanna say? Yeah. Hi. this, I was struck by the, the, this one detail, of when you were describing the, the manifestations of, Len Arianism that are coming out Yeah.

of going back to a cave. Yeah.

That, I used to think that that was something that was stolen by the Manson family from the Hopi book that that came out in the fifties.

Right. But it seems like it's pretty universal because the Manson family was at, was down in, in Death Valley, they were looking for the, what they called the, the bottomless pit, in which they would hide and wait for the, the black people to overthrow the white people and when the black people couldn't handle power, they would come up and take over.

Right. So a kind of similar kind of world ending story, if you like, in an underworld. Yeah.

But it, it has the cave in it.

And that's what that it just really, that really struck me when you said that the cave is showing up there too.

Well, I think though, manko caves, are kind of liminal spaces like mountaintops.

So, caves will often be entry points into the underworld.

Other rivers often are, pools are mountain pools and it's in mountaintops and caves or swamps, mar marshes, marginal areas.

You often get these strange beings in them and often it's a way of entering, I mean, entering to the other world through water, like in a lang's journeys typical all across the world, ? Yeah.

You have, you have like the cabi who live in there, and they, they make noise so that the, the baby savior doesn't get killed.

Right. Yeah.

Ah, yeah. And creep, everyone hear manche? Yeah.

Not necessarily he's talking about certain, oh yeah.

Stories. But yeah, we do. I think we got the idea.

So there's quite a few remarks on, zoom chat.

Inca asking, how does the process of entering trance work exactly.

Any taking of substances, right? Just through starting a meditative state.

hi Inca, how are you? Sure. Okay.

So no, it doesn't involve proce for Batek, at least on, similar to all, all the groups that neighbor them.

Hi Inca. no, they don't take any psychoactive substances at all.

It's through rocking. Yeah. So you're solely rocking.

And, and Samaya is the same.

I often, young Tamar and, Samaya a will be rocking quite wildly but the older, seasoned shamans, it's just a very light rocking and that ex when is, for me, it's always this light rocking.

But what's particularly interesting, like I, I tried to say quite a few times in the talk you've got these Yami, for example, many, many other Amazonian groups, they're taking pretty high levels of ayahuasca, yage, and other psychoactive substances.

But the worlds that they describe, the relationships with spirits that they describe are remarkably similar to the Bat ex.

So, I mean, I think it's fantastic the way that you can, and other groups.

So in, in Nepal, they can get into different, different states through movement as well.

It, I mean, I think the whole psychoactive stuff is mainly we see in, in Central America, south America, maybe a few other places for sure.

But it's Batek No, they don't, they don't need the drugs. No, No. In Africa. Just, just the, just plenty of fruit, Just, well, no, you don't get the fruit until you've been trancing.

You've gotta steal the fruit to begin with. Yeah, yeah.

Yeah. Thanks for the question. Well, I, I, I know you had spoken about it before, but every time I just seem to have maybe missed that it wasn't mentioned.

So I thought, no, this time I have to ask him, because it just seems so, different and, and peculiar that, they don't need to take anything, which is of course, much,

much nicer than having to procure any kind of substances that, that in the long run, of course, will be harmful. Yeah.

No, I think it's a really, really great question too.

Okay. because, well, I mean, two weeks ago was in Paris, on a, in an exhibition all about ayahuasca shamanism.

Okay. Ayahuasca shamanism now is a massive problem.

Loads of tourists from England, Germany, France, states are going out to Amazonian communities, taking these drugs.

People are just really terrible eco, ethno tourism, which kind of is quite devastating for different communities and I think the idea that you think you can go in from, let's say London or Birmingham or New York, and go in and take a load of drugs, stay at home, take some acid at home I, I mean, what's the point? Save you money. You know, I don't think it's gonna do you much good out there personally, or do like the B and try to, they say when, when BS talk about spirits, to me, they say, well, spirits in your country, they're all over the place too often.

You just have to go and meet them. You know? So, which I think's great if people did care about their environment by engaging with their environment as if they are incredibly important spaces, then maybe wouldn't have some of the problems we have today, ? But have you found out from them what the movements are that you, is it what? It's Rocking. It's rocking.

It's more PE movements.

You can do it like the, what do they call the spinning, the D two feet.

Two feet, yes. Dervishes, you can do it through spinning.

There's lots of different weight you can do through breathing.

Voice, sun sound's kind of very repetitive.

Yeah. So often repetition, like the music is very, very drone like music the pencil stuff they say for hours and hours and then, and, ging juice, I like.

Yeah, yeah, yeah.

but it's very drone like music. Yeah.

Anybody, thank you. Sorry. Yeah.

Well, Alistair or anybody else here would have, Oh, we got One right there. Okay.

Alistair there and right at the back, was there anyone else? Oh, yeah, I just quickly when you started, I was thinking about pen, pen confidence Christians. Yeah.

They don't take It. No. Just Do that. Yeah.

into native Canadian powers. Mm-Hmm.

The same, the drum repeat.

Yeah. Right. Yeah.

And, and, the, the, the newer, ghost starts, which dancer were they? They had dancers again after trauma. Mm-Hmm.

So there's a sense of wanting to achieve a set to, to reinforce your sense of being in charge of events, however traumatic they Are. Yeah and this is common.

Yeah. It is transforming trauma into ecstasy.

Yeah. Yeah.

Could you just say a little, summarize that for Zoom? It's just, yeah. Talking about different areas tr Different, various places that mean that it's, it's not people taking drugs in all these places.

You, you can enter, you can enter these states, to kind of, you were saying, I think deal, deal with trauma and transform, traumatic experiences and I mean, Bob Denton, when he writes about, it's a book called Overwhelming Terror.

He's Love and something amongst the samari, when these sai are entering this trunk, these, these are monstrous entities.

A bit like you see in, studio Ghibli, if anyone knows Studio Ghibli these insectoid multitude demonic forces coming in.

They're coming in from the jungle, whirring buzzings, they're like demons coming in.

But then when they come into this ceremony, the people are rocking and riding, and then they transform them into these beautiful beings and then they collapse in ecstatic states. You know? And I think the B'Tech rituals are all about overwhelming trauma as well in that sense.

And, yeah.

But also I wanted to make a a a quick comment as well.

If you think about, say, jazz music or, when you're in a, oh, I don't mean boring jazz.

No. You know, I mean, wild jazz parties, you are getting in a state of, of, of an ecstatic state of dancing like you do in Pentecostal churches.

Like you do in rock and roll music, rock and roll.

The, the, it's in the words rock and roll to enter a trial.

Like say, okay, it's not as controlled the schmuck trunk, but it's tempting to do somewhat, somewhat similar things, I think, ? Yep.

Right at the back chat.

Yeah. Quite a bit. So, oh, sorry.

So the question was about have I spoken to the most about dreams and how they interpret dreams? Yep. I have quite a bit.

I mean, there's all kinds of omens that could happen in a dream that you shouldn't do things.

So for example, if you dream of a tiger, yeah, you shouldn't go to the forest and this very sad story, a man had dreamt of a tiger, and then his wife was saying, oh, let's just go foraging nearby.

So she was they weren't very far from the camp at all and then, and he was nearby pulling down some rats, I think like 20, 30 meters away.

Then she was being attacked by a tiger.

He ran in there, his wife had been killed by that point and then he got attacked and he got this huge claw mark over his back.

So, and then the rest of his life, he's like, well, I didn't listen to my dream and now my wife's dead.

You know, there are other dreams that you might dream something and it'll mean you'll encounter a lot of guru, which is what is more valuable than gold.

but the most important thing, I think is what I mentioned in the talk today.

You know, in these kind of lucid dreams you are meeting, it's the meeting of these, these non-human persons that a ju or the halal who are teaching ledge medicinal knowledge.

They're teaching you songs and A question lucid dreaming to us as a particular meaning as a particular kind of dreamer.

Yeah. Are you saying the B would normally teach everyone how to do the lucid dreaming? Well, that's what they say. They're saying Batek day de Batek day, not Batek Bay, batek Maya.

It's one person, Sean, B Day.

Not all Batek day, that many, many bak day, let's say.

Everyone's a bit halat. Yeah.

So everyone can teach their children how to, how to dream. And Student means in our Language, a controlled dream. You can be in A dream, Go into it and make you, well, you do, you do things in your dream.

But I think, I mean, I, I'm brought up in that society, they have said, some of them said that they can teach me to dream like that if you like.

So one day I might do it.

But, they've said it's, I mean for me in the West, there's so many ideas of the kind of hippie dippy ideas about everything's peace and love in shamanism said to me, this is really dangerous stuff.

You know, you could easily, if you're not with us, us, they'd never attempt to do it if you're not with us.

cause you could have a nervous breakdown or a heart attack when it's happened.

cause you're meeting really incredibly powerful entities which I don't know if they're real in a, in this sense, but I know that they would feel real to me, and that's enough.

You know, I don't wanna be demons that much and big scary monsters.

But you can do fantastic things too. Yeah. Yeah.

Well, there is a question on Zoom.

We may be finished soon, but yeah, Ben Aspel was taught asking about, oh, that's my one tribe and not the other will incorporate spirits.

and Ben, do you wanna ask that question? Or Ivan can read it.

Why do the one tribe not incorporate spirits while the other, does our ancestors also spirits they work with? Yeah, One does. It's a great question.

Yeah.

Of, yeah. So, just whether that's, for practice purposes or it's like they're prohibited from incorporating spirits for some reason and yeah, I think you spoke about kind of

animal spirits that they work with, but not necessarily ancestors, which is a feature of kind of other forms of charism.

So I wondered if that was the case with them.

Yeah, it can be ancestors sometimes ha hala manna. Yeah.

It means old, old shamans if you like.

meeting them, not being possessed by them.

well, funnily enough, in studies of shamanism, there's always been this kind of argument that shamanism, real shamanism is soul journeying and spirit possession is something really different.

Yeah. And in malacia Malay, Malay practice often involves spirit possession.

Okay. Malay Bobo, you call it the word for a kind of Malay shaman, whereas other groups like Mattek Day who were studied extensively and tam are, they're not really incorporating spirits like that.

So people say that's real shamanism.

So they say, oh, that's a kind of hybrid for, I just find it a ridiculous distinction.

I think, click quite clearly batek Meyer are doing really, really similar things to Batek Day.

Yeah. But they're having spirits, inviting spirits in too.

I'm not sure why, but it could be, I mean, in Malaysia you've got these different, if you like societal types, you've got people who are really state avoiding forest forages.

So that would be particularly groups like, the Hai and the ra.

Okay. Then you have kind of Sweden cultivators, sono people.

So, Sai and Teia.

Then you have kind of trader fisher people down in the, the south of the peninsula.

Okay. and each group has different forms, but BX are kind of special both Bak de and Bak Maya, because their kind of societal forms are, are somewhat like the Hai and Merick who they look like they all live in the forest, but they've chosen, like I said earlier in the talk, to really engage with outsiders.

That's where you get all these lone words.

You know, they're, they're trading a lot.

So undoubtedly they'd have been influenced by, Malay magical practices shamans as well.

This is something I should have said in the talk if you are a, I know many bat shamans who will go all over the peninsula to learn things because say for example, HAI shamans are specialists in healing trees, for example.

So if you wanna learn about healing trees, you wanna go and study with the Hai shaman if you wanna learn something else and you, but each group really, they say, we can only know the spirits from our landscape and I mean, if you are learning really powerful shamanic knowledge, it's directly from the spirits.

You can learn it, like I said, like how you learn the dreamers from your parents.

You can learn spells, medicin knowledge from your parents, but you wanna get the, the, the real stuff.

You know, it's directly from the spirit.

So even if you move around, you are not, if, if you're bat and you move into the HAI area, you're not gonna be learning from the hai spirits, I don't think.

Yeah. But yeah, I would say it's due to contact with, with malaise possibly.

I don't know. Yeah. Yeah.

I think we pause.

Thank, thank you so much for questions and comments on Zoom.

Yeah. Thanks for all coming. Really appreciate it.

By the way, just before anyone goes, if anyone wants papers or anything like that, any questions, do email me all my publications at the moment, including my book.

You can, you can actually, you can download it for free.

I will be republishing another in another format, the graphic novel, hopefully within year, roughly a year that should come out.

Please go out and buy that one when it comes out.

It would be great. It should be a good time. And your, your email is Ivan Tacey dot Plymouth at ac dot uk.

The Ted K Archive

Dr, Ivan Tacey, University of Plymouth
Batek Shamanism: weaving time through cosmopolitics (Seminar)
27 Feb 2024

<www.vimeo.com/919509108>

www.thetedkarchive.com