# Cosmic Sexy Time, Eggs, Seeds, and Water: Crash Course World Mythology #3

Crash Course: World Mythology
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Hi I'm Mike, this is Crash Course Mythology, and today we're going to talk about something that is almost impossible to avoid when discussing creation myths: sex.

Or more specifically, sexual reproduction. Yeah, it's gonna be a little awkward, stop covering your ears, Thoth, you're gonna be fine. You can handle it. We can all handle it. We're all adults and after all sexual reproduction is how all of us got to be here. Well, maybe not Thoth, who was born of Set's skull? Ew.

But for the rest of us it probably makes sense that a lot of cosmic creation myths often invoke sexual reproduction. Still cosmic sexual reproduction is a little different, and sometimes a lot weirder than human sexual reproduction. Well I mean depending upon what you're into of course.

[Opening music]

So lets ease into this with a little Latin. Sexy, sexy Latin. So you know how when you grow plants they come from seeds? Well, in Latin - the word for seed is semen, which is why a man's seminal fluid is also sometimes called his seed. The idea of something growing from a seed is a logical analogy to creation but multiple godly fluids seem to be fertile, as we'll see in an Eyptian creation myth.

In one of the many versions of the Eyptian creation story, the creator god says, "I fulfilled all my desires when I was alone, before there had appeared a second to be with me in this place; I assumed form as that great soul wherein I started being creative while still in the primeval waters in a state of inertness. So it was I who spat forth Shu and expectorated Tefnut."

So honestly, that sounds a lot more like saliva, at least in translation, but the imagine becomes clear in a later part of the myth when the god relates, "When I rubbed with my fist my heart came into my mouth in that I spat forth Shu and expectorated Tefnut."

Thankfully, this myth isn't actually explicit in what the gods are doing and the anatomy is obviously a little strange. But here's a god, alone, fulfilling his desires and rubbing with his fist, with the result that two new figures, also gods are created.

It's not Shakespeare-level body but neither is it Disney channel material, right? Notice that the creator god here is alone and also presumably, male. This may suggest a patrilineal culture since creation occurs without a female presence.

The story of Mbombo's creation from the Bashongo Bantu people in Africa is remarkably similar including water, a solitary creator and best of all, vomiting! Yeah, it's a banner day for bodily fluids here at Crash Course.

In the beginning, in the dark, there was nothing but water, and Bumba was alone. One day Bumba was in terrible pain, he retched and strained  and vomited up the sun. After that, the light spread over everything. The heat dried up the water until the black edges of the world began to show: black sandbanks and reefs could be seen.

But there were no living things. Bumba vomited up the moon, and then the stars, and after that the night had its light also. Still Bumba was in pain, he strained again and nine living creatures came forth. Last of all, came man.

Again, we have a solitary man creating the world using his body, and bringing it forth after being in terrible pain, which is possibly an analog to female childbirth. And speaking of pain, few myths involve more of it than the Greek creation story involving Aphrodidte. I mean this myth just has it all! Water, genitals, violence, creation, armored giants, really just the whole completely horrifying megillah. Here's the version found in Hesiod's *Theogney:*

"Great Heaven came, bringing on the night and desirous of love, he spread himself over the earth. stretched out in every direction. His son Chronos reached out from the ambush with his left hand, with his right he took a huge sickle with its long row of sharp teeth, and quickly cut off his fathers genitals, and flung them behind him to fly where they might. They were not released from his hand to no effect, for all the drops of blood that flew off were received by the earth and as the years went round, she bore the powerful Erinyes, and the great giants in gleaming armour with long spears in their hands, nd the nymphs who they called Meliai on the boundless earth.

"As for the genitals, just as he first cut them off with his instrument of adamant, and threw them from the land into the surging sea, even so they were carried on the waves for a long time. About them, a white foam grew from the immortal flesh, and in it a girl formed. First, she approached holy Cythera and from there she came to sea-girt Cyprus, and out stepped a modest and beautiful goddess, and the grass began to grow all around beneath her slender feet. Gods and men call her Aphrodite, because she was formed in foam, and Cytherea because she approached Cythera and Cyprus-born because she was born in wave-washed Cyprus, and genial because she appeared out of genitals.'

Side note: I need to stop using the word genial as an adjective. And there you have it ladies and gentlemen, violent castration begets the word friendly or cheerful, and the goddess of love. Well, one goddess of love. There are lots others and we'll see more of them in later episodes on pantheons. But enough about saliva and vomit and bleeding testicles and other horrifying things that can potentially be read as semen.

Let's turn to that other important part of sexual reproduction: the egg. A number of cultures have creation myths that feature something called a Cosmic Egg. In one Indian creation myth, found in the Shatapatha Brahmana, the creator god, in this story called Prajapati, forms a Cosmic Egg after creating water. Out of which this egg come various creatures, but most importantly the Earth and the rest of the universe which, confusingly, is also water.

One translation from the 19th century puts it this way. "He desired, 'May I be reproduced from these waters!' He entered the waters with that triple science. Thence an egg arose. He touched it. 'Let it exist! Let is exist and multiply!' So he said. From is the Brahman was first created. And that which was the shell became the earth. The juice which flowed from it became a tortoise. This whole earth dissolved itself all over the water: all this universe appeared as one form only, namely, water."

So that is confusing. And also wet. Also what is this triple science that he enters the water with? What we do understand is that water brings forth an egg. And from that egg comes the Earth, sky, a tortoise, and more water.

There's an early Persian creation story that is similar to the one from India, in that it also includes an egg. And hey, our old friend water is here too! According to this story the god of good, Ahura Mazda, and lets remember this is a god, not a make and model of car, hahaha!

Ahura Mazda created a perfect spiritual world before creating the tangible one. And this perfect world made the god of evil, Angra Mainju aka Ahriman, so angry that he burst through the Cosmic Egg, causing such a disturbance that the sun began to rotate

through the sky, instead of standing still. This is turn led to day, night, mountains, valleys, and most importantly the destruction of the perfect world. Which led to work, pain and death for humanity. So nice goin evil.

You know what they say, you can't create the universe without breaking a few cosmic eggs. What too soon? And why are there no creation myths about cosmic bacon? I could really go for a cosmic breakfast.

There's one more cosmic egg creation myth that I want to talk about, and it follows really nicely on from the Zoroastrian one about Ahura Mazda and Angra Mainju because, like that one, it features a duality as a fundamental principal of creation. One of the many Chinese creation myths combines a cosmic egg trope with a world parent myth.

Let's go to the Thought Bubble.

In the beginning there was a huge egg containing chaos - a mixture of yin-yang, female-male, passive-active, cold-heat, dark-light and we-dry. Within this yin-yang was Phan Ku, that which was not yet anything, but which broke forth from the egg as the giant which separated chaos into the many opposites, including earth and sky,

Phan Ku was covered with hair, horns sprung from his head and tusks from his mouth. With a great chisel and a huge mallet, he carved out the mountains, valleys, rivers, and oceans. He also made the sun, moon and stars. He taught the people what they know.

When Phan Ku finally died his skull became the top of the sky, his breath the wind, his voice the thunder, his legs and arms the four directions, his flesh the soil, his blood the rivers, and so forth. The people say that the fleas in his hair became human beings, everything that is is Phan Ku. And everything that Phan Ku is is yin-yang.

With Phan Ku's death, a vacuum was created, and in this vacuum pain and sin were able to flourish. In the beginning was chaos, from which light became the sky and darkness formed the earth, yang and yin are contained in light and darkness, and everything is made of these principals.

Thanks, Thought Bubble.

Here we see that many of the themes in creation myths overlap. For example, last week we talked about chaos being a state of undifferentiation and here it appears again, although this time it is a series of dualities, a mixture of yin-yang. Unlike in the Bible, where God has to come in and created the dualities as a way of imposing order.

Although this myth features a cosmic egg, its also an example of what are sometimes called world-parent myths; where a creator god brings the universe into being, through actual or metaphorical sexual reproduction, or as in this case, be being differentiated into aspects of the known world.

Those of you who remember Crash Course World History Episode 6 on Vedic religions, Buddism and Ashoka might recall the story of Purusha, who was also divided up into aspects of the human reality. Although Phan Ku and Purusha are usually thought of as male, if they are thought of having a gender at all, often the world-parent is portrayed as maternal, an earth mother, as opposed to a sky father. But that is a story for another day.

So that is our first take at creation stories that involve, either explicitly or more symbolically, sexual reproduction. As you can tell, these myths are not always straight forward, or biologically possible, strictly speaking. I also hope you don't come away thinking we're reading too much into these myths. That we have dirty minds, which is what Thoth over here thinks. I'm not the dirty bird, you're the dirty bird!

But that's the exciting thing about myths they're open to various interpretations, try your own reading, while noticing the broad commonalities in these stories taken from many different parts of the world. And thanks for watching. We'll see you next week.

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Thanks for watching, and next time you sneeze, check the tissue, there might be a universe in there.