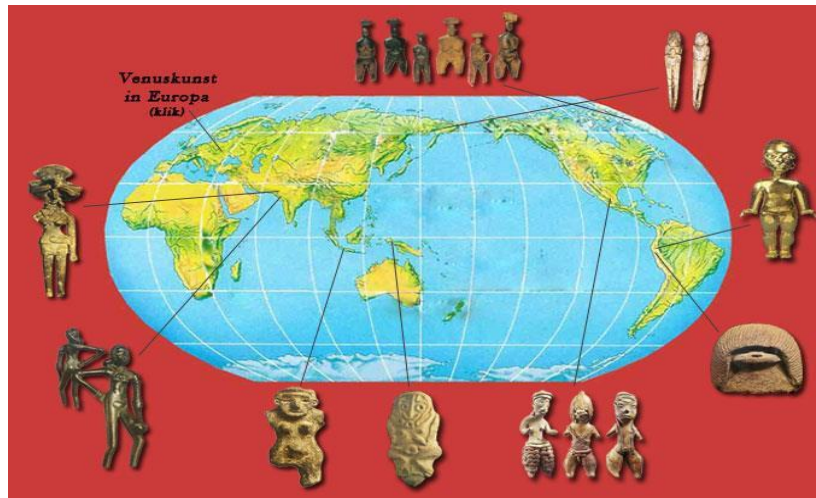


## Continuing Marija Gimbutas' work on ancient female figurines, the latest worldnews

*Looking forward and ahead to Marija Gimbutas centennial in 2021  
and Gen Vaughan's 81st birthday in 2020*



**Abstract, short.** In this article I follow the trail of ancient female figurines all over the world updating the work of Marija Gimbutas on ancient prehistoric figurines on a global level. She discovered that in Neolithic Old Europe the vast majority of the human figurines were female. The latest research proves this dominance of female figurines in Neolithic times at several other places in the world. Only from the Bronze Age on – and in some places even much later – do male figurines appear. Art shows the transition from matriarchal cultures or egalitarian societies of peace to warlike patriarchal cultures.

**Abstract, longer.** In this contribution Marija Gimbutas' work on ancient female figurines is expanded to a global level. Also on a global level they are in the far majority; a few male figurines appear only in Bronze Age; the female ones disappear in Iron Age. International museums visitors will read outdated descriptions about this ancient mostly female art. We are all witnessing and celebrating the revival of the feminine in Metoo and other movements. But... until now there was little space for a *sacral* and *spiritual* interpretation of the ancient female figurines. In this post-secular era it is necessary to learn and understand the symbolic and spiritual language of the 'little mothers' again. They are represented in many different and sometimes strange forms, but there are similarities, there is an underlying uniform pattern. In the second part of this article I follow the trail of ancient female figurines all over the world, updating the subject on global level.

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## 1. Introduction

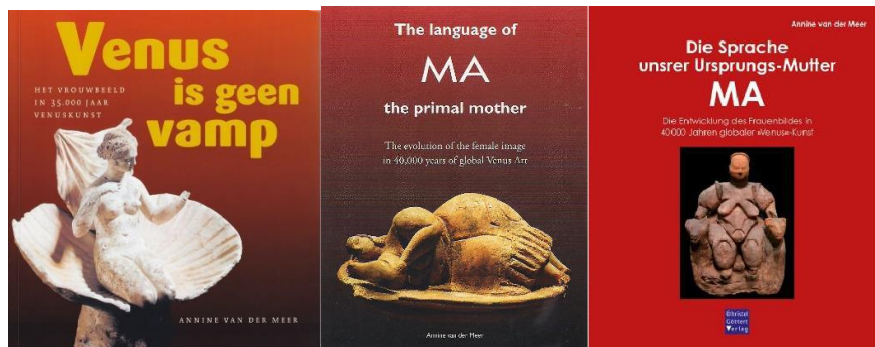
In this article I honor two ladies: Marija Gimbutas for her work on ancient female figurines in Old Europe (left picture above) and Genevieve or Gen Vaughan for making my work on the globalization of Marija's earlier work possible. Marija Gimbutas was born on the 23th of January 1921. So her centennial will be celebrated in 2021. Recently her 'Kurgan-theory' was rehabilitated by Colin Renfrew and David Anthony.<sup>1</sup> Gen mothered my first international steps on this path. She supported me in my search into the meaning of the little mothers and their mothering symbols. As I owe much to her, this contribution is dedicated to Genevieve Vaughan on the occasion of her 81th birthday, the 21st of November 2020. She mothered this subject about the 'little mothers'.



Gen Vaughan thanking all conference contributors on the 17<sup>th</sup> of July 2010. From left to right: Annine van der Meer (the Netherlands), Marguerite Rigoglioso (USA), Bernedette Muthien (South Africa), Angela Dolmetsch (Columbia); Kaarina Kailo (Finland), Genevieve Vaughan (Italy/USA), Letecia Leyson (USA/Philippines).

**On the 17<sup>th</sup> of July, 2010** I gave a lecture on *Venus Art, Art of the Primal Mothers* in Rome at a gift conference organized by Gen Vaughan.<sup>2</sup> In it I stressed the priceless insights of Marija Gimbutas; she stated that the vast majority of ancient figurines in Old Europe were female.<sup>3</sup> And she was right. I called this art 'Venus' Art, because many of these statues are called 'Venuses'. Gen was pleased with my lecture and interested in the subject. Prehistoric 'Venus' Art from the Paleolithic and Neolithic is often depicted as motherly Rubenesque statues with full breasts, round bellies and enormous buttocks. The reproductive organs are exaggerated. Max Dashu addresses the figurines as the 'little mothers'.<sup>4</sup> The above picture was made at the end of the Rome conference and shows Gen with her open arms, second from the right.

**An English book.** After my 2010 lecture Gen was disappointed that I only wrote a book in Dutch about 'Venus' Art called *Venus is geen Vamp* (Venus is not a Vamp). She wanted this information on ancient motherly figurines in English. Then Gen very generously donated the translation- and lay-out costs for a future book in English. In 2013 *The Language of MA the primal Mother, the evolution of the female image in 40,000 years of global Venus Art* came out.<sup>5</sup> In this book I categorized the immense varieties of prehistoric female figurines in Old Europe and in the Near East. I even started to expand the subject to civilizations outside this area.



**The German edition.** This global approach is continued in the German edition, an update of my English MA-book that has appeared in May 2020 in Frankfurt.<sup>6</sup> Lectures in connection with the publication of this German edition are organized by the German MatriaCon, the international school for matriarchal consciousness in Germany. You could say that I am continuing the work of Marija Gimbutas and expanding the system of symbols she developed for ancient female figurines, to a global scale.



**Two new 'Venus' books in Dutch.** In 2019 I have written two books in Dutch, one is entitled '*Empower yourself with Venus Power. The 13 body positions from Venus art*' and gives modern women and men the secrets of and movements into the 13 sacred global body positions of our primal mothers. You empower yourself when moving in their global positions. The book was published in autumn, 2019.<sup>7</sup> The second one *Venus Ontraadseld* has appeared on World Women's Day in March 2020. In the first part of this 2020 book I have summarized the main insights of the last few years.<sup>8</sup> I felt the urgent need to inform students - when reading the outdated descriptions - about the latest *symbolic and spiritual* interpretations of ancient female figurines. A new important branch in archaeology called *cognitive archaeology* is developing these interpretations. I also wanted to show the similarities in the many different and sometimes strange forms in which these little motherly ladies present themselves, so that modern people can recognize an underlying uniform pattern. In the second part of the 2020 book I follow the trail of ancient female figurines all over the



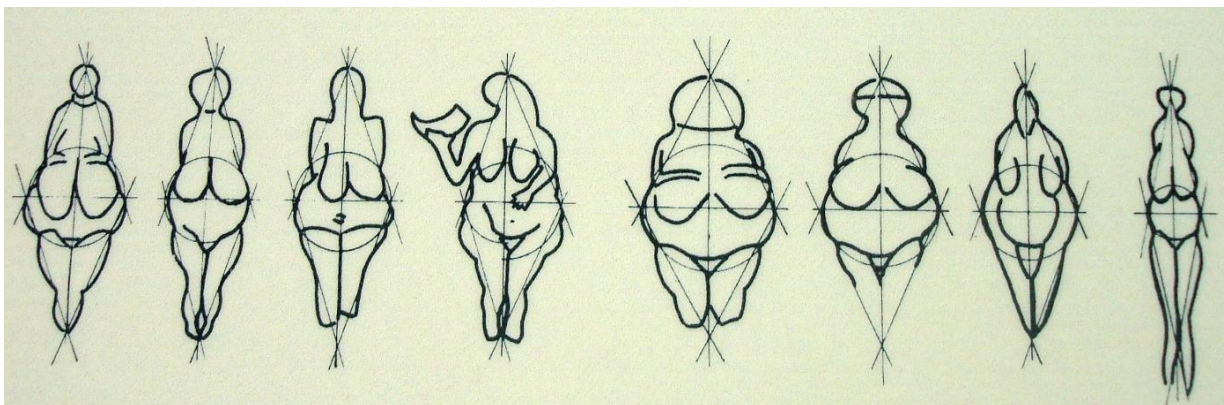
world updating the subject on global level. I will follow the same procedure in this article.

## 2. About the little mothers



**The little Rubenesque mamas.** Max Dashu calls the 'little mamas' from India the *Matrikas*.<sup>9</sup> The syllable and primal sound *Ma, Mu, Ba, An* or *Na* means 'mother' in all the languages of the world.<sup>10</sup> The word for 'clan mother' or 'mother' in India is *Amma* or *Mata*. So in the word *matrika* or 'little mother' you find the basic sound *MA* or 'mother', as in the international word for 'mama'.

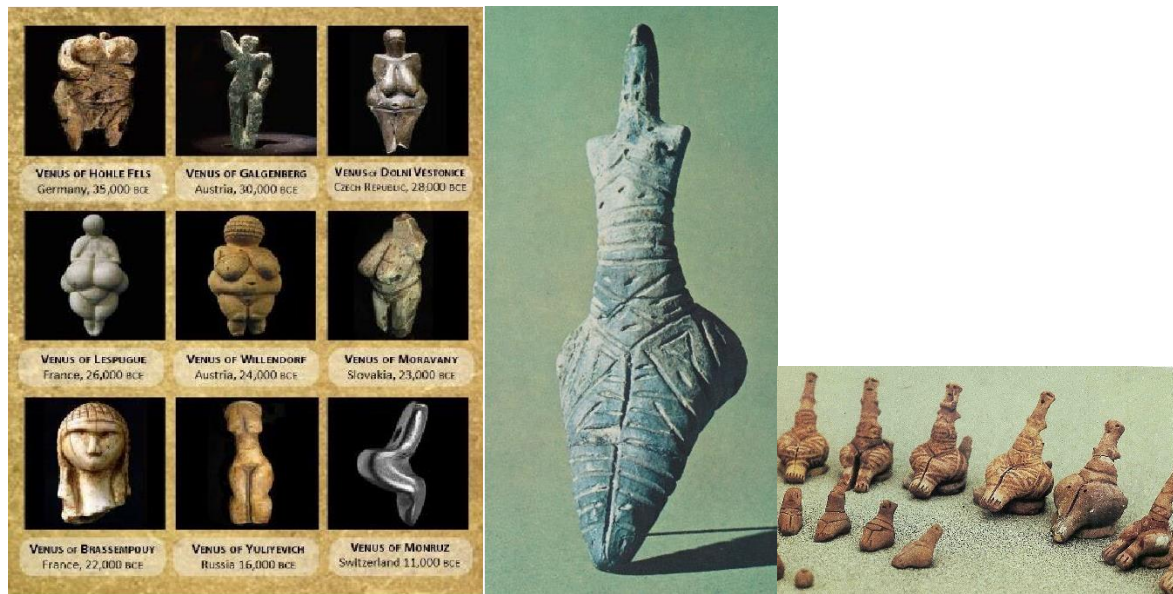
Many of these 'little mothers' from all over the world show motherly body parts: they have full breasts, round pregnant bellies, full buttocks and hips and...they often show a large vulva and/or womb. Most of the times they show a small head, sometimes it is birdlike or snakelike. You find these little ladies spread over the world over long periods of time: the Paleolithic, Neolithic and Chalcolithic until the Bronze Age and in some areas into the Iron Age. Most of them are pregnant and show bulging bellies, enlarged vulvas and breasts that burst with maternal milk. They outnumber by far the ancient male figurines.



**No real women.** Do not believe the museum- or handbook descriptions that state that they depict 'real women', supposedly showing an 'anatomically realistic' pregnancy. 'Anatomic realism' is a branch in the 'New Archaeology'-school that became popular in the 1960s.

In my opinion the 'little mamas' are not real women. It is a symbolic way to point out something completely different. The little mothers show enlarged and exaggerated generative organs because this has a symbolic and sacral meaning...And... why are they so often depicted *naked*? 'Normal women' do not walk naked in cold, icy times....

Archaeological reports point out that 'normal' ice age women are slender and small.<sup>11</sup> These little mothers do NOT represent 'normal women'.<sup>12</sup> Their nakedness and exaggerated body parts must have a symbolic meaning. And as Marija Gimbutas already rightly observed with regard to Old Europe: an overwhelming majority of human art is female...and this amazing fact is revealing itself on a world scale.



**The little stiff ladies.** Next to this enormous group of Rubenesque little ladies you find a second group of stiff, elongated and more abstract ladies. The body is stiffened. Deep in the womb of the earth mother the departed soul is going to sleep. It rests in the cave together with all the other departed clan members, the ancestors. The living members of the clan come to visit their 'sleeping' family members while resting in the dark cave, in the dark megalithic temple, or in the dark megalithic clan grave.<sup>13</sup>

**The cycle of eternal life.** After a while the ancestral mothers send some souls back to the surface of the earth. They will return as little babies, as rebirthed ancestral souls. All over the world exaggerated body parts are related to ancestral art.<sup>14</sup> The little mothers that populate 'Venus' Art depict female ancestors with the capacity to rebirth ancestral souls.

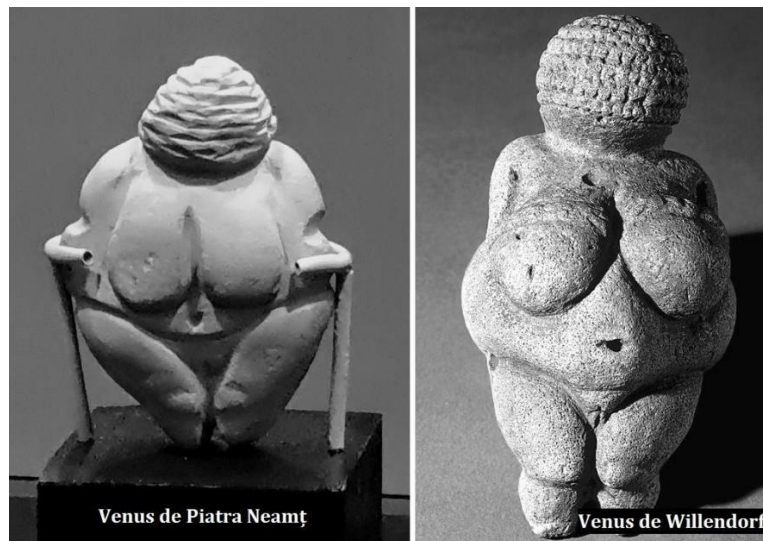
In her latest German book from 2019 Heide Göttner-Abendroth stresses that in the 'little mothers' are *ancestresses*, although they are called *mother goddesses* later on.<sup>15</sup> This is all about the eternal cycle of life in Birth, Death and Rebirth.<sup>16</sup> Heide Göttner-Abendroth calls this ancient spirituality 'the religion of rebirth'.<sup>17</sup> It is the red thread running OK through her 2019 book, that – according to Heide – will also be published in English.

Heide states that the pregnancy of the little ancestral mothers must be interpreted spiritually.<sup>18</sup> The belly with the dark womb and large vulva is the source of life. Pregnancy has a spiritual meaning. There is this eternal renewal in the stars in heaven and OK in nature on earth. Life on earth shows the returning life cycles of plants, animals and humans. Life in the dark womb of Mother Cosmos is linked with the dark womb of Mother Earth.<sup>19</sup>

**The spiritual role of the mother.** Now you may understand why the mother also has a central *spiritual* role in a traditional and indigenous society. She not only gives birth to babies, she is also involved with the rebirth of the ancestors. Now you fully understand why ancient female figurines have a *sacral* and *spiritual* function.

In Western-Europe this cycle of life, this coming, going and returning of souls, reborn into the extended family, was known till 1800.<sup>20</sup> After 1800 the farmers left their land and started to flock to the new urban centres to work in the new factories. They started to live in nuclear families instead of the extended rural families. And most importantly: they lost contact with nature, they lost contact with the ancestor spirits living in wells, trees, big stones and caves,

they lost contact with the land in which their ancestors were rooted and known to live as living energies in caves, wells and trees. In some cases urban people became uprooted and desperate. Then they lost contact with their bodies and souls; they worked to survive by focusing on earning money. They lost the sacred view of life.



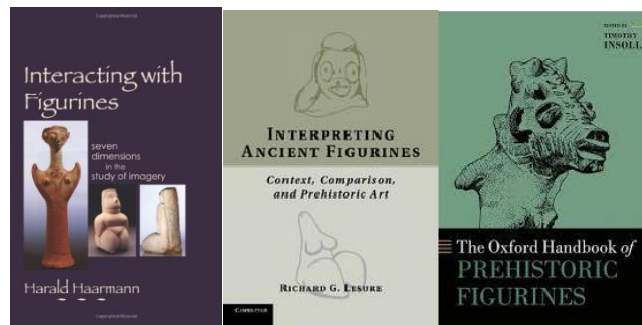
**‘The Woman of Willendorf’.** Researchers criticize the term ‘Venus’ and ‘Venus’ Art. Max Dashu calls Venuses ‘little mothers’; they present themselves in overlapping body positions; they show the same symbolic language by presenting large vulvas and breasts. In her latest book Heide Göttner-Abendroth mentions the ‘Venus’ of Willendorf, the ‘Woman of Willendorf’ (die Frau von Willendorf) and talks about the ‘Venus’ of Laussel as the ‘Woman’ of Laussel’ (die Frau von Laussel).<sup>21</sup> Both authors criticize the term ‘Venus’ Art for its supposed sexism; they consider it a patriarchal term, a fossil from patriarchy.

I do use the term ‘Venus’ but use it only in a *matriarchal* sense. Matriarchal Aphrodite – her Greek name changed into the Latin name Venus – was the Mother of Heaven, Earth and Underworld. It is a sacred goddess name. ‘Venus’ Art shows an evolution from clan mothers to mother goddesses and to the one and only Mother above them all, she who stands at the Beginning: the divine Mother of Earth and Cosmos.<sup>22</sup>

I use the following definition: ‘Venus’ Art is the art of the primal ancient mothers. It is clan mother art and sacred feminine art from pre-historic and indigenous tribes which has life, death and new life as its central theme and depicts those clan mothers who are later deified.<sup>23</sup>



### 3. The functions of the little mothers



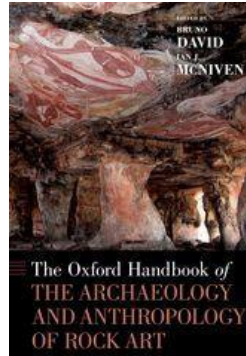
**Updating the work.** Ancient Female Figurines are becoming a hot debated subject in academic circles. In 2009 Harald Haarmann wrote *Interacting with figurines*; in 2013 Richard Lesure wrote *Interpreting Ancient Figurines. Context, Comparison in Prehistoric Art*; in 2017 Timothy Insoll published *The Oxford Handbook of Prehistoric Figurines*, a book of more than 1000 pages.<sup>24</sup> In the work of Lesure and in the Oxford Handbook you find contributions on ancient figurines from scholars all over the world. On the one hand this is good news, because new information is opened this way. But there is another less positive side.

**The denial of femininity.** In this Oxford Handbook many scholars subscribe to the outdated Ucko-criteria of 1962 and 1968.<sup>25</sup> Ucko denied the femininity of the abstract group. Ucko and many modern academic followers argue that this group has no sex because they see no breasts and/or full bottoms. Please be warned for this kind of 'information'; in museum catalogues, study and handbooks you find faulty descriptions. The so-called 'genderless' group is mostly female. Sometimes you see a hairdo, jewelry, strings, hip girdles and tattoos that are typically female.

**Figurines envisaged as dolls and toys.** In the past we saw the (false) interpretations of 'Venus' as 'pinup girl', as 'fertility idol' and as part of 'hunter magic'. Ucko interprets the little mothers as 'dolls' and 'children toys', as amulets, items for initiation and educative items for explaining pregnancy, etc.<sup>26</sup> He and his modern followers deny every sacral use, they deny the divine aspect and refuse to call them 'goddesses': they are 'normal women'. Read the 2017 Oxford Handbook and find out that up until today a vast majority of academic Ucko supporters criticize Marija Gimbutas.<sup>27</sup> Most scholars subscribe to the approach of the New Archaeology-school of the 1960s; in these academic circles *processual* and *postprocessual* archaeology, a movement in archaeology that popped up in the 1980s, is still very popular.<sup>28</sup>

**A multifunctional use.** All the pieces of the puzzle fit a coherent structure when you use the interdisciplinary method of *cognitive archaeology* in which the findings of archaeology and anthropology are integrated, and you compare the figurines from modern indigenous societies with ancient ones.<sup>29</sup> Yes, they are multifunctional but *also* sacral. In specific phases of one's life they are used in initiation rituals: the first menstruation, pregnancy, motherhood. They are used in *domestic* daily rituals and broken in order to fulfill a wish: 'let me stay healthy, let me become pregnant, let there be enough food', etc. They are used in *funeral* ceremonies in order to release the souls of the departed and send them to the earth mother. They are used in *seasonal* rituals of sowing and harvesting to bring rain, or a good harvest, etc. Then they are broken to free the wish and make it eternal. The figurines are

prayers to the ancestors, they are mobile shrines. In traditional and indigenous societies you find in the background what we call in the secular West 'ancestor veneration'. You often encounter the term 'fertility cult, but this 'fertility' is related to the ancestors. *They* give fertility. So, the ancient little mothers depict ancestral and/or spiritual beings in nature, only much later they are accompanied by the ancestral fathers.<sup>30</sup>



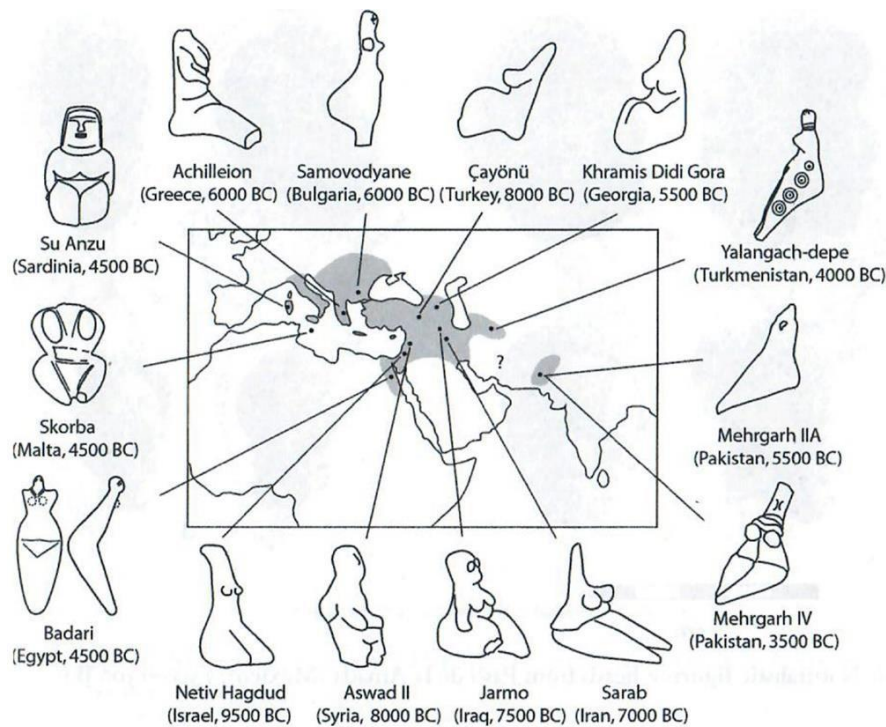
**New insights in the sacred aspect.** Most traditional archaeologists are educated in a postmodern materialistic way. They simply deny the existence of any sacral aspect of ancient female art, art that pictures the ancestress with the exaggerated sexual organs; she who helps the living by sending new seeds for plants, new animal souls, new human souls. Nowadays the interdisciplinary method of integrating the findings of archaeology and anthropology is making progress.<sup>31</sup> This interdisciplinary so called 'double method' sheds a new *spiritual* light on rock art and is fully accepted in official archaeology as 'cognitive archaeology'. See *The Oxford Handbook of Archaeology and Anthropology of Rock Art* (2018).<sup>32</sup>

#### 4. The little mothers show global similarities

**The opposition to global symbols.** The method used by most scholars in the 2017 Oxford Handbook is influenced by post-modern contextualism (to see every individual detail in the local and regional context) and deconstructionism (to debunk traditional assumptions and prejudices, deconstructing big theories of the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century as for example shamanism or the mother goddess-approach).<sup>33</sup> These archaeologists oppose a cross-cultural and global approach. They deny similarities in the language of symbols, (although we find little mothers or ancestresses with exaggerated body parts everywhere around the world). They suggest that overlapping body positions are coincidental and there is no underlying coherent structure!

I registered 13 global body positions. I distinguish, for example, the mother who is heavily pregnant, the mother who gives birth, the mother who presents her breasts, the mother who is breastfeeding her baby ....





**Contradictions.** Although Richard Lesure subscribes to 'contextualism', he gives this diagram in which he contradicts himself: it shows the similarities in body positions in a large area over a long period of time. Figurines of the little mothers are shown from the first agricultural societies in several early Neolithic societies, civilizations where women develop the first horticulture and agriculture. Look at this diagram and see for yourself how the little mothers look alike over long distances and timescales. In my opinion there certainly is a transcultural, global language shared by these sacred ladies. This diagram you find in Lesure, *Interpreting ancient figurines*, 21 fig. 6.

**The similarities.** What do we see when we are looking at this diagram? We see our little ladies sitting on the earth as if they were sitting on a throne. They left the wandering nomadic life style known in gatherer-hunter societies. They stay at one place because they settle themselves next to their gardens and fields. They build themselves an extended family house where next to the hearth they honor their ancestors who are involved with birth and rebirth life in every aspect: the day is born from the night, spring from winter, the new year from the old year. Light and darkness cooperate in creating life as the feminine and the masculine do in keeping balance, harmony and peace in egalitarian societies of peace. You see some very abstract ladies. Although they do not show breasts, they really are female. Compare them to the more 'realistic' ones, who do have breasts.

**The diagram.** In my opinion the oldest Neolithic figurines from early agricultural societies show a coherent and transcultural body language.

\*We first see the oldest little lady from Israel, 9500 BC.<sup>34</sup>

\*Then we go to Syria and Jarmo in Iraq, where hundreds of female figurines were found.

\*Please take a look on top of the diagram where you find the abstract lady in sitting position with pregnant belly from Cayönü in Turkey from 8000 BC.; this is a very old region in the middle of the area. This is described as the Fertile Crescent and is considered to be 'the cradle of civilization'.

\*We cross the Zagros mountains in Eastern Turkey to Iran where we find many high tells or artificial. manmade hills with, among many other baked clay figurines, the famous Venus of Sarab, a baked clay figurine from 7000 BC.

\*The next stop is the old culture of Mehrgarh in Pakistan. Look at this very abstract lady from level IIA, from 5500 BC; in a later period the women who create these figurines will work out more detailed female traits in the example of level IV, from 3500 BC.

\*North of Iran you find Turkmenistan, with the same old tradition. Look at this very abstract lady formed out of red fired clay from 4000 BC. She is covered all over her body with black concentric circles. Her vulva is well-indicated in a black triangle.<sup>35</sup>

\*And there is another abstract lady from Georgia, from 5500 BC.

\*Take a look at the left of the diagram where you find the abstract ladies of Badari, 4500 BC.

\*Now we are heading to Eastern Europe, to Bulgaria and Greece with abstract sitting ladies from 6000 BC from the early agricultural societies.

\*We are moving westwards to the Rubenesque sitting ladies of Sardinia and Malta, from 4500 BC.

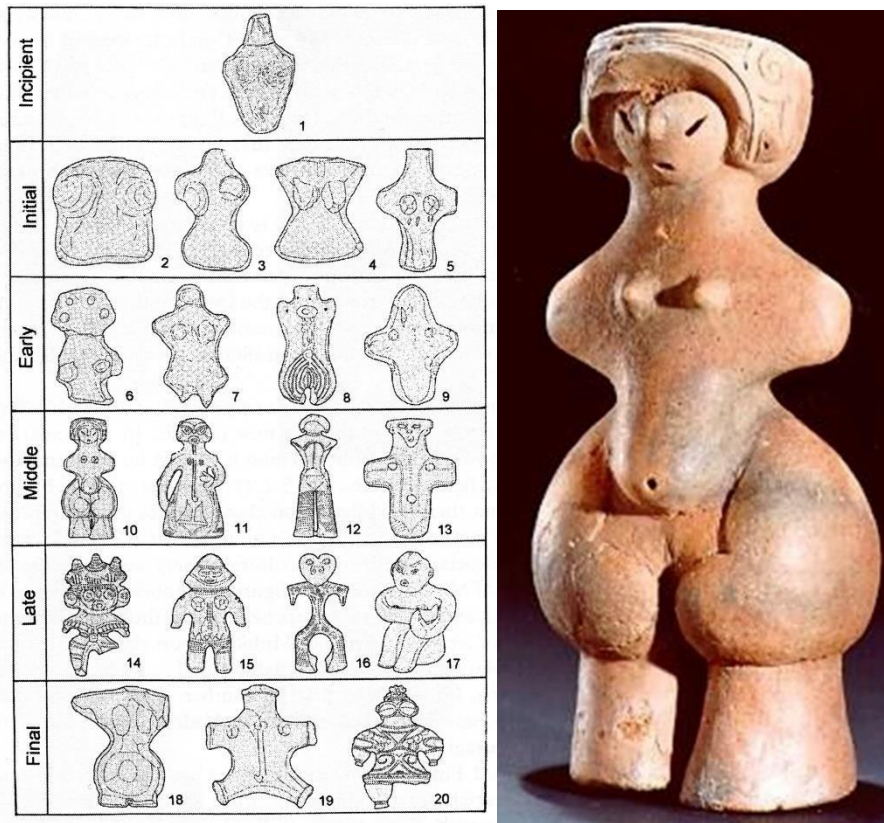
The list could be much, much longer, because the figurines of Cyprus, Crete, the Cycladic island and more western regions are not shown or mentioned.

**Outside this area** of Central Asia, the Middle East and Old Europe you also encounter several other Rubenesque 'Venus'-ladies. You find them for example in Japan, in China, in Valdivia in Ecuador and in many other countries. Although they are represented in a myriad of varieties of forms, materials and functions, the basic idea behind this all is the ancestral mother and her mothering of Life.

## **5. Updating ancient female figurines on a global level**

**The vast majority is female.** I was very happy to find in the 2017 Oxford Handbook of over 1000 pages important new information that consolidated the work of Marija Gimbutas on ancient feminine art from the Paleolithic, Neolithic and Chalcolithic. Marija Gimbutas stated that only 3 to 5 percent of the human art in these periods was male, in the following I aim to show that Marija was right not only for Old Europe but also on a world level. I will give the latest news on ancient female figurines from Japan, Iran and Turkmenistan, Pakistan and India, Valdivia in Latin America and last but not least Greece and the Cycladic islands in the Mediterranean. These few examples do confirm her earlier insights about Old Europe.

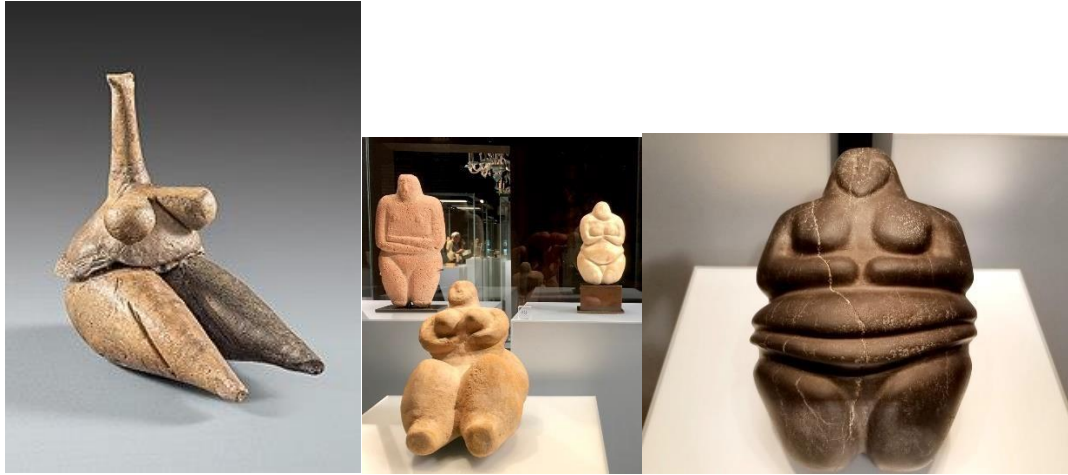
### **5.1. Japan**



nr 10

**Japan.** Japanese academics stated that *almost all of the 18.000 dogu statues(!)* – *dogu* means (sacred) ‘doll’ in Japanese – that were found between 16.500 and 300 BC (!), were *female*.<sup>36</sup> They found practically no male figurines. I show a diagram of the evolution in forms, from stones and schematic females to elaborate figurines to schematic again.<sup>37</sup> The Japanese also are convinced that the schematic ones with holes in their abstract body are primary female. These ones show the transforming qualities of the female body. Important *dogu* were buried with ancestors and sometimes broken. They were ‘ritually killed’ and used in the ‘sending off-rituals’ in which souls of the departed could fly away.<sup>38</sup> There is a famous ‘Venus’ of Tabanatake (3250-1500 BC), she is the icon of modern Japan, see nr 10 on the diagram. Patriarchy ended the tradition of making of *dogu*-art in egalitarian and female centred societies around 300 BC. Here art shows the transition into patriarchy very clearly.

## 5.2 Iran



**Iran/Turkmenistan.** Early agriculture was born in the Fertile Crescent area. In the Eastern part of Turkey you find the Zagros-mountains; their eastern side covers Iran and Turkmenistan. Here the Neolithic starts around 10.000 BC. Around 8000 BC the aceramic period ends here and women start to make ceramic pots and figurines of baked clay. As elsewhere, the first figurines here were made of stone or ivory and the later ones of clay. The Venus of Sarab is a very good example of one of the first baked clay figurines. You find her on the Lesure diagram, shown above.

Aurelie Dams researched the Iranian female figurines and wrote an article in the above-mentioned 2017 Oxford Handbook.<sup>39</sup> She describes the Venus of Sarab as 'plump'.<sup>40</sup> (see for this little mother the figurine above on the left. Dams states that in Neolithic Iran and Turkmenistan only female – and no male – figurines are found. Most of these clay figurines are very full, female and pregnant. These are not 'normal women'. We remember what Heide Göttner-Abendroth explained about the sacred aspect of pregnancy; the ancestresses are pregnant with new souls and send them to the living members of the tribe. Most of these very ancient Iranian little ladies were found in domestic areas, a small number in graves.

In the Chalcolithic the vast majority of the figurines is also female, we find only a few male ones. After the Aryans entered Iran, the archetype of the ancestral ladies with their full breasts continued in the goddesses Anahita, Inanna and others.

### 5.3. Pakistan/India



*Left: two sitting ladies, 3000 BC, Mehrgarh, Pakistan  
Right: Balochistan, early agricultural societies, 3000-2500 BC*



**Pakistan/India.** We follow the trail of the first agriculturalists. They spread to Pakistan and India and there will be our next stop. We find a lot of female figurines in the Mehrgarh-culture, 7000-2000 BC. (see Lesure diagram) As said: the earliest are very simple (Mehrgarh Ila, diagram) but they show a growing complexity as time goes by. (Mehrgarh IV, diagram) and pictures above.



**The Indus-valley culture.** More to the south we find the Indus-valley civilization with more than 2600 sites. 2000 of these sites are situated in present day Pakistan. All the 2600 sites yield enormous amounts of figurines.

In this Indus-civilization you find the city of Harappa in the north of the valley of the Indus river. In early Harappa 1 and 2 (the Neolithic from 5500-2600 BC) 8500 figurines were found, *all of them female*, and no male figurines were found at all. A few male figurines show up only during the urbanization in the Bronze Age (2600-1900 BC) and then only as a small minority.<sup>41</sup> In the Indus-valley site of Mohenjo-Daro is found the 'dancing girl'.<sup>42</sup> Recently she was upgraded to 'The Mona Lisa of the Indus culture'.<sup>43</sup> See figurine above.

#### 5.4 Valdivia in South America



**Valdivia in Ecuador.** Let's go to Latin America, to the oldest agriculture known on the continent of America. The Valdivia civilization develops itself from 5000 BC on. The first small female figurines are of stone and ceramic. 70 very small figurines were found here, from Valdivia A, B and C (3500-1500 BC). Scholars found 5 age groups: 1. the young girl before puberty; 2. the menstruating girl; 3. the pregnant women; 4. the adult and mature woman. 5. the woman with double sex.<sup>44</sup> There is an ongoing hot debate whether this fifth group is female or male.<sup>45</sup> In my opinion all 70 figurines are female. Elsewhere I showed the figurine that is called the 'Venus of Valdivia'.<sup>46</sup>

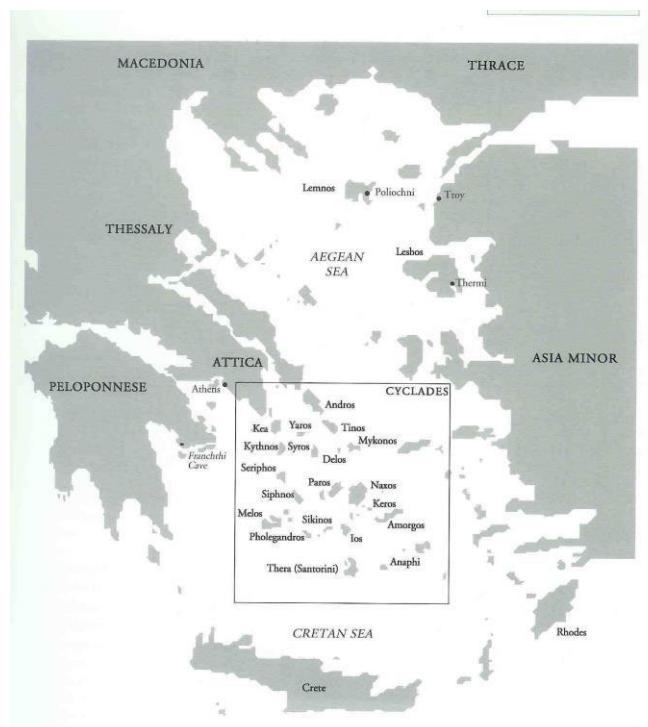
## 5.5. Crete in Greece

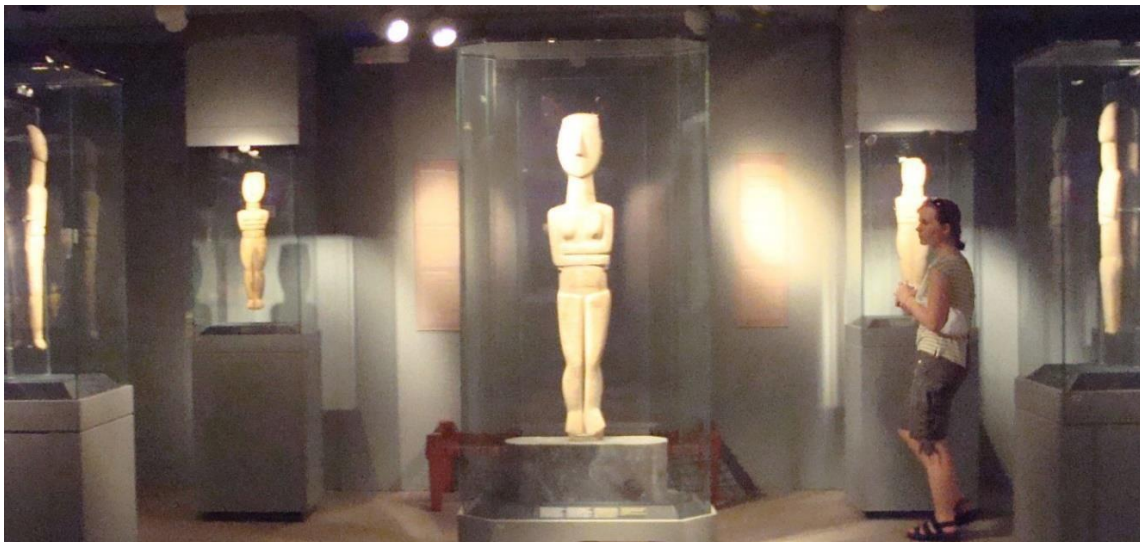
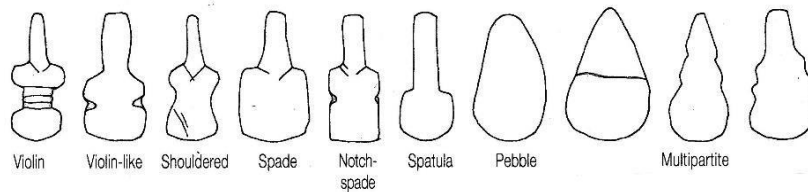
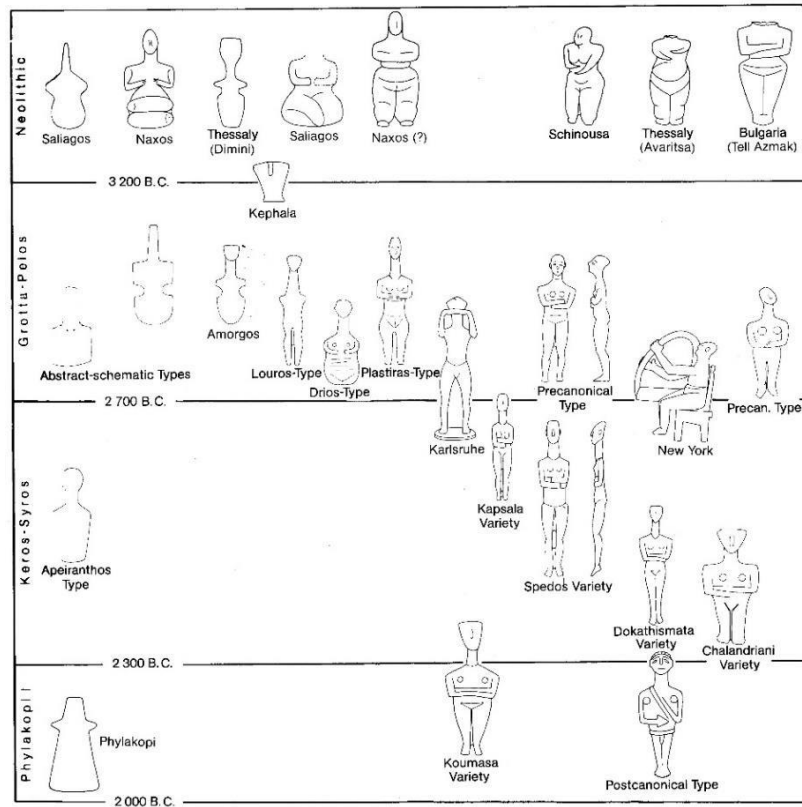


**Crete.** Maria Mina does not agree with the Ucko criteria in Crete. In her opinion the schematic group is mostly female and that brings the total number of realistic and schematic Neolithic female figurines in Crete to 96 % of all found figurines.<sup>47</sup>

Joan Cichon gave important new insights on ancient figurines in Crete. In *Bronze Age* Minoan society there was a balance between the divine female and her male partner, together they kept the cosmic balance. Therefore we also find in Bronze Age Crete quite a few male figurines; they were used for initiations rituals.

## The Cycladic islands in Greece





**The Cycladic islands.** Here 797 semi-realistic mostly female and pregnant figurines were found (first example above) and 146 abstract ones (second example above), also considered to be female.<sup>48</sup> New finds in Keros are not included.



## 5.6 The Cycladic island of Keros in Greece



**Keros.** South of the island of Naxos there is the inhabited island of Keros. At a distance of 500 meters, there is the small island of Dhaskalio. In Bronze Age some 400 people from all the other Cycladic islands came to stay here when performing rituals in the ceremonial centre at Keros. They built themselves elaborate houses in Dhaskalio and covered the pyramid shaped top of the island with large shining plates of white marble from Naxos.<sup>49</sup> The islanders had to cooperate in this enormous project.

Recently Colin Renfrew and Michael Boyd from Cambridge University found at Keros an unspoiled South Deposit with many broken figurines.<sup>50</sup> Both scholars consider Keros as the



centre of the Confederation of the Cycladic islands.<sup>51</sup> In the summer of 2019 the exhibition 'Look Over There' was held in the Cycladic island of Koufonissi.<sup>52</sup> In the exhibition descriptions you can read what was denied for so long. Scholars from Cambridge University see in all the specific female figurines found in the sacred South-deposit at Kavos on the island of Keros... not idols or schematic female 'normal women' but... *goddesses*. For the first time in many years they provide a sacral interpretation.

### 5.7 Finally: back to the maternal values of the little mothers and their peaceful societies



**Finding back our motherly values.** In the little mothers or 'Venuses' whether abstract or realistic, we rediscover our primal mothers, our ancestresses. Worldwide they are in the vast majority in prehistoric times. How amazing. They populate egalitarian societies of harmony and peace. Looking at them we remember their strength, wisdom, sacred worldview and harmony. Dear Gen, you manifest these qualities. I thank you for living these motherly values and bringing them into *our* world.

Dr. Annine van der Meer, Summer 2019.

#### Bio

##### CV

Dr. Annine van der Meer is a Dutch historian, theologian and symbolist. She has written several authoritative books on the hidden history of the feminine and of women and their forgotten contribution to evolution and civilization - digging Her-Story out from underneath His-Story in order to write Our-Story. Where necessary, she balances the established image of woman and man for the purpose of achieving equality, harmony, balance and peace for the world. In 2008 she set up the Pansophia foundation as a school of Wisdom in the 21st century, in which the raising of consciousness, spirituality and empowerment of women are combined. As a speaker, Annine is very much in demand both in the Netherlands and internationally. She lectures comprehensively on women's studies all over the world in an integrated and interdisciplinary manner.

For more information on the author see:

[www.anninevandermeer.nl](http://www.anninevandermeer.nl)

For more information about the author's books see:

[www.pansophia-press.nl](http://www.pansophia-press.nl).

Books may be ordered via [www.pansophia-press.nl](http://www.pansophia-press.nl).

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> Colin Renfrew gave on the 8th of November 2017 the 'Marija Gimbutas memorial lecture' entitled 'Marija Rediviva DNA and Indo-European Origins' in the Oriental Institute in Chicago, see <https://www.google.com/search?q=Marija+Rediviva+DNA+and+Indo-European+Origins%E2%80%99&ie=utf-8&oe=utf-8&client=firefox-b>; on the 7<sup>th</sup> of November 2018 David W. Anthony, author of the book *The Horse, the Wheel and Language*, Princeton, 2007, gave the lecture 'Indo-European origins through linguistic, archaeological and ancient DNA perspectives' at the University of Leiden, The Netherlands. At the end his conclusion was: 'Marija Gimbutas was right'; see also Kristian Kristiansen, Morten E. Allentoft, Karin M. Frei, Rune Iversen, Niels N. Johannsen, Guus Kroonen, Łukasz Pospieszny, T. Douglas Price, Simon Rasmussen, Karl-Goran Sjogren, Martin Sikora & Eske Willerslev, 'Re-theorising mobility and the formation of culture and language among the Corded Ware Culture in Europe', *Antiquity*, Bd. 91, nr. 356 (2017), 334-347.

<sup>2</sup> See [www.anninevandermeer.nl](http://www.anninevandermeer.nl) for English report: 'the Gift Economy conference in Rome 17 July 2010', English report for newsletter of Academy Pansophia.

<sup>3</sup> Marija Gimbutas, *The Civilization of the Goddess, The World of Old Europe*, HarperCollins Publishers, New York, 1991, 223.

<sup>4</sup> Max Dashu, 'Icons of the Matrix' I, II, [www.surpressedhistoriesarchives.net/articles](http://www.surpressedhistoriesarchives.net/articles).

<sup>5</sup> Annine van der Meer, *The Language of MA the primal Mother, the evolution of the female image in 40,000 years of global Venus Art*, The Hague, 2013; van der Meer, *Venus is geen Vamp, het vrouwbeeld in 35.000 jaar Venuskunst*, The Hague, 2009.

<sup>6</sup> Annine van der Meer, *Die Sprache unserer Ursprungs-Mutter MA. Die Entwicklung des Frauenbildes in 40.000 Jahren globaler "Venus"-Kunst*, Christel Götttert Verlag, Rüsselsheim Germany, May 2020.

<sup>7</sup> Van der Meer, *'Empower jezelf met Venuskracht. De 13 lichaamshoudingen uit de Venuskunst'*, The Hague, 2019.

<sup>8</sup> Van der Meer, *Venus Ontraadseld. Wereldwijde wegwijzer van venuskunst, oermoederkunst*, (Venus Unraveled), The Hague, 8 March 2020.

<sup>9</sup> Max Dashu, 'Icons of the Matrix' I, II, [www.surpressedhistoriesarchives.net/articles](http://www.surpressedhistoriesarchives.net/articles).

<sup>10</sup> Heide Göttner-Abendroth, *Geschichte matriarchaler Gesellschaften und Entstehung des Patriarchats*, Band III: West-Asien und Europa, Kohlhammer, Stuttgart, 2019, 59.

<sup>11</sup> Erik Trinkhaus, J. A. Svoboda eds., *Early Modern Evolution in Europe: the people of Dolni Vestonice and Pavlov*, Oxford, 2006; Jill Cook, *Ice Age Art, The Arrival of Modern Mind*, The British Museum Press, London, 2013, 67 n. 5; van der Meer, *The Language of MA*, 70 n. 87.

<sup>12</sup> Heide Gottner-Abendroth, *Geschichte matriarchaler Gesellschaften und Entstehung des Patriarchats*, 211.

<sup>13</sup> Heide Gottner-Abendroth, *Geschichte matriarchaler Gesellschaften und Entstehung des Patriarchats*, 61, 65: this is confirmed by many indigenous peoples who still go to caves to visit their sleeping ancestors, see several chapters in Bruno David, Ian J. McNiven, *The Oxford Handbook of the Archaeology and Anthropology of Rock Art*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, New York, 2018; see also Bruno David, *Cave Art*, Thames & Hudson, London, 2017.

<sup>14</sup> Van der Meer, *The Language of MA the primal Mother*, 249.

<sup>15</sup> Heide Gottner-Abendroth, *Geschichte matriarchaler Gesellschaften und Entstehung des Patriarchats*, 53, 69, 70, 124, 136, **211, 215**.

<sup>16</sup> Heide Gottner-Abendroth, *Geschichte matriarchaler Gesellschaften und Entstehung des Patriarchats*, 62.

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<sup>17</sup> Heide Gottner-Abendroth, *Geschichte matriarchaler Gesellschaften und Entstehung des Patriarchats*, 62, 70, 83.

<sup>18</sup> Heide Gottner-Abendroth, *Geschichte matriarchaler Gesellschaften und Entstehung des Patriarchats*, 69.

<sup>19</sup> Heide Gottner-Abendroth, *Geschichte matriarchaler Gesellschaften und Entstehung des Patriarchats*, 63, 83.

<sup>20</sup> Van der Meer, *Vrouw Holle en het Gouden Hart* (Mother Holle and the Golden Heart), The Hague, 2018, 63, 65, 121 n 157 with ref. to Jacques Gélis, *L'Arbre et le Fruit. La Naissance dans l'Occident moderne (XVIe-XIXe siècle)*, Paris, Fayard, 1984; van der Meer, *Vrouw Holle en de verborgen wijsheid in sprookjes* (Mother Holle and the hidden wisdom in fairy tales), The Hague, 2017, 146, 155, 270, 534.

<sup>21</sup> Heide Gottner-Abendroth, *Geschichte matriarchaler Gesellschaften und Entstehung des Patriarchats*, 69; Max Dashu, 'Icons of the Matrix' I, II, [www.surpressedhistoriesarchives.net/articles](http://www.surpressedhistoriesarchives.net/articles).

<sup>22</sup> Van der Meer, *The Language of MA the primal Mother*, 248.

<sup>23</sup> Van der Meer, *The Language of MA*, 248.

<sup>24</sup> Timothy Insoll ed., *The Oxford Handbook of Prehistoric Figurines*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, New York, 2017.

<sup>25</sup> Peter Ucko, *Anthropomorphic Figurines of Predynastic Egypt and Neolithic Crete with Comparative Material from The Prehistoric Near East and Mainland Greece*, 1968; van der Meer, *Van Venus tot Madonna*, The Hague, 2006, 2015, 179, 307.

<sup>26</sup> Lesure, *Interpreting Ancient Figurines*, 62.

<sup>27</sup> Timothy Insoll, 'Miniature Possibilities? An Introduction to the varied Dimensions of Figurine Research', *The Oxford Handbook of Prehistoric Figurines*, 3-15, 5: "A general consensus is apparent that prehistoric figurines should be approached as objects with complex meanings that require interpretation and not just description. Seminal in this realization, as cited in various chapters (chapters 2, 4 6, 20, 26, 33, 39, 37) was Ucko's (1968) study... Ucko's contribution to figurine studies is positively acknowledged by Bailey (2005), Meskell (2007), Lesure (2011), Nanoglou (2008) and Joyce (2003). Less positively accepted are the generalizing approaches of, for example, Gimbutas (1982, 1989) (See chapters 36, 3 and 2)".

<sup>28</sup> Richard G. Lesure, *Interpreting Ancient Figurines. Context, Comparison in Prehistoric Art*, Cambridge University Press, 2011, 2013, 4, 5, 210.

<sup>29</sup> *The Oxford Handbook of Archaeology and Anthropology of Rock Art*, Bruno David and Ian J. McNiven eds., Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2018 with several ex.

<sup>30</sup> Van der Meer, *The Language of MA*, 249-50.

<sup>31</sup> Bruno David, Ian J. McNiven, *The Oxford Handbook of the Archaeology and Anthropology of Rock Art*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, New York, 2018.

<sup>32</sup> Bruno David, *Cave Art*, Thames & Hudson, London, 2017, 11 n. 3 about the 'double method', the formal (archaeological) and informed (anthropological) both coming together in the *cognitive archaeology*; *The Oxford Handbook of Archaeology and Anthropology of Rock Art*, ch. 23 and 24.

<sup>33</sup> *The Oxford Handbook of Archaeology and Anthropology of Rock Art*, ch. 20, p. 487: shamanism is a "fixed and unitary category of shamanism as an overarching approach".

<sup>34</sup> Van der Meer, *The Language of MA the primal Mother*, 504 color photo [II.7.3a]

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<sup>35</sup> Van der Meer, *The Language of MA the primal Mother*, 512 [II.7.12]: she is said to be an old 'fertility goddess'.

<sup>36</sup> Koji Mizoguchi, 'Japanese Anthropomorphic Clay Figurines', *The Oxford Handbook of Prehistoric Figurines*, 521-543; Heide Göttner-Abendroth, *Matriarchal Studies*, 147 sees dogu as goddesses with a relation to ancestral art and female shamanism.

<sup>37</sup> Van der Meer, *The Language of MA the primal Mother*, 237 diagram [I.8.1].

<sup>38</sup> Harada Masayuki, 'Dogu broken and Enshrined: Traces of a Jomon world view', *The Power of Dogu, Ceramic Figures from Ancient Japan*, Simon Kaner ed., British Museum Press, London, 2009, 51.

<sup>39</sup> Aurelie Dams, 'Prehistoric Human Figurines from Iran', *The Oxford Handbook of Prehistoric Figurines*, 2017, 591- 610.

<sup>40</sup> Aurelie Dams, 'Prehistoric Human Figurines from Iran', *The Oxford Handbook of Prehistoric Figurines*, Oxford, 2017, 604.

<sup>41</sup> Sharri R. Clark en J. Mark Kenoyer, 'South- Asia-Indus Civilization', *The Oxford Handbook of Prehistoric Figurines*, 493-519; Judy Foster, *Invisible women of Prehistory, Three million years of peace, six thousand years of war*, Victoria, Australia, 2013, 187.

<sup>42</sup> Van der Meer, *The Language of MA the primal Mother*, 240 [I.8.5].

<sup>43</sup> Dr. Dona Datta, 'Treasures of the Indus', BBC documentary, part 1-2-3. Part 1 titled 'Pakistan unveiled', was broad casted on Sunday 18 August 2019: 21.05-22.05h. on Belgium 2, CANVAS.

<sup>44</sup> Richard Lesure, *Interpreting Ancient Figurines*, Cambridge University Press, 1011, 2013, 37-39; Judy Foster, *Invisible Women of Prehistory*, Victoria, Australia, 2013, 303.

<sup>45</sup> Richard Lesure, *Interpreting Ancient Figurines*, 36 thinks they are male and many others also do.

<sup>46</sup> Van der Meer, *The Language of MA*, 27 [I.1.20] with the Venus of Valdivia, 2800-1800 BC.

<sup>47</sup> Maria Mina, 'Figuring Out Cretan Neolithic Society: Anthropomorphic Figurines, Symbolism and Gender Dialectics', *Escaping the Labyrinth: The Cretan Neolithic in Context*, Sheffield Studies in Aegean Archaeology 8, Oxford: Oxbow Books, 2008, 115-135, 112; Maria Mina, 'Figurines without sex, People without gender', *Archaeology and Women, Ancient & Modern Issues*, Sue Hamilton, Ruth D. Whitehouse and Katherine I. Wright eds., Walnut Creek California, 2007, 281; Joan Cichon, *Matriarchy in Minoan Crete: a Perspective from Archaeomythology and Modern Matriarchal Studies*, California Institute of Integral Studies, 2013, 235 n. 584, you can find her study online.

<sup>48</sup> Van der Meer, *The Language of MA* 202-206 [I.7. 51b-I.7.66] for abstract figurines; see 196-202 [I.7.33-I.7.51b] for survey of the realistic figurines.

<sup>49</sup> See <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Keros>. See also website Ancient Origins. Reconstructing the history of humanity's past, 10 July 2019: <https://shar.es/a0FoSD>.

<sup>50</sup> Colin Renfrew, Olga Philaniotou, Neil Brodie, Giorgos Gavalas and Michael J. Boyd, *The Settlement at Dhaskalio*, Volume 1 in the series *The Sanctuary on Keros: Excavations at Dhaskalio and Dhaskalio Kavos*, 2006-2008, Cambridge, McDonald Institute for Archaeological Research, 2013; Colin Renfrew, 'Cycladic Figurines', *The Oxford Handbook of Prehistoric Figurines*, Timothy Insoll ed., Oxford University Press, 2017, 637-658, 649-50: "Circumstances indicate that these figurines and other materials were brought to Keros already in a fragmentary condition and were deposited here in a series of rituals in which many Cycladic islands participated. These ceremonies of breakage took place periodically on other islands and the remains were brought to Keros. The complete absence of human remains in the Special Deposit South at Keros exclude any



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direct association with burials, which the finds in the Cycladic cemeteries may initially have suggested. So these broken figurines at Keros were not grave goods.”

<sup>51</sup> Colin Renfrew, Michael J. Boyd, *Catalogue of sculptural fragments in the Sanctuary on Keros and the origins of Aegean Ritual Practice: the excavations of 2006-2008*, vol III: *The Marble Finds from Kavos and the Archaeology of Ritual*, Cambridge, McDonald Institute for Archaeological Research, Forthcoming.

<sup>52</sup> To find online: “Look Over There”: STARC, in Collaboration With the University of Cambridge to Exhibit Unique Antiquities of Keros in Koufonisia. See website of the Cyprus Institute, see <https://www.cyi.ac.cy/index.php/cyi-news/look-over-there-starc-in-collaboration-with-the-university-of-cambridge-to-exhibit-unique-antiquities-of-keros-in-koufonisia.html>.