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2021

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Recommended Citation

McGeeney, Kayleigh; O'Sullivan, Arthur; and Schull, Joshua, "The Role of “Love Goddesses” and What They Reveal About Women in Different Cultures" (2021). *Research Days Posters 2021*. 61.

https://orb.binghamton.edu/research_days_posters_2021/61

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The Role Of “Love Goddesses” And What They Reveal About Women In Different Cultures

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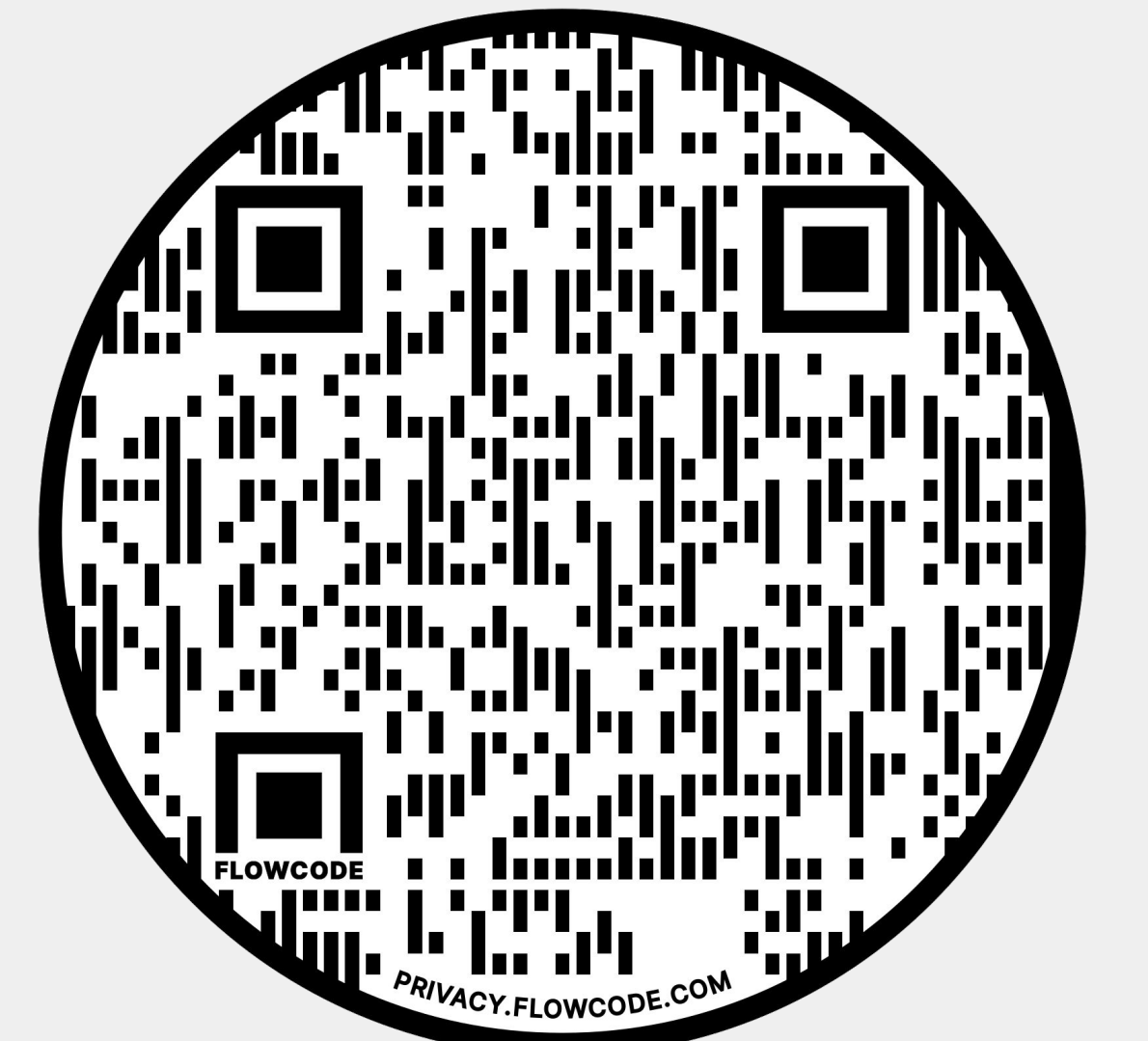
Introduction

Many cultures make fundamental claims about women and their role in society. These claims are often derived from a given culture’s mythology, specifically myths that center around love. With this in mind, we conducted a literature review to answer the following question:

How does the mythology surrounding “love goddesses” influence the societal roles of women?

For our literature review, we studied cultures around the world, investigating the myths surrounding deities, overwhelmingly goddesses, associated with “love,” and observed how these mythological ideals are reflected in their respective societies. “Love,” in this case, refers to romantic and sexual love, “eros” in Greek. We consulted existing primary sources to understand the symbolism and characteristics of our “love goddesses.” We likewise consulted studies about the role of women in the societies, and the cultural ideals surrounding “femininity.” For each society, we compared the degree to which societal perceptions of their love goddess were similar to societal perceptions of women, as well as other factors that influence cultural claims about the essential nature and role of women.

Bibliography and Credits



Ishtar/Inanna

- ❖ Mesopotamia
- ❖ c. 4000 BCE - c. 400 CE
- ❖ Goddess of Sex, Fertility, and War

Hathor

- ❖ Egyptian
- ❖ c. 3000 BCE - c. 30 BCE
- ❖ Goddess of the Sky, Motherhood, and Fertility

Aphrodite/Venus

- ❖ Greco-Roman
- ❖ c. 3000 BCE - c. 320 CE
- ❖ Goddess of Sexuality and Beauty

Rati

- ❖ Indian/Hindu
- ❖ c. 2000 BCE - Present
- ❖ Goddess of Carnal desire, Lust, and Sexual pleasure

Oshun

- ❖ Yoruba
- ❖ c. 1000 BCE - Present
- ❖ Goddess of the Oşun River and its associated fertility

Freyja/Frigg

- ❖ Norse
- ❖ c. 800 CE - c. 1000 CE
- ❖ Goddess of Magic, Gold, Beauty, Fertility, and War

Xochipilli and Xochiquetzal

- ❖ Nahuatl Aztec
- ❖ 1428 CE-1521 CE
- ❖ Ambiguous gods of Fertility and Flowers

Discussion

First, our literature review showed that the mythologies surrounding “love goddesses” are often tied to the natural world that surrounds their respective culture, and their mythology reflects the role of women in unique and complex ways. It is principal to note that although these goddesses play similar roles, there is no shared common origin between these goddesses nor in their relationship with love and women. Although that does not mean that some do not goddesses influence others. All in all, “love goddesses” are what their society bases their ideas on women. In their early stages, “love goddesses” were powerful, fierce, passionate, and seductive. However, as time moves on, “love goddesses” became less fierce, although when wronged, the guilty individuals would still incur these women’s wrath. This lessening of fierceness directly correlates to the women’s roles in these goddesses’ contemporary societies. As time progressed, women’s roles became more subservient and to be a woman was something to be of shame. Nonetheless, there are outliers such as the goddess Freyja and Norse society or Xochipilli/Xochiquetzal and Aztec society.

One of the most common issues prevalent during this research is how little data there were on the goddesses in general—especially non-western and non-Mediterranean geographic areas. If further research is conducted, it is suggested to do a similar study on different goddess archetypes such as the mother goddess. A second possible study is analyzing one of these goddesses and how they change throughout the ages and into the modern age.