

UNIVERSITY COLLEGE LONDON
DEPARTMENT OF ANTHROPOLOGY

MSc in Medical Anthropology Dissertation

This was a dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements of the degree of MSc of the University of London on 28 August 2025.

**How is the Moon as a ‘medicine’ conceptualised
by the Moondance community**

Juliet Vopenka Navratilova

Abstract

This thesis explores the healing influences of the Moon and the Moondance while describing its essential elements, such as sweatlodge, smudging, praying, and menstruation. I demonstrate in three ways – through the medicine of the Moon as kin, Moon as a healer, and Moon as a teacher – how they function and serve as vital tools for women to reconnect with themselves, their health, femininity, and community. Through enculturation into the animist world of the Moondance, the community perceives the Moon as a caring, protective grandmother. The moon and related attributes, such as cyclicity, menstrual blood, and the lunar goddess Coyolxauhqui, serve as healing symbols in ‘medicine of the mirror’. Thanks to the human ability to reflect/mirror the self through projection, these symbols function as opportunities for healing through self-knowledge. The Moon’s luminous and gravitational qualities are believed to synchronise the lunar and menstrual cycles to improve women's health, and menstrual synchrony fosters female solidarity during the Moondance. The bond of sisterhood is deepened during the dance and staying together in the secluded liminal space of the four-day and four-night rite of passage. The part of the medicine of the Moondance is reclaiming the women’s spiritual place in history by establishing it as an ancient female ritual. Even though Moondance is new in this form, by challenging biased male narratives and promoting alternative forms of knowledge, I built my argument to support their reclaim. This work is the first contribution to knowledge about Moondance in anthropology.

Contents

List of images3

Introduction to the Moondance and project4

Argument

Thesis Outline

Literature Review

Methodology

- People in online semi-structured interviews and questionnaires
- Place, embodiment, and sensory anthropology
- Method of Compassion and reflexivity

Analysis.....14

Chapter 1 - Analyses - Moon as a Kin and lunar goddesses.....14

- Animism and magical consciousness
- The lunar Goddesses
- History

Chapter 2 - Moon as a Healer and Synchroniser.....23

- The medicines of the mirror and Coyolxauhqui
- Menstrual-lunar synchrony
- Menstrual synchrony
- Sweatlodge
- Smudging

Chapter 3 - Moon as a teacher.....33

- Sacred pipe and prayer
- Dance
- Male/female biases and ecofeminism
- Rite of Passage
- Cultural appropriation

Conclusion.....46

Bibliography.....48

List of images

Fig.1 – The Codex Borgia restoration 1993/2024. Plate 55 on page 23

Fig.2 – The Coyolxauhqui Stone, photo by Dennis Jarvis, 2016,

<https://www.worldhistory.org/image/4540/coyolxauhqui/>

Fig.3 – possible original colours of Coyolxauhqui stone, photo by Steven Zucker -

<https://smarthistory.org/templo-mayor-at-tenochtitlan-the-coyolxauhqui-stone-and-an-olmec-mask/>

Fig.4 – The Codex Borgia restoration 1993/2024. Plate 39 on page 39

Fig.5 – Sweatlodge structure without blankets, my photo, 2024

Fig.6 – Bruce Wright, Rock Art of the Pilbara Region, North-West Australia: Upper Yule River, 1968 – women menstruating and dancing together (99-119)

Fig.7 – Bruce Wright, Rock Art of the Pilbara Region, North-West Australia: Upper Yule River, 1968 – menstruating sisters (85-98)

Fig.8 – Bruce Wright, Rock Art of the Pilbara Region, North-West Australia: Upper Yule River, 1968 – sisters menstruating together (845)

Fig.9 – Danzantes, photo by Mary Ann Sullivan, 2009.

<https://homepages.bluffton.edu/~sullivanm/mexico/oaxaca/monteban/1004.jpg>

Fig.10 – Danzantes, photo by Mary Ann Sullivan, 2009.

<https://homepages.bluffton.edu/~sullivanm/mexico/oaxaca/monteban/1005.jpg>

Acknowledgements

I would like to express my gratitude and acknowledgements to the Elders of the Moondance Isabel Vega (Toluimatl), Guadalupe Retíz (Tonalmitl), Patricia Guerra Leal, Jovita Embarcadero, Egda Stivalet (Acuauhtzin), María Louisa Soto (Malinalli), Ana Carmona (Itzpapalotl), Sylvia Lemus Sharma (Mayahuel), and other Grandmothers who dedicated their lives to the service of healing and empowering women worldwide.

I thank my supervisor, Dr. Aaron Parkhurst, and Prof. Dr. Jo Cook for their advice and support.

Introduction to the Moondance and the project

The sound of the drums echoes through the night landscape. The voices of the drummers complement the rhythm that matches our heartbeat. They sing their Moondance songs. It's the middle of the night, the full Moon shines brightly, and the neighbours in houses scattered across the valley are sleeping. Up here, over a hundred women are stamping their feet to the rhythm of the drum, singing, and praying. They can be seen from the opposite hill, resembling lines of White Ladies from a distance. But these women, dressed in white, are not ghosts but very much alive - empowered women dancing for their health, love, peace, fulfillment, and happiness for themselves, their communities, and the Earth. These women come from all walks of life, different nationalities, ages, spiritualities, and expectations. What they have in common is being women - caring, nurturing, life-giving, life-giving wanting, lost, found, wounded, oppressed, searching - mothers, daughters, sisters, grandmothers. All are united in the global movement of Moondance, which started in this form in the 1990s in Mexico.

The founders of Moondance, some of whom were Mexican Sundance women, were encouraged by their Sundance Elders to search for their women's dance. The structure of the Moondance is therefore derived from the Sundance, a spiritual tradition of the Lakota people. The contents relate to Aztec cosmology, which is deeply rooted in four-directionality, the principle of duality, the three-layered structure of the cosmos, and the cyclic nature of time (McCluskey 2023: 11-24). A third element is a blend of modern spiritual practices, such as New Age.

Historically, in Sundance, only men danced to the Sun for empowerment and healing for themselves and the community. The Moon is considered feminine because of its cyclic nature and its connection to water (tides). This essentialist view is part of the Moondance teaching, where the Moon guides women on their spiritual renewal journeys just as the Sun did and does for men.

The women dance for four consecutive nights and rest during the day. It is a deep inner work, a psychological journey embedded in the conceptual framework of the Aztec cosmology of the four cardinal directions (McCluskey 2023: 11-24). Each night

is dedicated to one direction and its attributes, deities, and elements. It is a journey akin to the Jungian idea of individuation – a process of becoming whole and authentic Self. At the same time, it is not about individualism but about community. While only women dance, it is a community effort supported by men in roles such as firekeepers, kitchen helpers, and site protectors. This support allows women to fully participate in purification practices like (semi)fasting, attending sweatlodges, and menstruating together to connect with the ‘medicine’ of the Moon and the Moondance.

Medicine is defined here as anything that facilitates understanding and healing of the Self in relation to the world. Using Calabrese’s explanation of the Navajo concept of health and healing (Calabrese 1994: 500), medicine has a therapeutic role through healing symbols as well as physical means, such as purification of the body. “It is not considered to be separate...but both are aspects of spiritual harmony” (Calabrese 1994: 500).

Moondance is an eco-feminist rite of passage. Women are reclaiming their power as sovereign females and guardians of the Earth. The Moon, with its cyclic nature, and the dismembered goddess Coyolxauhqui (koh-yohl-SHAU-kee) for her vulnerability, serve as important healing symbols in this reclamation. Symbols are not only decorative but also healing, as demonstrated by anthropologists like Napier (2023), Calabrese (1994), Turner (1970/2016), and Lévi-Strauss (1963). They work because of our ability to see ourselves in them, our ‘reflexivity’ (Calabrese 1994:505).

The Moon, as a universal symbol, has fascinated humans in a different way than the Sun. This fascination is reflected in art, rituals, and religious and esoteric teachings around the world. The oldest depiction of the Moon was discovered in Italy and is an anthropomorphic half-moon sculpture estimated to date back to the Upper Paleolithic (40,000-12,000 years ago) (Filingeri 2000). Moon doesn’t just fascinate and inspire us symbolically, though; there is evidence that the Moon influences our biology (Zimecki 2006, Wehr 2018, Casiraghi 2021).

Argument

This Master's dissertation examines the influences and the 'medicine' of the Moon and the Moondance, through which women seek to reconnect with themselves, their health, femininity, and community. I will argue in three ways how this spiritual practice functions as a vital tool for achieving the connection.

The first way is to connect with the Moon as kin. Through enculturation, the community opens itself to participate in the magical, animist world of the Moondance. This gives them a sense of belonging and protection from the Moon, which is seen as a caring grandmother.

Secondly, to connect with the Moon as a healer through symbols such as the Moon, blood, and a dismembered lunar goddess using the mechanism of reflexivity – 'the medicine of the mirror' as called by the participants. Women believe that the Moon, as a luminous and magnetic celestial body, can heal through the synchronization of the menstrual cycle with the lunar cycle. The menstrual synchrony with other women fosters an intimate community bond, creating a source of power that can help heal psychological and even transgenerational wounds. Supportive purification practices like sweatlodes, fasting, and smudging (cleansing with smoke) boost the healing potential.

Thirdly, Moon acts as a teacher. Moondance creates a framework for a rite of passage. Women learn how to pray with the sacred ceremonial pipe, and through dance, singing, and other group practices, they discover the value of sisterhood. The feeling of belonging to the community of women is a vital medicine for many of them. They are then reborn into a new role as empowered, eco-feminist women.

The part of the medicine of the Moon and Moondance is reclaiming the woman's spiritual place in history by establishing the antiquity of the Moondance. Although it is new in its form, Moondance is regarded as an ancient practice and "a thousands year old teaching and continuation of the Red Road" (Native American spiritual concept of living in harmony, responsibility, and compassion with the world) that has been remembered and transformed (Carmona 2007:11). The strategy of this reclaiming is twofold: to challenge biased narratives and to promote alternative forms of

knowledge like dreams and visions that are not accepted by the current scientific/academic paradigm. In this thesis, I built my argument to support their reclaim by piecing together historical and archaeological accounts and finds to demonstrate that the core of the Moondance is transcultural and ancient.

Theses outline

In Chapter 1, I will set the scene of the Moondance. It is not a festival but a four-day and four-night sacred spiritual ceremony that involves not only humans but also non-human entities such as spirits, elements, guardians of directions, and multi-layered aspects of the cosmos, which are called upon for protection, blessing, and contribution. What it means and how it works for participants will be explained through theories of animism, phenomenology, and Lévy-Bruhl's 'law of participation'.

The Moon is considered alive, like kin - a grandmother watching over the community. Moondance originates from Mexico, reflecting Aztec cosmology in its appearance. I will describe the Aztec lunar goddesses, focusing on Coyolxauhqui, who is a central healing symbol of Moondance. The Aztecs were skilled astronomers, and this is reflected in their mythology and the fate of Coyolxauhqui, who symbolizes the Moon eclipse. The Moondance narrative about the fate of this goddess is rooted in a feminist cause from the very beginning. I will describe the events and time period from which Moondance emerged, providing as much detail as I was able to find to honour the founders.

Chapter 2 explores different types of healing through the Moon. I draw on Calabrese's research on Navajo Peyote Meetings (1994) and Jung's concept of the projection of the unconscious (1980) to explain how the 'medicine of the mirror' functions. Our ability to reflect ourselves through symbols - such as the Moon, menstrual blood, or the dismembered goddess Coyolxauhqui - and projection onto others is essential for healing and self-knowledge, as testified by the interlocutors. The symbol of Coyolxauhqui serves as a mirror into the fragmentation of the soul, caused by unresolved (even transgenerational) grief and trauma. Once acknowledged and emotionally released, a healing and transformation can take place.

The Moon's crucial role in the Moondance is twofold. Firstly, it is the symbolism of the cyclicity, linking it to the menstrual cycle. Secondly, the mechanism of the Moon's gravitational forces and luminance causes sea tides in nature. To women, the exact mechanism is behind the movements of inner waters in the body, including menstrual blood. In this chapter, I will also describe the function of menstrual synchrony and provide an example of the earliest recorded instance - in Aboriginal rock imagery - highlighting the importance of menstruation and women menstruating together, as well as pointing out who interprets or creates narratives of stories not documented in words. Paragraphs about sweatlodge and smudging will describe further cleansing features of the Moondance.

The third chapter will engage with the Moon's role as a teacher. Women learn to pray with ceremonial pipes, prayer ties, and dance to connect with the Moon and the creative and divine forces. I will revisit the Aboriginal rock imagery to expand on my argument about the biased narratives I introduced in the second chapter. I will compare it with the ecofeminist narrative and the goal to depatriarchalize the past for female empowerment.

The rite of passage paragraph provides more testimonies of Coyolxauhqui's medicine, introducing a new symbolism - joy and liberation - that can be seen as part of the mechanism behind the liminal phase of the rite of passage, such as ecstasy or Durkheim's collective effervescence.

Moondance combines various cultural and spiritual traditions, which raises questions about cultural appropriation. This will be addressed in the last paragraph. I will conclude that what some see as appropriation, others view as cultural appreciation. As is the case with Native American women who, through Moondance, started 'remembering' the spiritual practices of their grandmothers, which is ultimately the medicine of Coyolxauhqui, the mirror medicine of dismemberment.

Literature review

To my knowledge, only two books have been written about the Moondance: Ana Carmona Itzpapalotl's 'La Pipa de obsidiana Danza de Luna' (2007) and Susana Xochitlquetzalli's 'Moondance Ceremony and other Rites of Initiation' (2024). I draw

information from both. The first emphasizes material culture and the interpretation of symbols; the second focuses more on structure. This thesis focuses on the medicinal and healing aspects of the Moon and the Moondance, exploring how these medicines function and their significance for women.

In the chapter about the moon as kin, I explore an animistic perspective of the Moondance environment that is seen as alive, sacred, and filled with healing, magic, and rituals. As argued by David Napier and Rivers, these social processes are interrelated (Napier 2016), and to the Moondance, they are essential. I will engage with the work of David Napier, 'Why Animism Matters' (2016), because it confirms the benefits my interlocutors receive from their relationship with the Moon and the animistic environment. Their sensory experience is further explored through Maurice Merleau-Ponty's phenomenological writing on embodiment (2000), Susan Greenwood's concept of a magical consciousness (2009), and Levy-Bruhl's 'law of participation' (1923/2010), all of which provide perspectives on the same experience of an interconnected world.

For the research on Aztec cosmology, I used the writings of Susan Milbradt (2020) and the images from *The Codex Borgia*, a Mexican manuscript printed in colour (Díaz, Redgers, 1993). I have reconstructed the history of Moondance through interviews with Grandmothers who began dancing in the mid-1990s, a few years after the first Moondance in 1992. With the permission of Moondance Elder Ana Carmona Itzpapalotl, I used the historical information from her book 'La Pipa de obsidiana Danza de Luna' (2007).

In the chapter on Moon as a healer, Joseph Calabrese's paper (1994) helps explain how the medicine of the mirror works. The purpose of healing symbols is to mirror/project/ reflect the Self that was not fully conscious, so that it can be understood and integrated. The symbol of a dismembered goddess serves as a mirror into one's own fragmentation of Self caused by a trauma that may be transgenerational. De Bruyn and Braveheart refer to it as 'historical unresolved grief' (1998). This phenomenon occurs through the multigenerational transmission described by Murray Bowen (1999) and Böszöményi-Nagi (1973). The catharsis acts as a therapeutic valve, providing healing.

In the popular book by Miranda Gray, 'The Red Moon' (1994), the lunar and menstrual cycles and their phases are linked with each other. This is the teaching of the Moondance Elders, promoting attention to the Moon for the benefit of female and menstrual health. Helfrich-Förster's scientific study of 'phase jump' explains a common testimony of my interlocutors about their menstruation syncing with the full or new Moon (2001).

The menstrual synchrony phenomenon is also common on the Moondance and was first studied by Martha McClintock (1971). Chris Knight proposed in his book 'Blood Relations: Menstruation and the Origin of Culture' (1991) that the meaning of menstrual synchrony was a deliberate act of female solidarity. I agree with him, as his research on the Aboriginal myth of the Rainbow Serpent aligns with the elements of the Moondance. Although the menstruation of the Moondancers is not entirely intentional, it contributes to the female experience of solidarity. His interpretation of the myth about menstruating sisters differs significantly from the common one, as it promotes female empowerment. Thomas Buckley's research on Yurok women and their menstruation habits and attitudes supports this perspective and aligns with the teachings of the Moondance. I develop the issue of biased narratives in this thesis and agree with historians Tereza Dubinova (2013), Marija Gimbutas, Miriam Dexter (2011), and Jungian analyst Marie-Louise Franz (1993) that alternative knowledge found in myths and non-written historical artifacts is important for the feminist reclaiming of the past. I juxtapose this with Cynthia Eller's critique of this argument 'Why an Invented Past Won't Give Women a Future' (2000). I partly agree with it, concluding that some elements of the Moondance are ancient, but I also believe it is important not to fall into the opposite side of the bias spectrum.

I use the writings of ecofeminists Maria Mies and Vandana Shiva, who argue that patriarchy is connected to capitalism and the exploitation of women and the environment (1993), to reflect the beliefs of the Moondancers. By exploring traditional knowledge and spirituality, Mies and Shiva promote shifting from consumer-driven economies to those based on subsistence and community living (Mies, Shiva 1993), which also aligns with the ethos of the Moondance community. The biological essentialism within Moondance, such as prescribing the Moon to the domain of

women and defining womanhood by menstruation, may reinforce gender stereotypes, which can be critiqued through Sheryl Ortner's nature/culture construct (1972).

In the last chapter about the Moon as a Teacher, I turn to Arnold Van Gennep's rite of passage (1960/1977) and specifically the liminal phase. In this timeless, sacred, socially bonding space (Turner 1995), an experience of ecstasy or 'collective effervescence' as analysed by Emile Durkheim can produce female solidarity (Knight 1988), emotional regeneration raising self-esteem (Carlton-Ford 1992), and connection with the divine (Laughlin 1994, 2018) that can lead to transformation.

Methodology

People in online semi-structured interviews and questionnaires

I have interviewed 14 women and 3 men, and I received questionnaire responses from a further 33 women. My interlocutors ranged in age from 29 to 79, and were from 9 different countries in North, Central, and South America, as well as several European countries. Men and some women were supporters, and women danced from one to 13, and some even up to 30 to 40 times. Several women were Elders, and 4 were circle leaders. The dancers were from 10 different Moondance circles from Mexico, Costa Rica, the USA, Canada, and Europe.

The members of the Moondance community come from diverse backgrounds, professions, lifestyles, and socioeconomic statuses. Most attend alone, some as a group of friends, and a few as a family with a partner and/or with their children. Despite this diversity, they are like-minded individuals, most of whom view themselves as spiritual rather than religious (Iliadis 2021: 20), and share a love and appreciation for nature. 'Alternative spirituality' is favoured over the negatively viewed term religion due to the patriarchal Catholic dogma (Iliadis 2021: 20). Nature is not just alive through plants and animals, but also in a way similar to animism, where the land, Moon, trees, rivers, and even stones are perceived as having consciousness. However, not all of these people identify as animists, and they don't need to in order to see nature as a living, sentient being. They know how regenerative nature can be, and they honour and respect it for that (Shaw 2004: 135). While some are pagans and New Age practitioners who view nature as sacred, others adopt the worldview of Moondance/animism, as taught by the Elders, which posits that nature listens and

responds (Cruikshank 2005; Baker 2021). Some simply perceive the other-than-human consciousness phenomenologically through their bodily perception. (Merleau-Ponty 2002, Pink 2009). Because this thesis explores healing/medicine derived from the relationship with the Moon, awareness of place, the ‘being in the world’ (Heidegger), or being ‘emplaced’ (Merleau-Ponty) is crucial.

Place, embodiment, and sensory anthropology

The place is multi-layered. What is seen is a social gathering, but not a festival. It is a four-day, four-night ceremony with circles of various sizes, accommodating anywhere from 30 Moondancers to over 800, with the largest the size of a football pitch. The biggest one is in Mexico, where there are dozens of other circles across the states. Moondances take place along the American continents from Argentina to Canada. In Europe, circles are established in Austria, Switzerland, France, Spain, and Ireland (as of 2025), with more about to start in the next year or two. Near the circle is a sacred fire with a sweatlodge, or in the case of the Mexican Moondance, with 26 sweatlodges. Regardless of size and number, the circle and the sweatlodge are considered sacred, living places, just like the rest of the landscape. These landscapes can be part of natural and cultural heritage, such as Mt. Shasta in California or Teotihuacan in Mexico. Or they can be found in lesser-known mountain ranges, valleys, and fields with minimal human settlements. Every circle is slightly different, reflecting diverse cultures, but Mexican cosmology is rooted in all of them.

What is not seen is felt. The participants described what they perceived through their bodies, not just thinking but also feeling and sensing. It is essential to learn to listen and feel to understand the teachings and receive the medicine in the same way as Paul Stoller was taught by Songhai in Niger (1987).

Method of compassion and reflexivity

Stoller promoted ethnographic work through learning through his own physical and sensory experiences (Pink 2009: 4). My fieldwork was in the Moondance in Europe, and my participant observation was, as Barbara Tedlock put it, „the observation of participation” (1991). The circle leader and the Grandmothers didn’t wish an anthropologist to disrupt the Moondance ceremony, and I was permitted to write only about my own direct experience. Hence, during Moondance, I didn’t ask

anyone about their stories, and all the testimonies of others are online interviews-based.

My autoethnographic contributions in this thesis are based on many years of experience - I attended 12 Moondances in three different circles. Being an insider, or 'native,' allowed me to experience the "transformative potential of ritual" that changes and empowers women (Salomonsen 2004: 46). According to Salomonsen, especially in ethnographies of rituals, it is crucial to be reflexive - "to become my own informant"(2004: 50) by using the method of compassion. Compassion here means honesty when beliefs are taken seriously, both cognitively and emotionally, rather than just through participant observation. I have been involved in anthropology for the same length of time as I have been part of the Moondance (since 2015), which has trained me to be reflexive and to view rituals both as an observer and as someone engaged from within. Writing about my experience is therefore not self-indulgent but, as Laughlin argues, especially in the study of religion, essential (Laughlin 1997: 482). The method of compassion also signifies respect for the integrity of the individuals studied (Salomonsen 2004: 50). I have discussed my work with the Elders, and I respected their wishes not to reveal the details of the actual dance or the description of the circle inside.

Analysis

Chapter 1 - Moon as Kin and Lunar Goddesses

It is a break on the third night of Moondance. All women start bringing their blankets or sleeping bags inside the circle for a short sleep. The nights in the mountains can be cold. After feeling hot and ecstatic from the movement, my body quickly cools down. The sky is clear, and the shine of the Moon can be felt in my body. Nana Metztli, the grandmother Moon, is right above us on her journey across the sky. It's comforting to see her - a luminous, magical guarding presence I can always rely on. She is in her fullness, my eyes tell me. But when I close my eyes, another sense, a non-physical one, detects the white, round celestial body looking down on me. The moon rays gently penetrate me, like invisible fingers stroking me inside, stirring the surface of my inner waters, my blood, and other fluids. Like oceanic tides, my waters also feel the magnetic pull. This makes me feel vulnerable, as if something omnipresent, ancient, and bigger than I and this world, with its own consciousness, controls me, sees all of me, and knows all my secrets. I also perceive the Moon through 'knowing' - similar to when you feel that a person behind or next to you on the bus is watching you. I hear a message, an answer to my prayer, telling me to stop fighting in and with my life, to surrender and trust. That I am safe. I fall asleep with moonlight shining on me and within me, and I have very vivid dreams.

Scientific studies suggest that the Moon may have an influence on human physiology (Zimecki 2006). The full Moon affects melatonin levels and sleep (Casiraghi et al.2021), and psychiatrist Thomas Wehr discovered that manic-depressive cycles in bipolar patients fluctuate in sync with the Moon's gravitational cycles (2018). This may relate to the historical belief that the Moon causes mental illness - 'lunaticus' (Latin), meaning 'moonstruck' and 'crazy' (Latin Lexicon). Some research indicates that hospital admissions increase during the full Moon, and the Moon also impacts rates of traffic accidents, crimes, and suicides, as well as potentially influencing fertility and births (Zimecki 2006: 2-3). However, most scientific studies indicate that there is no evidence of the Moon's influence on these factors, except for increased

human activity during and due to the visibility caused by full moonlight. This Master's research does not aim to prove or disprove scientific claims, but to explore how the Moondance community perceives the Moon, how it influences them, and how it empowers their lives.

"The Moon is alive," the women and men from the Moondance community told me. While the men don't dance and remain on the spatial periphery of this four-day, four-night ceremonial event, they are a vital part of it through their roles as helpers, safekeepers of the space, and guardians of the fire. They also participate in sweatlodge rituals at their camp; they pray and feel the connection with the Moon and their women inside the circle. Women (dancers) stay together for those four days and nights in a secluded enclosure, which includes their camping ground, the communal area for afternoon teachings, the circle, and the fireplace.

They participate in a series of purification practices, including (semi)fasting, smudging, sweating in sweatlodges, and praying (these elements will be gradually explained). This sensitises them to the connection with the Moon. The women shared with me their individual, tailor-made teachings and connections about resilience, strength, intuition, slowing down, grief, joy, coming back to themselves and nature, relationships, ancestral lineage, menstruation, boundaries, and creativity - given to them by the grandmother Moon, an ancient female Elder, Divine Feminine who acts as a guide, helper, compass, watcher, confidant, and companion.

Animism and magical consciousness

An animistic approach to understanding the world around us, set within the framework of ritual and spiritual healing, is central to the Moondance and the 'medicine' of the Moon. I agree with David Napier and W.H.R. Rivers that medicine (healing), magic (magical consciousness/animism), and religion (rituals in the Moondance) are social processes that are so interconnected (Napier 2016: 15) that the medicine of the Moon couldn't exist if any one of the three components were missing.

The Moon is alive because the community plunges together into a sensuous experience of 'being in this world', not separate from it, echoing the

phenomenological view of German thinkers Edmund Husserl and Martin Heidegger. Their emphasis on embodiment (phenomenology is the science of experience) aligns with the animist direct experience of the world (Napier 2016: 10-11). Both—animism and phenomenology - oppose the 'Cartesian' idea of separation and dualism. I include both because the embodiment and being-in-the-world experienced by the men and women of the Moondance better fit the description of community members who don't necessarily see themselves as animists or pagans but rather as conscious people seeking an experience. French philosopher and phenomenologist Maurice Merleau-Ponty proposed that the human body intentionally inhabits space and communicates it through sensations (2002). The sensation of the Moon, its stroking, talking, and watching, conveys a sense of aliveness and magic.

Susan Greenwood argues that "magical consciousness is a dimension of human thought and action...an inherent aspect of human consciousness that can be felt and understood through the body" (2006: 7). The community seeks to embody and allows their perception to shift to 'participate' in an alive world, and allows the world to also participate in their lives. The shift toward participation occurs when the group leaves their everyday routines and enters the space of the ritual, which lasts the entire four-day/four-night period, especially during the sweatlodges (Chapter 2) and dance (Chapter 3). The group experiences a psychic unity, called the 'law of participation' by one of the first anthropologists, Lucien Lévy-Bruhl (1923/2010), and occurs through magical consciousness (Greenwood 2009), both states of mind. This psychic oneness unites whole groups, animals, the living, and the dead (ancestors) (Greenwood 2009: 32-35). When the clouds part to let the Moon shine, when an asteroid passes nearby, when it rains, or when a night bird calls out, all of this is seen as the participation of living components in the collective 'magical' story of the Moondance night.

The term animism originates from the work 'Primitive Culture' (1871) of the father of cultural anthropology, Edward Tylor, and derives from the Latin word 'anima,' meaning the soul or essence of a being. Tylor's original definition referred to a belief in and experience of spirits, but in recent decades, it has been used to describe less developed (in terms of written texts and institutions), non-monotheistic religions, such as shamanism (Graham 2014: 4). In the 21st Century, the revival of animism led to

the term 'new animism' or 'neoanimism', which describes nature-based and pagan spiritualities in the positive sense, emphasizing that everything is alive, interconnected, and that all entities possess personhood, intelligence, and agency (Von Stuckrad 2023: 4-5).

Participants who did not identify as pagan described the Moon and the environment of the Moondance ritual in animistic terms. The more they 'participated' - attended more Moondances - the clearer their perception of and self-cultivation into the animist world became. Based on community members' testimonies, I agree with David Napier's 'cultural learning' - that all of this can be learned (Napier 2016: 13). Cultural learning involves approaching communication with the Moon and other 'alive' elements of the ritual with respect and humility.

The Moondance can only begin once all directions are called upon - including not just the cardinal but also the directions of the Earth, Sky, and the Centre (heart); elements (water, air, fire, earth) (Xochitlquetzalli 2024: 134-135; Carmona 2007: 112-113), spirits of the land, and guardians of Aztec cosmology, and invited for protection and blessings. They all become contributors to the Moondance ceremony. The earth, water, and fire are especially revered and valued in ecological terms throughout the ceremony.

Moreover, the Moon is not only alive but also regarded as a grandmother - caring and trusted kin that provides a sense of security. "She is the channeler of the blessing emanating from the Great Spirit when hearing my prayer"; „She is Beauty herself, the energy of grace and compassion against all odds, grandmother of all.“ With these statements, I agree that 'animism matters' (Napier) and is beneficial to the community because it promotes new creativity, ecological awareness, fresh narratives, and healing or therapeutic spaces (Napier 2016: 22-23).

The lunar goddesses

The Moon is alive, and it is a 'she'. In some languages, the gender of the Moon is male; in others, female. Among the German-speaking Moondance communities, for whom the Moon is grammatically masculine (der Mond), they adopted the Moondance female Moon. One informant told me that only after this

'adoption' of the feminine Spanish 'la luna', the energy of the Moon 'started to make sense' to her. „We see, hear, and otherwise experience the world largely as we do because of the language habits of our community that predispose certain choices of interpretation“ (Sapir 1949:162). It is not within the scope of this work to investigate the linguistic determination in greater detail. In this work, I focus on the cultural construct and symbolism of the Moon. Anthropomorphizing the energy into a loving, embracing female figure of a grandmother is, according to Stephan Schwartz, a strategy to make sense of the ‚nonlocal consciousness‘. In this strategy, people create a cultural construct of a spirit or deity for this energy, which aligns with their religious or cultural beliefs (Schwartz 2018:17:36-19:08). Luna, from which the Latin word for the Moon is derived, was the Roman Goddess of the Moon.

The Central Mexican (Aztec) mythology has several lunar deities, mainly but not exclusively female, associated with different lunar attributes, phases, and seasons (Milbrath 2020: 15). These deities are recorded in myths, rituals, and codices (pictured manuscripts) dating from before the Spanish Conquest in 1519. The Codex Borgia is the most important resource for understanding the Moondance (Milbrath 2020: 15). In this codex (Diaz, Rogers 1993/2024:23, Plate 55, here Fig.1), the Moon (Metztli in Nahuatl) is depicted as a horseshoe or cauldron with distinctive curved ends called the ‚nose Moon‘ (yacametztli)(Fig.1) by the Aztecs, sometimes worn as a nose ornament by lunar deities. Inside the cauldron is a pool of water with a rabbit sitting in the middle (Milbrath 2020: 17). The symbol of the cauldron represents the sacred womb and is worn by each Moondancer on their poncho.



Fig.1

The main Aztec lunar deities include Xochiquetzal, a young lunar goddess representing the new Moon (Milbrath 2020: 18-19); Tlazolteotl, associated with pregnancy and childbirth, depicted with a snake (Fig.1). Her womb appears to be filling up like the waxing Moon and full Moon (Milbrath 2020: 21); Tecciztecatl-Metztlī, an old Moon goddess and grandmother wearing a conch shell headdress, symbolizes the connection between the Moon and the tides and represents the waning phase (Milbrath 2020: 23); and the lunar goddess Coyolxauhqui, who represents the lunar eclipse (Milbrath 2020: 16).

The lunar goddess Coyolxauhqui, according to legends, was decapitated and dismembered by her brother, the solar god and God of war Huitzilopochtli (Cartwright 2016), which symbolizes the astrological event of the waning Moon/eclipse shrinking as it moves closer to the Sun (Milbrath 2020: 16). The Aztecs were skilled astronomers who used a lunar calendar (Milbrath 2020) which is reflected in their cosmology - a term coined by Mexican historian Alfredo López Austin (2016). It describes the Aztecs' worldview, which posits the interconnectedness of the universe - encompassing celestial bodies and humans - embedded in their mythologies and ritual practices. During these rituals, including human sacrifice, they reenacted the astrological events mentioned above to maintain cyclical cosmic balance (López Austin 2016).

In the Moondance, the symbolism of the lunar goddess Coyolxauhqui took on a new, feminist meaning, serving as a core medicine for women. Before I explain the nature of this medicine, I will briefly describe the excavation of the monolith of the goddess, as it is one of the critical “birthing” moments for the Moondance.

History

A large stone disc measuring 3.4 meters in diameter (Fig.2,3), depicting the dismembered and decapitated goddess Coyolxauhqui, was found in Plaza Mayor in Mexico City in 1978. She is naked, wearing only a headdress, earrings, body decorations, and a snake belt around her waist. (Fig.3 shows how it might have been originally coloured.) The disc dates to around 1473, when the site served as a temple and shrine dedicated to the war god Huitzilopochtli in the Aztec city of Tenochtitlán (Cartwright 2016).



Fig.2



Fig.3

This finding fits into the era of visions, 'remembering,' dreaming, and the search for an authentic expression of feminine spirituality among Mexican women, which was described to me by one Moondance Abuela (Spanish for Grandmother and an honorary title for an Elder) who joined a few years later:

It was around the time of the excavation that the founders of Moondance started to envision the dance for women. In the 1980s, Isabel Vega, a Sundancer, received a vision during her Sundance to open the Moondance circle. Together with her friends, they began researching and studying the codices. A picture in the Borgia Codex of 12 dancing female spirits (cihuateteo) in a circle (Diaz, Rogers 1993/2024: 39, Plate 39, here Fig.4) was interpreted by them as an ancient dance of women and a prophecy in which all women of every skin colour will unite. In the centre of a red ground is a deity of Red Quetzalcóatl (Byland 1993/2024:xxv), a powerful Aztec creator god whose name means 'feathered serpent'. Four of the six deities on the sides of the circles can be associated with the Moon (Milbrath 2020: 24-25).

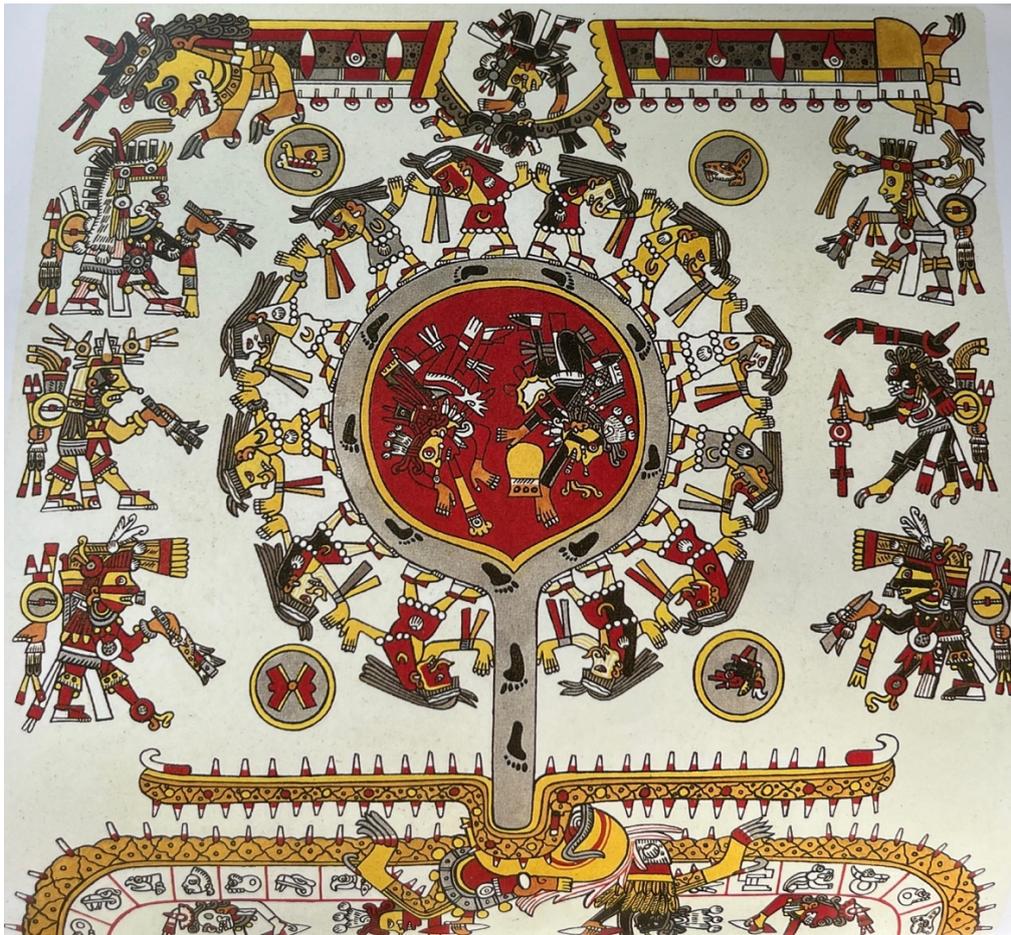


Fig.4

Another source of inspiration was the Aztec dance Ochpaniztli, a festival of purification, death, and revival dedicated to three goddesses (Carmona 2007: 14; Graulich 1991). Then there were the 300 figure slabs called Danzantes, created between 200 and 500 BC in Monte Alban in Oaxaca, which the women interpreted as female dancers. The pre-Hispanic pipes in the museums confirmed to them that praying with a pipe was part of their tradition. (More about the dancing figures and pipes in the third chapter).

Patricia Guerra Leal, whose husband Tlakaele was one of the first impulses of the Moondance, dreamed at the same time as Isabel Vega about the Moondance. Patricia also had a prophetic dream in which she saw a pipe ceremony that had expanded across the world in the shape of a star, and each point of the star indicated countries and places of the new Moondance circles (Carmona 2007: 29).

The excavation of Coyolxauhqui was a sign that it is time for the women to have their dance, during which they can heal their dismembered bodies, abused by centuries of oppression (Carmona 2007: 27). The first Moondance, called Danza de la Luna Xochimetztlí, took place in 1992 near the Iztaccihuatl volcano with Isabel Vega (Toluimatl – her Nahuatl name), Guadalupe Retíz (Tonalmitl), Patricia Guerra Leal, Jovita Embarcadero, Egda Stivalet (Acuauhtzin), and two others (Carmona 2007: 5, 29-30). The abuelas who joined in 1996 - María Louisa Soto (Mallinali), Ana Carmona (Itzpapalotl), and Sylvia Lemus Sharma (Mayahuel) - became, along with Guadalupe Retíz (Tonalmitl), influential leading Grandmothers for other circles worldwide, especially in the West. The dances outside Mesoamerica share cultural aspects of each country and reflect the intuition of their leading Grandmothers (Carmona 2007: 73), but they are always rooted in Mexican spiritual tradition.

This period, from the 1970s to the 1990s, marks the rise of the Mexicanism movement, also known as 'Neomexicanism,' as proposed by De La Peña and González (2019). This movement emerged as a cultural response by the mainly mestizo urban population to globalization and modernity. It aimed to reclaim Mexico's pre-Conquest heritage and ancestral wisdom through strategies such as hybridization with New Age esotericism and the reinterpretation of historical symbols (De La Peña 2001: 95-96). This period also represents the peak of the second wave of feminism in Mexico. Mexican feminist scholars, such as Julia Tuñón Pablos, sought to reevaluate the historical record on women, who had previously been excluded from the narratives (1987, 1998). It is possible that these two cultural movements also sparked the 're-discovery' of the Moondance. I use the word 're-discovery' because the Elders believe there was a Moondance for women in the past.

While Moondance celebrates a woman's power and essence, serving as a vital remedy during patriarchal times, the core work involves an uneasy transformative process of confronting the disowned and hidden - one's shadow and wounds (Carmona 2007: 124).

Chapter 2 - Moon as a Healer and Synchroniser

A hole was dug for the sacred offering - menstrual blood - to be poured into it, nourishing the Earth and expressing gratitude. Women lined up, each holding a glass jar of different sizes, waiting for their turn and then either silently or aloud giving thanks. Yet, seeing them made me feel uneasy. Unknowingly, they provoked me. I then realized it wasn't them, but something inside me they reflected at me. When it was my turn, I approached the hole, knelt, prayed, and poured out my jar. Looking at the blood, in this moment and space, 'out of place' (Douglas), a powerful symbol of life given and taken, brought out emotions that reflected my hidden inner world of anger and despair. Menstrual anxiety, which I didn't realize I had, and a sense of violently spilled blood, which I had never encountered, confronted me. Disgust arose from deep within and brought feelings of shame, dirtiness, and grief. I cried. I felt like an open tap, with emotions flowing through me that weren't just mine but also those of my mother and female ancestors. The ritual took a few hours to complete. I wasn't the only one crying; we all felt supported and held by each other. Experiencing my inherited wound was deeply healing. I felt empowered and relieved of a burden I hadn't known I carried. My relationship with menstruation and myself began to change.

As a Western woman getting her first period in the 1990s, I grew up with sanitary towel advertisements using blue colour instead of red (NB: The colour turned red on British TV only in 2017) and minimal menstrual education. I felt embarrassed by my menstruation, a nuisance that needed to be concealed. It got better as I grew older, and I learnt to tolerate my ordeal. It became clear that I need more than just tolerance during a blood offering ritual to the Earth at the Moondance. I shared an autoethnographic account of my catharsis to honour the Abuelas's wish not to share other women's stories. The ritual of planting the Moon (Xochitlquetzali 2024: 101-104) was added later to the Moondance, and it is performed only in certain circles. It follows the Colombian tradition of ritual offerings called "pagamentos", which expresses gratitude to the Earth and cosmic forces for what we have received to maintain balance (Xochitlquetzali 2024: 98).

The medicines of the mirror and Coyolxauhqui

The women and the blood in this ritual mirrored my hidden wound that came out through my emotions. The healing process could start only after I became aware of it. The majority of my interlocutors talked about this reflexivity, calling the Moon a mirror, also the mirror in the sisters or sisterhood. Joseph Calabrese's research on the Navajo Peyote Meetings of the Native American Church (NAC) regarding 'healing symbolism' and the human capacity to reflect oneself through it (Calabrese 1994) can be applied here to explain the mechanism behind the medicine of the mirror.

Like the cyclical Moon in the Moondance, the Navajo Peyote Meeting symbol of the Half Moon represents the lifespan from gestation and birth to death (Calabrese 1994: 498, 513). The Moon's cyclicity in the Moondance also mirrors the reproductive cycle of a woman (Carmona 2007: 143-149, also Calabrese 1994: 514), which prompts self-reflection on her role as a creator of life (baby) or her own life (creativity in general). The symbol of the wounded goddess Coyolxauhqui offers even deeper opportunities for healing through self-knowledge, leading to transformation and the development of identity (Calabrese 1994: 498). "The Moon reflects what it receives. She receives from the Sun and mirrors the Sun's rays upon the Earth," described one Abuela. Women are encouraged to be 'reflecting moons' to each other, serving as a metaphor for projection. According to Carl Gustav Jung, projection is an automatic transfer of unconscious content onto someone else, often with the belief that the content belongs to that person (1980: 60). Women learn to become aware of reflected contents as their own, rather than those of someone else. This creates an opportunity for repressed 'dark side' aspects of the personality to surface for the purpose of becoming whole and healed. My interlocutor Martina described it like this:

„Each woman comes to the Moondance with her own skeleton in the closet, which always surfaces in an unguarded moment. The feedback from other women acts as a mirror to that skeleton, and the healing comes from 'coming out,' making it conscious, and talking about it in a compassionate and safe environment. It is highly therapeutic and a very speedy teaching."

In Aztec mythology, the god Tezcatlipoca (meaning 'Smoking Mirror' in Nahuatl) rules over the night sky, including the stars and the Moon, and has a sacred symbol, the

obsidian mirror. It is interpreted as an image of the Moon (Milbrath 2013: 61, 2020: 25) and is made of obsidian, a glass-like dark stone sacred to the Mexica people (Levine, Carballo 2014: 102). The mirror reveals the invisible, serving as a medium for divination by the Aztecs (Olivier 2003, in Campbell et al. 2021: 1560). In the Moondance, „his mirror is for looking inside and connecting with the inner self in order to let go of the past.”

The symbol of Coyolxauhqui serves as a mirror into own dismemberment. There is a ‘Coyolxauhqui imperative’ theory that was developed and described by Mexican feminist Gloria Anzaldúa (2015: 120-122). The imperative is about the lifelong process of healing, about the need to look at the wound in order to understand it and then integrate and transform oneself through this self-knowledge.

When Rachel came to the Moondance for the first time, her family was on the verge of splitting. On the Moondance, she found her centre, grounding, guidance, her roles as a mother and a sister, thanks to the community of sisters there. It helped her put some of her pieces back together; she hadn’t even realized she was missing them. Rachel took down a picture from her wall and showed me the stone monolith of Coyolxauhqui (Fig.2).

“This is an image of someone with profound trauma. The fragmentation and dismemberment are the experiences of the trauma, not knowing who I am anymore. It teaches us how to renew, to ‘re-member’ after shattering fragmentation and loss of balance... being witnessed in grief and witnessing the grief are potent healers.”

Rachel’s missing and then found piece was similar to mine described above. They were found hidden behind a ‘historical unresolved grief’ (DeBruyn, Braveheart 1998). Historical trauma is described as a phenomenon of unresolved grief by Braveheart and DeBruyn in the context of the loss of lives, land, and the traditional way of life of Native Americans. This trauma, passed from one generation to the next, contributes to social problems like domestic violence, abuse, homicide, and accidental deaths (DeBruyn, Braveheart 1998: 56). The concept of transgenerational trauma has been developed as multigenerational transmission, based on Murray Bowen’s family systems theory (Brown 1999), and the idea of ‘Invisible Loyalties’ (perpetuating dysfunctional roles) by Böszöményi-Nagy (Böszöményi-Nagy & Spark 1973).

Multigenerational transmission occurs through conscious teaching and/or unconscious emotional programming (Brown 1999). The exact mechanism of transmission is debated and may occur, for example, through biological epigenetic processes (Klibaner-Schiff et al. 2024) and/or via the symbolic and psychological framework of Jung's 'collective unconscious' (Feldman 2022). The term 'collective unconscious', coined by the Swiss psychotherapist Carl Gustav Jung, represents a deeper layer of the unconscious mind with shared experiences (Stevens 2006: 75). I suggest that the phenomenon of historical trauma can be applied to the unexpressed grief of female oppression, unacknowledged menstrual shame, and abuse across generations of women, which leads to low self-esteem, a lack of self-confidence, and women's health problems. The medicine of the mirror offers catalysis and integration of grief.

Menstrual-lunar synchrony

As mentioned earlier, menstrual blood is a powerful healing symbol. All Moondance Elders from different cultures are united in the knowledge and belief, passed down by their Elders, that menstrual blood and the womb are sacred, and paying attention to the lunar cycle is key to understanding one's menstrual cycle (Carmona 2007: 146). Some Moondancers are already familiar with this teaching from popular books, such as 'The Red Moon' by Miranda Gray (1994). Most women who come to the Moondance already see the connection between menstrual and lunar cycles as common knowledge. In their native languages, this link is evident from the alternative names for menstruation, e.g., in English "moon time," in Czech "měsíčky" (little moons), and in French "les lunes", which signify regularity/cyclicality. If the lunar cycle is 29.53 days (Liu, Ping 2004) and a healthy menstrual cycle averages 29.3 days (Bull et al 2019), this assumption makes sense.

Some women with irregular menstrual cycles (meaning sometimes too short, then long, or missing a period altogether) hope that the Moondance will make them more regular. While this doesn't always happen, it is clear from the responses that the 'healing' occurs more on the level of understanding the function of the menstrual cycle for physical and psychological well-being, which sometimes leads to improvements on the biological/physical levels.

Fatima's menstruation typically coincided with the time of the Moondance (full Moon), which made the first dances very difficult because of severe menstrual cramps accompanied by vomiting. While surrounded by 'happily' bleeding women, as she described some women, she learned from them and their recommended literature, such as *The Red Moon* (Gray 1994), about embracing the cyclical nature of her body and its connection to the moon phases. She came to believe that the cramps were her resisting menstruation and learned to accept that this phase is telling her to slow down, go inward, and, with the blood flow, let go. According to Fatima, this acceptance brought her greater peace with herself as a woman, allowing her to connect with her body and feminine energy, which in turn led to this introspection. Fatima concluded that her menstruation started becoming regular with significantly fewer cramps.

Maria's acceptance of her blood, after she offered it to Earth for the first time in the blood giving ritual, during which she forgave "a lot of things", allowed her to see her menstruation and womb as natural, which she believes corrected her cycle. From these and many other stories, it seems that when women menstruate together, they can learn a great deal from one another. The fact that their cycles happen at the same time is no coincidence. Many women and Abuelas refer to the Moon as a mover of the tides, including their inner waters. Regarding whether the Moon influences their menstruation, out of 24 respondents, 19 said yes, and several shared that their menses sometimes shorten to sync with the full Moon or new Moon, as observed by Fatima and Maria. Their cycles then align with these two phases of the Moon. If a cycle is usually shorter, it 'jumps' more often to catch up and align with either phase. For women, this confirms their connection with the Moon and nature, offering a profound teaching and a medicine of the mirror.

Strong scientific evidence suggests that the menstrual cycle is driven by an internal mechanism, the circadian rhythm. This rhythm, or clock, affecting the ovarian and menstrual cycle, operates on a 24-hour cycle and is synchronised by light and dark, Sun and night (Ecochard 2024: 1). However, according to the Helfrich-Förster study, 'phase jump' can occur when a woman's cycle falls out of sync with the Moon due to artificial light and later re-aligns at a different lunar phase. This is caused by two

external lunar mechanisms –gravitational forces and luminance (Helfrich-Förster et al., 2001).

Menstrual synchrony

An equal number of responses agreed that the Moondance influences their menstruation. I received accounts from women who unexpectedly began their menstruation when they gathered during the Moondance. This phenomenon, known as ‘menstrual synchrony,’ was first documented by Martha McClintock in her research on how close interactions among women living together, such as in a college dormitory, influence the timing of their menstrual cycles (1971). There are other reports from around the world, but I want to focus on the earliest known visual depictions of menstruation in rock imagery that are over 27000 years old, from the Pilbara region of North-Western Australia (McDonald, Veth 2013: 68). Knight and Wright suggest that it portrays the myth of Rainbow Snake about two menstruating Wawilak sisters (Knight 1988: 234, 236, Wright Bruce 1968). It has different versions, but the main story is about two dancing sisters who menstruate together. When they enter the sacred waterhole - either directly or through their blood - and pollute it, they are swallowed by a Rainbow Snake, an ancestral being living there.

British anthropologist Chris Knight offers a different interpretation: the menstrual synchrony of the sisters represents a collective female force (1988: 232). Their blood becomes a single flowing stream (105 in Fig.6, 845 in Fig.8), uniting the women as “one blood” and “one flesh” (Knight 1988: 245). The snake in the waterhole rises, drawn but not angered by their blood. It symbolizes the ancestral mother of all, a rainbow, cyclical time, and tides (Knight 1988: 244), while the ‘life-giving’ waterhole represents a vagina (Knight 1991: 465). When the sisters are swallowed, they embody all these symbols: a snake and a rainbow. It is a voluntary act (1991: 460), as they “desired to lose their separateness in the formation of a larger whole” (Knight 1988: 237-239). The snake can be understood across cultures as a symbol of cyclicity (Dailey 2020: 1). Further symbolism important for the Moondance will be discussed in the third chapter. The act of swallowing signifies a vital withdrawal into the Self, representing an accumulation of inner strength. The women are regurgitated afterward, renewed (Knight 1991: 464-465).

Abuelas teach that the Moondance is an ideal place to step away from the outer world to 'look into the mirror' for healing and discovering one's life's purpose. Menstruation during the Moondance is encouraged because it makes women more sensitive and intuitive - focused inward, which allows access to a deeper layer of the Self. The blood-giving ritual mentioned earlier occurs intentionally on the third day so women can gather their fresh flow.

Thomas Buckley's ethnography of Yurok women documents the same teachings (1988). The elders of a young Yurok woman told her about the positive power of menstruation, which can only be harnessed when the woman is secluded and not working, to use her energy "to find out the purpose of life", and when out of balance, to talk to the Moon (Buckley 1988: 190). This testimony contrasts sharply with the universal idea of menstruation as something dirty, dangerous, and polluting, which forced women into separation during their menses to prevent contaminating the house (Buckley 1988: 192). Buckley discovered that the women's testimonies were not publicly acknowledged due to a double bias - both from the male anthropologist and the male informants (1988: 192). I will discuss this bias in the next chapter, but for now, the same bias is evident in the Aboriginal myth above, where women "pollute the sacred waterhole and are punished" for it by the snake. As described in the previous chapter, menstrual blood is seen as a sacred offering, the opposite of a pollutant. Another offering is sweat.

Sweatlodge

Deliberately induced sweating as a cleansing and healing practice has a long history worldwide, from Roman hot baths, Finnish saunas, Turkish hammams, to Indigenous North American sweatlodges and Mexican temazcals. The latter two developed traditional ceremonies in which not only the body and mind but also emotions and spirit are purified and healed (Schiff, Pelech 2007: 49). Symbolically, Moondancers go to the sweatlodge to offer their sweat for renewal. Temazcals and sweatlodges today serve different purposes and hold different meanings (Torre Castellanos, Zúñiga 2018: 23-38), such as strengthening connection to ancestors, providing psychotherapeutic benefits (Schiff, Pelech 2007), and, in the case of women's spiritual circles, connecting with the feminine self, the Divine Feminine, the

moon cycle, and, as Iliadis described, to ,depatriarchalize' - re-evaluate women (Iliadis 2021: 26).

The Moondance sweatlodge's practical purpose is to warm up and refresh before the night dance, and to relax the body afterward, preparing it for sleep during the day. It lasts under an hour (compared to the usual 2-3) and one Abuela calls it "a wiped down lodge" because, through the steam and sweating, it acts as a cleansing like washing. The cleansing occurs not only on the physical level, but also mental (cleansing of fears) and spiritual one (Carmona 2007: 96). There are a total of 8 sweatlodges, used before and after each night of the Moondance (Xochitlquetzali 2024: 110).

Temazcal, derived from Nahuatl words 'tema' (heat) and 'calli' (house) (Arizpe 2009: 198), originates from indigenous health and spiritual traditions of pre-Hispanic times. It traditionally included women's health and reproductive ceremonies, such as preparations for childbirth (Torre Castellanos, Zúñiga 2016: 164). The modern popular use of this ancient Mexican practice is thanks to the Mexicanist movement in the late 20th Century that revived it (Iliados 2021: 1), and to temazcaleras (female temazcal leaders) who reclaimed it for women's healing and empowerment, blending ancestral knowledge with modern spiritual practices (Torre Castellanos, Zúñiga 2016: 163). While traditional temazcals in Mexico are permanent dome-shaped structures made of stones or bricks, contemporary versions - like those at the Moondance - are hybridized, incorporating elements from various spiritual and cultural traditions, such as the inipi ceremony of the Lakota people (Iliadis 2021: 27, 53).



Fig.5

These are dome-shaped temporary structures made with wooden poles (in Moondance bamboo) covered with blankets (Iliadis 2024: 53). Fig.5 is shown without blankets. The structure of the temazcal ritual is also similar to the inipi ritual. Heated volcanic stones - called in the Moondance 'abuelitas' (grannies in Spanish) - are brought in after the people have taken their places inside. Each round - door (puerta) - is dedicated to a cardinal direction and its attributes. In the Moondance sweatlodge, there are only two rounds, each accompanied by four songs (Xochitlquetzali 2024: 111). Before starting the next round, more stones are brought in. The clothing worn is a long dress with a waist belt and a headband. The low entrance requires crawling, which represents humility, and the phrase „to all my relations“ affirms our relationship with the other-than-human consciousness (Schiff, Pelech 2007: 59; Carmona 2007: 89). Inside is completely dark, like in a cave, symbolizing the womb of Mother Earth (De la Torre, Gutiérrez Zúñiga 2016: 164), from which one is reborn.

Many Moondance women are also Sundancers, and they welcome the chance to enter the sweatlodge while menstruating because it was not allowed in the sweatlodges during their Sundances. Dolores, a feminist with Mexican roots, spoke passionately about these prohibitions: “You don’t tell us because we bleed every month that we don’t need to know the sacredness of the sweatlodge”. One North American explanation for the prohibition is women’s power during menstruation. “It is so strong that it can draw the power away from the sacred sweatlodge...and this interference can cause others to become sick” (Omaha).

According to Buckley’s findings, sweatlodges may have existed in North America. He suggested that all Yurok women in households menstruated at the same time (menstrual synchrony discussed above), which was influenced by the Moon (1988: 191). Additionally, these women were not secluded alone but gathered in large dome-shaped communal brush menstrual shelters that were heated for sweating (1988: 202). This validates the historical existence of Mexican women’s teamazcals, and similar examples are found in Europe as well. The Estonian smoke sauna ritual is part of the UNESCO Intangible Cultural Heritage (Tamme 2023), and historically, women gave birth there and sweated together. A documentary called ‘Smoke Sauna Sisterhood’ (2023) by Anna Hints narrates the history, ritual practices, and personal stories of women who shared their experiences, released emotions, and reconnected

in a safe space. The depiction closely resembles what occurs in the Moondance sweatlodge.

Smudging

To deepen the connection with the cycle, womb, inner self, and the Moon, further purification is achieved through fasting or semi-fasting, as well as 'limpia' (purification in Spanish), which involves smudging.

"Fasting is a tool to detach from matter, to bring clarity to inner work by focusing the mind on our heart, thus understanding visions as messages, without intellect..." (Carmona 2007: 124). For this clarity, giving up food is seen as another form of offering.

To smudge means to cleanse. The use of plant-derived smoke has been documented in cultures worldwide for tens of thousands of years (Pennacchio et al 2010: 1). Smudging with copal in Nahuatl culture in Mexico is a very important part of their tradition. Copal is a resin from the Burseraceae tree, and it was traditionally used by the Mexica people as an offering or as food made from the sacred blood of the trees for the gods (Nunziato 2021). In the Moondance, smudging is performed by blowing smoke to cleanse the energy of people, the land, the circle, the materials used to build the sweatlodges, the food, and everything else. Before women enter the sweatlodges, they must be cleansed by the smoke. Those who smudge are called 'sahumadoras' (from the Spanish 'sahumar' – to fumigate), and their tools (sahumar, copalera, or popochkomitl in Nahuatl) are clay vessels with holes on top in which they burn copal on charcoal (Carmona 2007: 38).

Sahumadoras learn to develop a relationship with copal, considered as sacred and an ally. This aligns with the traditional teaching of 'Copaltemalitztlī' (burning copal) (Nunziato 2021: 40), unlike its commodified use in Western spiritual markets, along with other incense that simply smell good. One Mexican teacher explained that to cleanse means to allow the fire to teach through observing. Smoke is the product of fire, and the sahumadoras are those who carry the sacred fire, called the grandfather fire (Carmona 2007: 28). This role is a responsible one that requires a clear mind and focus to observe and pray to copal, and request a cleanse. One sahumadora

explained that because women go through all the mental and emotional shifts, it's important to cleanse them, all their thoughts, and the circle during the night, constantly.

Up until now, I have described the medicine of the Moon and the Moondance as a safe place, guarded by the grandmother Moon, a space of healing through the symbol of the dismembered goddess and lunar cycles, as well as physical healing through purification practices. Now, I will describe the medicine that comes through teaching-learning.

Chapter 3 – Moon as a teacher

Before I lay down for my short sleep filled with vivid dreams under the bright full Moon during a break, a sister approached me. She was holding a finely polished obsidian pipe with a long wooden stem decorated with a feather. More smoke began to emerge from her pipe as she sat down in front of me and inhaled through the stem. The tobacco inside burned more intensely, and the ember at the top glowed brighter. We both prayed while she puffed in every direction - left, right, down, up, and toward my heart - to bring blessings and balance to me and my life. She then offered the pipe to me, turning it so that it looked like I was holding a baby in my arms. Sharing her sacred tool created a close bond between us, and I felt a deep sense of gratitude. I formed my prayer silently and then inhaled the tobacco - not into my lungs but just into my mouth. I repeated the prayer silently again while blowing the smoke toward the Moon. I prayed for myself, my family, my sisters, and peace in countries experiencing conflict. I have read papers about the 'Maharashi Effect' in Transcendental Meditation (TM), where group practice reduced crime and violence in cities (Wallis 2003: 47). So, I prayed earnestly, alongside other women who carried and shared their pipes in different parts of the circle, and worldwide. The dream of Patricia Guerra about women's sacred pipes across the globe, which she had almost 40 years ago, was indeed prophetic. Knowing that women in different countries pray - and some even dance - under the same full Moon felt inspiring.

The break during the night dance is not just for sleeping and resting. Although resting under the Moon is beneficial. According to one Abuela, the 'moonbathing' is vital for

women's revitalization. Having vivid dreams brought on by the Moon as a way of processing unconscious contents might be part of it for both women and men. The other essential activity during the night breaks is praying with the sacred obsidian pipes.

Sacred pipe and prayer

Pre-Hispanic cultures of Mexico used pipes and tobacco in social rituals and religious ceremonies (The Bowers Blog). The Moondance founders re-created the practice with the help and blessings of the living tradition of the ceremonial pipes of the Native Americans, specifically the Lakota (Carmona 2007: 74). The stone used in the Moondance circles is black obsidian, which shares the same symbolism as the smoking mirror. It represents the feminine, while the stem symbolizes the masculine (Xochitlquetzali 2024: 128). The pipe is a tool for communication with the Creator (Carmona 2007: 77). It is filled - 'charged' with another sacred medium and connector of the worlds, tobacco. The indigenous Mexica people used the *Nicotiana rustica* tobacco plant ceremonially, and "all the men smoked it in unison" (Siegel et al. 1977: 16). The carer of the pipe forms a deep, loving relationship with it (Carmona 2007: 80). The act of praying is a vital part of the Moondance. One of the circle leaders told me that the teaching/medicine of the Moondance is "to learn how to pray". Dolorez shared that praying is her favourite part of the dance. I admit that this invisible activity also makes me feel good.

I grew up in an atheist family, and no one taught me to pray. My first prayer, when I was a young adult, resembled Elizabeth Gilbert's prayer: Hello, God, how are you? I'm glad to meet you. I've always been a big fan of your work... please help me..." (Gilbert 2007: 5). To pray, I needed to believe in something bigger than myself. "Prayers are inherently transcendent in that they are always directed to a superior spiritual being with whom humans seek to align" (Baquedano-López 1999: 197). The recipient of the prayers during the pipe prayer are the Moon, Great Spirit, Mother Earth, or God, depending on the individual's belief system. The sacred pipe called 'chanunpa' (in the Lakota language) is not only part of the actual dance but also, like in the Sundance (Hallowell 1990: 37), a ceremony performed during community (full Moon) gatherings or during personal contemplations throughout the year.

A significant part of preparing for the Moondance involves creating prayer ties as personal requests for the Moondance. These can be a single large request or individual requests for each of the 52 prayer ties. There are 13 prayers for each colour, representing the cardinal directions and their attributes, such as east yellow for new beginnings, north white for letting go of the past, west red for transformation and feminine healing, and south blue for willpower (Carmona 2007: 37, 112-113; Xochitlquetzali 2024: 116-119). A prayer is silently 'placed' into a pinch of smudged tobacco, which is then put inside each small sack and tied with a white cotton thread. Sometimes, four green ties are added between the colours as a prayer for Mother Earth. The long string of ties is laid along the edge of the dance circle, and at the end of the fourth night, they are burned in the fire to release the prayers and send them on the smoke. The traditional practice of prayer ties, including the prayer pipe, the four-day/night duration of the ceremony, and the prayer in movement, originates from the Native American Sundance tradition.

This poem by Abuela Sylvia sums up the cyclic nature of dance and prayer:

To dance is to pray
To pray is to heal
To heal is to give
To give is to live
To live is to dance

„Every step is a prayer,” repeated Dolorez about her favourite part of the Moondance. Absolute focus should be on the prayer - a petition or pledge for the community - that is being expressed with each step. This also reminds me of TM meditation. After four years of dancing, I refined my act of praying while in the role of Sahumadora, the smudger, keeping her copalera lit while standing at the gate of the circle every night. And after four years of working with fire, I stepped into the role of a drummer; the focus on prayer was even more intense, with each beat acting as a prayer.

Dance

According to Alfredo López Austin, the dance in pre-Hispanic times was not about performance. It served to preserve knowledge (2008). The dance during the Moondance ceremony can be understood in these terms. It is not focused on

individual actions but is a community effort to create human mandalas to “honour the elements, stars, planets, and the energies of life, adding depth and significance to the ceremony” (Xochitlquetzali 2024: 82), accompanied by drumming and singing. To respect the wishes of the Abuelas, I will not reveal the details of the dance and the mandalas, as they are considered internal knowledge that must remain secret to preserve their sacredness. For this reason, I have also omitted describing the inner structure of the circle.

Each night of the dance is dedicated to one cardinal direction and its corresponding guardian deity, along with the attributes of the direction, an element, and a colour. E.g., God Tezcatlipoca is the guardian of the North that represents ancestors, death, transformation, earth, and white (Xochitlquetzalli 2024: 134-135; Carmona 2007: 112-113). The fourness and directionality are important in Aztec cosmology (McCluskey 2023: 11-24), and the four nights representing each direction are similar to the teaching of the medicine wheel of North American indigenous peoples, which serves as a tool to help see or understand what cannot be seen, such as ideas (Mashford-Pringle 2023: 3). Each night of the dance is part of an internal Moondance journey.

“It was a big process from the first to the fourth night. From the new beginning (east), through the waters of my emotions and healing of my femininity (west), my ancestors (north), to the joy of being alive (south). I felt ecstatic afterwards, from surviving it”, described Martina, and then continued: “And I have appreciated the unfolding over the years as well. Where, in the first year, I was like What the heck is happening? What am I doing? How did I get here, and then it became this big part of my life...I got more and more clarity, it made more sense over the years, and so it was beautiful to be able to form my relationship with the Moon and Moondance”.

In the fourth year of dancing, the Moondancer receives her Nahuatl name during a naming ritual called Nahualli (Xochitlquetzali 2024: 137). The name is calculated by the leading Abuela based on the dancer’s birthdate and the Tonalmatl (Book of Days), a 260-day Aztec ritual calendar used for divination (Pharo 2012: 186). This name grants her a new identity and symbolizes qualities that the dancer should embody to bring blessings and fulfill her destiny (Xochitlquetzali 2024: 137-138). The

name can be one or two words representing a deity, a guardian animal such as a jaguar, an action/movement, a name based on the calendar (Xochitlquetzali 2024: 141), or a combination of all of these. “The name unlocked part of me not seen before”, described Martina. Rachel said that her name is the energy she is aspiring to.

After the Nahualli ceremony, concluding four years of Moondance, a new cycle of dancing can begin. Cyclicity, a core concept in Aztec cosmology (McCluskey 2023: 11-24), is central to the Moondance. “All we do here is cyclical – purify, dance, rest, purify... what the nature is doing, we are doing, what the stars are doing, we are doing... as above so below,” said one Abuela and a circle leader, also referring to the Aztec duality that is strongly embraced in the dance. Through the spatial realms of above/below (sky/earth), as well as day/night and masculine/feminine, all that creates the unity expressed as “Ometeotl” after each speech.

The most common response I received from the Moondancers regarding the teaching or medicine of the Moondance was the connection to the sisterhood - the sense of solidarity felt through synchronizing movement with other women. It serves as the foundation for a functional community. The strength of sisterhood, involving women dancing and menstruating together, is reflected in Chris Knight’s ground-breaking book ‘Blood Relations: Menstruation and the Origins of Culture’ (1991).

Knight proposed that women synchronized their menstruation with each other and the Moon as an act of female solidarity, a form of ritualized sex strike that led to the establishment of social rules, thus forming the origins of human culture (1991: 456). The possibly earliest recorded version of the women’s dance that inspired Knight’s bold theory is again represented by the rock imagery of the sisters from the Aboriginal Rainbow Snake myth, described in the chapter about menstruation.



Fig.6

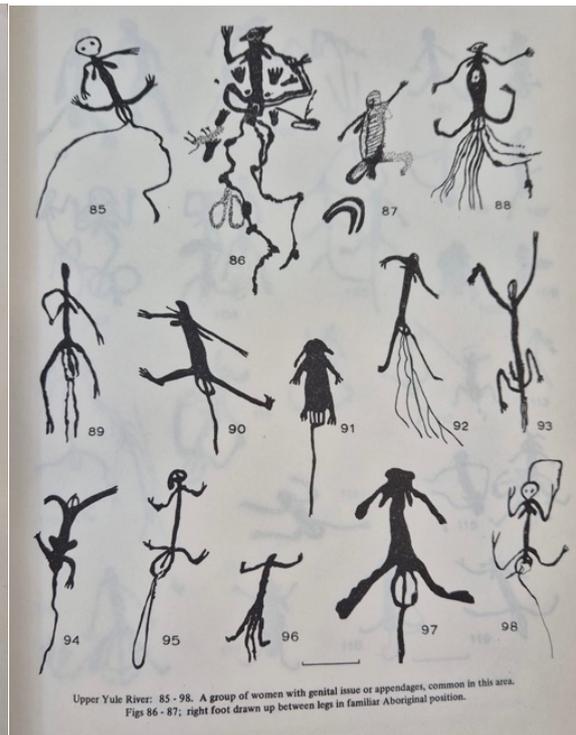


Fig.7

Figure 7 shows the menstruating sisters, for example, in 85 or 92, and in 105 of Figure 6 and 845 of Figure 8, how they menstruate together. According to Chris Knight and Bruce Wright, in the imagery 103, but also 112, the menstruating sisters are dancing together (Wright 1968, Fig.6).



Fig.8

Could the carved figures on the wall in the Monte Alban pyramidal complex (Fig.9, 10), called Danzantes, mentioned in the History of the Moondance paragraph, also be dancing menstruating women?

The founders of the Moondance considered the Olmec (one of the earliest Meso-American civilizations) 2200–2500-year-old carved stone slabs as evidence of a female dance in pre-Hispanic history. The figures are nude, limb, appearing to be in a

frenzy, their eyes closed, mouths open, wearing costume elements. Several of these carved figures feature flowery blood scrolls emanating from their genital areas (Orr 2002: 13). There are nine different interpretations by all-male archaeologists and specialists, who claimed various representations of swimmers, priests, shamans, or prisoners of war being castrated. The absence of male sexual organs intrigued them (Orr 2002: 15-17), but perhaps because the figures lack breasts, this might be why none of the interpretations suggested women. Could it be another example of male bias, similar to the case of menstruation and Yurok women, or the Rainbow Serpent myth?



Fig.9



Fig.10

These are not suggestions but questions to ponder about alternative knowledge and biases. The Aboriginal petroglyphs depicting menstruating women, as well as the image of dancing women in *The Codex Borgia*, are not just art but a visual language (Dubinova 2013: 32), conveying knowledge akin to that of dance (López Austin 2008). The 'old-fashioned' views in archaeology and anthropology see petroglyphs and pictographs as 'rock art' because they influence viewers like art does (David,

McNiven 2017). However, for the Indigenous Elders, it is more than just art. They go beyond aesthetics and regard them as messages from ancestors (Wright Aaron 2023).

Ancestral knowledge might also be captured in archetypes of the collective unconscious. The Jung's collective unconscious, already mentioned earlier, is a deeper layer of the unconscious mind with shared experiences and universal archetypes (Stevens 2006: 75). According to Jung's colleague Marie-Louise von Franz, fairy tales and dreams express the collective unconscious containing ancestral pasts, in psychic rather than historical terms (Franz 1972/1993). When I first saw the Moondance women, all dressed in white and dancing in a circle under the Moon, it reminded me of the mythical figures of Slavic fairies - guardians of water and wells - who, in Czech myths and fairy tales, dressed in white dance in a circle under the full Moon (Ghisiova 2015: 10). Interpreting the Moondance and the Czech fairy tale through Jungian and von Franz's perspective is beyond this work's scope. Nonetheless, I suggest that the dreams and visions of the Mexican founders of Moondance might originate from the same layer of the unconscious, and thus could convey information from this kind of ancestral memory.

Male/female biases and ecofeminism

Moondance Elders 're-created' the dance as a forgotten sacred female Mexican tradition of empowerment. Cynthia Eller's book 'The Myth of Matriarchal Prehistory: Why an Invented Past Won't Give Women a Future (2000) critiques the feminist effort to reclaim their past. It claims that 'matriarchal prehistory', societies led by women or in which women hold high positions before patriarchy, is a feminist myth. According to her, there is no evidence of it, and this made-up past can be damaging to feminist credibility (Eller 2000). She encourages focusing on the future instead of the idealised past to create a new, evidence-based vision (Eller 2000).

There are, however, historical accounts, and „she also devalued the psychological dreaming of myth, the active creation of a future other than the patriarchal one“ (Dubinova 2021: 34). Many Moondancers believe the history of a peaceful matriarchy before patriarchy to be true. The archaeologist Marija Gimbutas (1982) provided evidence of matrifocal, goddess-centered, and peaceful Old Europe. In the Neolithic

iconography she studied, the bird and snake goddesses were worshipped as a continuum of life, representing “fertility of womb and fruitfulness of earth,” as well as death and rebirth (Dexter 2011: 185, 186). Because of the limited evidence of weaponry and fortifications, these societies (around 8000-4000 years ago) appear to have been peaceful (Dexter 2011: 182).

In mythology, snakes are often interchangeable with dragons (Ogden 2013: 2) and are among the most common symbols across different cultures, carrying various symbolic meanings (Friedlander 1992: 14-15). They are frequently linked to women and cycles (Knight 1988: 232-255; Dubinova 2013: 59-65). In this work, the Aztec Lunar Goddesses Tlazolteotl and Coyolxauhqui are depicted with snakes, as well as the two Aboriginal sisters (Wright Bruce 1968: Fig.100, 383, here Fig.6).

Archaeological and linguistic evidence indicates changes toward patriarchal, patrilinear, semi-nomadic, and militaristic Proto-Indo-Europeans - our European ancestors who absorbed into the ancient European populations (Gimbutas 1982: 18-19; Dexter 2011: 182). Dexter argues that these patriarchal cultures transformed the Neolithic bird and snake goddess into a monster (2011: 189).

From the meaning of cyclicity and the continuum of life, the snake/dragon became a monstrous female archetype embodying chaos (Eliade 1954/2019: 19), fertility, passion, uncontrollable force, and danger (Ogden 2021: 65-68), which needed to be subdued/controlled by men. Serpent Delphyne was slain by the Sun god Apollo (Ogden 2021: 67-68), Medusa by Perseus (Ogden 2008), and the sea goddess and mother of all gods, the serpent Tiamat, by Babylonian Sun god Marduk (Prichard 2021: 28-36). This 3 to 4,000-year-old Mesopotamian creation myth closely resembles the myth of the lunar goddess Coyolxauhqui, who was killed by her brother, the Sun god Huitzilopochtli. Coyolxauhqui's mother, Cuatlicue, was an earth and fertility goddess, and her statue, with serpents across her face, was discovered in 1790, terrifying the Spaniards so much that she was reburied (Krippner 2019: 235). I cite these examples to illustrate how one symbol can carry different meanings depending on the positionality of the narrator.

For Carl Gustav Jung, the serpent represented the unconscious (1980: 363). The projection or the mirror medicine was discussed in the first chapter. The

Coyolxauhqui medicine and the myths above about the cycle of life reflect the narrative of patriarchal oppression. “Who controls that narrative?” asked ardently Dolores, the feminist Moondancer. (Another narrative of Coyolxauhqui is offered by a North American Grandmother in the Rite of Passage paragraph). Dolores’s reaction highlights the anger about male biases in myths and menstrual traditions mentioned earlier, and asserts her own interpretation, which is supported in the Moondance community as a form of empowerment.

Although my interlocutors were not familiar with the term ‘ecofeminism’, most understood that the oppression of women is linked to the exploitation of nature. Many promote feminist principles of equality and live in sustainable communities, or follow principles of sustainability, ecology, and harmony with nature’s (lunar) cycles. In ecofeminism, patriarchy is connected to capitalism (Mies, Shiva 1993). Maria Mies and Vandana Shiva criticised ‘patriarchal capitalism’ as the common root of domination and exploitation of both the environment and women. By exploring traditional knowledge and spirituality, they advocate for shifting from consumer-driven economies to those based on subsistence and community living (Mies, Shiva 1993).

The spiritual dimension of this approach stems from indigenous worldviews that regard nature and women are sacred and everything as interconnected (Mies, Shiva 1993). This is the teaching of the Moondance, which is not only conveyed through the words of elders and women to each other but also through their way of life and actions. “If you don’t know how to deal with nature, you don’t know how to deal with women”, said Moondancer Fatima. Maria nodded her head in agreement and added: “Even women can be ‘machistas’ and therefore patriarchal if they pollute the earth and don’t honour it by giving back their blood to the earth... That is why we have the Moondance, to heal and learn to be women, to be in balance with ourselves and the Earth”.

The Moondance women can be considered feminists who strive to liberate themselves from the cultural construct of women's subordination and gender inequality, a concept analysed by Sherry Ortner through the nature/culture construct (Ortner 1972). At the same time, they promote biological essentialism, which reinforces these gender stereotypes. Womanhood is defined by menstruation. What

about those who don't have it? Part of the Moondance teaching is that the Moon and Moondance improve the menstrual cycle and fertility. But some women coming every year to the Moondance still have irregular menstrual cycles, and some even reported that after the Moondance, they didn't get their menstruation for a couple of months or longer.

Rite of Passage

However, all my interlocutors' responses, both women's and men's, were optimistic about the influence of the Moondance on their lives. After this ceremony, they felt regenerated, confident, and made changes like shedding unhealthy relationships, even divorcing, forming new ones based on healthy boundaries; deepening friendships with women, solving problems more effectively, taking on leadership roles, creating, writing, flowing, sleeping better, and trusting in oneself and her abilities – these are the results of this rite of passage.

This psychological journey, first theorised by Arnold van Gennep, consists of three phases: separation, liminality, and incorporation (Gennep 1977: 21). Victor Turner described the liminal space as an anti-structure and *communitas* because, after crossing the boundary from a secular, structured world, individuals find themselves in a structureless, sacred, deeply bonding “communion of equal individuals” (Turner 1995: 96). This equality is expressed through communal dancing and Lévy-Bruhl's concept of ‘participation’ (2010). Additionally, participants wear identical clothing - white ponchos and skirts with a red belt around the waist - to symbolize unity (Carmona 2007: 73) and lunar energy (Xochitlquetzalli 2024: 73).

Complete separation from the outside world is a prerequisite for creating liminality, allowing the ecstasy - the spiritual/religious experience, called by Émile Durkheim a ‘collective effervescence’ - to unfold (1995). The intense excitement during the dance fosters strong social bonds (Durkheim 1995) such as female solidarity (Knight 1988, 1991), connection with the Divine (Laughlin 1994, 2018), and renewal through emotionally charged catharsis (Carlton-Ford 1992). The catharsis I experienced during the blood giving ritual, along with other women's descriptions of the dance, has a psychotherapeutic effect that, according to Carlton-Ford, enhances self-esteem (1992: 365-387).

Patricia, Grandmother and circle leader from North America, said that part of the medicine of the Moon and Moondance is connecting with the ecstatic feminine. She shared a story of giggles and laughter during the dance and a vision of Coyolxauhqui in pieces, not because she is a victim of dismemberment, but because “she exploded from an absolute bliss and joy of being alive”. It does evoke a sense of lunacy or hysteria. It can relate to Czech fairies dancing under the Moon (Ghisiova 2015: 10), as the Czech term for fairy - ‘víla’ - originates from the verb ‘to be possessed’ (Profantova 2004: 232) or to “passionately fly, toss and turn, to be crazy” (Niederle 1953: 290 in Ghisiova 2015). Patricia described that in their Moondance circle, they have “respectful, cautious Native American Elders, who, after getting into the juicy power...they felt so liberated, they turned into little girls and smiled from ear to ear”. To her, this was a confirmation of the power of the dance and the power of the Moon. An alternative narrative to the healing symbol of Coyolxauhqui is the joy and celebration of womanhood.

Cultural appropriation

I will conclude this chapter with these Native American Elders. To North American tribes, the spiritual practices of the Red Road (the spiritual path of balance and harmony with Self and others), such as sweatlodges, sacred pipes, Vision Quests, and Sundance, are viewed as cultural theft when used by non-Indigenous people (Johnsont 1995: 277). Appropriation refers to the use of religious beliefs and rituals of an indigenous culture by outsiders from another culture, in unacknowledged ways (Young, Brunk 2009). When I asked about it, my informers didn’t see this ‘borrowing’ as something bad, but rather as an inspiration. Most of them, especially in Europe, were not aware of the volume and complexity of this issue, and some have never even heard the term ‘cultural appropriation’.

“Make it your own,” a Mexican circle leader told me. “Abuela in our circle encourages people to find their own lineage...Don’t appropriate it and pretend like it’s your creation, but take what you can, celebrate and honour it...Find your own songs that your grandmother sang to you,” said Dolorez about acknowledging the Moondance origin but adjusting it culturally. This statement reflects the teaching of the Moondance, emphasizing the unification of women worldwide, which they see as a

fulfillment of prophecy captured in the image of dancing women in *The Codex Borgia*. Several Moondancers mentioned belonging to the 'rainbow' tribe, where these borrowings are not appropriated but 'appreciated'. "I am not trying to be Mexican or Native American, I don't take it as mine," explained another circle leader who always acknowledges the Elders and nations from which the teachings originated. Practicing as taught by the Elders and within the context of the ritual, affirmed by moral reflexive judgment-'self-authorization'-is called 'cultural appreciation' (Cruz 2024: 980).

The North American non-indigenous Moondancers are familiar with these debates, as the genocide of Native peoples is part of their history. They treat the issue of cultural appropriation with awareness and humility. Rachel from the USA told me about receiving teachings from Elders who want to share, but no one in their bloodline wants to learn. Her family created a circle of reciprocity in which they give support to the community of their teachers. Maria, whose ancestry is Mayan, practices yoga and Buddhist chants, and she doesn't view this as cultural appropriation. She also eats pizza and Chinese food, illustrating that, as humanity, "we have engaged in intercultural exchange for so long that it didn't even have a name until now". Fatima made a remark, hinted at earlier by Rachel. Through this sharing of knowledge, indigenous wisdom is preserved and revitalized - "all the online courses in Nahuatl, interests in Mexican cosmology, only because these Moondancers are opening circles around the world". With all the cultural diversity and neoliberalism, navigating this complex issue remains challenging.

The Native American Grandmothers who felt liberation and smiles when they began dancing under the Moon, explained Patricia, "started recalling what their grandmothers did, remembering pieces of those ceremonies that were a secret, that they had forgotten because they were victims of residential schools...But the Moondance helped them reawaken something for them. Reminding them, not that they didn't have it, but that much was taken away from them. This re-membering is the medicine of Coyolxauhqui."

Conclusion

In this thesis, I explored the influences - the 'medicine' of the Moon and the Moondance. I demonstrated in three ways that through these medicines, women reconnect with themselves, their health, femininity, and the community.

Firstly, I argued for the importance of animism, a concept that has been widely studied in anthropology. Moving away from the positionality of armchair anthropology, which viewed animism as something archaic and superstitious, I aim to contribute to the growing appreciation of animism in the 21st Century across fields such as ecology, creativity, and healing/therapy. Moondancers view the Moon as kin, a grandmother figure that gives them a sense of belonging, protection, and care.

By providing the history of the Moondance, I situate it within a feminist discourse of reclaiming spiritual space for women by framing the Moondance as an ancient female ceremony. This reclaiming is supported in this thesis by challenging male-biased narratives and promoting alternative forms of historical knowledge.

In the second way, I analysed how the Moon and its related features are conceptualised as healing symbols, such as the menstrual cycle/blood or the dismembered lunar goddess Coyolxauhqui. The medicine of the mirror/projection/reflexivity is about how symbols and other people reflect our inner world, expressed through emotions, which helps with the healing process. I believe that if anthropologists engage more with this interdisciplinary approach involving anthropology, psychology, and religion/spirituality, it can further enrich and deepen their ethnographic research. The same applies to psychologists who can benefit from engaging with healing symbolism in an anthropological context.

The Moon is also believed to have healing properties due to its luminous and gravitational qualities. As the mover of the tides, it acts as a synchronizer of the menstrual 'tide'. The community believes that the synchrony with the Moon enhances fertility. However, my research suggests that it is more likely to help women

understand their cycles in relation to the lunar cycle. Acceptance of the nature of cyclicity may lead to psychosomatic and physiological benefits.

A shift in understanding and/or acquiring new knowledge can also serve as a form of medicine/healing. In the third point, I explained that the full Moon resides over a liminal space of a rite of passage where women learn to pray to the Moon and divine forces, and dance to foster sisterhood and female solidarity. The dance and the breaks between provide them with the space to integrate the shadow work of the medicine of the mirror in order to be reborn as whole, empowered women.

With these three categories of Moon as kin (magical consciousness/animism), a healer (medicine), and a teacher (ritual practices/rites of passage), I agree with Napier and Rivers that these social processes are interconnected, and I argue that this is the threefold medicine of the Moon and that the Moondance wouldn't function as a power healing tool if one of the three components were missing.

Throughout the thesis, I introduced essential elements of the four-day/four-night Moondance ceremony, like sweatlodge, smudging, and praying, which help women in their physical, emotional, and spiritual cleansing and healing. Due to the scope and word limits of this work, I was unable to explore other important elements and their symbolism, like singing and drumming, or to explain the hierarchical structure of the Moondance. This can be further investigated, especially in relation to research on cultural differences. It seems that the Moondancers have culture-specific expectations for the Moondance, and their projections and reflexivity display patterns unique to their culture. The Moondance serves as a space for intercultural exchange of knowledge and experiences, providing a fascinating environment for cross-cultural studies.

Moondance arose from neo-Mexicanism and feminist movements during globalisation and modernity as an alternative healing ritual rooted in history. In Aztec culture, religious offerings included human/women sacrifices. In contemporary Moondance, women offer their sweat, blood, food, sleep, prayer, and songs to the Great Spirit/Divine Feminine/Mother Earth/Creator. These alternative offerings serve

as ritual gestures to recreate the world/cosmos (Carrasco 2002), similar to what ancestors in Mexico and other cultures have done.

The lunar goddess Coyolxauhqui, decapitated and dismembered by the solar god Huitzilopochtli, the Indian goddess Usas, dismembered by storm god Indra, and the Mesopotamian goddess Tiamat, slain by storm god Marduk, represent forces of cyclical cosmic order. Them and other goddesses from ancient cultures may appear as victims in their mythologies - such as Indian Sati, wife of Shiva, who self-immolated after humiliation; Mesopotamian Inanna; or Greek Persephone – but they embody an archetype of catalyst for cosmic balance, cyclical renewal, and thus creation. In modern feminist narratives, these goddesses are seen as archetypes of female disempowerment, which, in the Moondance, through Coyolxauhqui, functions as a healing symbol for the fragmentation of the female self, caused by patriarchal oppression and trauma.

This work is the first contribution to knowledge about Moondance in anthropology, and it shows Moondance as a powerful contemporary healing ceremony, which may explain its popularity and swift rise from a local Mexican movement to a global phenomenon.

I acknowledge the use of Microsoft Copilot in suggesting authors and sources and Grammarly for proofreading.

Bibliography

Anzaldúa, Gloria. *Let Us Be the Healing Of the Wound: The Coyolxauhqui Imperative - la sombra y el sueño*. UNAM Voices. (2015): 120–22.

<http://www.revistascisan.unam.mx/Voces/pdfs/7423.pdf>

Baquedano-López, Patricia. "Prayer." *Journal of Linguistic Anthropology* 9, no. 1/2 (1999): 197–200. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/43102465>.

Blain, Jenny, Douglas Ezzy, and Graham Harvey. *Researching Paganisms*. The Pagan Studies Series. Walnut Creek, CA: AltaMira Press, 2004.

Böszöményi-Nagy, Ivan; Spark Geraldine. *Invisible Loyalties: Reciprocity in Intergenerational Family Therapy*. Hagerstown: Harper & Row. 1973.

Brown, Jenny. 'Bowen Family Systems Theory and Practice: Illustration and Critique'. *Australian and New Zealand Journal of Family Therapy* 20, no. 2 (1999): 94–103.

Buckley, Thomas, and Alma Gottlieb. *Blood Magic*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988.

Bull, Jonathan R., Simon P. Rowland, Elina Berglund Scherwitzl, Raoul Scherwitzl, Kristina Gemzell Danielsson, and Joyce Harper. 'Real-World Menstrual Cycle Characteristics of More than 600,000 Menstrual Cycles'. *Npj Digital Medicine* 2, no. 1 (2019): 83.

Byland Bruce E. Introduction and commentary. *The Codex Borgia. A Full-Color Restoration of the Ancient Mexican Manuscript*. Ed.by Díaz Gisele and Redgers Alan. 1993/2024.

Calabrese, Joseph D. 'Reflexivity and Transformation Symbolism in the Navajo Peyote Meeting'. *Ethos* 22, no. 4 (1994): 494–527.

Campbell Stuart, Healey Elisabeth, Kuzmin Yaroslav, Glascock MD. The mirror, the magus and more: reflections on John Dee's obsidian mirror. *Antiquity*. 2021; 95(384):1547-1564.

Carmona Itzpapalotl, Anita. *La pipa de obsidiana Danza de Luna*. Editorial Osadia, S. A. 2007.

Cartwright, Mark. Coyolxauhqui. *World History Encyclopedia*. 2016.
<https://www.worldhistory.org/Coyolxauhqui/>

Casiraghi, Leandro, Ignacio Spiouzas, Gideon P. Dunster, Kaitlyn McGlothlen, Eduardo Fernández-Duque, Claudia Valeggia, and Horacio O. De La Iglesia. 'Moonstruck Sleep: Synchronization of Human Sleep with the Moon Cycle under Field Conditions'. *Science Advances* 7, no. 5 (2021): eabe0465.

Cruz, Angela Gracia B, Yuri Seo, and Daiane Scaraboto. 'Between Cultural Appreciation and Cultural Appropriation: Self-Authorizing the Consumption of Cultural Difference'. Edited by Linda L Price, Markus Giesler, and Hope Jensen Schau. *Journal of Consumer Research* 50, no. 5 (2024): 962–84.

Dailey, Charles William. 'The Serpent Symbol in Tradition: A Study of Traditional Serpent and Dragon Symbolism, Based in Part Upon the Concepts and Observations of Rene Guenon, Mircea Eliade, and Various Other Relevant Researchers'. Doctoral, University of North Texas, 2020.

David, Bruno, and Ian J. McNiven, eds. *The Oxford Handbook of the Archaeology and Anthropology of Rock Art*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2017.

De La Peña, Francisco. 'Milenarismo, Nativismo y Neotradicionalismo En El México Actual'. *Ciencias Sociales y Religión/Ciências Sociais e Religião* 3, no. 3 (2001): 95–113.

De la Torre, R; Gutiérrez Zúñiga, C. Healing in a Temazcal (Indigenous Sweat Lodge): Experiences from Rural Mexico to Holistic Spirituality Circles. *Alternative Therapies in Latin America: Políticas, Prácticas and beliefs*. Ed by Saizar M. and Bordes M.. Nova Science Publishers 2018: 23-38.

Dexter, Miriam Robbins. 'The Degeneration of Ancient Bird and Snake Goddesses'. *Journal of Archaeomythology* 7 (2011): 181–202.
www.archaeomythology.org/.

Ecochard, Rene et al. 'Evidence That the Woman's Ovarian Cycle Is Driven by Aninternal Circamonthly Timing System'. *Science Advances* 2024 (April 2024).

Eliade, Mircea. *The Myth of the Eternal Return: Cosmos and History*. Princeton University Press, 1954.

Feldman, Brian. 'After the Catastrophe: Working with the Intergenerational Transmission of Collective Trauma in Jungian Analysis'. *Journal of Analytical Psychology* 67, no. 1 (2022): 105–18.

Filingeri, Licia. 'The oldest ancient known representation of the Moon (Upper Paleolithic, Vara, Savona, Liguria, Italy)'. *Paleolithic Art Magazine Index* 2000 (December 2000). <https://www.paleolithicartmagazine.org/pagina16.html>.

Friedlander, Walter J.. *The Golden Wand of Medicine. A History of the Caduceus Symbol in Medicine*. Greenwood Publishing Group. 1992.

Ghisiova, Karin. 'Vily v České Literatuře pro Děti a Mládež'. BA Filozofická fakulta Katedra bohemistiky, Universita Palackého, 2015.

Gilbert, Elizabeth. *Eat, pray, love*. Bloomsbury Paperbacks. 2007

Graulich, Michel. Ochpaniztli, Fiesta de renovación. *Arqueología Mexicana*. 1991. <https://arqueologiamexicana.mx/mexico-antiguo/ochpaniztli-fiesta-de-renovacion>

Gray, Miranda. *Red Moon: Understanding and Using the Gifts of the Menstrual Cycle*. Shaftesbury, Dorset [England] ; Rockport, MA: Element, 1994.

Greenwood, Susan. *The Nature of Magic*. Berg Publishers. 2006.

Greenwood, Susan. *The Anthropology of Magic*. Oxford: Berg, 2009.

Hallowell, Ronan. 'Dancing Together: The Lakota Sun Dance and Ethical Intercultural Exchange'. *IK: Other Ways of Knowing* 3, no. 1 (n.d.): 30–52.

Heidegger, Martin. *Being and Time*. Blackwell Publishers, Oxford, 1962.

Helfrich-Förster, C., S. Monecke, I. Spiouzas, T. Hovestadt, O. Mitesser, and T. A. Wehr. 'Women Temporarily Synchronize Their Menstrual Cycles with the Luminance and Gravimetric Cycles of the Moon'. *Science Advances* 7, no. 5 (2021): eabe1358.

McCluskey, Stephen. Native American Cosmologies. In *Cosmology: Historical, Literary, Philosophical, Religious and Scientific Perspectives*. Ed by Hetherington, Norriss S. Boca Raton: CRC Press, 2023: 11-24.

Iliadis, Theodoros. 'The Quest to Consume the Authentic Other: The Mexican Temazcal as a Case-Study Analysis of Experiential Consumption in the Periphery of Neoliberalism'. MA, Freie Universität Berlin, 2021.

Jung, C. G. The Archetypes and the Collective Unconscious. *The Collected Works of C. G. Jung*, edited by Herbert Read et al., translated by R. F. C. Hull, 2nd ed., Volume 9, Part 1, Princeton UP, 1980. Bollingen Series 20.

Klibaner-Schiff, Eleanor, Elisabeth M. Simonin, Cezmi A. Akdis, Ana Cheong, Mary M. Johnson, Margaret R. Karagas, Sarah Kirsh, et al. 'Environmental Exposures Influence Multigenerational Epigenetic Transmission'. *Clinical Epigenetics* 16, no. 1 (2024): 145.

Knight, Chris. *Blood Relations: Menstruation and the Origins of Culture*. New Haven, Conn. ; London: Yale University Press, 1991.

Krippner, Stanley. The Meso-American goddess Coatlicue: Too terrifying for the Spaniards. *International Journal of Transpersonal Studies*, 38 (2). 2019: 226-230.

Latin lexicon. Definition of lunaticus.

<https://latinlexicon.org/definition.php?p1=2033655>

Laughlin, Charles D. 'Mana : Psychic Energy, Spiritual Power, and the Experiencing Brain'. *Time and Mind* 11, no. 4 (2018): 409–31.

Lévi-Strauss, Claude. *Structural Anthropology*. New York: Basic Books. 1963.

Lévy-Bruhl, Lucien. *Primitive Mentality*. S.I.: Nabu Press, 2010.

López Austin, Alfredo; Espinosa, Alejandra Gámez. *Cosmovisión mesoamericana: Reflexiones, polémicas y etnografías*. Fondo de Cultura Económica. 2016.

Mashford-Pringle, Angela, and Amy Shawanda. 'Using the Medicine Wheel as Theory, Conceptual Framework, Analysis, and Evaluation Tool in Health Research'. *SSM - Qualitative Research in Health* 3 (2023): 100251.

Mcclintock, Martha K. 'Menstrual Synchrony and Suppression'. *Nature* 229, no. 5282 (1971): 244–45.

McDonald, Jo, and Peter Veth. 'Rock Art In Arid Landscapes: Pilbara And Western Desert Petroglyphs'. *Australian Archaeology* 77, no. 1 (2013): 66–81.

Merleau-Ponty, Maurice. *Phenomenology of Perception*; Translated by Colin Smith. Routledge Classics. London: Routledge, 2002.

Mies, Maria, and Vandana Shiva. *Ecofeminism*. Halifax, N.S. : London ; Atlantic Highlands, N.J: Fernwood Publications ; Zed Books, 1993.

Milbrath, Susan. 'The Moon in Meso-America'. *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Planetary Science*. Oxford University Press, 2020.

Napier, A. David. *Making Things Better: A Workbook on Ritual, Cultural Values, and Environmental Behavior*. Oxford Ritual Studies Series. New York: Oxford University Press, 2014.

Nunziato, Rebecca Mendoza. 'The Sacred Essence of Copal Incense: Ritual Survival from Postclassic Mesoamerica to Modern Chicax Communities'. *The Graduate Journal of Harvard Divinity School* 2020-21 14 (2021): 22–45.

Ogden, D.. *Perseus* (1st ed.). Routledge. 2008

Ogden, Daniel. *Drakōn: Dragon Myth and Serpent Cult in the Greek and Roman Worlds*. Oxford University Press, 2013.

Ogden, Daniel. 'Drakaina: The She-Dragon'. In *The Dragon in the West*, by Daniel Ogden, 59–83. Oxford University Press, 2021.

Omaha, Barbara. *Women's Moontime and Ceremony*. Seven Circles Foundation.
<https://www.sevencircles.org/womens-moontime-and-ceremony/>

Orr, Heather S. 'Danzantes of Building L at Monte Albán'. Excavation 1994 Oaxaca, Mt Alban, 2002.

Ortner, Sherry B. 'Is Female to Male as Nature Is to Culture?' *Feminist Studies* 1, no. 2 (1972): 5–31.

Pablos, Julia Tuñón. *Mujeres en México: una historia olvidada*, 1987. *Mujeres en México: recordando una historia*, 1998.

Paul. Stoller. *In Sorcery's Shadow: A Memoir of Apprenticeship among the Songhay of Niger*. Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1987.

Pennacchio, Marcello, Lara Vanessa Jefferson, and Kayri Havens. *Uses and Abuses of Plant-Derived Smoke: It's Ethnobotany as Hallucinogen, Perfume, Incense, and Medicine*. New York, N.Y: Oxford University Press, 2010.

Pharo, Lars Kirkhusmo. "'Tonalism": Name, Soul, Destiny and Identity Determined by the 260-Day Calendar in Mesoamerica'. *Oslo Studies in Language* 4, no. 2 (21 July 2012).

Pink, Sarah. *Doing Sensory Ethnography*. 1 Oliver's Yard, 55 City Road, London EC1Y 1SP United Kingdom: SAGE Publications Ltd, 2009.

Pritchard, James B, and Daniel E Fleming. *The Ancient Near East : An Anthology of Texts and Pictures / Edited by James B. Pritchard ; Foreword by Daniel E. Fleming*. Princeton, N.J: Princeton University Press, 2011.

Quiñones Keber, Eloise, and American Society for Ethnohistory, eds. *Representing Aztec Ritual: Performance, Text, and Image in the Work of Sahagún*. Mesoamerican Worlds. Boulder, Colo: University Press of Colorado, 2002.

Schiff, Jeannette Waegemakers, and William Pelech. 'The Sweat Lodge Ceremony for Spiritual Healing'. *Journal of Religion & Spirituality in Social Work: Social Thought* 26, no. 4 (2007): 71–93.

Schwartz, Stephan A. 'The New Thinking Allowed' documentary, 2018.
<https://www.newthinkingallowed.org/the-anthropology-of-consciousness-withstephan-a-schwartz/>

Siegel, R. K.; Collings, P. R.; Diaz, J. L. On the Use of *Tagetes lucida* and *Nicotiana rustica* as a Huichol Smoking Mixture: The Aztec "Yahutli" with Suggestive Hallucinogenic Effects. In *Economic Botany*. Vol 31, No 1. Jan - Mar 1977: 16-23.

Tamme, A., and M. Abel. 'Review: Smoke Sauna Sisterhood (2023): Documentary by Anna Hints'. *Sexual and Relationship Therapy* 40, no. 1 (2025): 277–79.

The Bowers Blog. Purepecha (Phurépecha) Ceramic Pipe. Bowers Museum. September 2013. <https://www.bowers.org/index.php/collections-blog/purepecha-phurepecha-ceramic-pipe>

Torre Castellanos, Renée De La, and Cristina Gutiérrez Zuñiga. 'Temazcal: Un Ritual Pre-Hispánico Transculturalizado Por Redes Alternativas Espirituales'. *Ciencias Sociales y Religión/Ciências Sociais e Religião* 18, no. 24 (2016): 153–72.

Turner, Victor W. *The Ritual Process: Structure and Anti-Structure*. The Lewis Henry Morgan Lectures 1966. New York: Aldine de Gruyter, 1995.

Turner, Victor. *The Forest of Symbols: Aspects of Ndembu Ritual*. Paperback printing. Cornell Paperbacks. Anthropology. Ithaca London: Cornell University Press, 2016.

Van Gennep, Arnold. *The Rites of Passage*. Repr. d. Ausg. 1960. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1977.

Von Stuckrad, Kocku. 'The Revival of Animism in the 21st Century'. In *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Religion*, by Kocku Von Stuckrad. Oxford University Press, 2023.

Wehr, T A. 'Bipolar Mood Cycles and Lunar Tidal Cycles'. *Molecular Psychiatry* 23, no. 4 (2018): 923–31.

Wright, Aaron. "Why I No Longer Call It "Art". In *Archaeology Southwest*. 2023. <https://www.archaeologysouthwest.org/2023/03/08/why-i-no-longer-call-it-art/>

Wright, Bruce J. *Rock Art of the Pilbara Region, North-West Australia* / by Bruce J. Wright. Canberra: Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies, 1968.

Xochitlquetzalli, Susana. *Moondance Ceremony and other Rites of Initiation*. Chicauhtlimetzli California Moondance. USA. 2024.

Young, James O., and Conrad G. Brunk, eds. *The Ethics of Cultural Appropriation*. Chichester, U.K. ; Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2009.

Zimecki, Michal. 'The Lunar Cycle: Effects on Human and Animal Behavior and Physiology'. *Postępy Higieny i Medycyny Doświadczalnej (Advances in Hygiene and Experimental Medicine)* 60:1-7, February 2006.