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ESSAYS

REMEMBERING COYOLXAUHQUI AS A BIRTHING TEXT

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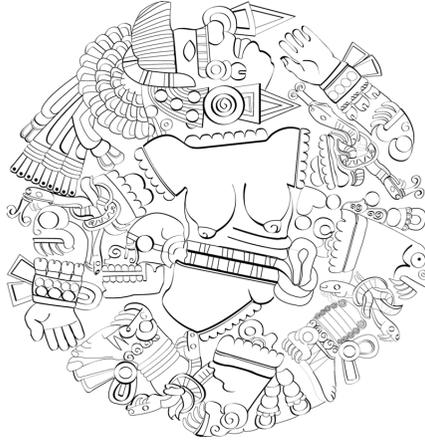


Image 1: Coyolxauhqui from Anzures (1991)

Abstract: *This article examines several interpretations of the stone image of Coyolxauhqui: 1) the Early Academic interpretation established by anthropologists; 2) the Xicana Feminist interpretation; and 3) a Partera/Midwife perspective which re-envisioning Coyolxauhqui as a birthing diagram or guide for women in labor. Historically, Coyolxauhqui has been referred to as the “dis-membered woman” and used as evidence of the victimization of women in Mesoamerican society. This article challenges the conventional notions of Coyolxauhqui and argues that even the reformist understandings rendered by Xicana feminist thinkers were still founded from and built upon colonial interpretations of this image. By re-envisioning and re-membering Coyolxauhqui through a Partera/midwifery lens, a new interpretation emerges. Rather than being regarded as the “dis-membered woman” Coyolxauhqui is revered through an Indigenous women’s perspective that honors her as a text about the life-giving force of women.*

Key words: *Coyolxauhqui, Mexica, moon cycle, midwifery, partera, Indigenous women, Xicana, traditional birthing practices, uterus, Xicana feminism, empowerment*

INTRODUCTION

Since 1978, when the stone image of Coyolxauhqui was excavated during the construction of México City's underground public transportation system, multiple interpretations have continued to emerge with sometimes conflicting meanings and analysis. When the Earth was opened, an enormous stone disc depicting a woman was revealed. It was the "re-birth" of this woman, Coyolxauhqui that led to the unearthing of an entire city, now known as el Templo Mayor, in the heart of Mexico-Tenochtitlan. Not only does Coyolxauhqui's emergence and revelation unearth a sacred, ceremonial center, but it gave birth to an entire re-imagining/re-imaging of Xicana¹ feminist ideas and icons. This metaphor of birth and emergence from the earth is appropriate as this article attempts to insert an added, alternative interpretation of Coyolxauhqui, not as the "dismembered woman" commonly inferred, but rather as an empowered woman warrior that is in process of labor and birth. The interpretation presented in this piece re-envision the stone image of Coyolxauhqui as a diagram or guide for understanding the life-giving force of women.

Xicana feminist writers, Cherrie Moraga (1993) and Gloria Anzaldúa (1987) sought solace in the image of Coyolxauhqui as warrior and as the collective Xicana Mother Divinity, but rather than upholding the notion of her as solely the "dis-membered" woman, as many Xicana feminists have asserted, Coyolxauhqui is re-visited and re-membered in this article as whole. She is a woman engaging in cycles of menstruation, reproduction, labor, and birth. Her story and representation as the moon serves as a metaphor for her role and relationship to birth and human reproductive life cycles. Her image represents a birthing text for women to reflect upon during their own reproductive life cycles. The goal of this article is to build upon and augment the ongoing re-constructions of new narratives, spiritual venerations, new artistic renderings (Gaspar de Alba and López 2011), and contribute to what Alicia Gaspar de Alba calls, the "[Un]Framing of the Bad Woman" (2014). The argument made in this article is that Coyolxauhqui was indeed "framed" [dual meaning inserted] through the multiple analyses that sealed her interpretation that she was a victim of patriarchy. The intervention in this article departs not only from early anthropological interpretations of her, but also from the accepted feminist interpretations that followed which continued to perpetuate her image as that of the dis-membered woman, punished for being "bad" or rebellious. The argument in this article is that the interpretations first proposed about Coyoloxauhqui were derived by western²

anthropology and acquired through Spanish colonialist assumptions. Rejecting those early anthropological interpretations, this article proposes a deeper knowing of Coyolxauhqui as the complex, life-affirming, whole-bodied woman who approaches her reproductive life stages with a powerful dance.

The excavation of Coyolxauhqui and el Templo Mayor only reinforces the idea that much of the history of “América”³ still lies below the surface, waiting to emerge (Weatherford 1988). The fact that *danzantes* Mexicas (commonly referred to as Aztec dancers), spiritual runners, and ceremonial people continue to return to these sacred sites and conduct prayers and ceremonies, proves that these physical, ancestral, structural “remains” are far from being “ruins,” but rather are alive, flourishing, and continuing the spiritual and cultural work of ancestors. The continuous and ongoing unearthing and findings of complex cities, ceremonial centers, and intricate artistry in México, and the rest the Americas, represents a critical glimpse of Indigenous⁴ cosmology and world view. While some may interpret the excavation and resulting unearthing of Coyolxauhqui as accidental, other grassroots scholars and Indigenous spiritual teachers interpret it as the inevitable fulfillment of existing prophesies such as the following, stated by Mexica scribe, Cuauhtlequetzqui: “Estaserá nuestra fama: en tanto que dure el mundo, asidurará el renombre, la gloria, de Mexico-Tenochtitlan/“This shall be our fame: As long as the world lasts, so long shall last the renown, the glory of Mexico-Tenochtitlan” (León-Portilla & Shorris 2001; Chimalpahin 1998).⁵ A similar version of this quote is engraved on one of the contemporary museum buildings in El Templo Mayor, prophesying that while the military defeat of Mexico-Tenochtitlan was eminent for the Mexicas, the spiritual war had not been lost; the history and spiritual beliefs would be guarded within the people, and thus, Mexico-Tenochtitlan’s beauty, magnificence, and splendor would never die.

According to Mexica cultural researcher, Maestra Temitzin⁶ (personal interview), events like the 1985 earthquake in México City, while devastating, sometimes have to occur because the Earth’s people require a re-awakening. The Earth has to open herself up to remind humans what exists below the surface. According to Temitzin, following the 1985 earthquake, residents of the affected areas found remnants of codices, sacred pottery and art which had been unearthed. They brought these items to el *Grupo de Zemanauak Tlamachtilyan* (from which she was a member and leader) an emerging organization in the 1980s that created a counter-anthropological, grassroots, intellectual Mexica think-tank which was organizing Indigenous revitalization movements throughout

México City (Mendoza 2007). In other words, the emergence of these sacred items, either due to natural disaster or the building of a subway system, was no accident. Rather, it was a necessary spiritual force that had to transpire to present to its descendants the maps or guides of the past in order to reach one's destiny for the future and fulfill the prophesy that the glory of Mexico-Tenochtitlan would never cease. The prophesies and teachings left through the codices, stone inscriptions, and oral traditions state that the descendants of Mexico-Tenochtitlan, and it could be argued that throughout all of the Americas, would rise again. This "rise" could be interpreted as the emergence and reclaiming of ceremonial objects, cultural revitalization, or the rise of Indigenous-Earth consciousness.

EARLY ACADEMIC/ANTHROPOLOGICAL INTERPRETATIONS OF COYOLXAUHQUI

In the 1930s-40s, Mexican scholars such as Angel Maria Garibay (1940) and his student, Miguel León-Portilla, began to study and produce interpretations and understandings of Mexica documents, Nahuatl language, and preserved knowledge. This devotion to bringing academic attention to Indigenous/Mexica life-ways coincides with the proliferation of the ideology of "La Raza Cosmica," the belief that the "cultura clasica" or classical "Aztec" and "Mayan" culture was equal to that of the Greeks and Romans (Vasconcelos 1925). While Europe continued to hold its culture as significant to the world, centralized around Latin and Greek history, Vasconcelos (1925), Gamio (1942), Garibay (1974), and León-Portilla (1990) argued that México also had its own classical culture and it was that of the "Aztecs" and "Mayans." José Vasconcelos' (1925) argument was that La Raza Cosmica/the Cosmic Race was the place from which México and Latin America should base their cultural and national identity. In the 1930s-40s, the study of "Aztec" and "Mayan" cultures was essential to give México importance in the world. While their work was indeed important, at the same time it can be argued that there was a political ambition that drove them to focus only on "classical cultures" of México (Payás 2004). In many ways, their work contributed to the glorification of Aztec/Mayan cultures of the past, but ignored the racism of Indigenous peoples of the present. In the 1970s, there was an explosion of non-Indigenous scholars (Karttunen and Lockhart 1976; Andrews 1975; Anderson, Berdan, and Lockhart 1976), who continued to build and expand Nahuatl language interpretations of both "classical" documents and mundane, daily life documents. In many ways, these scholars proliferated the notion that the only knowledge that exists about

México's Indigenous "past" is what the Spaniards left (and imposed on Nahua communities) through their careful documentation and written explanations, chronicles and record-keeping, valuing the written word versus oral tradition. Yet, Indigenous peoples, still alive and thriving, continue developing and evolving culturally, artistically, and spiritually, often dispersing this knowledge through oral tradition and practice.

Oral tradition, very much alive within contemporary Indigenous communities, provides accurate interpretations and understandings of spiritual life-ways and Indigenous epistemologies. Many Indigenous languages, still primarily oral, cannot accurately be translated into European languages. Often, ceremonial practices and spiritual teachings can only be transferred through orality and experience. However, oral tradition is often discredited as inaccurate, unreliable, and invalid in the academic arena. The inability for scholars to authenticate, cite, and understand the coded language within oral tradition, often leads them to cast aside important stories and ceremonial practices when in fact they should be at the center. Further, Indigenous peoples are often not perceived as the authority of their own cultural knowledge and therefore are not deemed as "trustworthy" sources. Historic imperialism and the coloniality of being (Maldonado-Torres 2007), or rather the lived experience of colonialism, dehumanizes Indigenous peoples and relegates them as subjects/objects, rather than authors of their own lives.⁷

While the Spanish have undoubtedly influenced Indigenous peoples and pueblos, Indigenous pueblos' living structures, ceremonies, and ways of life have not been ruptured from the historic development of Indigenous civilizations persisting for millennia (Bonfil Batalla 1996). Guillermo Bonfil Batalla in his canonical work, *México Profundo*, argues that México's Indigenous people have been systematically ignored and denied by the "imaginary México" created by those in power, a nationalist identity based on the premise of La Raza Cósmica or an imagined, completed "mestizaje." He calls this, "México Profundo" (profound México) because, although majority sectors of Mexican society do not recognize themselves as being Indian, they still organize their cultural life on the basis of an Indigenous origin. Further, the imagined Mexican nation has "de-indianized" its citizens and has marginalized the living Indigenous peoples and communities in México. Bonfil Batalla affirms the ways in which root "cultures" (and on-going Indigenous cultural production) maintain the undeniable indigeneity of México and its citizens. The main point is that rather than turn to and incorporate autochthonous Indigenous knowledge, which has existed for thousands of years, contemporary scholars continue to build from the body of work

by scholars (predominately non-Indigenous, western Scholars) in the 1930s-40s and 1970s, whose scholarship is built upon colonial chronicles written under the hand and censorship of Spanish friars and soldiers. All subsequent ideas and interpretations begin from this canon of scholarship, even those by Xicana Indígena feminist scholars.

What is known about Coyolxauhqui and the subsequent conventional interpretations of her, come from the chronicles of Fray Bernardino de Sahagún (1970; León-Portilla 2002) in the Florentine Codex (interpreted 1950-1982). Mexica art, filled with metaphor and cosmological relationships, continues to be interpreted by western scholars within the confines of their own contemporary cultural sensibilities, unwilling to expand upon other possibilities. The imagery is often interpreted as “frightening” or wrought with bloodshed and carnage. (Carrasco 1999; León-Portilla 1990) The loaded language used, such as “cannibalism,” “decapitation,” “savage,” and “human sacrifice,” is meant to infer terror and to demonize Indigenous interpretations of the world. While precise Indigenous meanings can only be inferred, stone figures and structures were clearly placed in and around sacred sites to lend context and meaning to their ceremonial architecture and spiritual belief systems. Each piece of imagery cannot be isolated because each is only a part of a larger conception to tell a story and document the history of a people. According to Bernardino de Sahagún, in the Florentine Codex (and subsequent translations and interpretations), he explains the “mythos” or creation story of Coyolxauhqui and her mother Coatlicue. In sum, one day as Coatlicue (a representation of Mother Earth) was sweeping, she found hummingbird feathers, gathered them and placed them in the sash of her belt. As a result, she became pregnant. Coyolxauhqui (a representation of the moon), Coatlicue’s daughter, informed her four hundred brothers (represented as stars) and urged them that they had to kill their mother who was pregnant with Huitzilopotchtli (representation of a hummingbird), a child who would bring warfare to the people. When Coatlicue heard what her children were plotting, she was frightened, but Huitzilopotchtli, from inside her womb, told her not to worry. Coyolxauhqui led her four hundred brothers up the hill of Coatepec. When Coyolxauhqui and her four hundred brothers reached the summit, they immediately killed their mother, Coatlicue. When they cut off her head, blood and serpents oozed from her head and, simultaneously, Huitzilopotchtli was born with his spear and shield in hand. Huitzilopotchtli instantly pierced Coyolxauhqui, slashed off her head, and cut off her limbs. Her body twisted and turned as it fell to the ground below the Coatepec mountain. He then tossed her head into the



Image 2: the Florentine Codex depicting Huitzilopochtli in battle with the brothers in Coatepec.

sky where it became the moon, so that his mother would be comforted in seeing her daughter in the sky every night. Then, Huitzilopochtli took on the four hundred brothers and killed each one of them.

The image from the Florentine Codex might incite one to interpret this story in a literal way, as many western scholars have done, since the colonial era, assuming and asserting that it represented the actual violent nature of the people. However, these images were drawn post-invasion and for the purpose of Fray Bernardino de Sahagún's chronicles. The artistry reflects stronger European aesthetics and sensibilities, as the scribes were drawing to relay information to European chroniclers and their ways of knowing. In actuality, the images depict a visual rendering of a creation story—a cosmology—used to explain the creation of the moon and the battle of night against the rise of the sun/son or day. Spiritual beings such as the Earth, Moon, and Sun are living entities, as real as human flesh, and embody human traits, the same way humans embody traits of the Earth and cosmos. To draw these beings as humans is not unusual because they are alive and part of the sacred family of life. Storytelling or oral tradition is a practice used by Indigenous societies to make lasting evocative meanings in the mind and memory, but most importantly in the heart and emotion of human beings. Through storytelling, this memory survived over the span of generations. Therefore, describing spiritual beings as human entities

and depicting them as such in the codex drawings makes vivid the real feeling of these beings as able to interact and engage with the human world and knowledge.

Nahua ideology, contrary to western European ideology, did not separate science from the spiritual, rather it was one. Each of the natural forces (climate changes, seasonal changes, etc.) was both a scientific force of nature and spiritual phenomenon to be acknowledged. Nahua scientists studied the universe, cosmos, the anatomy and physiology of animals, plants, and human beings. Their scientific work led to the domestication and creation of hundreds of varieties of corn (Pipierno & Flannery 2001), architectural structures perfectly aligned with the cosmos, poly-agricultural systems that changed food consumption for the entire planet, and a complex aqueduct system that transported water and goods to populations that surpassed major European cities at the time of contact (Medina 2014; Weatherford 1988). They developed a lunar calendar, which aligned with the seasonal stages and their agricultural knowledge. However, western European interpretations have de-legitimized Indigenous philosophies by labeling them as “superstitious” or “myth.” Eurocentric theorists have neglected to recognize Indigenous theory coded within oral tradition, the glyphs, carvings, statues, and other sorts of artistry which were used to teach, guide, and advise youth about the world around them. These various artistic tools gave life to societies through the understandings of anatomy, physiology, science, astronomy, food experimentation, architectural design, and sound environmental practices (Martínez 2002).

The large, round, shield-shaped stone, reflecting the story of Coyoxauhqui, was unearthed in 1978 at the base of the stairs of the ceremonial center now known as El Templo Mayor and has come to be known as the image of a “moon goddess.” Identifying Coyolxauhqui as a “goddess” is problematic, as this term and the idea surrounding this term, is based on a western European interpretation. Mexica or Nahua ideology did not “worship” gods, goddesses, nor deities, but rather depicted the natural forces of the universe through art and human interpretation. Arturo Meza Gutiérrez (1987; 1985; various youtube video lectures), a respected teacher of Mexican Indigenous culture in México City, argues that there was no such ideology of polytheism. Rather, in Mesoamerican ideology, the Mexicas (and Indigenous societies throughout the continent) strongly believed and lived by the rule that all things that are part of the earth and universe, and even the smallest element of life must be given respect and acknowledgement of its existence. Thus, balancing and synchronizing each and every

cell that forms life on earth and the universe was the meaning and purpose of spirituality and life itself (Meza Gutiérrez, 1987; 1985). This knowledge presented by Meza Gutierrez is often devalued due to the over-privileging of western science/knowledge as the authority, therefore presenting the notion of polytheism, amongst many other Euro-centric notions, as undisputed false truths. In light of environmental and spiritual chaos in the contemporary world, Indigenous epistemologies and science are now being re-visited and viewed as perhaps being more advanced than previously given credit. Much of the ideas that Meza Gutierrez presents are understandings that existed on a continuum since before European contact, but were shunned and abruptly disrupted by the colonial project in 1492.

The meaning and interpretation of the word “Coyolxauhqui” affirms the idea that she was not viewed a “goddess,” but rather as a visual manifestation of ceremonial experience. Cozkuacuauhtli Huitzilcenteotl (n.d.), in his article, “Coyolxauhqui: A Women’s Revolution,” poses an Indigenous based interpretation of the word Coyolxauhqui. In the Nahuatl language, words are read from right to left, therefore, Huitzilcenteotl translates: “Coyolli + xauh + qui” as: “She who is adorned with rattles/La que se adorna con cascabeles.” Her name has also been translated to mean “face painted with bells,” because of the images of “bells” engraved on her face and cap. A more accurate translation, using contemporary Nahuatl, would be the following: *coyolli* is a type of long, yellow palm leaf that is used in ceremony to create wreaths and bouquets for the altars. *Xahua* means “escarbar” or to dig or to pick. Coyolxauhqui, therefore, is a person who picks the coyoles. She gathers the ceremonial palm flowers and prepares for ceremony. In essence, this article argues that Coyolxauhqui is indeed in preparation for the ceremony of giving birth/life, therefore, she is the one who gathers the ceremonial flowers. Further, as a representation of the moon, which is a metaphor used for the moon cycle/monthly menstrual ceremony, Coyolxauhqui is in preparation for the ceremony of menstruation as well (Cozkuacuauhtli 2011).

While the creation story of Coyolxauhqui is metaphorical and metaphysical, it also has tangible lessons and can serve multiple functions. The image of Coyolxauhqui can be a spiritual figure, a scientific, mathematical figure,⁸ a diagram for cultural understanding, a representation of the cycles of the moon, or an all-encompassing image of the physical experiences of women at different times in her life. The possibilities are infinite, yet for the most part, she continues to be interpreted as a woman “dis-membered” or “decapitated” (Milbrath 1997).

XICANA FEMINIST INTERPRETATIONS

Perhaps the most well-known Xicana Feminist interpretation and re-imagining of Coyolxauhqui comes from Cherríe Moraga's (1993) piece "En Busca de la Fuerza Femenina." She retells the Florentine Codex interpretation in, what she calls, "El Mito Azteca":

Según la leyenda, Coatlicue, 'Madre de los Dioses,' is sweeping on top of the mountain, Coatepec, when she discovers two beautiful feathers. Thinking that later she will place them on her altar, she stuffs them into her apron and continues sweeping. But without noticing, the feathers begin to gestate there next to her womb and Coatlicue, already advanced in age, soon discovers that she is pregnant.

When her daughter, Coyolxauhqui, learns that her mother is about to give birth to Huitzilopchtli, God of War, she is incensed. And, along with her siblings, the Four Hundred Stars, she conspires to kill Coatlicue rather than submit to a world where war would become God.

Huitzilopchtli is warned of this by a hummingbird and vows to defend his mother. At the moment of birth, he murders Coyolxauhqui, cutting off her head and completely dismembering her body.

Breast splits from chest splits from hip splits from thigh from knee from arm and foot. Coyolxauhqui is banished to the darkness and becomes the moon, *la diosade la luna* (1993: 73).

Early Xicana Feminist thinkers and scholars were revisiting the problematic icons endemic in the Chicano Movement era, such as La Malinche, La Llorona, and La Virgen de Guadalupe, all figures whose stories emerge as products of European colonization and patriarchal devastation. Moraga and others (Anzaldúa 1987; Castillo 1994) wanted to reconsider the often passive, virgin/whore images afforded to Chicanas. Moraga and other Xicana artists and thinkers were in search for a female "god" or something to connect them to a spirit that existed before European imperialism forced their way into the spiritual identity of Indigenous peoples. Moraga embraces Coyolxauhqui as an "hija rebelde/rebellious daughter" (1993: 74) and as the "goddess" or woman creator and spiritual manifestation of feminine power. Moraga positions Coyolxauhqui as a new icon of Xicana feminism that acknowledges the ways in which Xicana Indígena women, both individually and as a community, have been "dis-membered." Coyolxauhqui became the symbol of Xicanas who were in process of "re-membering" (multiple meanings: memory,

human reconnection, and becoming whole again as an individual). Moraga states:

She is la fuerza femenina, our attempt to pick up the fragments of our dismembered womanhood and reconstitute ourselves. She is the Chicana writer's words, the Chicana painter's canvas, the Chicana dancer's step. She is motherhood reclaimed and sisterhood honored. She is the female god who we seek in our work, la Mechicana before the 'fall.' (Moraga 1993: 72).

Similarly, Gloria Anzaldúa (1987) uses the images and stories of Nahua female symbols, such as Coatlicue, to construct a new narrative for Chicanas. Her canonical work, *Borderlands/La Frontera*, is a call to “re-member” the body. The U.S.-México border is a metaphor for the continual splitting of land, represented as the body of a woman, or Mother Earth. The barbed-wire fence or physical border rips apart further a wound that refuses to close, and continues to split Mother Earth in multiple, painful ways.

Coyolxauhqui, as a symbol, idea, and icon, ultimately was a catalyst for new evolutions and transformation of Chicana feminist thought. Both Moraga and Anzaldúa promoted that only through the reconstitution of the female body (or that of Mother Earth) could Chicanas seek to heal the wounds of degradation, marginalization, racism, sexism, and heterosexism. Coyolxauhqui served as a metaphor for the historical Indígena/Mestiza body that had been fragmented and was seeking to be whole (Huacuja 2003). Many Chicanas reflected on the pain that Coyolxauhqui experienced—that of being “mutilated” by her brother—as symbolic of the same pain many Chicanas understood living under a system of patriarchy, but more so, having been literally “sacrificed” by their Chicano brothers during the Chicano Movement of the 1960s–70s. Chicana feminists who brought forth their vision of Chicana/o liberation in the 1960s–70s were shunned and labeled as divisive in the movimiento (Blackwell 2011; Roth 2004). Chicana feminist thinkers in the 1980s reflected on the sexism and homophobia of the movimiento, as well as the contributions of Chicana activists to feminist thought (Garcia 1997). Coyolxauhqui, a powerful warrior figure became a reflection of Xicana feminism. Xicana feminists sought to re-member and piece back together Coyolxauhqui's story and in doing so, found her to be a metaphor for piecing back together and re-membering their own lives, stories, and connection to a powerful ancestral past. However, this embodied experience still began from a deficit place of “dismemberment” or being broken in order to arrive to a new introspection and

renewed consciousness. The goal of this article is to re-visit Coyolxauhqui where the “dismemberment” that takes place represents the experience of giving life rather than a result of violence and death, in line with oral tradition, ritual birthing/midwifery, and ceremonial practices. Rather than examine solely the Florentine Codex as interpreted through the anthropological lens, which was the dominant narrative from which all interpretations derive. Derivatives of a dominant narrative are problematic given the strong European and religious influence of the original document. Hence, an Indigenous epistemology and midwifery lens offers a different interpretation of Coyolxauhqui as a birthing image.

Coyolxauhqui's emergence and re-birth from the earth was key to Xicana feminist re-imaginings of Mexica/Indigenous societies. Xicana feminists of the 1980s-90s re-examined the patriarchal ideologies of the Chicano Movement era, as well as mainstream society. They looked toward Coyolxauhqui as the answer to revealing the Xicana feminists' battle against patriarchal society. However, although Xicana feminists were obviously critical of patriarchy, their interpretations of Coyolxauhqui were still based in colonialist epistemes. Xicanas relied on western anthropological (primarily Euro-centric, male) interpretations of her, as a dismembered woman, betrayed by her brother. This has limited the interpretations and has relegated her to *only* infer the “broken woman,” image, and while this interpretation serves to advance the theoretical desires of Xicanas to present a feminist anti-patriarchal rhetoric, it can place limits and surmise a deficit approach to Coyolxauhqui, rather than explore all possibilities and complexities.

AN OLD/NEW INTERPRETATION—A PARTERA'S PERSPECTIVE

Through examining Indigenous epistemologies and autochthonous interpretations of Coyolxauhqui, new understandings can emerge. María Anzures (1991) argues that Coyolxauhqui should not be referred to as a “dis-membered” woman, but instead represents “re-integration” and the union of all cardinal directions and the cycles and rhythm of life. Anzures refers to her as “la Madre de las Manifestacions” or the Mother of all Manifestations of life and balance. Anzures counters the notion that “splitting/breaking apart” can only be due to death and destruction, but actually represents the possibility of new life and the re-creation of one's self.

Maestras Temitzin and Axayacatl⁹ (personal interviews) interpret the image of Coyolxauhqui to be “broken,” not as a symbol of patriarchal

domination, but as a pragmatic symbol of the transition from following a lunar calendrical system to a solar calendrical system. The fact that her stone image was placed on the bottom of the mountain or sacred site, was not because she was lowered in status, but rather because her release to the bottom of the sacred center was a symbolic letting go of the lunar calendrical system. Prior to the founding of Mexico-Tenochtitlan in 1325 AD, previous Nahua alteptl (or Nahua pueblos), ancestral pueblos and peoples of the Mexicas, followed a lunar calendar as the primary system for marking time and agricultural coordination. Chalchihuites (also known as Alta Vista) in the northern state of Zacatecas, which existed between 100-1400 AD, was an alteptl/pueblo of the Western Nahuas known as Caxcanes. Upon visiting this sacred site, much older than Mexico-Tenochtitlan, twenty-eight enormous stone pillars serve as the lunar calendar of the pueblo. Temitzin and Axayacatl offer an alternative, less dramatic interpretation of the stone figure and prefer to connect her image to the documentation of a society moving toward a stronger focus on the complex sun stone/solar calendar.

Other analyses of Coyolxauhqui emphasize her as a representation of duality and the dual nature of all life. Huitzilcenteolt (2010) argues that in pre-invasion legends, the moon has been personified as both male and female. For instance, in Teotihuacan, legend describes the forming of the sun and the moon as Nanahuatzin (a male) who becomes the sun while Tecciztecatl who is also a male becomes the moon. This affirms the Indigenous notion of dual-duality found in all beings. This dual-duality is the understanding that, not only does duality exist with two opposing entities (Mother Earth and Father Sky, sun and moon, water and fire), but also within a single entity. For example, within one human body there is duality (masculine and feminine energy). The same can be said for the Earth, Sky, and every element and/or entity that exists. Further, the creation stories detail the relationships, interactions, and challenges between all these beings and the multiple ways duality can manifest. Metaphorically speaking, Coatlicue—"Mother" Earth gives life to all cosmic diurnal and nocturnal beings, the moon in the creation story of Coyolxauhqui is represented as a female. In this particular creation story, the sun/Huitzilopotchtli is said to fragment his sister and disperse his brothers, thus describing sunrise and the "retreating" of all nocturnal beings: the moon and stars. The fragmentation of Coyolxauhqui can be interpreted as the sun creating a shadow of the moon during its different stages, breaking up the full moon into different quarters during the rotation of the Earth, Sun, and Moon.

Unlike other cosmic beings, the moon is constantly changing (new, first quarter, crescent, full), thus, she/Coyolxauhqui is considered the “eternal dance.” From an Indigenous perspective, each visual phase of the moon is seen as a dance position and each of these has a specific influence on earth. For example, the gravitational attraction between the moon, sun, and earth causes the ocean tides to rise and fall, particularly during new, first-quarter, full and third-quarter moon stages. For instance, if everything in space was still, it would take 27.3 days for the moon to revolve around the earth. But because everything is in motion, including the earth, it takes the moon 29.53 days to complete a full revolution. Furthermore, the average of both moon revolutions (revolving on its own and revolving around the earth) is approximately 28.4 days ($27.3 + 29.53 \div 2 = 28.4$) (Aveni, 2001). This time period is known as a lunation. A lunation is considered to be the process by which the moon has different phases or stages throughout the month. Notably, for centuries Indigenous philosophy has closely tied women to the moon’s lunation, thus, the menstrual cycle is often referred to as “mi luna” (in Spanish) or Moon time.

In order to explain menstrual cycles more thoroughly, one must first understand the science of menstruation. The hypothalamus portion of the brain controls the pituitary output which releases hormones that control a woman’s ovulatory cycle. At the beginning of the menstrual cycle, a releasing hormone from the hypothalamus causes the pituitary to send out a follicle stimulating hormone (FSH). FSH triggers the release of estrogen. Estrogen is a female hormone that causes the endometrium to constrict and shed. Shortly before the midpoint of the ovulatory cycle the hypothalamus releases estrogen which causes the pituitary gland to secrete luteinizing hormone (LH). High levels of estrogen and the release of LH cause the mature egg (ovum) to erupt from a mature (graafian) follicle; this is known as ovulation. (Roulette 2014). At this point, the temporary structure that had surrounded the developing egg undergoes further growth and transformation, becoming the corpus luteum (Tortora & Derrickson 2013). The corpus luteum produces estrogen and progesterone. As the levels of progesterone increase, the uterus and the fallopian tubes contract, and thin transparent cervical mucus secretes which provides bridges for the sperm to travel into the uterus. This sequence of events facilitates intercourse, fertilization, and the implantation of a fertilized egg. If fertilization does not occur, the corpus luteum shrivels and estrogen and progesterone levels start to decrease. After several days, a new menstrual cycle begins again. Low levels of progesterone and estrogen hormones cause the lining of the uterus to thicken and the

nearby arteries to constrict, so that the lining becomes starved for blood. Ultimately the arteries reopen and bleed, causing the top two-thirds of the lining to detach and be shed. The resulting discharge is called a menstrual period (Burns, Lovich, Maxwell, and Shapiro, 2010). As mentioned above, Coyolxauhqui (the moon) will undergo several phases or revolutions during a 29 day cycle. Similarly, women undergo a metamorphosis that takes about 28–29 days. Arguably, women's cycles mirror the duration period of a "Coyolxauhqui revolution." The moon is a woman's personal biological clock.

Similarly to the moon's cycles and phases, a woman's uterus also experiences cycles and phases. As mentioned above, the uterus "builds up" as it releases FSH, estrogen, progesterone, and LH. Similarly, the moon grows or becomes full. Additionally, in an approximately twenty-eight day cycle, the woman's uterus "dismembers" and liberates the precious fertile blood that could have potentially turned into placenta. A woman's uterus is also Coyolxauhqui. Like Coyolxauhqui, a woman's body dances for twenty-eight days (some dance longer, others less). Their dance starts on the first day of menstruation, they dance during pre-ovulation, then ovulation, post ovulation and they start a new dance on their next first day of menstruation once again. The uterus itself is like the moon since it goes through phases. The uterine lining grows until it is full and then it sheds to begin the cycle all over again. Mexica legend holds Coyolxauhqui as being Coatlicue's (Earth Mother's) daughter, and if all humans are also children of Mother Earth, Coyolxauhqui can be viewed like an elder sister who teaches us about our cycles. Although, many Indigenous peoples refer to Coyolxauhqui as Mother Moon or Grandmother Moon, ultimately, women can deduce that they have the honor to personally be connected/related to the moon/Coyolxauhqui and to her dance/danza.

Within the creation story of Coyolxauhqui, there is scientific knowledge being imparted about the reproductive life cycles of women. Maria Anzures (1991) explains that Coyolxauhqui was the daughter of Coatlicue, along with her four hundred brothers, and biological calculations show that a woman has about four hundred menstrual periods in her lifetime (Tortora & Derrickson 2013). Menstruation is orchestrated by the presence of what are labeled "male hormones," thus the "four hundred brothers," could represent each menstrual cycle in a woman's life. Coyolxauhqui plotted to kill her mother who had become pregnant with Huitzilopochtli that resulted from a precious feather at Coatepec, or the sacred "mountain of serpents." If Coyolxauhqui is interpreted as the "moon-time" or menstrual cycle, it could be interpreted that the plot to

end her mother's pregnancy was symbolic of the coming of menstruation. At this sacred mountain, Coyolxauhqui and her brothers cornered their mother, when suddenly, Huitzilopochtli sprung from Coatlicue's womb fully grown and adorned in bright feathers and warrior gear. He cut off Coyolxauhqui's head and "dismembered" her body into a jigsaw puzzle of torso, arms, and legs. Huitzilopochtli then fought his four hundred brothers, chasing and dispersing them toward the south.

In this sacred story or oral tradition, Coatlicue (she of the serpent skirt) is the Earth Mother who gives birth to the moon, stars, and sun. Coyolxauhqui, as the moon, is the nocturnal warrior who, along with her brothers, battles against the arrival of Huitzilopochtli, erroneously labeled, "the God of war." Huitzilopochtli is actually a representation of the sun and his name originates from the Nahuatl word *Huitzilin* which means hummingbird (Anzures 1993). The battle between Coyolxauhqui and Huitzilopochtli represents the opposing forces of night and day. Every morning, the rising sun triumphs over the night; the sun chases away the stars and banishes the moon. At night, however, Coyolxauhqui and the stars reappear and reign once again. Anzures (1991) argues that as bizarre as the story might sound to those unfamiliar with Nahua culture, the above battle is a metaphor for the mechanics of the celestial world. Anzures further points out that Indigenous cultures' use of metaphor is a method used to explain the sacred forces of nature: "It is through this method that we, the children of the Indigenous nations, are educated so as to be able to assimilate forever the history of the sacred" (Anzures 1991: 5). Through the personification of celestial beings, Indigenous cosmologies become relatable, such as the experience of human relations, thus embedding knowledge in the psyche and memory in order for the stories to carry on through oral tradition.

The cyclical battle between day (Huitzilopochtli) and night (Coyolxauhqui) can be better understood when examining the Nahua concept of war, "*atl-tlachinolli*." Composed of *atl* (water) and *tlachinolli* (burned/burning), the expression translates into "water and fire" or "burning water" and it symbolizes a union of opposing forces. Therefore, a "war" between Coyolxauhqui and Huitzilopochtli refers to the confrontation between two distinct elements. These two elements, however, are brother and sister, offspring of the same creator. In this manner, the two forces are integrally connected and the revival of one force is dependent on the surrender of the other. The idea of burning water can be seen when the burning force of lightning/fire combines with the build-up of water vapor or clouds in the air and results in a loud, thunderous

war in the sky. The rumbling storm of water and fire in the sky demonstrate a celestial battle.

Coyolxauhqui and her story serve as a metaphor; the moon is whole and then eventually fragments into pieces. Her fragments or phases represent movement, the passage of time, and the regeneration of energy. Her body is not broken, but rather separated. Her head faces upward, while her opened mouth receives celestial energy. Her arms and legs point to the four cardinal directions and her torso represents the sacred center from where life emerges—the womb. Evidence of her role as a mother who has given birth and nurtured children is illustrated on her breasts, which hang downward and her skin at the waist folds. This is why Coyolxauhqui is many times referred to as our Cosmic Mother, our Mother Moon. The serpent knot around her waist is called the “tlapilli” (or wrap) of maternity and it is a symbol of fertility (the snake regenerates by the shedding of its skin) as well as a representation of the divine duality present in nature: night and day; feminine and masculine; life and death. Additionally, Anzures points out that Coyolxauhqui’s tlapilli connects us to the terrestrial (as the snake slivers and crawls upon the earth) and the celestial world (as the snake is often depicted as a “feathered serpent”—Quetzalcoatl, who is able to touch the sky), offering us the harmony of the universe (Anzures 1991: 12). Coyolxauhqui, our cosmic Mother, is also represented as a sexual being. Her *xila* (vagina) or *xiuhnenetl*, “vagina of fire” or “precious vagina” is visible. In Nahuatl philosophy the vagina is the place from where light emerges. This is where the phase, “darluz,” derives, when a woman gives birth; she is going to give light.

Coyolxauhqui’s shifting position in the sky identifies her as a celestial body that floats, turns, rises, and vanishes. This is why Coyolxauhqui is also known as the “Celestial Dancer.” The cascabeles/bells on her face and wrists rattle and make music as she dances through space. Coyolxauhqui or “she who is adorned with cascabeles or rattles,” has also been interpreted as “the one who makes noise” (Anzures 1991: 20). One Nahuatl word for dance is *chitontequiza* and one translation/interpretation is “to emerge from silence.” The bells on Coyolxauhqui’s image, similar to the ayoyotes used in Danza Mexica, confirm that Coyolxauhqui is indeed dancing and depicts celestial poetry: “she who makes noise emerges from silence.” She emerges from the silence of the night with power and strength. Coyolxauhqui, in her image, is also wearing a dancer’s *copilli* or headdress. This headdress is adorned with a half-moon that represents the flower *cempoalxochitl* or marigold, “the ceremonial flower whose bright yellow color signifies eternal energy” (Anzures

1991: 18). A serpent, symbolic of wisdom and energy, and eagle feathers, symbolic of the most elevated of winged spirits, are visible in her headdress. Coyolxauhqui's body, upon close examination, is in a danza position of reverence. With a little imagination one can visualize her celestial movements as part of a rhythmic dance that she performs night after night.

The image of Coyolxauhqui illustrates that she has given birth, she changes, she dances, and she bleeds. Anzures (1991) points out that the symbol of blood is evident on her right side, emerging from her arm socket and two legs. This blood is called *chalchihuitl*, precious liquid, and it flows from her as an offering. In Nahuatl culture, it is believed that blood is activated by the sun and that the circulation of blood elevates us to higher levels of "consciousness." Danza movements and energy help create blood circulation. Blood is also a human life force, the most precious fluid contained inside the human body. The sight of blood could mean life, but it can also mean death, therefore the color red, used as a sacred color in Mexica (and many Indigenous) nations for ceremonial purposes, represents this ultimate duality. Eurocentric bias and perception have erroneously categorized all Indigenous bleeding rituals as "human sacrifice." Anzures (1991) points out that this is not true. The piercing of one's self, or *Yzonin*, was a ceremonial offering as a means to regenerate blood. The offering of that vital fluid to the Creator-*Ometeotl* was of the highest honor. This blood offering ceremony is still practiced amongst many Indigenous peoples in ceremonies such as the Sundance. Historically, only men would Sundance and make flesh/blood and dance offerings during the yearly ceremony because women made this offering once a month. The Sundance brought equilibrium between men and women; the men dancing for four days with no food or water, under the summer sun, allowed them to connect to women who made the ultimate sacrifice—flesh/blood offering and dance (labor)—during childbirth.

As noted above, it is evident that Coyolxauhqui has a strong connection to women's menstrual cycles. This bleeding cycle is governed by the movements of the Cosmic Mother Moon, and in the same way that her lunar body breaks, a woman's uterus experiences a "dismemberment" once a month. The uterine blood lining dismembers itself and sheds. In this dismemberment, women bleed and shed vital fluid in order to regenerate themselves. The dismemberment however is not violent, but ceremonial; it is more of a releasing.

Coyolxauhqui, in addition to teaching about the menstrual cycle and the cycle of night and day, also teaches about the ritual of birthing mothers. The powerful body of a birthing mother prepares itself for

labor in three phases. As Anzures (1991) explains, Coyolxauhqui shifts her position in the sky and can be viewed as a celestial body that floats, turns, rises, and vanishes. In the case of a birthing mother, the phases of labor and shifting positions during labor are divided over the span of three phases: early labor, active labor, and transition labor. During each labor phase, the birthing mother floats, turns, rises, and vanishes as she brings out her creation to finally meet a new world. In early labor, the body starts to release chemicals such as oxytocin which start contractions. The intensity levels of each contraction is necessary as each stimulates the sacrum, cervix, vagina walls, labia majora, minora, organs, skin, and the body itself to stretch and become thin as each contraction rises in potency. Early labor is the longest phase of labor and many birthing mothers say is the most difficult and painful. This phase is the start of Coyolxauhqui being dismembered by her “brother/sister-assistants” such as: oxytocin, progesterone, estrogen, and many chemicals. These hormones and chemicals allow a women warrior to engage in this “fight for life” and bring out her power of birthing when a woman brings a new light into the world.¹⁰

The various and necessary changes in the laboring body of a birthing mother suggest that a mother dances with each contraction as she courageously endures the various battles of labor and delivery phases. During the first battle, the warrior mother starts to feel small contractions (dancing) that allow her to joke around and talk about the desire to finally meet her baby. As the contractions intensify, the warrior woman starts to move (dance) from side to side as her pelvis and sacrum stretch. The intensity of the contractions starts to increase as her cervix starts to soften and loosen its thickness. As this painful, but magnificent event occurs, the woman warrior’s humor starts to decrease. She continues to rock or move around the room or bed as the intensity of each contraction increases. Each contraction is stronger and longer and the mother warrior keeps moving (dancing) as she puts her hands on her waist. She increases the pressure to see if that lowers the intensity of the contraction, which helps her deal with the pain that her sacrum and pelvis are experiencing. The mother warrior’s desire to meet her baby turns into desperation, fear, nervousness, exhaustion, and irritation. Her tired and worn-out body experiences this strenuous battle against life and death as the moment of birthing gets closer to the end.

During early labor, the warrior mother must experience many changes in her body as it will allow for the next stage of labor to begin. During this first battle, the baby’s head will come down into the pelvis while the cervix will become softer, move to the front of the vagina,

and will thin out. The cervix will open from 0-3 centimeters, which is known as dilation. The battle can last anywhere from a few hours to a few days. This is why all women are remarkably strong warriors regardless of how long or how fast they move onto the next stage. Each warrior and pregnancy is unique and special in the way that labor progresses; truly all birthing mothers are courageous warriors in their own individual way. During early labor the contractions are usually far apart, irregular, or very short. During this battle, some birthing mothers may release a mucous discharge with blood. This is a normal sign that the body uses to tell the birthing mother that her cervix is preparing itself for a different phase or battle. For this reason, during the first phase the mother must take good care of herself. During this phase, women should rest, eat, and drink lots of water as she prepares her body to be strong and be able to cope with active labor more easily.

During active labor, the warrior mother continues to battle with each contraction as their intensity increases along with the dilation of her cervix. During the process of labor, a midwife, doula, or assistant can feel the tremendous energy that the mother warrior and the new human being are releasing into the universe, into that room or place where this labor is occurring. The mother warrior's dance increases with intensity as her contractions approach their highest peak. During active labor, the contractions are longer, stronger and closer together. For instance, the birthing mother gets three contractions within ten minutes. As the dilation of the cervix increases to four centimeters, so do the length of the contractions. Usually contractions that last more than 1½ -2 minutes and are less than five minutes apart, are signals that the warrior mother is entering the last phase, known as the "transition" phase (Cunningham, Leveno, Bloom, Spong, & Dashe, 2014).

During this "transition" phase, the contractions turn into a surreal and spiritual event that can only be experienced by a birthing warrior. Birthing mothers, at this time, show the world that their body is capable of contractions that make them float in a surreal, powerful, but painful experience necessary for the cervix to dilate from seven centimeters to ten centimeters. This last phase is the battle between life and death that is accompanied by nausea, vomiting, tremors, gas, and pressure in a birthing warrior's rectum. In this last phase, a mother relinquishes all modesty and is un-phased by the presence of others, which she demonstrates by doing whatever she needs to do to survive each moment. Her concentration and focus is unbreakable and often times it appears that she is literally "in transition" or in a transcendental state. The mother warrior floats and elevates as each contraction intensifies. She dances with pain, moves from

side to side, and her head starts to look down at the floor. Her gaze looks upward as she stares into the universe, her temperature rises, she gets red, and she sweats. The separation of her pelvis bones, sacrum, tendons, ligaments, veins, muscles, skin marks the complete dilation of her cervix that is unbearable. She looks out into the universe and her last contractions elevate to their highest peak—it is time to push baby out. As the warrior mother's head is pulling back, she may open her mouth and moan, the body starts to relax, her temperature starts to decrease, her moan transforms, and her pain is on its way out. The pain in the mother warrior's face is pushing her shoulders to contract as her body tries to bear all this surreal experience. The emergence of life out of a mother's womb marks a time of ceremony.

The stone carving of Coyolxauhqui depicts her in a danza position of reverence, looking upwards toward the universe. Coyolxauhqui and mothers-to-be are warriors that proclaim, "I am strong, but at the same time I am fighting this tough fight that makes my body feel as if I am being dismembered, and coming apart." As such, her cervix, her muscles, veins, sacrum, ligaments, skin are expanding and thinning so that the beautiful and powerful danzante can finally meet her creation.

CONCLUSION

Through examining Coyolxauhqui's image, one can conclude that she is a symbolic book of wisdom that relates to and explicitly shows the tremendous work a woman warrior has to endure in order to birth her human creation. Our hope as authors is that through the new perspectives offered in this article, readers will re-examine the stone image of Coyolxauhqui as a living document, a text, or a book of wisdom left by ancestors to communicate to the contemporary generation multiple messages and lessons. Coyolxauhqui's image is one of empowerment tied to a deep understanding of humanity and duality. Her image has the potential to teach younger woman and girls that having children is not easy; rather it is an experience that could be compared to a battle for one's own life and of the life of another being. Like Coyolxauhqui, a woman's body opens up in ways unknowable and reveals a strength and power that women may not even know they possess. Human survival depends on women enduring this process and ceremony of birth.

Re-memembering Coyolxauhqui as a birthing diagram, a menstrual cycle-lunar calendar, and as a guide for women in labor ultimately intervenes in the narrative that has dominated Xicana feminist thinking. Through re-examining oral traditions, birthing/partera rituals, and

ceremonial practices, new meanings emerge that begin from a place of life rather than death. The value of Xicana Indígena feminist scholarship that has centered on Coyolxauhqui is not discounted, but rather pushed to deeper levels of examination. The Indigenous knowledge that was available to Xicana Indígena feminist scholars, albeit from western anthropological paradigms, still served to open a door for others to begin to re-connect to Indigenous consciousness. Those early interpretations inspired others to dig deeper and to engage more closely with Indigenous epistemologies and spiritual sensibilities. This article aims to create new perspectives about Coyolxauhqui and give us the opportunity to reflect upon her as more than a symbol or icon, but as a living text. This stone text is intimately connected to the human experience today and shows that Coyolxauhqui continues to be our teacher.

NOTES

¹ Xicana/o, with an “X,” refers to more contemporary reclamations of the term as an identifier with Indigenous identity and sensibilities. The spelling of “Chicana/o” with “Ch” will be used when referring to the Chicana/o Renaissance Era of the 1960s-70s.

² While obvious contention to the term “western” can be discussed at length, for the purpose of this paper, in some cases it is used to refer to academic scholars/scholarship that looked toward western Europe as the center of knowledge and epitome of culture. The cultural dominance of “the west” remained(s) a powerful force in the United States and within U.S. institutions of higher education. In this paper, the term “western” is also used to refer to the cardinal directions, for example: the western hemisphere and western Nahuas. In this latter case, “western” is used to identify a geographical location. These dual uses are not to be confused nor interchanged.

³ “América” refers to a continent and also refers to what Cherrie Moraga (1993) calls, “América, con acento.”

⁴ This will be the term used to identify original peoples of the Western Hemisphere. As Linda Tuhiwai Smith explains in her book, *Decolonizing Methodologies*, “the word Indigenous is a way of including the many diverse communities, language groups, and nations, each with their own identification within a single grouping. . . ‘Indigenous peoples’ is a relatively recent term which emerged in the 1970s out of the struggles primarily of the American Indian Movement (AIM), and the Canadian Indian Brotherhood. It is a term that internationalizes the experiences, the issues and the struggles of some of the world’s colonized peoples” (1999: 6-7).

⁵ This quote can also be found in classical Nahuatl as: “In quexquichcauh maniz cemanahuatl, ayc pollihuiz yn itenyo yn itauhcain Mexico-Tenochtitlan” (Francisco de San Antón Stump 1991). This quote has been re-translated from Nahuatl in multiple ways (Gómez-Cano 2011).

⁶ Maestra Temitzin is a grassroots researcher, Mexica activist, and was a member, investigator, and leader of the Grupo de Zemanauak Tlamachtilyan in México City in the 1980s. The research component of the aforementioned umbrella organization was called Cetiliztli Nauhcampa. She is a teacher of the Nahuatl Language and much of her research on Mexica culture, from this time period, has been published and distributed through photo-copied pamphlets sold in the Zocalo plaza.

⁷ Much of early Native American Studies scholarship was based on the fundamental desire to gather all the literature ever written about individual and generalized communities in order to reflect, respond, de-bunk, contest, and redress all previous documented knowledge about Native peoples. This is still an important project of many communities today.

⁸ Centuries before the invasion of Europeans, Indigenous scientists discovered that the shape of the earth was ellipsoidal. This discovery is depicted on the oval shape of Coyolxauhqui. According to Aguilera García and Nicholson (1997), Coyolxauhqui is an oval shape stone and Maria Anzures (1991) argues that the blood of Coyolxauhqui represents the earth. The earth's shape, according to the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), is ellipsoidal (National Research Council of the National Academe 2009). Coyolxauhqui is an example of petroglyph techniques that Indigenous societies used as a form of scientific writing.

⁹ Axayacatl, the sister of Temitzin was also a member of the Grupo de Zemanauak Tlamachtilyan. She was the Maestra/leader of the Danza Grupo Mazatl, which was also under the umbrella of Zemanauak from the 1980s-1990s.

¹⁰ These hormones represent the power of the woman. The chemicals mentioned cause contractions. Contractions are created by a compound of chemicals, as such, they are referred to as her "sibling assistants," because without them, there would be no contractions; if there are no contractions, there is no labor.

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