



## Nanno Marinatos: A Tribute

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**Nanno (Ourania) Marinatos**

It is with the greatest pleasure that the editors of the *Journal of Ancient Egyptian Interconnections* dedicate the present fascicle of the journal as a Festschrift for Professor Nanno Marinatos. A bright light in the constellation of Classical Studies, Professor Marinatos stands as a leading figure in the area of interconnections between the ancient Aegean and the wider world of the Eastern Mediterranean, the Near East and Egypt, and we, along with some

of her many friends, feel it particularly fitting that we offer this tribute to her and her work.

Nanno (Ourania) Marinatos was born in the Patisia suburb of Athens in 1950, the first child of the great Aegean archaeologist, Spyridon Marinatos and his wife, Aimilia Loverdos. The child's official name, Ourania, was her grandmother's and was given to honor her. But upon birth, her father decided that she was

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“Nanno,” a name taken from the 6th century elegiac poet Mimnermus who was greatly celebrated for his love poems. Although only fragments of two “books” of his poetry have survived, and little is known of Mimnermus himself, one ancient account linked him romantically to a girl with the rare and beautiful name Nanno – after whom the poet named one of his two books. And so it was that Ourania Marinatos was also Nanno.

As the daughter of Spyridon Marinatos, it is perhaps not surprising that the young Nanno – who early developed a love of reading and cultivating the imagination – soon became enamored of the ancient world. Her first memorable experiences relate to her father's excavations in the Greek countryside where she learned first-hand about the lives of the ancient people that had been lived out on the same Greek landscape that she herself experienced as a child. As she has said, this gave her a peculiar connection to, and interest in, the land and its fauna.

Studying in a German-run high school, Nanno also learned both the German language and Germanic discipline in her daily habits. She has said that she feels the strict discipline the school imposed on its children supplied them with a major career-enhancing tool for their adult lives (one that was clearly not wasted on Nanno herself).

In 1970 Nanno left Greece to study at the University of Colorado. There she was exposed to a very different world to that which she had been accustomed in the Junta-controlled Greece, one which opened her horizons. As a result, after graduating with a BA, MA, and Ph.D. in Classical Studies, she did not return only to Greece, but taught as well at various colleges and universities in Europe during the 1980's, including the University of Zurich and the University of Bergen.

In the 1990's she worked at Tell el Dab'a in Egypt. Her encounter with this country proved to be one of the most important experiences in her life. This was, perhaps to no small extent, due to the fact that Egypt was much closer to the ancient world she visualized as a child than any other place she had ever been or has been since. Nanno liked the simplicity of life in rural Egypt, the serenity and beauty of the landscape, and the monuments, which were the most impressive she had seen. As a result, Egypt and Crete became the two places that inspired much of her scholarship as well as her personal spirit.

Since 2001 Dr. Marinatos has been Professor of Classics at the University of Illinois, where she has also served as chair of the Department of Classics for several years. Despite her many academic responsibilities, she has continued to publish extensively and has produced a number of works of major importance. Her publications have been as rich in content as they have been varied in approach and focus (a list of her published works is included in this Festschrift), and include scores of scholarly articles and many books including *Minoan Religion: Ritual, Image, and Symbol*; *The Goddess and the Warrior: The Naked Goddess and Mistress of Animals in Early Greek Religion*; *Minoan Kingship and the Solar*

*Goddess*; *Sir Arthur Evans and Minoan Crete: Creating a Vision of Knossos*; and *Akrotiri, Thera, in the East Mediterranean*.

All of these books have added considerably to our understanding not only of ancient Aegean culture, but also to our grasp of the wider sphere of its interconnections – what Nanno has called the “cultural *koine*” through which ideas and styles were transmitted throughout the Mediterranean and much of the ancient world beyond. Professor Marinatos' reconstructions and insights into this cultural *koine* have had a great influence on recent scholarship and this is perhaps nowhere better seen than in her book *Minoan Kingship and the Solar Goddess*. In this book – which Colin Renfrew, in his review in the *Times Literary Supplement*, said was in many ways “... a *tour de force* of scholarship, embodying new insights and illuminating points of detail” – we find her work and ideas distilled in such a way that we have no hesitation in calling it one of the most important books, in its field, published so far this century.

It is our own estimation that Dr. Marinatos' work will continue to grow in importance as successive generations of scholars begin to see the emptiness of many strands of recent scholarship and, by contrast, the rich vein of possibilities that her research has uncovered. This has been no maverick spur of research, however. Nanno has frequently and humbly given credit to some of the founding figures of Aegean research and has helped twenty-first century scholars see the value and application of much of that earlier work. Nevertheless, while it is a commonplace expression in scholarship that we all stand on the shoulders of our predecessors, in this sense Nanno has stood taller and seen further than most of us. Certainly, she has provided a great service to the field of Egyptian interconnections, and it has been a privilege to bring together this collection of essays in her honor.

Nanno maintains a house in Greece and plans to eventually return there permanently. One of her hobbies is tending her garden in Greece and observing its wildlife. That will doubtless be an ongoing joy to her as she renews her connection with the ancient land and its living things. Her scholarly plans include further studies on the paintings from Thera and also a project on Thucydides, an author with whom she began her career with her first book. He has been and still is one of her favorite authors, along with Thomas Mann and Sir Arthur Evans.

In Greek mythology, Ourania was one of the nine Muses – the muse of astronomy. This is an area on which Nanno has only occasionally touched in articles such as “The Cosmic Journey of Odysseus,” but there is a far clearer connection between Nanno and the Ourania of myth. Loved and greatly respected by the colleagues and students who know her well and whom she has so frequently inspired, it is no exaggeration to say that Nanno Marinatos has served our field as a modern day muse – a muse of ancient interconnections.

The Editors, *JAEI*