

Goddess Mystery Cults and the Miracle of Minyan Prehistoric Greece

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The Path of the Serpent

By

Dionysious Psilopoulos

**Cambridge
Scholars
Publishing**



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This book first published 2023

Cambridge Scholars Publishing

Lady Stephenson Library, Newcastle upon Tyne, NE6 2PA, UK

British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

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ISBN (10): 1-5275-9118-2

ISBN (13): 978-1-5275-9118-9

To the persecuted spirit of ancient Greek wisdom, the eternal
Sophia: may it soon arise like the Phoenix from its ashes

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like first to express my gratitude to the Anthropological Association of Greece and specifically to its founder, the legendary paleoanthropologist Aris Poulianos, and his son Nikos Poulianos and his wife Dafne Poulianou, for their gracious permission to quote from the master's pioneering scholarship. My deepest gratitude and respect also go to Athens University Emeritus Professor Ilias Mariolakos and to Livani Publishing Organization (especially to Giota Livani) for allowing me to use Mariolakos's impressive and groundbreaking scholarship in the field of Greek geomythology, as evinced in his first two volumes of *Greek Geomythology* (2018 and 2021). A big thank you to the National Bank of Greece Cultural Foundation for allowing me to quote from the classic work by the late archaeologist and scholar of Greek prehistory, Dimitrios R. Theocharis, titled *Neolithic Hellas* (1973), and its subsequent 1981 edition, *Neolithic Civilization*. A special thank you to former Director of the Ephorate of Antiquities of Arkadia and Lakonia, archaeologist Theodoros Spyropoulos, who has allowed me to quote generously from *Amphion* (1981) and his three-volume masterpiece *Lakedaimon* (2013). My deepest appreciation also goes to Professor of Greek history and Archaeology Michael B. Cosmopoulos for allowing me to quote from his impressive *Bronze Age Eleusis and the Origins of the Eleusinian Mysteries* (2015). Lastly, I extend my gratitude to archaeologist Liana Souvaltzi and to Aegiis Publications (especially to Polyxeni Kyriakakou) for allowing me to use her groundbreaking scholarship relating to her discovery of Alexander the Great's tomb in the Siwa oasis.

One cannot help but feel respect and admiration for scholars such as Poulianos, Spyropoulos, Souvaltzi, and Mariolakos, whose selfless love for Greece led them to forge challenging pathways and to clash with the academic and even the political establishment.

My thanks also to my friend and copyeditor extraordinaire Michel Pharand for his valuable suggestions, and to my friend and scholar Patrick Quinn for our many stimulating discussions during the writing of this book.

Lastly, I am very grateful to my family for their moral support and especially to my wife for the endless hours of silence she had to endure....

Every effort has been made to trace and contact all rights holders whose works have been cited in this book. I will gladly rectify any omissions at the earliest opportunity.

INTRODUCTION

The supreme meaning is great and small, it is as wide as the space of the starry Heaven and as narrow as the cell of the living body.

—Carl G. Jung, *The Red Book: Liber Novus*, translated by Mark Kyburz, John Peck, and Sonu Shamdasani

In the beginning it was the Goddess and not the god who created the heavens and the Earth. In the Pelasgian Orphic theology her name was Eurynome or Goddess Nykta (Night), the mother of gods and mortals, the mother and Goddess of everything (*Hymn to Night* 1-2).¹ Eurynome, associated with the noetic plane, coupled with Ophion, the serpent, and laid the Universal Egg. From the breaking of that egg, the explosion of this raw matter—the big bang—emerged Protogonos, Eros, or Phanes, the manifestation of the physical universe. Eurynome and Ophion ruled the world from Olympos, until the time when Ophion, disregarding the sovereignty of the Goddess, claimed that he was the sole creator of the universe. Ophion's claim angered the Goddess, who “bruised his head with her heel, kicked out his teeth, and banished him to the dark caves below the earth” (Graves, *GM* I.27).²

In the Hesiodic theology, accepted by patriarchal Olympian religion, “Chaos gave birth to Erebus and black Night; then Erebus mated with Night and made her pregnant and she in turn gave birth to Ether and Day” (123-125, translated by Athanassakis). What Hesiod says is that even before the emergence of Night, the absolute darkness necessary for the creation of light, Night's mother, Chaos, forms the original maternal womb that generates universes. Indeed, after Chaos, the “broad-breasted” Gaia was born, the “firm seat of all the immortals” (116-117). Gaia, the ultimate power, the genitrix of “humans and the blessed gods” (*Orphic Hymn to Gaia*), represents not only the Earth but the Universe itself. She “first gave birth to starry Ouranos [sky]” (126), the seas and the mountains “without mating in sweet love” (132). Then, in compliance with the new Greek religious patriarchal order, Gaia mated with Ouranos “her match in size” (127) and gave birth to the twelve Titans, the three kyclopes, and the three-hundred Hundred-Handers, that is, the elements or basic laws which govern the sensible universe.

Gaia, Rhea, Nykta, Demeter, Persephone, Hekate, Aphrodite, and Artemis are all names and images of the Great Goddess. Specifically, Gaia, Rhea, Nykta, Aphrodite, and Demeter are all described in their respective Orphic hymns as the mothers of the gods and mortals. In *Eleusis* (1967), Hungarian Classicist Carl Kerényi (1897–1973), quoting Orphic theogony and commenting on the association between Rhea and Demeter, asserts that, “after becoming the mother of Zeus, she who had formerly been Rhea became Demeter” (133). Demeter or Da³-meter or Deo, “the mother of everything, the goddess with the multiple names” (*Hymn to Demeter* 40), literally means Mother Earth, Gaia, or Ge (Γαία-Γη) and meter (μήτηρ). De-meter or Dameter is the Great Mother Goddess whose cult thrived not only in Old Europe, as distinguished Lithuanian-American archaeologist and expert in European prehistory and matriarchal societies, Marija Gimbutas (1921–1994), argues, but also in the pre-Deukalion-Flood Aegean region, known as Aegeis or Pelasgia, extending from the Adriatic Sea to the Asia Minor coast and from the Balkans to Minoan Krete. Prehistoric Aegean region tribes—Pelasgians, Lykians, Karians, Lydians, Minoans, and mainland Minyans—most probably adhered to the cult of the Great Goddess. In *The Great Mother* (1955), Jungian psychologist Erich Neumann (1905–1960) asserts that ceramic figurines of the Great Goddess have been discovered in a wide area “extending from western Russia to the Balkans and central Europe. They originate in a matriarchally accented cultural milieu, related in all probability to Aegean culture and its precursors” (106). Moreover, Neumann adds that these figurines discovered from “Siberia to the Pyrenees . . . presuppose the presence of a unitary ‘world view’ centering round the Great Goddess” (94).

Demeter, the feminine principle and grain goddess, civilized the world, providing humanity with its first laws, the ‘thesmoi’, and taught the blessing of agriculture. Greek mythology reports that Demeter sent Triptolemos, her ‘three-fold’ warrior, priest, and apostle, to spread the cultivation of grain, or civilization, to the world. This civilizing order of the Goddess, however, was disrupted by patriarchy’s gradual domination, and the Goddess’ unity was replaced by the rigidity and abstraction of male war-like mentality and dry reasoning. As Neumann observes, the Great Goddess, “as a feminine figure of wisdom, was disenthroned and repressed. She survived only secretly, for the most part on heretical and revolutionary bypaths” (331).

The Path of the Serpent attempts to trace these secret bypaths along the history of the western chthonic esoteric tradition, from ancient times to the present. The esoteric tradition began with the development of

the religious feeling in human beings, related primarily to the concept of time. The Great Goddess as a Moon Goddess and a Goddess of the starry night is also the Goddess of time and space. Neumann asserts that it is the moon and not the sun which is “the true chronometer of the primordial era” (226), that “not only the alternation of day and night but also the changes of the months, seasons, and years are subordinated to the all-powerful will of the Great Mother” (226). The Mother Goddess, symbolized by the ‘uoboros’, the snake that bites its tail, is, according to Neumann, the “Great Round” (18) in which all opposites are reconciled and synthesized. The Goddess, uniting the four elements, the microcosm and macrocosm, represents totality and unity, the synthesis, or the psychic wholeness necessary for humanity’s physical and psychical wellbeing. The occult was probably an attempt to express the ineffable unity observed in physical phenomena identified with the Mother Goddess as well as the awe and ecstasy early humans felt when surrounded and intoxicated by the marvels of nature. In its early evolutionary phase, humanity developed a sense of inner unity which matured with human beings’ observation of the basic scheme of birth, death, and rebirth (later expressed in the mystery cults) and discerned also in the astronomical phenomena related to the sun and moon and in the cyclical process of nature. The esoteric tradition probably originated from humanity’s yearning to enunciate this strange, ineffable feeling of unity experienced within, which was inevitably identified with the causeless archetypal logos or principle that cannot be communicated through words but can only be felt. Christian theologian Hippolytus of Rome (c. 170–c. 235 CE) cryptically observes in his commentary on the Eleusinian Mysteries that this is the principle or state of consciousness or divine child achieved by the initiate at the last stage of the Mysteries. It is “the perfect great light that comes from the ineffable” (V.9). Since prehistoric times, the emissaries of the ineffable have been the shamans, priests, and priestesses of the Goddess. Those sensitive individuals, having mastered the techniques of ecstasy, transcended everyday consciousness, crossed the abyss, and united with the Divine Centre, Universal Rhythm, ‘Incomprehensible Divinity’, ‘Supreme Meaning’,⁴ or Great Mother Goddess.

In those early matriarchal societies where the unity observed in heaven and earth was externalized and deified in the image of the Mother Goddess, the esoteric tradition complemented the exoteric religion. The purpose of the esoteric tradition’s rituals (dromena, or actions) was to make the initiate feel the ineffable unity taught by the exoteric religion of the Mother Goddess: the divine circle of birth, death, and rebirth. In its early phase, the esoteric tradition was not necessarily ‘occult’ in a

derogatory sense. As long as the exoteric religions adhered to the principle of unity personified by the Goddess, the esoteric tradition retained its esotericism only to complement the exoteric religion, without any conflict whatsoever. However, with the rise of patriarchal religions, the faction of the esoteric tradition that adhered to the cult of the Mother Goddess became of necessity occult and thus acquired a subversive, conspiratorial character. In *The Prophets and the Goddess*, endeavouring to outline the history of the western esoteric tradition, I realized that it comprises two inimical factions: the chthonic and the solar. The former refers to the esoteric gnosis permeated by the principles and values of the Great Goddess, which after the rise of patriarchy was restricted only to the lower principle, the earth, the chthonic. Naturally, the philosophy of the Goddess-oriented tradition is synonymous with motherly functions: the giving and protection of life, nurturing, love, understanding, empathy, and peace. The adherents of this tradition celebrate the artistic spirit, imagination, intuition, and promote individual freedom. However, followers of the solar esoteric tradition moved away from the original hearth of the Goddess and adopted the principles dictated by patriarchy, with an emphasis on a war ethos, rigidity, and strict conformity to rules. The initiates of both the chthonic and solar esoteric traditions, having access to the world's secret history, operate through secret societies and disseminate their eclectic knowledge only to a privileged elite. In addition to the chthonic and solar initiates, 'Church Mythologists' were also actively involved in the creation of solar Christianity. With only limited or no access to the esoteric tradition, Church Mythologists misinterpreted or interpreted literally the abstruse metaphysical and mythological truths found in the esoteric corpus. As a result, they alienated solar Christianity from its esoteric roots, transforming it into an institution or mechanism for manipulating the masses.

The western esoteric tradition's principal spring lies in the technologically and culturally advanced Proto-Greek civilization that developed in the Aegean region, perhaps even before Deukalion's Flood. When the Pleistocene Extinction Event, or Deukalion's Flood, occurred around 12,500 years BP, followed by the Younger Dryas cooling period, the golden age of humanity became history and myth. The technologically advanced knowledge became a memory which faded over the passing generations. Fragments of this knowledge were preserved and later disseminated allegorically in the Mysteries of the Goddess. It is within the realm of possibility that the survivors who had found refuge in the caves, the womb of Mother Earth, felt ironically betrayed by the Goddess, and when they emerged out of their subterranean shelters turned naturally to

the Sun for comfort. The Goddess was forgotten in the mists of time, became an archetype and receded into the unconscious, while the wrathful gods gradually emerged in the history of humanity.

Prehistoric Orphic Proto-Greek initiates and scientists and the historic philosophers that followed held no illusions about the origins of humanity. Aware of the world's secret history, they knew that the Great Mother Goddess, the Genitrix, was the supreme divinity, the 'alien' or 'unknown god'. They also knew that the material universe and humans were not necessarily created exclusively by that 'alien god', but by lesser creator gods, mere demiourgoi, highly advanced entities, but entities nevertheless. Moreover, they were monotheists, distinguishing between the original genitrix⁵ and the lesser deities, whom they considered cosmic forces or embodiments of natural phenomena, or personifications of natural powers.

After Deukalion's Flood, or the Fall of humanity, the prehistoric theological and technologically advanced knowledge of the pre-flood Proto-Greeks became esoteric and was transmitted through the channels of the chthonic esoteric tradition. Thus, the chthonic esoteric tradition not only exhibits the ineffable unity or sound of silence experienced by the initiates in the mysteries of the Goddess, but also carries the hidden and forgotten knowledge of pre-flood Greek philosophers and scientists. This knowledge, transmitted by prehistoric Orphics, Hesiod, and Homer to pre-Socratic philosophers and classical Greek scientists, as discussed in the appendix, includes primarily information on Humanity's origins, and the peculiar nature of the illusionary material prison world in which humans live. Moreover, this knowledge includes information about the deceptive mind, one that distorts the doors of perception, making humans perceive a false dualistic reality, concealing the truth that we live in a world where nothing exists independently, in a world of energy and light. Significantly, ancient scientific knowledge has come full circle and embraced quantum physics' recent discoveries that we live in a mental interrelated universe where reality is contextual and everything flows, that the truth lies in complementarity, in the integration of opposites.

The enigma of the Fall is related to the origins of humanity. At a Christian religious level, the Fall refers to humanity's expulsion from a paradisiacal state following the intervention by the Serpent, archangel Samael, Satan, or Lucifer, humanity's arch-enemy and God's adversary. In psychological terms, this paradisiacal state, or the Hesiodic Golden Age of humanity, stands for the womb of the mother, the original paradise from which humans were released into life, the world of experience. But it also represents the unity represented by the Goddess, the feminine principle, a

unity lost by the rise of the patriarchal principle, and by the development and rise of the analytical powers of the left hemisphere of the human brain. Historically, humanity's Fall perhaps reflects the incredible catastrophe that humanity experienced when comet fragments hit the Earth during Deukalion's Flood. The comet, appearing in the night sky as a shining serpent or dragon throwing fire, was identified in our collective unconscious with evil, and therefore the serpent naturally became humanity's arch-enemy.

The *Path of the Serpent* primarily traces the history of the chthonic esoteric tradition, while at the same time follows the trail that the Serpent left in its struggle to extinguish the light of the Goddess. It is an attempt to trace and identify through the centuries the nature of the forces that manipulate humanity, the forces struggling against the re-integration of the human psyche. Ophion or Ophioneus, the Serpent who hatched Eurynome's 'universal egg', who usurped the place of the Goddess and became cosmocrator, the creator-ruler of the world, is identified with Jehovah, the Archon of the World, the 'serpent god',⁶ the force that suppresses poetic spirit and individual freedom and demands obedience to dogma and rigidity, to sheer power and strength, and dedication only to the individual self. Thus the chthonic esoteric tradition becomes the harbinger of the true inner religion, one that helps initiates feel and liberate themselves from the deceptive mind and embrace the Goddess. The Great Mother Goddess—the true, incomprehensible, and only divinity—becomes the metaphor or archetype for the forces that show compassion and respect for every single living organism in the Cosmos, a metaphor for humanity's spiritual transformation that leads to a psychic wholeness and liberation from the deceptive mind and matrix.

In the seventh book of the *Republic*, Plato, an initiate to the Eleusinian Mysteries and adherent of the chthonic esoteric tradition, presents the allegory of the cave. The cave is the material phenomenal world in which humans are imprisoned. They are presented as hypnotized since they are fixed in one place, staring only at the wall in front of them, with their necks and legs in chains. Consequently, they perceive as truth only the shadows of the objects, handled by the puppeteers, cast by the fire on the wall. Humans, ignorant of the controllers' existence, fully conditioned by the dogmas perpetuated by the latter, have lost their individual conscience, ideals, or principles. They have become like sheep, an ignorant mass of indifferent nihilists absorbed in their work routine and consumerism, believing that they are free when in fact they are totally controlled, mere puppets in the hands of their masters.

Similarly, Greek-Armenian initiate, philosopher, and mystic George Gurdjieff (1866–1949), in the allegory of the evil magician, narrated in his disciple Peter D. Ouspensky's (1878–1947) *In Search of the Miraculous* (1950), asserts that human beings cannot achieve real consciousness because they are asleep, imprisoned in a mode of sleeping or limited consciousness induced by an evil magician. To stop his sheep from running away, the magician-shepherd has hypnotized them into believing that they are immortal, free, and that even when he slaughters them, he means the best for them.

To awake from this dream-like state, escape the cave's darkness and emerge in the light, one must explore and eventually integrate the human soul. As Gurdjieff would say, we first need to understand the 'machine'. The aphorism 'Know Thyself', inscribed on the temple of Apollo at Delphi, provides the key to understanding and synthesizing the two distinct forces that exist within us and form the human psyche. The knowledge of the self and its relationship to the surrounding world, the macrocosm, will lead us to Aristotle's 'eudaimonia' (ευδαιμονία), the highest happiness or good. The exercise of virtue (ἀρετή) will create the empathy needed for the obliteration of the Ego and the resulting negative passions. This knowledge will lead us to the discovery of truth,⁷ to the remembrance of our divine descent, to the divine spark within us, and to the embrace of the Mother Goddess. By charting, acknowledging, or assimilating these two powers, a sacred marriage takes place in the human psyche. The product of this marriage is a divine child, and the birth of this child, or new state of consciousness, liberates humans from the forces of inertia and repression.

The Goddess's Mystery cults culminate in the birth of the divine child. As we discuss in the second chapter on the Eleusinian Mysteries, the initiates, in order to discover their true selves, were led to the depths of their psyche. When in the midst of darkness, the blazing light of the 'midnight sun' purges the negative emotions and the initiates' deceptive mind, the veil of the illusionary world is lifted, and the mystai perceive the world as it really is: pure white sparkling energy, or infinite, to paraphrase the visionary poet and mystes William Blake. The initiates realize their divine status, and this realization is metaphorically the child born from the sacred marriage between Demeter and Zeus. The new state of consciousness makes Anthropos⁸ more than Anthropos, a state that endows humanity with god-like status.

Like the Eleusinian Mysteries, the Samothracian or Kabeirian Mysteries, discussed in the third chapter, were held in honour of the goddesses Demeter and Persephone. At some point in their long history,

when the chthonic esoteric tradition had to yield before the rising tide of patriarchy, following the dictates of the solar esoteric tradition, Kadmilos, the sun, becomes the dying and resurrected god, replacing Persephone, the seed, the dying and resurrected Goddess of the Eleusinian Mysteries. Like Isis, Persephone looks for her son and lover Kadmilos for nine days; when she finds him, she unites with him in a sacred marriage, and the light and grace of the Goddess returns to the island of Samothrace and the initiates' soul. Having witnessed the sacred marriage, the initiate transcends the opposites and experiences spiritual enlightenment and wholeness, an ecstatic experience that leads to the embrace of the Goddess and a new state of consciousness.

The origin of the Orphic Mysteries in the Aegean region is lost in the mists of time. As we discuss in the fourth chapter, at that prehistoric time, when war was likely raging between the adherents of the sun and the moon, a Greek theologos and religious reformer tried to achieve the impossible: to create a religion that would reconcile and unite the two camps. Orpheus was a priest of Apollo, a sun worshiper, and adherent of the solar esoteric tradition. To bring balance to the world and to the human psyche, Orpheus ingeniously created a religion based on the god Dionysos. Dionysos is not, however, for Orpheus the Supreme Being or First Principle, the true 'unknown' or 'Incomprehensible Divinity'. Orpheus does not describe in his theology the nature of this absolute deity because he considers it inexplicable and incomprehensible to the human mind. For Orpheus, the androgynous god Dionysos becomes a catalyst that reconciles the two opposing powers, the two pre-cosmic principles symbolized in Orphic theology by water and earth (matter). Following the Orphic Hieronyman⁹ theogony and cosmogony, from these two forces or principles, time, 'chronos' (χρόνος), is created, giving birth to Ether (Αἰθήρ) and Chaos. From Chaos the Cosmic Egg is born, and from that Egg the triple god Phanes, known also as Eros, Erikapaios, Protogonos, or Metis, emerges. The 'egg', as Neumann observes, is "the archetypal symbol of world creation. As the container of opposites it may, for example, be divided into two halves, white and black, with heaven above and the earth below" (42). Indeed, commenting on the Orphic theogony, Pope and bishop of Rome Clement I (c. 35–99 CE), asserts that, within the periphery of the Egg, Phanes, a hermaphrodite being, was created (qtd. in Mead, *Orpheus* 162–163). In his commentary on Plato's *Timaeos*, Proklos also claims that Phanes, Erikapaios, or Metis was believed to have been a female creatrix (II.130).¹⁰ The androgynous nature of Phanes or Dionysos, emphasized in Orphic theology, suggests a religion that relies thoroughly on the conjunction of opposites, on totality, on a balance that would

mystically restore dignity and humanity's god-like status. As patriarchy was gaining power, however, the titan Zeus, the serpent god, suppressed the cult of Dionysos or Phanes, and by the classical period had assumed all power to himself.

Although a 'serpent god', Zeus did not rule by fire and iron like Jehovah, who demanded from his subjects absolute obedience and servitude. He did not interfere much in the affairs of the Greeks. Zeus was, indeed, the god of the sensible universe, the sole god and father of all the gods and mortals. However, the Olympian pantheon comprised six goddesses and six gods, a gender balance that also reflects the Greeks' balanced mentality. Their passion for balance, for equality, for democracy, for moderation, for doing nothing in excess produced the superb Classical Greek civilization that we still admire today and consider the foundation of western civilization. This civilization is based on gnosis and the spirit's freedom, whereby the individual mind and not God becomes the measure of all things. Moreover, the Olympian religion was not dogmatic. There was no system or method, no rigid rules and laws dictated by a strict cast or priesthood or by a holy book. The priests could not assert their authority in the city because the city was controlled by the laws and no one was beyond the laws—not even the lawmakers. The autonomy that Greece enjoyed at that time enabled its philosophers, scientists, and theologians to probe deeply into the human psyche, the nature of the world and human existence. Inevitably, as we discuss in the second and fourth chapters, Church mythologists, responsible for the creation of patriarchal Christianity, turned to the inexhaustible Greek source of Orphic religious knowledge to establish Christianity's metaphysical foundations. Christianity would never have had a chance to stand as a universal religion were it not for the broad shoulders of Greek philosophers, theologians, and Greek civilization in general—a civilization that the religion of love and tolerance, however, showing her gratitude, destroyed.

Classical civilization was not born overnight. As we discuss in the fifth and seventh chapters, its roots lie deep in Greek prehistory, reaching back the Upper Palaeolithic era. Following Plato's lead, it appears that even at that period, prior to Deukalion's Flood, there existed a technologically advanced civilization. In Plato's *Timaeos*, the Egyptian priest, having admitted to Solon that Athens was a thousand years older than Egypt, extols the Greeks' ancestors inhabiting the Aegean region as "the finest and best of all the races of humankind [that] once lived" (23c). He reports that the Athenians, who had a technological civilization equal if not superior to the Atlanteans, had defeated the latter and liberated the Egyptians from the yoke of the Atlanteans before Deukalion's Flood (25c).

In *Maps of the Ancient Sea Kings* (1966), History Professor Charles H. Hapgood (1904–1982) describes this lost civilization as a “worldwide civilization, the mapmakers of which mapped virtually the entire globe with a uniform general level of technology, with similar methods, equal knowledge of mathematics, and probably the same sorts of instruments” (145). Hapgood refers to an anonymous sophisticated “nation of seafarers,” with technology for calculating longitude that the Greeks and Phoenicians did not possess (49). Because of the Flood’s destructive rage and the Aegean region’s geoclimatic conditions (discussed extensively in the sixth chapter along with the Floods of Ogygos and Dardanos), no clear evidence can be discerned of that superb pre-Deukalion-Flood Aegean civilization. Oral tradition has preserved the memory of the Great Flood, commemorated in Classical Greece in the festival of Anthesteria, and, as Greek folklore testifies, has even reached modern Greece, as examined in the sixth chapter.

Possible evidence of the technological superiority of pre-Flood civilization is found in Homer’s epics. Aside from the unquestionable, incredible advanced astronomical knowledge he displays in his epics, Homer possibly also reveals, as we discuss in the seventh chapter, some advanced technological achievements in the pre-Flood Aegean region. As we examine in the fifth and seventh chapters, the descendants of this civilization—third-millennium prehistoric Greek Minyans, Minoans, then Mycenaeans—being excellent navigators with advanced astronomical knowledge, in seeking metals and other raw materials, conducted extensive trade and cultural relations with many northern and western European countries, even sailing overseas to the American continent and India.

The maritime knowledge of the Minyans and Minoans, ancestors of the Mycenaeans, followed a tradition of indigenous development lasting thousands of years. The discovery mainly of obsidian tools in the Mesolithic layers of Franchthi Cave, tools originating from Melos Island, led renowned British archaeologist Colin Renfrew to acknowledge that even from the ninth millennium there is clear evidence of an extensive sea trade of raw materials in the Aegean (“Εμπόριο και Τεχνική Εξειδίκευση” [“Trade and Technical Specialization”] 180). Moreover, in *Neolithic Hellas* (1973), prominent pioneering Greek archaeologist in Greek prehistory and an expert in Mesolithic Thessaly, Dimitrios R. Theocharis (1919–1977), fully demonstrated that there is no gap between the Palaeolithic and Neolithic periods in Greece, and that it was during the Mesolithic period, a truly transitional one, that productive economy spread

to Greece (24). Theocharis also outlined the cultural Neolithic continuity and autochthony of the Aegean region's prehistoric inhabitants.

The biological continuity and autochthony of the Aegean region's prehistoric inhabitants, discussed in the fifth and seventh chapters, has also been noted by distinguished Greek paleoanthropologist Aris Poulianos (b. 1924). In *The Origin of the Greeks* (1962), Poulianos reveals the uninterrupted indigenous biological continuity of the prehistoric and modern Greek populations. Moreover, based on his research at the Petralona Cave in Chalkidiki, he dismisses the 'Out of Africa' theory and claims that modern Europeans descend from the *Archanthropus Europaeus* Petraloniensis, dating from 700,000 BP, according to artefacts discovered in the cave.

Geology Professor Emeritus at Athens University Ilias Mariolakos also supports the Aegean region's inhabitants' autochthony. In his pioneering *Greek Geom mythology* (2 vols., 2018 and 2021), Mariolakos demonstrates that Greek gods are born and bred of the people living in the Aegean region, that their creation is associated with the tremendous changes that occurred in the physico-geological environment due to the large climatic change observed on Earth between 18,000 and 6000 BP, and mainly due to the rise of the Aegean Sea level by approximately 125 metres during that period (II.14).

Prehistoric and modern Greeks' biological continuity has also been affirmed by genetic research, as we discuss in the fifth chapter. Modern population genetics has revealed that modern Greek DNA goes back uninterruptedly to at least the Neolithic period, that there was no genetic difference between Minoans and Mycenaeans, that Kretans are indigenous and did not descend from Libya or Egypt but directly from third-millennium Minoans, and that the Greeks have not been racially or genetically influenced by other peoples, but indeed are the ones who genetically influenced other peoples, especially those of Southern Italy.

Prehistoric Minyans' and Minoans' remarkable achievements are explored in the fifth and seventh chapters. Mariolakos, masterfully exploring the thalassocracy of the Minoans and Mycenaeans, has proven that third-millennium prehistoric Greeks, long before the Trojan War, were not limited only to the Mediterranean, but using the Atlantic currents had reached, for purposes of trade, the copper mines of northern Europe and North America.

Aside from the acknowledged thalassocracy and advanced Minoan and Mycenaean cultures, Minyan technical achievements in the mainland are equally significant and are explored in the seventh chapter. In his pioneering three-volume *Lakedaimon* (2013), and also in *Amphion*

(1981), former Director of the Ephorate of Antiquities of Arkadia and Lakonia, archaeologist Theodoros Spyropoulos, making mythology history, proved that the Minyan tomb of the mythical Dioskouroi (sons of Zeus), Zethos, and Amphion in Thebes, dates from the third millennium. This unique monument, in the shape of a step pyramid and therefore older than Cheops's Pyramid and Zoser's Step Pyramid, is also an underground monument, as tunnels, still unexplored, run through the interior of the hill. Moreover, the hydraulic works in Kopais, the pyramidoid structures in Hellinikon, and the Agiorgitika and Steno of Tegea metallurgy sites, the oldest sites in the European region, are also dated, according to Spyropoulos, from the third millennium, proof that the Minyans, ancestors of the Mycenaeans, had developed a highly technically advanced civilization.

Conventional archaeologists did not welcome Spyropoulos's and Poulianos's radical conclusions. As we discuss in the seventh chapter, their discoveries were at best ignored or met with contemptuous indifference, and at worst, as in Poulianos's case, with politically motivated slander and false accusations. Also examined in the seventh chapter is the similar case of Greek archaeologist Liana Souvaltzi, whose announcement in 1995 of the alleged discovery of Alexander the Great's tomb in the oasis of Siwa in Egypt was greeted with unjustified hostility by the political and archaeological establishment.

In demonstrating prehistoric Greeks' cultural continuity and autochthony since at least the Upper Palaeolithic and Neolithic periods, Theocharis, Poulianos, Mariolakis, and Spyropoulos solved the Indo-European problem. The complexity of this problem is discussed in the fifth chapter, where we suggest that prehistoric Proto-Greek tribes inhabiting the Aegean region were indigenous, sharing the same customs, manners, and religion, and most probably the same language. Despite cultural diffusion, intermixtures, and low-scale migrations, no clear evidence indicates that at some point in Greek prehistory exogenous populations from the Pontic-Caspian-Steppe area or from the East marched violently and massively into the Aegean region, bringing with them their own language and culture and assimilating local populations. The Aegean region's Proto-Greek inhabitants, ancestors of the Minyans, Minoans, Mycenaeans, and Classical Greeks, had developed an advanced cultural and technological civilization. Because of the planet's extremely unfavourable climatic changes, in the Aegean region specifically, from 18,000 to 6000 BP, this civilization was forgotten. In Plato's *Timaeos*, the Egyptian priest explains to Solon that the Athenians had forgotten their lineage "because for many generations the survivors [of Deukalion's

Flood] moved on without leaving a written testimony” (23.18-19). Therefore, the Athenians had to “begin again like children, in complete ignorance of what happened in our part of the world [Egypt] or in yours [Aegean Region] in early times” (23.7-9). The fact that they left no written records after the Flood does not mean that they had forgotten their language; knowledge was simply passed from generation to generation via oral tradition. The language of the pre-Flood Aegean region was a *lingua franca*, a proto-language that should be called Proto-Aegean rather than Proto-Indo-European. As the region’s dominant language, Proto-Aegean linguistic elements abound in almost all European languages, even in faraway India, where prehistoric Greeks had established administrative centres for trade purposes, as ancient historians, geographers, and even Homer testify.

Prehistoric Greek knowledge was eventually transmitted through the ages and reached Classical and Hellenistic Greece. Classical intangible cultural heritage, discussed in the first chapter along with the prevalence of the Great Goddess in the consciousness of ancient and modern Greeks, transmitted through oral tradition and recorded by modern Greek folklore, reached modern Greece and even the land of the Zulu in Africa. Classical Greek scientists, as discussed in chapter seven, having access to the gnosis disseminated by the Goddess Mystery Cults, rediscovered the gnosis of their prehistoric ancestors. The Antikythera Mechanism miracle, the first analog computer in history, required a combination of advanced astronomical knowledge, mechanical skills, and mathematical ingenuity—a combined knowledge requiring considerable time to mature and develop.

This advanced knowledge, however, ended abruptly when the forces of inertia marching with Alaric (370–410 CE), King of the Visigoths, invaded Greece in 396 BCE, extinguishing the light of Eleusis, murdering the last Hierophant, and suspending civilization for at least 1000 years. The Logos remains lost. The Midnight Sun of the Goddess has temporarily set in the hearts of the people. But as Romantic poet and avid Hellenophile Percy Shelley (1792–1822) rhetorically asks in his “Ode to the West Wind,” “If Winter comes, can Spring be far behind?”

Notes

¹ Unless otherwise indicated, all translations from the Greek are mine.

² The same myth is narrated in the Gnostic Nag Hammadi Gospels.

³ In Dorian dialect, ‘Da’ means the Earth.

⁴ In *The Red Book*, Carl Jung uses the terms ‘Incomprehensible Divinity’ and ‘Supreme Meaning’ to express the ineffable “one God” (371), the “celestial mother” (370).

⁵ The original genitrix was described as Ἀναρχος (‘Anarchos’, without beginning), Ἀπειρος (‘Apeiros’, endless), Ἀχρονος (‘Achronos’, timeless), Ἀγέννητος (‘Agennitos’, unborn), Ἀνόλεθρος (‘Anolethros’, who cannot be ruined), and Αἰδῖος (‘Aidios’, everlasting).

⁶ In the Old Testament, Jehovah is identified as a serpent god. In Numbers, Jehovah demands that Moses “make a fiery serpent, and set it on a standard; and it shall come about, that everyone who is bitten, when he looks at it, he shall live” (21:8).

⁷ In Greek, the word ‘Α-ληθη’ (A-lethe) means the absence of forgetfulness, from the negative prefix ‘A’ and ‘lethe’, oblivion or forgetfulness.

⁸ In Greek, ‘Anthropos’ (Ἀνθρωπος; human) includes both genders. Etymologically, the word derives from ‘Ano-throskon’, suggesting one who walks with the head up, or from ‘anathron ha opope’, suggesting, as Socrates informs Hermogenes, one who contemplates or reasons what they have seen (Plato, *Kratylos* 999c)

⁹ For a more in-depth review of the Hieronyman theology see M. L. West’s *The Orphic Poems*, pp. 176-226.

¹⁰ Θήλῃς καὶ γενέτωρ κρατερός θεός Ηρικαπαῖος.

CHAPTER ONE

MOTHER RIGHT AND THE PRECEDENCE OF THE GODDESS

Whoever blasphemes against the father will be forgiven,
And whoever blasphemes against the son will be forgiven,
But whoever blasphemes against the holy spirit will not be forgiven,
Either on earth or in heaven.

—*The Gospel of Thomas*: Nag Hammadi library, Codex II.2, translated
by Martin Meyer

Swiss anthropologist and philologist Johann Jakob Bachofen's (1815–1887) *Mother Right: An Investigation of the Religious and Juridical Character of Matriarchy in the Ancient World* (1861) introduced the matriarchal hypothesis into the academic world. This theory claims that present-day patriarchal sociological structures superseded matriarchal systems; that current, dominant Abrahamic patriarchal religions, which constitute a relatively recent phenomenon, superseded a religion that worshipped the feminine principle personified in the image of the Mother Goddess, a cult that extended over a considerably long period in the history of human consciousness. Surveying the universality of the sociological phenomenon of matriarchy, Bachofen concludes that it “marks a cultural stage” (71) in human evolution. Commenting on the significance of the female in shaping early religious thought, he asserts that it “played the most active part in the propagation of most religions” (85). English poet, Egyptologist, polymath,¹ radical lecturer, freethinker, and contemporary of Bachofen, Gerald Massey (1828–1907), remembered for his controversial studies on religious origins and a less recognized proponent of the matriarchal hypothesis, similarly identifies the Mother-Goddess as the “earliest of all divinities in all lands being portrayed in the image of the reproducer that unites both Father and Mother in one person” (“Man in Search of His Soul” 5).

Bachofen's theory of prehistoric Goddess worship was further acknowledged and amplified by eminent Scottish anthropologist Sir James George Frazer (1854–1941) and by renowned and controversial British

classicist Jane Ellen Harrison (1850–1928). In *Prolegomena* (1903) and in *Themis* (1912), Harrison admits that patriarchy superseded matriarchy as a necessary step in the development of human consciousness. Zeus, “the archpatriarchal bourgeois” (*Prolegomena* 285 emphasis in original) renounced the sovereignty of the Great Goddess, ‘the Lady of the Wild Things’.² Under the new patriarchal order, as Harrison observes, “the magical potency of woman” (285) is forgotten. From an inspirer the woman becomes an enchantress, a femme fatale, a Circe, a Pandora. She who has “made all things, gods and mortals alike” (285) has become a “plaything” in the hands of impertinent gods, a slave. Similarly, in *Themis*, in her quest to discover the roots of Greek religion, Harrison delves into the chthonic cults that preceded patriarchal Olympian religion and recognizes the precedence of the Goddess over “the masculine divinities” (ix) in Greek religious consciousness. Moreover, she associates the figure of the goddess of justice Themis with the Great Goddess of the multiple names. She asserts that “behind Gaia the Mother, and above even Zeus the Father, stands always the figure of Themis” (xxii), as she is responsible for the natural order of things and world balance.

Frazer’s classic *The Golden Bough* (1890) examines the primitive, chthonic fertility cults which preceded the solar ones, thus recognizing the antiquity of ‘Mother right’. In his essay on Bachofen, distinguished American comparative mythologist Joseph Campbell (1904–1987) observes that Frazer, and Harrison recognized “an age of mother right antecedent to that of the Greek and Roman patriarchal systems” (*The Mythic Dimension* 89), that Frazer, independently and perhaps unintentionally, completed Bachofen’s quest to collect testimonies of the matrilineal tradition from all over the world.

Campbell, an ardent advocate of ‘Mother right’, recognizes the obvious: that “the God beyond God is God’s Mother” (“The Mystery Number of the Goddess” 147). Significantly, in his foreword to Gimbutas’s *The Language of the Goddess* (1989), Campbell accepts the author’s hypothesis of the precedence of the Old European Goddess culture and further stresses the need for the transformation of human consciousness and for a return to the peace and unity that the Goddess represents (xiv).

In *Aeschylus and Athens* (1941), and particularly in *Studies in Ancient Greek Society: The Prehistoric Aegean* (1949), renowned Irish classicist, Marxist philosopher and Campbell’s contemporary, George Thomson (1903–1987), applied a Marxist critique to reinterpret Greek heritage. Treading on the heels of Frazer and Harrison, Thomson provides sufficient evidence to prove the matrilineal hypothesis in the prehistoric

Aegean basin. Thomson believed that women played the key role in the development of civilization because they were the ones who initiated agriculture (*Prehistoric Aegean* 150).

English architect, classicist, and philologist Michael Ventris (1922–1956), who died prematurely in a car accident at the age of thirty-four, further advanced the matrilineal hypothesis in 1952 by deciphering the syllabic script³ ‘Linear B’, a shorthand used, according to Greek archaeologist Theodoros Spyropoulos, by special officials in the Mycenaean and Minoan palaces (*Lakedaimon* I.385). ‘Linear B’ evolved from ‘Linear A’, a script used by the Minyans and Minoans that has not yet been deciphered. By deciphering the ‘Linear B’ tablets found in Knossos and Pylos, in which the Great Goddess played the leading role, Ventris verified Bachofen’s theory. Most importantly, by proving that ‘Linear B’ is an early form of archaic Greek, Ventris demonstrated the Greek race’s antiquity and the unity and continuity of Greek national identity proving that the Minyans, Minoans, and Mycenaeans were Greeks who shared more or less the same cultural and linguistic elements.

Bachofen, Campbell, and Thomson erroneously believed that matrilineal practices derive from the Near East, “from which the agriculturally based mother right culture complex came to the isles and peninsulas of Greece and Rome” (Campbell, “Johann Jacob Bachofen” 89). This hypothesis no longer holds true. Agriculture did not develop only in the East reaching Greece afterwards, but also in the Aegean region to which Asia Minor belongs. Moreover, as the main advocate of the matrilineal hypothesis, Marija Gimbutas, has amply demonstrated, matrilineal practices have been observed in Old Europe at least since the Neolithic period, where the cult of the Great Goddess reigned supreme.

Renowned poet and scholar Robert Graves (1895–1985), unlike Frazer, Harrison, Thompson, and Gimbutas, was not a distinguished professor and academic. However, as a man of genius and by profession a Muse poet, he had intuited or “stumbled on,” as he writes in “The White Goddess” (1957) “the central secret of neolithic and Bronze Age religious faith” (*Steps* 89). The secret that Graves refers to is that of the cult of the Great Goddess that ancient Europeans worshiped. According to Graves, the Old Europeans did not worship any gods,⁴ but only the Great Goddess. In his introduction to *The Greek Myths* (1955), Graves, foreshadowing the pioneering scholarship of Gimbutas, declares that

the whole of neolithic Europe, to judge from surviving artefacts and myths, had a remarkably homogeneous system of religious ideas, based on worship of the many-titled Mother-goddess, who was also known in Syria and Libya. Ancient Europe had no gods. The Great Goddess was regarded

as immortal, changeless, and omnipotent; and the concept of Fatherhood had not been introduced into religious thought. (Vol. 1, 13)

Gimbutas, through her extensive archaeological studies, verifies Graves's hypothesis and confirms that "there is no trace of a father figure in any of the Palaeolithic periods. The life-creating power seems to have been of the Great Goddess alone" (*The Language of the Goddess* 316). In *The Goddesses and Gods of Old Europe* (1982), *The Language of the Goddess* (1989), *The Civilization of the Goddess* (1991), and *The Living Goddesses* (1999), Gimbutas argues convincingly that during the Palaeolithic and Neolithic periods up until the Iron Age (c. 1250 BCE), the cult of the Mother-Goddess was predominant in the pre-historic old-European world. Moreover, as it was identified with the Earth, Moon, and Life, the cult of the Mother-Goddess came to represent unity itself. As Gimbutas observes, "the Goddess in all her manifestation was a symbol of the unity of all life in Nature" (*The Language of the Goddess* 321). Similarly, in *The Myth of the Goddess* (1991), Jungian analysts and scholars Anne Baring (1917–2006) and Jules Cashford maintain that despite the apparent observation of dualism in the phenomenal world, the Mother-Goddess succeeded in representing a holistic view of life that inspired a "perception of the universe as an organic, alive and sacred whole. . . . As the Great Mother, she presides over the whole of creation as goddess of life, death and regeneration, containing within herself the life of plants as well as the life of animals and human beings" (47-48).

In her monumental oeuvre, Gimbutas proves that during the Palaeolithic and Neolithic periods, specifically in South-Eastern Europe, there was a distinct culture that did not reflect Near-Eastern civilization. It was an autonomous civilization developed in parallel with that of Mesopotamia, Anatolia, and Egypt. This old European civilization, which flourished mainly during the Neolithic period, in the seventh millennium BCE, covered an extensive area: from the Mediterranean region, the islands of the Aegean Sea and the Adriatic Sea, to Czechoslovakia, Southern Poland, and Western Ukraine. As Gimbutas asserts, during the Neolithic period (c. 7000 to c. 3500 BCE) the residents of those areas generated "a much more complex social organization than their western and northern neighbours, forming . . . small townships . . . involving craft specialization and the creation of religious and governmental institutions . . . utilizing copper and gold for ornaments and tools . . . [and] evolved a rudimentary script" (*The Goddesses and Gods of Old Europe* 17). Gimbutas proves that the Old Europeans' social structure was "matrilineal, with succession to the throne and inheritance passing through the female line" (*The Living Goddesses* 125). This matrilineal system reflects the

religion of the Old Europeans who, perhaps even from the Upper Palaeolithic (40,000 years BP) to the Palaeolithic (12,000 years BP) periods and up to the end of the Neolithic period at about the second millennium, worshipped the Great Goddess. This matrilineal culture, which according to Gimbutas reached a peak in the fifth millennium, was interrupted by the invasion of the “semi-nomadic pastoralists” (*The Goddesses and Gods of Old Europe* 18), the warlike Indo-Europeans.

The roots of Western civilization’s intellectual heritage, according to Gimbutas, lie in that unique matrilineal culture of the Old Europeans and not in the later patriarchal Olympian civilization of Classical Greece. As Gimbutas asserts in *The Language of the Goddess*, European heritage descends from “the ancient goddess worshipers who could think both symbolically and abstractly” (54). After the alleged invasion of the Indo-Europeans, when eventually Eastern and Central Europe gradually adopted a patriarchal social structure, the tradition of the matrilineal Goddess-centred culture continued in the Aegean region and on Minoan Krete up to the mid-second millennium. Gimbutas observes that “the early Helladic culture of Greece and the Cyclades and the Minoan civilization on Crete, with its wealth of palace art, epitomize the Neolithic and Chalcolithic culture of Old Europe” (*The Goddesses and Gods of Old Europe* 18). Gimbutas points out that on the Aegean islands and Krete, where there was an autochthonous population since at least the early Neolithic period, as archaeological finds testify, the Greeks worshipped the Great Goddess, and had developed at least since the second millennium “a completely theacentric, gynocentric civilization and religion” (*The Living Goddesses* 129).

Minoan civilization was a highly advanced autonomous civilization and, contrary to what conventional archaeology believes, was not influenced by Near-Eastern civilization. In *Centuries of Darkness* (1991), historian and archaeologist Peter James and his collaborators I.J. Thorpe, Nikos Kokkinos, Robert Morkot and John Frankish testify that “radiocarbon results, especially when calibrated by tree-ring chronologies, showed that most of the traditional dates given by diffusionist connections between the Near East and Europe could no longer hold,” and that the “cultures of [the] Neolithic and Early Bronze Age were raised by 1000 years or more to a completely unexpected antiquity.” Stressing Europe’s antiquity, the authors add that “various developments traditionally thought to have been borrowed from the Eastern Mediterranean . . . were now shown to have begun much earlier in Europe” (21). In *The Secret of Crete* (1972), German geologist Hans Georg Wunderlich (1928–1974) admits that “European culture and civilization originated” in Krete (344). Gimbutas

further asserts that the complex, pioneering technical attainments of the ancient Kretans in “arts, crafts, and architecture rivalled and, in many ways, exceeded, those of contemporaneous Egyptian and Mesopotamian cultures” (*The Living Goddesses* 133). Going further than Gimbutas and Wunderlich, Spyropoulos notes that even earlier than the Minoan civilization, Lakedaimon’s Minyan civilization was the great nourishing civilization of the ancient world. According to Spyropoulos, all peoples and cultures of the Mediterranean region, and perhaps even beyond it, drew their inspiration from this civilization (II.41). Commenting on the Minoans’ mastery of the sea, Spyropoulos adds that it never reached the really great thousand-year-old Minyan thalassocracy of Lakedaimon and its Argonautic Cycle, which is responsible for the circulation of commercial and cultural products throughout the Mediterranean region (II.44). After the Minyan and Minoan civilization’s progressive decline, marked perhaps by the eruption of the volcano in Thera in 1750 BCE, the tradition of the Goddess continued throughout the Bronze Age in Mycenaean civilization. Gradually, however, the gynocentric culture and religion of the Goddess that the Mycenaeans inherited from the Minyans and Minoans gave in to the patriarchal deities and androcentric culture which hurtled Greece into a Dark Age. When, centuries later, the Classical Greek civilization emerged, the role of the feminine was strictly limited but not absent in Greek society and religion. The Old European goddesses were incorporated into the Olympian pantheon, but the Great Goddess had lost her throne and went underground.

Shamans: The Priests of the Great Goddess

During the early reign of the Mother-Goddess, traces of the esoteric tradition can be found in a mysterious personage called the shaman. British philosopher and polymath Colin Wilson (1931–2013) in *The Occult* (1971) and Graham Hancock in *The Supernatural* (2005) describe how shamans fall into a trance state through dance, the ritualistic beating of a drum, and possibly with the use of hallucinogens, as Hancock asserts, during which their soul transcends ordinary consciousness, leaves their body, and passes into another reality or dimension (Wilson, *The Occult* 145). Moreover, Baring and Cashford affirm that when shamans fall into a trance state, they transcend ordinary tribal consciousness and visit another dimension, an invisible world adjacent to ours. Their purpose, according to Baring and Cashford, was to “give an infinitely profounder meaning to the human cycle of growth, flowering and decay” (32).