

Goddess in the Sky: The Archaeomythology of Marija Gimbutas and the Astrological Language of Neolithic Old Europe

**Editor's note: This paper was submitted to the Goddess of Prehistory: An Archaeomythology course taught by Dr. Mara Keller and Joan Marler at the California Institute of Integral Studies.*

Marija Gimbutas taught that a viable interpretation of prehistory requires an interdisciplinary focus, but the discipline of astrology has yet to be seriously entertained with respect to the mentality and spirituality of the Neolithic peoples of Old Europe.

Granted, astrology is a curious topic at best for western scholars today, due to its contemporary alienation from western science and religion. Routinely disparaged as unscientific, astrology's ancient natural laws—essentially religious laws—attest to principles such as the indivisibility of matter and spirit, of time and space, of consciousness and the void of absolute emptiness, and laws such as these, being inconceivable, flatly contradict the kinds of tidy dualistic philosophical assumptions which have long sustained the overall trajectory of eurocentric scientific method. Therefore, since the controls of repetitive laboratory experiments cannot "prove" the aforementioned first principles of astrology-or any of its other truths, for that matter-only its mechanistic aspect, the field of astronomy, has found a safe home within the modern era of the eurocentric university.

Astrology is also an odd topic for Western scholars today because the Abrahamic male monotheistic religions, which include Judaism and Christianity, do not award religious status to the discipline. Catholicism, in particular, has even had the habit of proclaiming astrology as demonic, or even the work of the devil. A confusing situation indeed, given that the Vatican library - arguably the dominant intellectual citadel of Western religion, owing to its historic alliance with the Roman Empire and subsequent European royal bloodlines - is stuffed with secret troves of astrological texts written in Egyptian hieroglyphics, Greek, Latin, and Arabic. Indeed, one can barely approach Roman Catholicism without being hypnotized by the intricate layers of astrological symbolism hidden within its visual art, rituals, sacred calendar, scriptures, and architecture. At any rate, for various philosophical and religious reasons, astrology has been mysteriously stripped from the western academic canon, a regrettable state of affairs that helps to explain why astrology has yet to be seriously entertained with respect to the mentality and spirituality of the Neolithic peoples of Old Europe.

The loss is ours, but fortunately, remedial work is always an option. In order to begin to contend with this state of affairs, admittedly on a tremendously superficial level, the introductory remarks of this paper will concern: 1) Astrology and the history of religion; 2) Neolithic figurines and rituals, compared to the constellations and astrology; and 3) Neolithic animal symbolism, with reference to astrological shamanism.

Astrology and the history of Religion

To begin with, the history of astrology is simply inseparable from the history of science, whether Western or Asian, and whether in terms of the evolution of mathematics, navigation, astronomy, or medicine. But even more importantly, with respect to the puzzle of Neolithic mentality, religions around the world have seemingly always lived in the most intimate of marriages with various schools of astrology.

As long as history speaks, disciplined spiritual leaders - indeed, the religious elite of virtually every non-Abrahamic culture - have seen fit to carefully attune to the vocabulary of the heavens. For thousands of years, highly refined and discriminating teachers, whether Hindus and Buddhists, or priests and priestesses from ancient Egypt and Mesopotamia, or those from the world's other shamanic and indigenous traditions, for example, from Siberia and Peru, or mystics from non-orthodox strains of Abrahamic Judaism, Christianity and Islam, all these and many more have observed the ways in which the planets of our solar system drift in time and space within an uncanny context: an abstract, yet practical rapport with the stars and with Earth. Observing the ways in which the bodies of our solar system align with the celestial backdrop of stars, these teachers have exhaustively correlated such alignments with the sensitive panoply of interrelationships between elements such as earth, water, fire, air, as well as minerals, plants, animals, humans, and events on Earth. While comparing, codifying, recording, and refining the human reception of these alignments and interrelationships, they have witnessed fabulous spectrums of resonance between Earth and sky, as though precise frequencies of intelligence are inexplicably shared between terrestrial and celestial worlds, all in the midst of clearly delineated, highly predictable rhythms: the temporal and spatial cycles of birth, growth, maturity, death, dissolution, and regeneration. Therefore, although the vast majority of western scholars today display a breathtaking ignorance of global astrological traditions, the fact remains that the majority of cultures - those of which we have any record, that is - have carefully trained religious leaders to accurately receive and transmit the language and consciousness of the sky. In so doing, our species has been encouraged to solidly center itself within the cosmic framework of an ongoing miracle: earth and sky, existing in an indissoluble union, are essentially indistinguishable from one another. Western science now admits that the vast expanses of galactic structures are literally realms echoed on the subatomic level of the human body, but the unfathomable wonder of this ceaseless union was long ago enshrined with simple elegance in an irrepressible Western philosophical dictum, one found in archaic, classical, Medieval and Renaissance hermetic texts: *As above, so below*. Upon reflection, astrology's alienation from western science and religion is seemingly inexplicable, given that astrological practice amounts to a scientific proof of an inconceivable orderliness, the imponderable details of which are best contemplated as divine.

At any rate, it stands to reason that in common with world's other religious traditions, whether shamanic,

indigenous, or organized, the ceremonial life of the Neolithic peoples of Old Europe may also have involved an astrological consciousness. Perhaps, if western academia's ignorance of global astrological traditions comes to be corrected during the decades to come, pioneering archaeological scholars will come to assume that this was the case—rather than to assume the contrary—and the Old Europeans will come to be appreciated, like so many other peoples, as ferociously intelligent cultures who deeply perceived, recorded, tested, refined and celebrated the subtleties of natural laws linking heaven and earth over millennia, in terms of the cyclical alignments of stars and planets, and their rhythmic affinities with the natural laws at play amidst the spectacular array of elements, minerals, plants, animals, humans, and events on Earth.

Neolithic figurines and rituals, and the constellations today

This general theory with respect to Old European Neolithic mentality and spirituality gains conspicuous support from the fact that the names and images of the constellations covering the bowl of the northern hemisphere largely correspond, whether in physical or symbolic terms, to the epiphanies of Goddess that Marija Gimbutas excavated, catalogued and interpreted in her voluminous and reverent scientific writings. In other words, quite remarkably, Gimbutas's reflections upon precious clay pieces of Neolithic ceremonial pottery, whether animals, humans, plants, or symbols, may be instantly appreciated by students of the sky as efficient signals for heavenly asterisms. As an aside, the exquisite, repetitive signs of Old Europe, such as spirals, meanders, and chevrons, may include ways of denoting the astrological elements, celebrated across cultures, such as earth, water, fire, air, wind, ether, spirit.

In further support of this theory, Gimbutas taught that Old Europeans reenacted rituals with these figurines, and in these passages of her work, mention is repeatedly made, however inadvertently, to the spatial and temporal language of astrology. For example, she taught that the myriad figurines contained an abstract sacred vocabulary; that they were ceremonial implements utilized in seasonal rituals intimately related to the annual solar cycles of agriculture and the authoritative role of the female therein; and that these rituals—which included the sacrosanct event of birth—took place within temple precincts oriented to the spatial coordinates of the four directions and the temporal coordinates of the equinoxes and solstices. Interestingly, this overall portrait of Old European ritual clearly articulates the alpha and omega of astrology's primordial, yet perennial, landscape of language and consciousness, namely, the spatial and temporal coordinates of annual solar cycles of agriculture, and the monthly lunar cycles of the female role in human reproduction.

Therefore, in my own mind's eye, any number of the 100,000 Neolithic figurines excavated to date may have once been ceremonially utilized as hand-held clay codes for specific constellations featured at seasonal ritual times of the solar year or lunar month, figurines perhaps filled with oil or beeswax, then lit and held aloft to the tunes of chants, songs, and dances, as delicate yet fiery mirrors of the stars.

Goddess, animal, and human female fusions: signs of astrological shamanism

Moreover, Gimbutas refers regularly to the central role played by animal symbolism in Old European religion, and specifically, to the remarkable extent to which animal and female forms, as extensions or manifestations of Goddess, were creatively fused in figurines, masks and other works of art. To the layperson, this salient feature of Neolithic religion may seem totally unrelated to the sky. Yet to an astrological priestess such as myself, this is the purest portrayal of astrological dimensionality found in Gimbutas's work, since the Old European ceramic fusions of Goddess, female animal, and woman easily symbolize the triangulating system of navigation that I utilize to pace the void of heaven.

For example, I begin by summoning the deity known as Artemis, she who is Goddess in her emanation as Bear. When this current is firmly established, I contemplate the natural laws surrounding the lives of bears on Earth, asking respectfully for direct assistance from the spirit of female bear herself. Thirdly, I reflect upon the individual and collective powers of female human beings, especially in terms of our affinities with female bears. Then, once the triangular circuit between Goddess, female animal, and woman has been firmly established in meditation, I am finally free to pace the void, focusing the inner eye upon the distant stars long named for bears. At this point, remembering that astrology is literally stellar logic and language, I engage in the arduous and extended labor of consciousness that may eventually reap a few kernels of astrological truth.

To repeat, in my own work as a feminist shamanic astrologer, I cultivate, and patiently sustain, a free-floating triangular current of associations between the following holy trinity:

- 1) the spirit of Goddess, in terms of an animal emanation;
- 2) the spirit of the same female animal, that her relationship to natural law, and to my own species, may be revealed; and
- 3) the spirit of women, or female-centered human experience, in so far as my female ancestors not only learned lessons by closely observing the female animal, but led their families and clans to survive and prosper due to the animal's ability to provide food, drink, shelter, clothing, adornment, decorations, containers, or tools, and from her ability to carry us over land or water, to carry messages, to plough or fertilize our fields, to haul local goods, to ship trade items overland, and so forth.

Finally, by connecting this triangular state of the psychic inner sun with the distant suns or stars long associated with the female animal in question, visceral floods of insight are spontaneously generated. Over time, these often are confined as the richest and most reliable revelations of astrological knowledge. Bluntly put, only with the free and willing assistance of the spirits of female animals, in addition to the contemplation of Goddess and of women's experience, have I attuned to the spirits of the stars, and therefore, to me, the animal symbolism so abundantly featured in the spectacular Old European repertoire of clay figurines and

masks—a imaginative repertoire of patterns that fuse various forms of Goddess, animals, and women can only stand as an astrological heartbeat of Neolithic religion.ⁱ

At first glance, these theories may seem preposterously farfetched. Yet the courage to proceed in this direction was initially found in the introductory words of Gimbutas's final book, *The Living Goddesses*. A superb working definition of astrology in itself, this paragraph is here quoted in its entirety, with its astrological terms highlighted in italics:

In Neolithic Europe and Asia Minor (ancient Anatolia)—in the era between 7000ⁱⁱ BCE and 3000 BCE—religion focused upon the *wheel of life and its cyclical turning*. This is the geographic sphere and the time frame I refer to as Old Europe. In Old Europe, *the focus of religion encompassed birth, nurturing, growth, death, and regeneration, as well as crop cultivation and the raising of animals*. The people of this era pondered *untamed natural forces, as well as wild plant and animal cycles*, and they worshiped goddesses, or a goddess, in many forms. The goddess manifested her *countless forms during various cyclical phases to ensure that they functioned smoothly*. She revealed herself in multiple *ways through the myriad facets of life*, and she is depicted in a very *complex symbolism*.ⁱⁱ

Taking this paragraph as an inspirational point of departure, this paper will begin to explore the theory that astrological awareness was central to the religious reality of the pre-Indo European peoples of Old Europe, and indeed, that these peoples pioneered the world's first abstract language in an effort to artistically celebrate the natural laws of heaven and earth with visible signs and symbols.

Next, a few words about this paper's structure, methodology, and politics.

Structure and methodology

Admittedly, a topic this enormous is dangerous for a term paper, since years of intellectual focus would be required to gain more than a superficial acquaintance with Gimbutas's massive corpus of scholarship, and moreover, since the celestial teachings to which this paper refers are still utilized by seers east and west to decode the interrelationships between all things in nature. Given the vast scope of this paper's tentative yet governing theory, what follows can only amount to an initial exercise, but hopefully in retrospect it will at least be considered an exercise that was worth the effort, and perhaps one to be profitably developed more thoroughly in the future.

In order to briefly illustrate the theory that the ceremonial life of the Neolithic peoples of Old Europe may have involved an astrological consciousness, the following structure will be utilized. First, heavy reliance will here be placed upon the first-42 pages of Marija Gimbutas's final book, *The Living Goddesses*. Here, she quickly categorized the vast symphony of Old European pottery figurines—approximately 100,000 of which have been excavated—in terms of several dozen keywords: vulva, birth-giving goddess, bear or deer, bird,

snake, pregnant vegetation goddess, vegetation year god, sacred marriage, bird of prey, stiff white nude, gorgon, frog, fish, dog, goat, bucranium, phallus, female triangle and hourglass, pig, and hedgehog. Gimbutas also wrote at length about the womb as tomb, altars in triangular sacred precincts, and water net symbolism. Secondly, given that Gimbutas's striking typology of figurines also amounts to a stunning resume of the majority of the constellations already regarded as ancient during the classical period of Mediterranean culture, her work will be compared with the most highly respected astrological poem of Greek culture, the *Phaenomena* of Aratos.ⁱⁱⁱ Aratos provided a comprehensive list of the 46 constellations that were understood to blanket

the shifting sky in 270 BeE, and his famous rendition of the cosmos was taken as the most authoritative literary point of departure by Greek and Roman writers for many centuries after his death.^{iv} Thirdly, based upon the following methodology, I will suggest possible correlations between Aratos's list of 46 constellations and Gimbutas's figurine typology in *The Living Goddesses*.

The methodology of this paper has been inspired by Marija Gimbutas's bold approach to knowledge. She had the guts to take folk traditions seriously, trusting the generational wisdom of our species, and then, deploying a cross-cultural and multi-disciplinary approach as an archaeologist, she traced beliefs and rituals back thousands of years to Neolithic Old Europe, seeking, and ultimately discovering, astonishing forms of cultural continuity in terms of Goddess-preeminent and woman-identified beliefs and rituals. In so doing, she created greater hope for a more peaceful human future.

Even though Gimbutas was not interested in astrology, I follow her example, trusting the generational wisdom of our species, in my case, in terms of our innate affinity with the sky, and in terms of the religious traditions we have evolved to describe complex yet practical relationships between heaven and Earth. Moreover, as a feminist historian, theologian, astrologer, and priestess, I have utilized the following cross-cultural and multi-disciplinary approach in order to arrive at the correlations soon to be suggested between the constellations of Aratos and the figurines of Gimbutas:

- 1) Gimbutas's archeological reflections and illustrations, as found in *The Living Goddesses*;
- 2) Mediterranean and Asian star lore, with respect to the constellations of Aratos;
- 3) Astronomy, in terms of the ancient and modern shapes of constellations, and their alignments with one another, especially in terms of celestial longitude;
- 4) Western and Vedic astrology, in terms of 30 years of study and eight years of professional experience;
- 5) Christian systematic theology, the tradition in which I was raised, and in which I trained as a feminist systematic theologian;

- 6) Ancient Greek, which I studied for seven years;
- 7) The pre-Christian spiritual traditions of Egypt, Mesopotamia, Greece, and Rome; and
- 8) The folk motifs of Anatolian carpets. Drawing upon this cross-cultural and multi-disciplinary approach, the following correlations—if developed at greater length—could help to account for ways in which a Neolithic horticultural and reproductive cosmological consciousness was gradually supplanted by a male-dominant and god-preeminent mentality. These correlations also suggest that the Goddess-preeminent astrological traditions of India, as well as women's traditional weavings in Anatolia, tend to preserve the most fundamental aspects of Neolithic mentality and religion, especially with respect to Earth and sky.

Therefore, this essay extends a slender antenna in the two potentially enormous directions: 1) tracing Western astrology back to Old Europe, and 2) relating Old European mentality and spirituality to Goddess-preeminent Indian astrology and Anatolian female-centered art. Perhaps astonishing forms of astrological continuity, especially in terms of woman-identified beliefs and rituals, are just waiting to be discovered and articulated for the benefit of others today!

Before moving to the correlations between Aratos and Gimbutas, a special explanation is called for with respect to the Turkish weaving traditions incorporated in the present line of inquiry.

To my eye, the folk language of symbols in handwoven Anatolian carpets, as well as the small animal figurines for sale in Turkish markets, are amazingly faithful to the Neolithic Goddess epiphanies researched and transmitted by Gimbutas in the *The Living Goddesses*, and by extension, to the animals of the major constellations. On a recent trip to Turkey, I stayed in carved volcanic tufa caves which branch into about 150 underground cities, highly sophisticated dwellings of up to 20 levels that lie unobtrusively beneath the landscape like stone jewels. I felt that our species had lived in these cities during the Neolithic period, and after making friends with farmers in the region, I also felt Cappadocia had been one of the central sites of the Neolithic agricultural revolution. Today, these fertile volcanic lands—heavily forested when inhabited by our hunting and gathering Paleolithic ancestors—offer up a fabulous array of crops with very little irrigation, and the fields, exquisitely tilled by hand, are arranged like poems among the caves. Later, while studying the designs of handwoven Anatolian carpets and hand-carved figurines, I became fascinated by the motifs embedded in these weavings, a female heraldry packed with messages, beliefs, and symbols. As one expert has melodiously written, each carpet is “a living history from the early times to the present in which women have patiently and untiringly written their joys and sorrows in amazing codes and magic letters which are to be read line by line... the language of these symbols has not been fully decoded to our day.”^v Therefore, although these Turkish women are not working from books, it seems that they have long continued to string heaven and Earth together by hand, and always to the fervent tunes of prayers for the future, and so an immense tribute must go out to the Anatolian carpet-weavers, for women such as these, the world over,

have not only known the deepest mysteries by heart, but have practiced them faithfully, amidst the daily joys and chores of households, husbands, and children.

Correlations: The *Phenomena* of Aratos and Gimbutas's figurine typology

N.B. Constellations not found within the Neolithic symbol system—at least according to my highly circumscribed understanding of Old Europe—are indicated with question marks.

GREEK CONSTELLATIONS OF ARATOS

Contemporary astronomical name in italics

Two Female Bears Together

1. Ursa Major (Great Female Bear)

2. Ursa Minor (Little Female Bear)

Dragon or Serpent

Draco

Kneeling Man

Crown

PROPOSED NEOLITHIC CONSTELLATION

*Based on Gimbutas's figurine typology in *The Living Goddesses**

Birth-giving Goddess as Bear

N.B. Also Deer, Reindeer, Elk

Snake #1

(Became Tiamat, to be split, and the Snake in the Garden of Eden)

are there any Neolithic figurines of men praying on their knees, in surrender? (Became the Hanged Man, Odin on the Tree, Adam bitten by the snake)

Are there any Neolithic figurines of crowns, or....

The final section of this paper addresses the political values embedded in these correlations between the constellations of Aratos and Gimbutas's typology, in terms of my work in astrology and women's spirituality.

Politics: The imperatives of Neolithic consciousness

Studying Marija Gimbutas this semester has had a liberatory, emancipatory, and transformative effect on my work as a western astrologer. Until now, the only way I could spiritually relate to the sky was within the context of Hinduism's *shakta* tradition, where Goddess has continually been revered, where the female is still the supreme cosmic principle. Fortunately, the people of India stubbornly kept Goddess alive—despite seven iconoclastic centuries of Abrahamic persecution by exclusively male-monotheistic Muslims and Christians—and to this day, the stars and planets are still named as aspects of her dazzlingly dark parthenogenetic body. Being the *only* world religion that refrained from catapulting Goddess into a shameful exile, Hinduism remained cosmologically integral, and therefore, it is no coincidence that its apparently disparate fields like astrology, astronomy, mathematics, medicine, ritual, language and scripture are all still respected as an interconnected whole.

In contrast to the *shakta* tradition, the Western astrological framework is an agonizing context. Although I have patiently studied and practiced this system for over 30 years, I have also been convinced that thousands of years of male-dominated social order and god-preeminent religion have twisted our tradition almost beyond recognition. Today, our constellations and planets are almost exclusively male, highly misogynistic, sexually stereotypical if not rapist, conspicuously distant from sexuality and reproduction, set apart from plants and female animals, incredibly denatured, and of course, riddled with murderously militaristic imagery. How in the world did this happen?

Quickly put, the origin of the Western constellations, and of astrological theory and practice, is commonly credited to patriarchal culture, namely, the Mesopotamian priests and agricultural calendars of the late 3rd millennium BCE. The idea that Mesopotamian men simply enshrined in writing an already ancient oral tradition is rarely if ever expressed, and Mesopotamian culture heroes like Marduk and Gilgamesh—whose stories essentially describe the male takeover and exploitation of the female celestial and terrestrial body—are routinely idealized. Later, as patriarchy was consolidated in the Mediterranean during the devastating developments of the 2nd and 1st millenniums BCE, upstart "solar heroes" like Mithras, Perseus, Apollo, and Hercules were widely worshipped, and gradually, our Western sky-further dismembered by solar hero conquests of zodiacal signs and constellations—swung even further into obedience to the conquests of exclusively male gods and divinized men. So many of these figures raped, abducted, and murdered with pride, and sadly, their Greco-Roman names are still invoked as westerners vainly attempt to commune with the perfections of planets and stars.

Finally, the long epoch of solar heroes prepared the way for the ultimate triumph of cosmological patriarchy, and the ultimate defeat of Goddess and women: the early 4th century CE official wedding between the exclusively male-monotheistic system of Roman Catholicism, and the patriarchal Roman Empire. As the Holy Roman Empire learned to market the genius of Jesus by holding his memory aloft as yet another solar hero—but this time, also as a thoroughly *sacrificial* and *asexual* male role model, in accordance with the dictates of a state bent upon domination of its male subjects—the Western astrological sky fell completely under the spiritual control of the imperial priesthood, especially under the Jesuits. Heaven gradually became arrayed as the costume of a fiercely warring and jealous God, one who demanded total obedience to the dictates of a unified church and state, as epitomized in the stories of an obedient daughter, Mary, and an obedient son, Jesus, who gave himself in sacrifice to Empire in accordance with his father's will.

Even as World War III in the sky of Central Asia unfolds today, largely fueled by the religious fundamentalisms of the world's only male-monotheistic religions—Judaism, Christianity and Islam—the Western astrological sky is still stained with spilt warrior's blood from Mesopotamian, Greco-Roman, and Christian mythology. Exactly like our foreign policy, our astrology still flows forth from the cultural

assumptions of male-monotheistic patriarchy, since the Abrahamic traditions of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam are still written large in the sky. Under this sky - which stretches over the roof of so-called "New Age" culture - women are largely consigned to Earth, in a cosmic missionary position, and expected to be grateful for the few "feminine" territories in the heavens, such as the Moon, Venus, the zodiacal sign of Virgo, the cloud of the Pleiades, and the belt of asteroids in our solar system. However, given the identity and scope of the expanding universe, these token awards made to females are the booby prizes designed for girls in the great galactic games, and this state of affairs is clearly political, for astrology plots the interconnectedness of all things, and if astrological grids are arranged in patriarchal patterns, then to the extent that these patterns are uncritically adopted, patriarchy is nourished and sustained on a most vital and comprehensive level.

In contrast to this irritating state of affairs, it has long seemed clear to me that astrology vastly predated patriarchy. I first fell in love with astrology in the 1970s because it was the only system I could find as an adolescent that focused upon natural laws and transformations *without* being predicated upon the first principles of an exclusively male God, male prophets and teachings, or a male-dominated religious institution. Later, I wrote my B.A. thesis on the sharp eclipse of the astrological worldview in Egyptian 4th century CE villages, owing to the sudden inception of Christian monasticism under the Roman Empire. Finally, in 1995, when I became a professional astrologer, I was given the kinesthetic awareness that my work actually originated in a Goddess-centered culture, at a time when queens and priestesses administered society in terms of the economics and spirituality of solar agriculture and lunar reproduction. I remembered Goddess being received as every aspect of space and time, as the void of emptiness, and as the inconceivable fusion between the two. It seemed that within the cosmic bowl of her sexual and reproductive body—a female body utterly coterminous with plants, animals, and the male body as well—the union of heaven and Earth that we now call "astrology" was born.

Until I studied Gimbutas this semester, I figured that I would never find any hard evidence for this dream of astrological history. But now, although my work to date is incredibly preliminary, I still have far more evidence than ever before that our own Western constellations may have once been far more peaceful and inclusive: female and male, highly sexual and reproductive, engaged with animals and plants, familiar with struggle, yet stretched toward the eternal. After just a few short months, my sky as a daughter of Norway has already been cast within a healthier context, and it seems that much evidence could be marshalled in support of the theory of this paper, and that the imperative need to restore a feminist sensibility to Western astrology could perhaps be realistically fulfilled.

Within my work in women's spirituality, studying Marija Gimbutas has also had a liberatory, emancipatory, and transformative effect. I have followed developments in this field since the late 1970s, and have long observed that a sexually dualistic cosmology with respect to heaven and Earth is considered self-evident, and not even worthy of serious discussion, in our books, papers, classes, workshops, and rituals.

Generally speaking, our community resounds with an exclusively *earthly* frame of reference for the spirituality of Goddess and her people, and a concomitant *heavenly* frame of reference for that of invading patriarchal cultures and their male God or gods. Indeed, with all due respect, Gimbutas's own reception of the culture and language of Goddess in Old Europe echoed this duality, since she focused upon Neolithic and Bronze Age religion in terms of earthly processes of birth, nurture, death and regeneration, and routinely counterposed this beneficent earth-based cosmology with that of the proto-Indo-European "Kurgan" culture, the tribes of pastoral, patrilineal, militaristic, horse riding, semi-nomadic peoples, most likely from the Russian steppes, who worshipped male deities within a sky-based frame of reference.

On one hand, this dualism within the field of women's spirituality is completely understandable, since after all, the west is currently rebounding from the past three or four millennia of solar heroes and exclusively male supreme deities. However, I suspect that our memories are not stretching quite long enough—and a long memory is the most radical thing. Perhaps Neolithic and Bronze Age cultures—two historical arenas central to the field of women's spirituality today, since they suggest what life might have been like prior to the consolidation of patriarchy—might be more fruitfully approached if one did not assume that the divine sky is necessarily male. Indeed, perhaps the bellicose pre-Indo-European Kurgans only *began* to make the very first timid efforts to appropriate the sky from Goddess by rewriting the bowl of heaven as a male preserve. It seems to me that Kurgan *descendants* were those who continued the work with a vengeance, especially the worshippers of figures like Marduk and Gilgamesh, and later, solar heroes like Mithras, Perseus, Apollo, and Hercules. To me, the real "adversary" of Goddess in the sky would hardly be the Kurgans who galloped over the steppes thousands of years ago and threw a few horses and chariots in the stars, but the Abrahamic warriors in our midst today, for with the Roman adoption of Christian male monotheism, the divine son became the only divine Sun, and his imperial father-politically conflated with the European king, emperor, and pope-absolutely ruled the roost. At this point, the cosmological legacies of the Neolithic and Bronze Age Goddess—namely, her astrological mysteries of solar agriculture, and her lunar mysteries of sexuality and reproduction were appropriated, turned upside down, stripped of any sexual content, and fed into a male centered mystery of birth, and an annual round of Christian holy days and ceremonies.

Of course, like any take on history, this quick interpretation is vulnerable, and regardless of the evidence ever marshalled in its support, its truth can never be definitely proven. Still, as an ancestor of the future, it is my duty and right to name the sky in accordance with my own political and spiritual lights—as so many men have already done, and in the interests of men, and within the context of male-dominated societies, and in allegiance to exclusively—male deities—and it will be my delight to inspire other women and men to boldly do the same.

For in truth, it matters not whether westerners finally take back the sky from church and state, or begin to relate it for the very first time, and as never before.

What matters is whether our route will be a gentle and multivalent approach to the wild rivers of sky, one that bravely acknowledges the oppressions of the past, yet sings in fluid tones that far transcend the polarized judgments of sexual dualism, in terms of which women and men have been taught to suffer for so long. For planets and stars tend to speak in both female and male ways, and in so many ways beyond these, defying easy categorization and the tidy satisfactions of anthropocentric sexual stereotypes. Perhaps a willingness to abandon such fundamentalisms could eventually stand as one small part of the titanic feminist effort to change the gods of western civilization, and thus to strike a better balance between women and men, and between humans and nature at large, thereby increasing the odds on our survival.

Conclusion

While contemplating this paper this semester, I have been led in the direction of several general theories about the religious mentality of Neolithic Old Europeans:

- 1) While ceremonially handling clay figurines and wearing masks designed as constellational codes, and cyclically utilizing all of these in agricultural and reproductive rituals, our ancestors not only honored Goddess and female-centered human experience, but animals as well, especially female animals, and the kinds of animals groupings within which the female of the species played an unusually preeminent role.
- 2) These respectful patterns were entirely practical and goal-oriented with respect to diligent cycles of agricultural and reproductive labor, since *the free and willing assistance of all female beings with whom our species shared the myriad mansions of Earth and sky was of inestimable assistance in terms of attuning the agriculture and reproductive labors central to human survival to the rhythmic intelligence of stars*, especially as transmitted by intense and continuous solar flows of photonic, electromagnetic, and gravitational force upon planet Earth and its satellite, the Moon.
- 3) The names of the constellations today largely commemorate an ancient shamanic religion—which our own age calls “astrology” - that centered upon human respect for Goddess; for female-centered human experience, especially in terms of agriculture and reproduction; and for the natural laws surrounding the lives of animals, especially female animals, or female-centered communities of animals. In conclusion, I suggest that the western lack of respect for, and ignorance of, astrology may be a spiritual arrogance rooted in something far deeper than the philosophical assumptions of the scientific method deployed in industrialized and technocratic cultures, and in something far deeper than the dictates of the exclusively male-monotheistic Abrahamic deity, the jealous Judaeo-Christian god who will have no other gods before him. Rather, I suggest that the western lack of respect for astrology-and indeed, the explanation for the fact that the discipline has even been demonized in Roman Catholicism, even as its treasures have been plundered to enhance the power of the church-may well be rooted in the following cultural factors, each of which is endemic to patriarchal social order and exclusively male-monotheistic religion:

- 1) disrespect for Goddess;
- 2) disrespect for Earth, especially in terms of agriculture and the spirits of plants;
- 3) disrespect for female-centered human experience, especially in terms of female sexuality and the female role in human reproduction;
- 4) disrespect for all animals, who are considered to be inferior lifeforms; and
- 5) disrespect for all natural law.

If this line of inquiry could be properly developed, for example, within the context of a comprehensive exam, perhaps a convincing case could be made that many of the tens of thousands of Neolithic pottery figurines excavated to date were once actually utilized as intimate, hand-held clay codes for constellations, and even as ceremonial oil and beeswax lamps lit like stars, while our ancestors were engaged in respectful ritual attunement to annual solar cycles of agriculture, including solstices and equinoxes, and monthly lunar cycles of the female role in human reproduction, especially at the culmination of gestation during the sacred hours of labor and birth. If this story could be told, it might help people to relate to the sky more deeply, and to further dignity Goddess, women and girls, agriculture, reproduction, and animals in human cosmological terms, thus helping westerners achieve a better balance with ourselves and one another, with other cultures and their abiding cosmological traditions, and perhaps most importantly, with the incomprehensible natural laws that cradle our survival.

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Primary sources (feminist)

As far as the history of astrology goes, I haven't found any other feminist authorities of note. Secondly, although I *have* found scattered references to the effect that scholars Shan Winn and Joseph Campbell evidently *did* review Gimbutas's scholarship in light of astronomical and astrological literacy, and that they *did* mention certain correspondences to her while she was still alive, I have not yet studied their writings along these lines, and in any event, I am not sure if either Winn or Campbell could be classified as a feminist thinker. Therefore, with respect to the theory of this paper, I haven't had any primary sources except for my own previously published work:

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ⁱ Neither biblical nor Darwinian in inspiration, my astrological philosophy indicates that the animals for whom our constellations are named were not originally indigenous to Earth, but that their genetic codes originated from distant stars, and were seeded on Earth long ago. Moreover, it indicates that relatively recently; perhaps even during the Neolithic, humans and such non-indigenous animals enjoyed telepathic communication, and as the various animals revealed the general location of their respective homes in the sky, we respectfully named groups of stars in memory of their celestial ancestry.

ⁱⁱ Marija Gimbutas, *The Living Goddesses* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999),3.

ⁱⁱⁱ I have taken hundreds of pages of notes correlating the 46 classical constellations of *The Phaenomena* with Gimbutas's figure typology, and intend to write up this research within the context of a doctoral comprehensive exam. Only after reviewing the astonishing evidence from four areas of the sky-Gemini, Virgo, Sagittarius, and Pisces-did I become convinced of the compelling value of this work, for the stellar intelligence of these four regions appears unmistakably in Gimbutas's work~ and it also happens to have been thunderingly transmitted to Earth from 7200 to 4800 BeE by the burning path of the Sun during equinoxes and solstices, during the precessional zone of the Old European agricultural cycle, also known as the Age of Gemini.

^{iv} I have taken one liberty with Aratos's list, for he did not list the Milky Way as a constellation, it being comprised of hundreds of billions of stars. However, he did discuss the fixed white stripe of our galaxy at length, and therefore, I have included it here, since I suspect that its cold, remote, overarching presence--one appreciated so often in global traditions as the soul's home before birth and destination after death-gave rise to the compelling vision of the Stiff White Nude.

^v . Mehmet Ates, *Turkish Carpets: The Language of Motifs and Symbols* (Antalya: Symbol Carpet, 1995),6. 10