

Introduction

Joan Marler

This first issue of this online *Journal* is dedicated to Lithuanian-American archaeologist Marija Gimbutas who conceptualized the interdisciplinary approach to scholarship which she named “archaeomythology.” Her basic assumption was that it is possible for certain archaic cultural patterns to continue as substratum elements into later cultural periods which can be identified and studied as layers of living stratigraphy. The first three articles in this issue provide examples of investigations into such ancient continuity.

Bulgarian folklorists Anna Ilieva and Anna Shtarbanova discuss zoomorphic elements preserved in Bulgarian women's ritual dances—the snake, bee, butterfly and frog—which correspond directly to Old European symbolism as described by Marija Gimbutas. As they point out, the ritual dances carry “a message from antiquity” containing knowledge of a mythological worldview, passed down through the active participation of many generations of village people. While recognizing that traditional dance functions as a living organism containing layers of cultural influences, they focus here on the most archaic level preserved in Bulgarian women’s rituality.

Romanian linguist Adrian Poruciuc explores the reoccurring image of the *dolf*, a “weird apparition” that appears in ancient Romanian ritual songs. The *dolf*, which remains etymologically obscure, represents the most archaic and conservative level of Romanian folklore. Using linguistic analysis, Poruciuc draws connections to Paleobalkan influences, even with “some of the earliest manifestations

of Eurasian religion.”

Indo-Europeanist Miriam Robbins Dexter, who earned her doctorate at UCLA under the tutelage of Marija Gimbutas, discusses evidence for Irish matrilineal traditions as exemplified by the goddesses and heroines in the *Táin*. The existence of matriliney is reflected by such features as the *avunculate*; the bestowal of sovereignty through the female line; women’s inheritance; and their autonomous sexual status which was not subjected to a usual double standard. Dexter argues that patterns of matriliney and female sovereignty were not generated from an exclusively patrilineal context but are evidence of strong continuity originating from an older non-Indo-European matrix.

The issue concludes with two articles that comment on the scholarship of Marija Gimbutas. The late **Edgar C. Polomé**, who co-founded the *Journal of Indo-European Studies* with Marija Gimbutas and Roger Pearson, writes about her significant contribution to Indo-European studies. Historian of Religion, **Naomi R. Goldenberg**, from the University of Ottawa, Ontario, Canada, inquires into the wholesale dismissal of Gimbutas’ work by some of her colleagues that has continued to the present day.

Most of the articles in this premier issue were first published in the festschrift, *From the Realm of the Ancestors: An Anthology in Honor of Marija Gimbutas* (1997), edited by Joan Marler (now out of print). These articles are offered here in appreciation for Marija Gimbutas’ gift of Archaeomythology.