



Introduction to Marija Gimbutas' Centennial Year

The Lithuanian-American archaeologist Marija Gimbutas was born on January 23, 1921 in Vilnius, the ancient capital of Lithuania. She is honored by UNESCO during this, her centennial year, as one of the “eminent personalities who have helped shape the civilization we share by contributing to the mutual enrichment of cultures for universal understanding and peace.” This Spring 2021 issue of the *Journal of Archaeomythology* is dedicated to Marija Gimbutas whose interdisciplinary practice of archaeomythology inspired the creation of our international organization, The Institute of Archaeomythology.

Ten authors from Britain, Finland, Germany, Italy, and the United States have contributed articles for this volume inspired by Marija Gimbutas. An offering by the artist, prehistorian Michael Dames contains this sentiment: “Working beyond the confines of positivistic instrumentalism, she showed that silent pots and figurines are able to transmit an eloquent poetry by means of a visual language, combining pattern, sign and metaphor . . .” The German linguist/cultural historian Harald Haarmann and Joan Marler wrote “Marija Gimbutas – A Visionary’s Legacy” to acknowledge specific gifts from her life-long scholarship and to discuss some of the ways Gimbutas’ interdisciplinary research on the civilization of Old Europe challenges outdated assumptions about early civilizations while inspiring new scholarship now and into the future.

Miriam Robbins Dexter begins her article about “The Roots of Indo-European Patriarchy” by discussing her doctoral studies with Professor Gimbutas at UCLA who encouraged her dedication as an Indo-European linguist and interdisciplinary scholar. It was Dexter who completed Gimbutas’ final manuscript, published posthumously as *The Living Goddesses*. The prolific novelist, poet, and screenwriter, Mary Mackey, wrote four popular novels directly inspired by Gimbutas’ scholarship. Mackey penned “Marija Gimbutas as Muse” to express her profound appreciation for this

extraordinary Lithuanian-American scholar who launched her onto a thirty year writing project directly inspired by *The Civilization of the Goddess*.

“An Ancient Festival Embraces a Modern Miracle,” by the feminist scholar Vicki Noble, describes three contemporary spring festivals celebrated in the mountain villages of Abruzzo, Italy, that demonstrate the practice of beliefs and rituals continued from ancient times. A similar continuity is described by Joan M. Cichon in her article, “Understanding Bronze Age Crete through the Lens of Marija Gimbutas, Old Europe, and Archaeomythology.” Cichon applies her doctoral work in philosophy and religion to a discussion of the primacy of the Goddess, the central role of women in society, a high level of artistry, and the prevalence of peace that Gimbutas described as a continuity of Old European patterns. Susan G. Carter, professor of philosophy and religion at CIIS in San Francisco, presents “An Archaeomythological Consideration of Matrilineal Culture Applied to Ancient Japan.” She discusses the Jomon period (ca. 13,600–900 BCE) to examine the possible existence of a matrilineal culture, as defined by Gimbutas, that could have engendered a strong and enduring female deity such as *Amaterasu-o-mi-kami*, the Japanese Sun Goddess.

The Italian researcher, writer and translator Luciana Percovich discusses the research of Momolina Marconi whose linguistic, mythological, and pre-Hellenic research highlights the powerful figure of the Mediterranean Potnia, the untamed Lady of the Wild, the generative source of all other Italian goddesses. Percovich compares Marconi and Gimbutas as two great women of the twentieth century. The celebrated author and teacher, Starr Goode, concludes volume 10 with her article, “The Icon of the Vulva, A Basis of Civilization.” Her lavishly illustrated article celebrates images of the vulva as expressions of the ancient origins of art, spirituality and civilization. She, too, honors Marija Gimbutas during and beyond her centennial year.