

Fay Craton

You referred to an alien culture which changed the goddess culture. What geographic region did the alien people come from?

*Marija Gimbutas identified a “Kurgan” culture, a Proto-Indo-European culture that was patrilineal, patrilocal, pastoral and seminomadic, who, she believed, originated in the steppes of Russia. They were militaristic, produced weapons, and rode horses. Their religion centered upon male gods. (Marija Gimbutas, *The Living Goddesses*, p. xv).*

Are there theories as to what transpired in Babylon to cut off the feminine?

Betty DeShong Meador details the transition of cultures in the region, from the Paleolithic to the Neolithic, representing a shift from nomadic hunter gatherers to agriculture. In the earlier cultures, including the Ubaid, the figurines recovered are predominantly female. The Ubaid culture was present around 5000 BCE.

Some think the Sumerians descended from the Ubaid culture, some believe they migrated from the Iranian plain to Mesopotamia. In the last 500 years of the Ubaid culture a temple dedicated to Inanna was discovered at Uruk. The first pictographic characters on clay tablets dating from 3300 BCE came from this temple. A series of temples dedicated to Inanna has been discovered in Nippur possibly originating from a prehistoric period preceding the development of Sumerian culture.

*A thousand years later, Enheduanna, the poet who wrote the Hymns to Inanna, lived. Meador writes, “During the course of this thousand years, the expanding Sumerian society began to call its rulers kings, developed governing bodies for cities, armed its city-states, built city walls for protection, and centered its growing commerce in the temples. The offices of priest and priestess evolved into important positions at the heart of each city.” (Meador, *Inanna, Lady of Largest Heart*, p. 32-33)*

Apparently agriculture, and the flood in 2900 BCE, recounted in the Gilgamesh epic, (and possibly the Hebrew Bible), impacted resources as the water supply receded. One theory is that this led to a qualitative change in political coexistence and power dynamics. Social stratification was based on property ownership, with male descendants of the chief men of household inheriting property.

In the Gilgamesh epic, Gilgamesh challenges the power of the Goddess Ishtar (the Babylonian-Semitic version of Inanna), symbolizing the desacralization of the Feminine in this later era.

Does Shoshana have contact information she is willing to share?

Please feel free to contact me at drshoshana@shoshanafershtman.com

What is the correct spelling for Betty Madore?

Betty DeShong Meador

Edith Allison

Any thoughts or intuitions about possible roles we can play in our lifetimes for Gaia?

I find image from the 2017 Women's March in Washington DC inspiring:



My sense is that Gaia is speaking to us and through us, moving us to support the earth in different ways—as Jungians, through raising consciousness, helping our analysts value their dreams and visions in which She appears. And as activists, supporting environmental and social change in whatever ways we feel drawn to—transforming our consciousness and our political will towards adoption of policies that support greening of our earth and equitable distribution of green resources and environmental justice.

Deb Nikkel

Stunning presentation. So relevant. Much appreciate the interpretation of Inanna. Would love to hear more about Ereshkigal - she's always depicted as the goddess of the underworld, but you represent her as the goddess of the earth. That changes my understanding of Inanna... thank you. Thoughts?

*According to some interpretations, Ereshkigal was the Grain Goddess, banished to the underworld. (see, e.g., Elinor Gadon, *The Once and Future Goddess*, p. 139-140.) This understanding also transformed my view of the myth... to see Ereshkigal as the banished Earth Goddess transforms much of the negative projections that some interpretations seem to carry. And that She, as Earth Goddess, is grieving and giving birth simultaneously feels like such a powerful myth for our time. And to see Inanna having to meet her sister and witness and bodily experience Her suffering before she can ascend and become ruler of the realm has much to teach us, I believe, about what descents need to happen, for us to encounter the suffering of our Earth Mother, in order to assume meaningful leadership in our time.*

Ellenschumann

We need a new term as we move from Patriarchal society and matriarchal society to Earth centered society. Gaiatriarchal? Or perhaps we will be given it by the Mother. Can you think of it?

I like Gaiatriarchal!

Karen Branam DC

Do you know of anyone who has written about modern dreams of Gaia?

I'm not aware but that sounds like it would be a very meaningful project!

Jonathanwales

As a point of clarification: Gimbutas believed in a radical divide between matriarchal Old Europeans (indigenous) and patriarchal, Tyr/Wotan Indo-Europeans. She conceptualised a pacifist Old European culture against a warlike Indo-European culture. This has been criticised as simplistic by scholars within Indo-European studies but there is an element of truth to it. Dr. Fershtman is right in that a high sky god appears to be at the telos of the Indo-European cosmogony.

The Indo-European homeland is hotly debated within the scholarly literature. Some believe in the Anatolian thesis, others a Caucasian mountain origin. In the nineteenth and early twentieth century, there was the circumpolar thesis, which is no longer held by the majority of scholars.

The reality is more complicated between a Bronze Age struggle between the Venus of Willendorf or Wotan. It is easy to proleptically mythologise ancient cosmogonies according to the perceptions of our own age.

Thank you for this perspective. My understanding is that the more recent archeologists are approaching the material with a feminist lens, the more support Gimbutas' theories are receiving. Of course, because much exists only in the form of the images themselves, we can only make meaning through our own capacity to mythologize, as Jules Cashford and Jung himself noted. However, I think the move towards bringing in the feminine to archeological findings is sorely needed to balance a heavily biased lens towards devaluation of the feminine. For example, in the Mesopotamian collection at the Louvre, among the hundreds of figures, I could count on one hand those that were named – Inanna, Astarte. The rest were simply labeled, "female nude." To understand that these were figures that were venerated in a sacred context is an important step in seeing the deep meaning inherent in these figures. The field of archeomythology seeks to apply our mythological perspectives to make meaning of archeological discoveries.

Thankfulbutler

Do you see any signs of cultures returning in a meaningful and practical way to the understanding of the goddess? We have had a lot of writing and awareness of the goddess cultures amongst scholars; what of religious and political aspects of modern cultures? Do we see any return to the realizathion that approaching goddess cultures will benefit us all?

I am encouraged by the widespread reclaiming of the sacred feminine in Judaism, the centrality of the Shekhinah, the Feminine aspect of the Divine, is strongly represented in many Jewish communities. In Christianity, the reclaiming of Mary and the Dark Madonna are profoundly encouraging, as are the links between these figures and the ancient sacred feminine. And cultures such as India where the Goddess was never lost have much to teach us in the depths of mythos associated with Goddess figures there. I sense a strong longing in youth to find and create feminine figures of strength and power in popular culture.

Miriam

I find the imagining of the goddess being pulled apart and then now, bringing her back together again fascinating. The image of Aphrodite you showed from Cyprus was born from a goddess about sexuality and sovereignty - this stood out. Sovereignty in a 'whole body'. I'd love to explore this more! Thank you so much shoshanna

Thank you so much Miriam, I'm glad to hear that you were moved by these images. I find it very powerful to connect with the wholeness that the Greek Goddesses emerged from, as Great Goddesses before their reduction to a more limited, particular role in Greek culture.

Patricia Gleeson

What is happening in Ukraine and this profound presentation painfully illustrates the crisis and necessity to find a way to move from the present to healing the injustice of the invasion. What action can we take?

I encourage all of us to act in the ways we feel called, supporting humanitarian aid, medical aid, and advocating for peace and justice.

Tu Bears

Hello Shoshana - thank you so much for your beautiful presentation. My question is: What is your practice of anchoring yourself in Her? And is “Her” you are referring to, Mother Earth or the Goddess? Jeane

Thank you so much for this question Jeane, and for your presence at the talk, and for being such a powerful guide for me over the years. The “Her” is both the Goddess as well as Mother Earth, the way our ancestors knew Her as both the Sacred Feminine and the Ground of Being, of all Creation. I learned much from you and Native American traditions about Mother Earth and Father Sky holding the Creation. My practices of anchoring in Her include shamanic journeying practices, and active imagination dialogue with Her, inviting Her to teach me, and allowing myself to feel Her presence.

Peter

rematriation, a re-earthing returning is sometimes being used? Thank you for bringing in the often unhelpful gender polarity

Thank you Peter, it is a challenge to both honor the devalued Feminine from prehistory and also honor the post-gender paradigm emerging in our time, which I also find very helpful and hopeful.