

Learning the Language of the Goddess



“Through an understanding of what the Goddess was, we can better understand nature and we can build our ideologies so that it will be easier for us to live.”

With Marija Gimbutas

Marija Gimbutas is largely responsible for the resurgence of interest in Goddess-oriented religions. Her discoveries were the foundation for Riane Eisler’s (whom we interviewed in our first volume) highly influential book, The Chalice and the Blade. For fifteen years, Marija was involved with excavations in southeastern Europe and the Mediterranean, which revealed the existence of a prehistoric Goddess-oriented culture. For at least 25, 000 years this peaceful civilization seemingly practiced complete equal rights between the sexes – socially, politically, and spiritually. As Riane Eisler pointed out, the full implications of this discovery have yet to be fully realized by the scientific community, or by society at large.

Born in Lithuania during a time when 50 percent of the population was still pagan, Gimbutas fled to Austria because of the war. In Vilnius, Lithuania, and later in Vienna, Innsbruck, and Tübingen, she studied linguistics, archaeology, and Indo-European cultures, obtaining her doctorate in Tübingen, Germany in 1946. In 1950, as an expert in eastern European archaeology, she became a research fellow at Harvard, where she remained for twelve years. In 1963 she came to UCLA, where she served as emeritus professor of European archaeology for many years. She is the author of more than twenty books, including well-known works such as The Language of the Goddess, The Civilization of the Goddess, and Goddesses and Gods of Old Europe.

We interviewed Marija at her beautiful mountain home – which overflowed with big-breasted wide-hipped goddess figurines and other archaeological artifacts – in Topanga Canyon, California on October 3, 1992. When Marija died on February 2, 1994, we felt very sad but also fortunate to have had the opportunity to spend time with her before she departed. Even though she battled lymphatic cancer for many years, Marija was vitally alive and active right up until the very end. On June 27, 1993, the Frauen Museum in Wiesbaden, Germany dedicated to her an extensive exhibit, “The Language of the Goddess,” and she was there to receive the honour.

After spending much of her life in relative academic obscurity, Marija Seemed to be genuinely surprised to discover how popular she had become. For all her accomplishments, she was always humble and gracious. Marija had an incredibly warm, sprite-like spirit, lively eyes, and a way of making you feel very comfortable around her She appeared delicate and graceful, yet filled with strength. There was something timeless about Marija, for she was a woman of many times and places, and the Goddess seemed to shine right through her.

– DJB

David: *What was it that originally inspired your interest in the archaeological and mythological dimensions of the Goddess orientated religions of Old Europe?*

Marija: It has to do with the whole of my life, I think. I was always a black sheep. I did what I saw with my own eyes – to this day, in fact. I was very independent. My mother was also very independent. She was one of the first students of medicine in Switzerland and Germany when there were no other girls studying.

I was born in Lithuania when it was still fifty percent pagan. I had quite a lot of direct connections to the Goddesses. They were around me in my childhood. The Goddess Laima was there, she could call at night and look through the windows. When a woman is giving birth she appears, and the grandmother is there organizing things. She has gifts for the Goddess towels and woven materials are laid for her, because she weaves the life, she is the spinner. She may be on the way to disappear, but fifty years ago she was still there.

Rebecca: When you say pagans, you mean people living in the countryside, close to nature?

Marija: Yes, well Lithuania was Christianized only in the fourteenth century and even then it didn't mean much because it was done by missionaries who didn't understand the language, and the countryside remained pagan for at least two or three centuries. And then came the Jesuits who started to convert people in the sixteenth century.

In some areas, up to the nineteenth and twentieth century, there were still beliefs alive in Goddesses and all kinds of beings. So in my childhood I was exposed to many things which were almost prehistoric, I would say. And when I studied archaeology, it was easier for me to grasp what these sculptures mean than for an archaeologist born in New York, who doesn't know anything about the countryside life in Europe. *(laughter)*

I first studied linguistics, ethnology and folklore. I collected folklore myself when I was in high school. And there was always a question; what is my own culture? I heard a lot about the Indo-Europeans and that our language, Lithuanian, was a very old, conservative Indo-European language. I was interested in that. I studied the Indo-European language and comparative Indo-European studies, and at that time there was no question about what was *before* the Indo-Europeans. It was good enough to know that the Indo-Europeans were already there. *(laughter)* The question of what was before came much later.

Then, because of the war, I had to flee from Lithuania. I studied in Austria, in Vienna, then I got my Ph.D in Germany. I still continued to be interested in my own Lithuanian, ancient culture and I did some things in addition to my official studies. I was doing research in symbolism and I collected materials from libraries. So that is one trend in my interest – ancient religion, pagan religion and symbolism. My dissertation was also connected with this. It was about the burial rites and beliefs in afterlife and it was published in Germany in 1946.

Then I came to the United States and had the opportunity to begin studies in eastern European archaeology and in 1950 I became a research fellow at Harvard and I was there for twelve years. I had to learn from scratch because there was nobody in the whole United States who was really knowledgeable about what was in Russia or the Soviet Union in prehistoric times. So they invited me to write a book on eastern European prehistory and I spent about fifteen years doing this. So that was my background of learning.

Rebecca: Did you anticipate the incredible interest that this research would fuel?

Marija: No. At that time I was just an archaeologist doing my work, studying everything that I could. And after that came the Bronze Age studies, and this gave me another aspect on this Indo-European culture. In my first book I wrote about eastern European archaeology, I started my hypothesis on the Indo-European origins in Europe and this hypothesis still works and hasn't changed much.

Rebecca: Could you describe your hypothesis?

Marija: These proto-Indo-European people came from South Russia to Europe, introduced the Indo-European culture and then European culture was hybridized. It was the old culture *mixed* with the new elements – the Steppe, pastoral, patriarchal elements. So already at that time, thirty years ago, I sensed that, in Europe there was something else before the Indo-Europeans. But I still didn't do anything about the Goddess, about sculptures, or art, or painted pottery. I just knew that it existed but I didn't really have the chance to dive into the field.

The occasion appeared when I came to UCLA in 1963 and from 1967 I started excavations in south-east Europe, in Yugoslavia, Greece and Italy, and did that for fifteen years. When I was traveling in Europe and visiting museums I was already building some understanding of what this culture was like before the Indo-Europeans, before the patriarchy.

It was always a big question mark to me; what could it be? This is so different. Painted pottery, for instance, beautiful pottery. And then the sculptures. Nobody really was writing about it. There were so many of them, wherever you went you found hundreds and hundreds. I was just putting in my head what I saw. So then I started my own excavations and I discovered at least five hundred sculptures myself.

Rebecca: How deep did you have to dig?

Marija: It depended. Sometimes at a site of 5,000 B.C, it was on top. You could walk through the houses of 7,000 years ago! Other times you have to dig deep to reach that. Usually you excavate sites which are already exposed, which are known and where people are finding objects of great interest. Many things have been destroyed in this way. Some interesting excavations were made, especially in Greece and I started to understand more and more about sculptures. I don't know how it happened, at what moment, but I started to distinguish certain types and their repetitions. For instance, the bird and snake goddess which are the easiest to distinguish.

So I slowly added more and more information. The first book was called *Goddesses and Gods of Old Europe*. Actually the first edition was called *Gods and Goddesses of Old Europe*, because I was not allowed to use Goddesses first.

David: According to who? Was it the publisher?

Marija: Yes. The publisher didn't allow me. In eight years a second edition appeared with the original title, *Goddesses and Gods of Old Europe*.

Rebecca: That first edition could be very valuable one day. *(laughter)* Your work appeals to a very broad audience and even people who don't have an academic background often feel they have an intuitive sense of what you're saying.

Marija: The intuitive people are always the first to say that. Then eventually academia catches up, because these are the least intuitive. *(laughter)*

Rebecca: Could you briefly describe to us the major differences between the old European Goddess traditions and the Indo-European patriarchy which came to dominate, and what aspects of the patriarchal culture caused it to want to control the matrifocal one?

Marija: The symbolic systems are very different. All this reflects the social structure. The Indo-European social structure is patriarchal, patrilineal and the psyche is warrior. Every God is also a warrior. The three main Indo-European Gods are the God of the Shining Sky, the God of the Underworld and the Thunder God. The female goddesses are just brides, wives or maidens without any power, without any creativity. They're just there, they're beauties, they're Venuses, like the dawn or sun maiden.

So the system from what existed in the matristic culture before the Indo-Europeans in Europe is totally different. I call it matristic, not matriarchal, because matriarchal always arouses ideas of dominance and is compared with the patriarchy. But it was a balanced society, it was not that women were really so powerful that they usurped everything that was masculine.

Men were in their rightful position, they were doing their own work, they had their duties and they also had their own power. This is reflected in their symbols where you find not only goddesses but also, Gods. The Goddesses were creatrixes, they are creating from themselves. As far back as 35,000 B.C,

from symbols and sculptures, we can see that the parts of the female body were creative parts: breasts, belly and buttocks. It was a different view from ours – it had nothing to do with pornography.

The vulva, for instance, is one of the earliest symbols engraved, and it is symbolically related to growth, to the seed. Sometimes next to it is a branch or plant motif, or within the vulva is something like a seed or a plant. And that sort of symbol is very long-lasting, it continues for 20,000 years at least. Even now the vulva is a symbol in some countries, which offers a security of creativity, of continuity and fertility.

Rebecca: Why did the patriarchal culture choose to dominate?

Marija: This is in the culture itself. They had weapons and they had horses. The horse appeared only with the invaders who began coming from South Russia, and in old Europe there were no weapons – no daggers, no swords. There were just weapons for hunting. Habitations were very different. The invaders were semi-nomadic people and in Europe they were agriculturalists, living in one area for a very long time, mostly in the most beautiful places.

When these warriors arrived, they established themselves high in the hills, sometimes in places which had very difficult access. So, in each aspect of culture I see an opposition, and therefore I am of the opinion that this local, old European culture could not develop into a patriarchal, warrior culture because this would be too sudden. We have archaeological evidence that this was a *clash*. And then of course, who starts to dominate? The ones who have horses, who have weapons, who have small families and who are more mobile.

Rebecca: What was daily life like, do you think for the people living in the matrifocal society?

Marija: Religion played an enormous role and the temple was sort of a focus of life. The most beautiful artifacts were produced for the temple. They were very grateful for what they had. They had to thank the Goddess always, give to her, appreciate her. The high priestess and queen were one and the same person and there was a sort of a hierarchy of priestesses.

David: Was the Goddess religion basically monotheistic?

Marija: This is a very difficult question to answer. Was it monotheistic, or was it not? Was there one Goddess or was there not? The time will come when we shall know more, but at this time we cannot reach deep in prehistory. What I see, is that from very early on, from the upper Paleolithic times, we already have different types of goddesses. So are these different Goddesses or different aspects of one Goddess?

Before 35,000 or 40,000 B.C there is hardly any art but the type of the Goddess with large breasts and buttocks and belly, existed very early in the upper Paleolithic. The snake and bird Goddess are also upper Paleolithic, so at least three main types were there. But in later times, for instance, in the Minoan culture in Crete, you have a Goddess which tends to be more one Goddess than several. Even the snake

Goddesses which exist in Crete, are very much linked with the main Goddess who is shown sitting on a throne or is worshipped in these underground crypts.

Perhaps, even in the much earlier times, there was also a very close interrelationship between the different types represented. So maybe after all, we shall come to the conclusion that this was already a monotheistic religion even as we tend now to call it – the Goddess religion. We just have to remember there were many different types of goddesses.

Rebecca: Do you see remnants of the Goddess religion in different religions throughout the world today?

Marija: Yes, very much so. The Virgin Mary is still extremely important. She is the inheritor of many types of Goddesses, actually. She represents the one who is giving life, she is also the regenerator and earth mother together. This earth mother we can trace quite deep into prehistory; she is the pregnant type and continues for maybe 20,000 years and she is very well preserved in practically each area of Europe and other parts of the world.

David: Do you see the Gaia hypothesis as being a resurgence of the original Goddess religion?

Marija: I think there is some connection, perhaps in a Jungian sense. This culture existed so deep and for so long that it cannot be uninfluential to our thinking.

Rebecca: It must have conditioned our minds for a long time. How do you respond to criticism that the Goddess religion was just a fertility rite?

Marija: How do I respond to all these silly criticisms? (*laughter*) People usually are not knowledgeable who say that, and have never studied the question. Fertility was important to continuity of life on earth, but the religion was about life, death and regeneration. Our ancestors were not primitive.

David: Did you experience a lot of resistance from the academic community about your interpretations?

Marija: I wouldn't say a lot, but some, yes. It's natural. For decades archaeologists rarely touched the problem of religion.

Rebecca: So far back in time, you mean?

Marija: Well, they probably accepted the existence of the Upper Paleolithic and Neolithic religion, but the training was such that the students have no occasion to be exposed to these questions. There was no teaching about prehistoric religion. Only in some places, like in Oxford University, sixty or seventy years ago, Professor James was teaching a course on the Goddess. Nobody at that time was resisting. Now we have more resistance because of the feminist movement. Some people are automatically not accepting.

This kind of criticism (i.e. rejection of the Goddess) is meaningless to me. What is true is true, and what is true will remain. Maybe I made some mistakes in deciphering the symbols, but I was continually trying to understand more. At this time I know more than when I was writing thirty years

ago. My first book was not complete, therefore I had to produce another book and another book to say more. It's a long process.

Rebecca: Wasn't it incredibly difficult to find written sources and references for your research?

Marija: There was so little, it was amazing! There were some good books in the 1950's. In 1955 a book was published on the mother Goddess by a Jungian psychologist, Eric Neumann. Then there were very good works on symbolism by Mircea Eliade.

Rebecca: When I tried to get hold of some of your books from the library they were all checked out and the librarian said that this was normally the case, so works on this subject are definitely in demand now.

Marija: I never dreamed of that. I always thought that archaeology books are not generally read and that you just write for your own colleagues.

David: Were you surprised in yours and others' excavations by the advanced designs of the habitats and the settlements of the Goddess religion?

Marija: Yes, I was. This was a revelation, to see that the later culture is much less advanced than the earlier one. The art is incomparably lower than what was before, and it was a civilization of 3,000 years, more or less, before it was destroyed. For thirty years now we've had the possibility to date items, using carbon dating. When I started to do my research, chronology was so unclear and we were working so hard to understand what period the object belonged to. Then in the 1960's it became so much easier. I spent a lot of time doing chronology, which is very technical work.

That gave us a perspective on how long-lasting these cultures were, and you could see a beautiful development from the more simple to the really sophisticated, in the architecture and the building of temples. Some houses and temples were two stories high and had painted walls. Çatal Hüyük was such a great discovery in Anatolia. The wall paintings there were only published in 1989, twenty-five years after Myler's excavation. One hundred and forty wall paintings – and archaeologists don't believe him because it's so sophisticated. And this is from the 7th millennium!

Rebecca: Do you think the matrifocal society could have sustained cities, or do you think that the nature of the religion and the lifestyle kept it small, usually no bigger than the average village?

Marija: It would have sustained cities. It did start to develop into an urban culture, especially in one area of the Cucuteni civilization which is presently Romania and the western part of the Ukraine. There we have cities of ten to fifteen thousand inhabitants in around 4,000 B.C. So urban development began, but it was truncated.

Rebecca: You have said that you think the meaning of prehistoric art and religion can be deciphered and that we need to analyze the evidence from the point of view of ideology. Do you think that we can honestly do this without being unduly biased by our own ideologies?

Marija: That's always difficult. Most archaeologists have great difficulty in accepting that the life was so different. For instance, an excavator publishes a plan of a village. This is a circular village in a concentric circle of houses and in the centre there is a house also. The explanation at once is, here is a chieftain's house and around him is his retinue and then the last ring around is everyone else.

And then, when you analyze the material, it is totally the reverse. The large ring of houses were the most important houses, the largest houses with the best floors and so on, then growing into the inside the smaller houses are in the middle. So you can write anecdotes about the interpretation because we see only through the twentieth century prism.

David: What does your research indicate about the social status of women in the pre-Indo-European culture?

Marija: Women were equal beings, that is very clear, and perhaps more honored because they had more influence in the religious life. The temple was run by women.

Rebecca: What about the political life?

Marija: My findings suggest that the political life – of course, it's all hypothesis, you cannot reconstruct easily, but we can judge from what remains in later times and what still exists in mythology, because this again reflects the social structure – was structured by the avuncular system. The rulers of the country; the queen which is also the high priestess and also her brother or uncle. The system is therefore called avuncular, which is from the word, uncle. The man, the brother or uncle, was very important in society, and probably men and women were quite equal. In mythology we encounter the sister-brother couples of female goddesses and male gods.

It is wrong to say that this is just a woman's culture, that there was just a Goddess and there were no Gods. In art the male is less represented, that's true, but that the male Gods existed, there's no question. In all mythologies, for instance in Europe, Germanic or Celtic or Baltic, you will find the earth mother or earth Goddess and her male companion or counterpart next to her.

Also there are other couples like the Goddess of Nature, Regenerator, who appears in the Spring and gives life to all earth animals and humans and plants. She is Artemis in Greek mythology. She is called Mistress of Animals, and there are also male counterparts of the same kind called Master of Animals. His representations appear in Çatal Hüyük in the 7th Millenium B.C. and they are there throughout prehistory, so we shouldn't neglect that aspect. There is a balance between the sexes throughout, in religion and in life.

David: Is there any evidence that the takeover was violent and how much did the people try to defend themselves?

Marija: It was violent, but how much they defended themselves is difficult to tell. But they were losers. There was evidence of immigration and escape from these violent happenings and a lot of confusion, a

lot of shifts of population. People started to flee to places like islands and forests and hilly areas. In the settlements you have evidence of murder.

Rebecca: What about the Kurgan, invading culture, were they always patriarchal, when did the patriarchy begin?

Marija: This is a very serious question which archaeologists cannot answer yet, but we can see that the patriarchy was already there around 5,000 B.C for sure and the horse was domesticated not later than that.

Rebecca: Do you think they came out of a previously matrilineal society?

Marija: It must have been so. But the trouble is that exactly there, in South Russia, where it is critical to know, we don't have evidence. We have no extensive excavations in that area of before 5,000 B.C.

Rebecca: The 'sacred script' that you translated from the Goddess culture, did it ever develop, as far as you know, into sentences or phrases?

Marija: Again, that's for the future to decide. It is possible that it was a syllabic script and it would have probably developed into something if it were not for the culture's destruction. The script is lost in most of Europe and it is the eastern and central Europe where we have most signs preserved. In the Bronze Age, in Cyprus and in Crete, the script persisted which is much related to what it was earlier in the 5th Millennium B.C. Some is preserved but we do not have very clear links yet because of this culture change.

Scholars are looking into this question and I hope it will be deciphered somehow. The difficulty is that this pre-Indo-European language is studied very little. People study substrates of languages in Greece and Italy, but mostly what they can reconstruct are place names like Knossos which is a pre-Indo-European name. The word for apple, for instance, is pre-Indo-European and so linguists little by little, word by word, discover what words are not Indo-European. Names for seeds, for various trees, plants, for animals, they're easily reconstructed. And also there exist several pre-Indo-European names for the same thing (like for the pig) and both are used; some languages use pre-Indo-European, some languages use Indo-European names, or both.

This is a field of research which should be further developed in the future and I think I am creating an influence in this area. It's extremely important to have inter-disciplinary research. For a long time in the universities, there was department, department, department, and no connection between departments. Archaeology was especially so, with no connection to linguistic studies and no connection with mythology and folklore.

Rebecca: You've talked about the need for a field of archaeo-mythology.

Marija: Yes. And when you don't ignore the other disciplines, you start seeing many more things. That is such a revelation, to see in mythology really ancient elements that you can apply to archaeology. To

some archaeologists this is not science, well, alright, let it not be science! It doesn't matter what you call it. *(laughter)*

Rebecca: Many people used to believe that language started with men in the hunt, and now there's more leaning towards the idea that it began in the home. When and how do you think language first developed?

Marija: Early, very early – lower Paleolithic. And it developed in the family. Some linguists are doing research in the earliest known words, and some formations show that certain words are very, very old and they exist all over the world.

David: You've collected a lot of European folk-tales. As creation myths are found in almost every culture in the world, have you found any that are relating to this theme?

Marija: Yes. Like, the water bird and the cosmic egg. The world starts with an egg and the water bird is bringing the egg, then the egg splits and one part of it becomes earth and the other part becomes sky.

David: Have you found any Lithuanian folk-tales to correlate with the story of Adam and Eve?

Marija: No. But it's interesting that Adam's first wife was Lilith. And who was Lilith? She was a bird of prey, the Vulture Goddess of Death and Regeneration. She was the one who later became the witch, so she was very powerful. She flew away. He could not control her. Then the second wife was made from his rib, so she was naturally obedient and stayed with him. *(laughter)*

Rebecca: There are so many transmutations of the Goddess in mythology and folklore developing from a positive image into a negative one. Do you see this as a conscious attempt to distort the feminine?

Marija: Yes it is. This is really Christianity's doing, because they felt the danger. They demonized the one who was the most powerful. The one who could perform many things, who was connected with the atmospheric happenings, with rains and storms. So this is the Goddess who rules over death and regeneration, the one who became the witch. So she was really powerful and in the days of the Inquisition, she is described as really dangerous.

From various descriptions you can sense that there was fear. She could control male sexuality, for instance, she could cut the moon and stop it growing, she was the balancer of the life powers. She could do a lot of damage, this Goddess. But you must understand *why* she was doing this. She could not allow things to grow forever, she had to stop, she caused the death in order to have the cycle from the beginning. She is the main regenerator of the whole world, of all of nature.

Rebecca: So the patriarchal culture had to make people afraid of her, so they would abandon her.

Marija: Yes. In the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, which are critical for this change, she became a Satan, a monster. This image is still with us. In each country she is more or less preserved. In the Basque, she is still there and very much alive. She is a vulture, she lives in caves. And sometimes shepherds arrange Christian Science crosses to remove the vultures. *(laughter)*

David: You have been largely responsible for the reemergence of Goddess consciousness in the Western hemisphere. How do you feel about the way that this perspective is being interpreted socially and politically?

Marija: The interpretation of Goddess in some cases is overdone a little bit. I cannot see that the Goddess as she was can be reconstructed and returned to our lives, but we have to take the best that we can seize. The best understanding is of divinity itself. The Christian God punishes and is angry and does not fit into our times at all. We need something better, we need something closer, we need something that we can touch and we need some compassion, some love, and also a return to the nature of things.

Through an understanding of what the Goddess was, we can better understand nature and we can build our ideologies so that it will be easier for us to live. We have to be grateful for what we have, for all the beauty, and the Goddess is exactly that. Goddess is nature itself. So I think this should be returned to humanity. I don't think that Christianity will continue for a very long time, but it's just like patriarchy, it's not easy to get rid of. *(laughter)* But somehow, from the bottom up, it's coming.

Rebecca: The patriarchy has been around for about five thousand years compared to the Goddess culture which was around for possibly millions. Why did it endure for so long?

Marija: Because of what I've been talking about. It was natural to have this kind of divinity and it is absolutely unnatural to create a punishing God and warriors who are stimulating our bad instincts.

David: A lot of the major themes you discuss: life-giving, the renewing of the eternal earth, death and regeneration, energy unfolding, are well-known archetypal themes that occur during a psychedelic experience. I'm curious about whether you think that the Goddess-orientated cultures incorporated the use of mushrooms or some kind of psychoactive plant into their rituals, and do you take seriously Terence McKenna's notion that the use of psychedelics was the secret that was lost at Çatal Hüyük?

Marija: I'm sure they had it. This knowledge still exists in rituals like Eleusis in Greece where now it's clear that psychedelics were used. From the depiction of mushrooms, maybe you can judge that this was sacred, but this was perhaps not the most important. From Minoan engravings on seals, for instance, you have poppies very frequently indicated. Also, poppy seeds are found in Neolithic settlements, so they were conscious about that, they were collecting, they were using and maybe growing poppies like other domestic plants.

David: Do you see it influencing the culture?

Marija: Yes. From Dionysian rituals in Greece which can go back to much earlier times you get all this dancing, excitement, always at the edge, to a frenzy, almost to craziness. That existed even in the Paleolithic times, I would guess, but what they used is difficult to reconstruct. We have the poppy seeds, alright. Mushrooms? Maybe. But what else? The hard evidence is not preserved by archaeological record. It's disappeared.

Rebecca: What do you think are the signifying differences between a culture, like the Goddess culture, which views time as cyclical, as opposed to a culture like ours which sees time as linear, progressing towards some waiting future?

Marija: It's much easier to live when you think of this cyclicity. I think it's crazy to think of a linear development like in the European beliefs in life after death – if you're a king, you will stay a king, and if you're a hero, you'll stay a hero. *(laughter)*

Rebecca: That aspect of the Goddess culture, the idea that things do travel in cycles. Do you think this made them much more philosophical about death?

Marija: Much more philosophical. And it's a very good philosophy. What else can you think? This is the best. And the whole of evolution is based so much upon this thinking, on regeneration of life and stimulation of life-powers. This is the main thing that we're interested in. To preserve life-powers, to awaken them each Spring, to see that they continue and that life thrives and flourishes.

David: What relevance do you think that understanding our ancient past to dealing with the problems facing the world today?

Marija: Well, it's time to be more peaceful, to calm down, *(laughter)* and this philosophy is pacifying somehow, bringing us to some harmony with nature where we can learn to value things. And knowing that there were cultures which existed for a long time without wars is important, because most twentieth-century people think that wars were always there.

There are books still stressing this fact and suggesting such crazy ideas that agriculture and war started at the same time. They say that when villages started to grow, the property had to be defended, but that is nonsense! There was property, but it was communal property. Actually, it was a sort of communism in the best sense of the word. It could not exist in the twentieth-century. And also they believed that in death you are equal. I like this idea very much. You don't have to be queen or a king once your bones are collected and mixed together with other bones. *(laughter)*

David: As rebirth is one of the major themes of your work, what do you personally feel happens to human consciousness after death?

Marija: Maybe in the way the old Europeans were thinking. That the life-energy continues to a certain degree, it does not disappear. Individual forms disappear and that's the end.

David: Do you think part of your individuality perseveres?

Marija: Well, that's what I leave around me now, my influence, what I've said in my books – this will continue for some time. So it does not completely die out.

Rebecca: Are you optimistic that a partnership society can be achieved once again?

Marija: I don't know if I'm optimistic. In a way I think I am, otherwise it would be difficult to live – you have to have hope. But that the development will be slow, is clear. It very much depends on who is

in the government. Our spiritual life is so full of war images. Children are from the very beginning taught about shooting and killing. So the education has to change, television programs have to change. There are signs for that, there are voices appearing. So you should be optimistic somehow.

David: Marija, if you could condense your life's work into a basic message, what would that message be?

Marija: Well, I don't know if I can say it in one sentence, but maybe the reconstruction of the meaning and functions of the Goddess is one of my major contributions. It happened to be me and not somebody else. It was just fate – Laima – that led me. (*laughter*)

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- <http://www.levity.com/mavericks/gim-int.htm> – Introduction
- <http://levity.com/mavericks/gimbut.htm> – Interview
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