

Book Review

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Jung and the Native American Moon Cycles: rhythms of influence

by Michael Owen. Nicolas-Hays Inc., United States, 2002.

Michael Owen is a Jungian psychotherapist who began his life and work in Canada and now practices in New Zealand. The inspiration for this book came primarily from the author's experience with the wisdom of the Peoples of Turtle Island (North, South and Central America). He proposes that these traditions and those of analytical psychology balance and enhance each other.

The first section of the book is an explanation of the Moon Cycles, which are based on the lunar measurement of time over the life of any individual. The Medicine Wheel provides a means of understanding, charting and interpreting the influences of these cycles. At any time different influences are present and the perspective of a person shifts as they mature. Owen guides us through the Moon Cycle stages and relates them to the archetypal concepts of Jungian psychology. He shows how they might provide insights and meaning to the soul's journey and the individuation process. Using this system each of us is a child until 27, an adolescent until 54, an adult until 81 and an elder thereafter. The Moon Cycles are little or big and span all directions; we travel through each moon for a specific purpose at different times.

It is easy to understand how Owen was drawn to examining Jung's life with particular reference to the rhythms of the Moon Cycles. He has created a fascinating portrait of Jung's life with regard to these influences. In the main body of the work he explores events and dreams and links them to Jung's writings in a way that adds another layer of understanding to the concepts which he developed, particularly with regard to the symbolic. There is reference to the wider world and the themes which were alive and influential at different times, with some speculation on how we might conceptualise history from a Moon Cycle perspective.

As a biography of Jung this work demands that the reader be involved with the twin worlds of the Native traditions and Jung's language of the unconscious. As an exploration of the ability of the Medicine Wheel to enhance and

challenge our relationship with the development of the self there may be some appeal. There is no reference to how the traditions of the People of Turtle Island might fit with traditional Maori wisdom. Instead, Owen invites the reader to regard the teachings as having their own distinct identity and heritage and to resist the temptation to 'look for similar elements across cultures and recombine them into a one-size-fits-all "core shamanism".'

In conclusion this is carefully researched study of ancient wisdom and biographical detail lovingly interwoven together. Detailed instructions for charting our own Moon Cycles are included at the end of the book. There is encouragement for the reader to reflect and wonder.