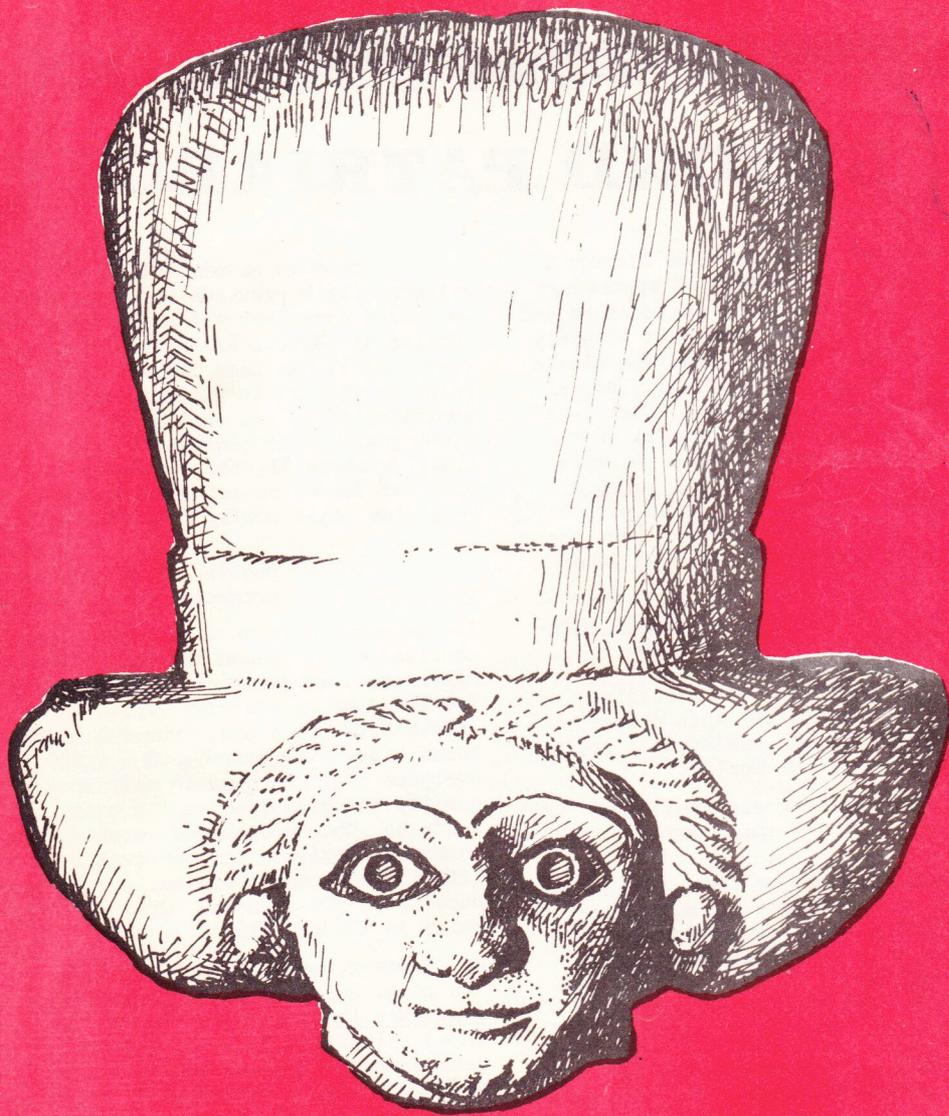


# Goddess



**SHREW**

30p

SPRING 77

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## BEYOND PATRIARCHY

The history of existing society is the history of women's oppression. Whatever other forms of oppression have been in existence - lord and serf, guildmaster and journeyman, capitalist and labourer, the most severely exploited has been the woman. She has been the victim of more than double oppression: that of the class of under-dog whichever that was; within that class, she has provided slave labour both for the benefit of the principal exploiter - i.e. in order to keep the male worker at work - and in all classes for the personal benefit of the male himself. Where the woman personally contributes any kind of paid labour directly into the system it has had to be in addition to the two other and major tasks. This is still the case.

It must be repeated: this is still the case. It is the case under capitalism, in the Western industrial societies of the second half of the twentieth century. It is the case under socialism, in the countries which give themselves this description. It is the case under the feudal and semi-feudal systems still existing in many parts of the world.

Why have women for so long accepted - and still, for the most part, accept - this unequal situation?

It is obvious that a society which believes that it is quite in order for more than half its members to suffer lifelong exploitation, not only of labour, but of total personal being, must have immensely strong conditioning in that direction. It must believe, and the super-exploited themselves must believe, that there is good reason for it.

The reasons, in fact, are made plain from the time of birth to the time of death. They are built into the structure of society based on the patriarchal system of religion. A male-God based society existing for 5,000 years in some areas became dominant totally in the rise of so-called civilisations of the last 2,000 years. Today, even where people are not church-going or even "religious" they are conditioned through life in every sector of society to accept its tenets - of a Father God, or even, (if very advanced) of the brotherhood of man.

Our roles today have been stereotyped by past religion and by the culture based on it.

In 1976, a group of women in London, formed a collective to examine the basis for the assumptions resulting from this culture. In particular, we tried to look beyond patriarchy to find if human-kind had always been organised on these lines. Were such ideas inherent in "human nature"?

Because several of us already had observed evidence for a previous universal Goddess religion, we called ourselves the Matriarchy Study Group. In looking at various areas, we found the evidence so vast that it has been impossible to do more than point to it. It is the more difficult since a total annihilation of its existence was attempted throughout 2,000 years by proponents of patriarchy; although almost successful, their efforts did not completely blot out the evidence, which today is being assembled on a wide scale but by disparate efforts.

We are publishing this GODDESS SHREW now as part of work in progress. These are our aims:

1. We want to share with other women our growing confidence that women have not always been "inferior", subject and oppressed by men in their families and in society. There was a time, universally, it seems, from the beginning of the human race until from 5,000 - 2,000 B.C. where everyone took for granted matriarchy values and society was organised on the basis of a woman-led culture. The Goddess was worshipped not only in terms of fertility and survival but as a way of life in which the feminine, and female, were considered pre-eminent. Great civilisations were built in these cultures.

2. However, we do not wish merely to contemplate the past. Our aim of understanding the past is to influence the present. We see the part that male based religion and philosophy has played in demeaning and exploiting women. In exposing this, we want to share our regained confidence in ourselves with other women. We extend to them the thought that we all have the psychological power to change our lives.

3. Further, we see that such control of the spirit as well as of our bodies will extend the possibility of change in society. Male domination and the assumption of traditional male roles is rampant, not only in rightwing reactionary circles. We move from the importance of feminist social demands to total re-appraisal of patriarchy in politics generally.

4. Such advances as have been achieved in the near past can be withdrawn at any minute. What has not yet been achieved is the understanding that women (and men) are still constantly under the oppression of male-based conditioning. Until this is removed, there can be no real political advance.

# Why on earth join a matriarchy study group?

How many times have complete strangers, on the other end of the telephone, asked whether you are Miss or Mrs? If you refuse to tell them, do they decide which they think you might be?

Do men from places like the North Thames Gas Board call you 'love' or 'dear'? If you call them 'sonny' in return, do they sound put out?



If you have voiced any objection to this sort of treatment, have you been told that it is all very trivial, just the sort of irrelevant complaint to be expected from a half-baked women's libber?

Has anyone ever told you that, without the family, society would collapse? Or even that feminism is a marxist (sic) plot to overthrow the sanctity of family life? Have you ever had the bible quoted at you to prove that a woman's place is in the home/child rearing/supporting men? Has it ever occurred to you that it is odd that women, even quite grown-up ones, should be 'given away' by their fathers in church wedding ceremonies?

And however remote your religious beliefs may be, are you plagued by a lurking superstition that they might be right after all, family life might be sacred and adultery wrong? That women really might be inferior because it says so in the bible?

I can't remember when I first started to notice the put-downs, but it seems a very long time ago. All the while I was asking myself questions like why is the family so important, particularly to politicians, why do people get married, why are children either ignored or treated as runners in a parental ego-race, why are old people treated as though they are useless and put into homes and treated as sub-human.... and why do complete strangers call me 'dear' and expect to know my marital "status"?

Feeling very wary, I found myself in a women's matriarchy study group. And what a treat it was. Here were people who knew exactly how it feels to be put down dozens of times a day, often in very trivial ways, but put down just the same. Angry about it, but not shouting, not trying to bulldoze anyone, listening to what was said, without trying to gain status with clever answers. No competitiveness. And what were they saying?

They were saying that a very long time before the bible, there were matriarchal societies. Women were important for a very long time. But they were overthrown by men who invented the patriarchal religions which are still with us. There were pictures of sculptures and pots and figures from very old matriarchal societies. Without knowing exactly how, when or where, we were all quite sure that it had happened.

It all fits. It is a great comfort to know that women have not been considered inferior since the beginning of time - but that they have been important much longer than not. It is enlightening to know that the bible is patriarchal propaganda which sets out to put women down. Of course the family must be considered sacred, without it how could there be heirs, sons, patrilineal societies?

How could adultery be anything other than a sin when paternity is impossible to prove and has been made into an important issue?

And so on and so on. Of course the man from the North Thames Gas Board talks down to me, he holds all the trump cards.



But then it is all very well, talking to women about such things. It is not at all threatening to learn that menstrual blood was considered important once, and that is why it is considered unclean by the patriarchal revolution. Nor that all manner of symbols which were sacred in matriarchal times become evil in the bible. Not at all worrying, quite logical, listen to it for hours without a quailm. But just try talking about it to men, or even a man.

It is amazing how hostile men can be, just to the idea of women talking to each other and getting a sort of peace of mind from it. No matter how often they may be in the habit of spending their time with groups of other men, in pubs or wherever, the idea of women talking together and enjoying it seems to set off all kinds of fantasies. Women just are not supposed to get on well together, not if they have the alternative of being with men.

Then try the concept of patriarchy. Disaster. That means you must be anti-man, getting at them, instant aggression, sulk, suspicion. So, you say, it is important to me to understand that I am not a non-starter, just because I am a woman, it helps me to know that there were matriarchal societies once, and they lasted for a very long time, yes, it is very difficult to know exactly what they were like, but never mind, they existed.

Women were important then, and not just because people were making a special effort to concede some status because they thought they should, but actually important because everyone thought so.

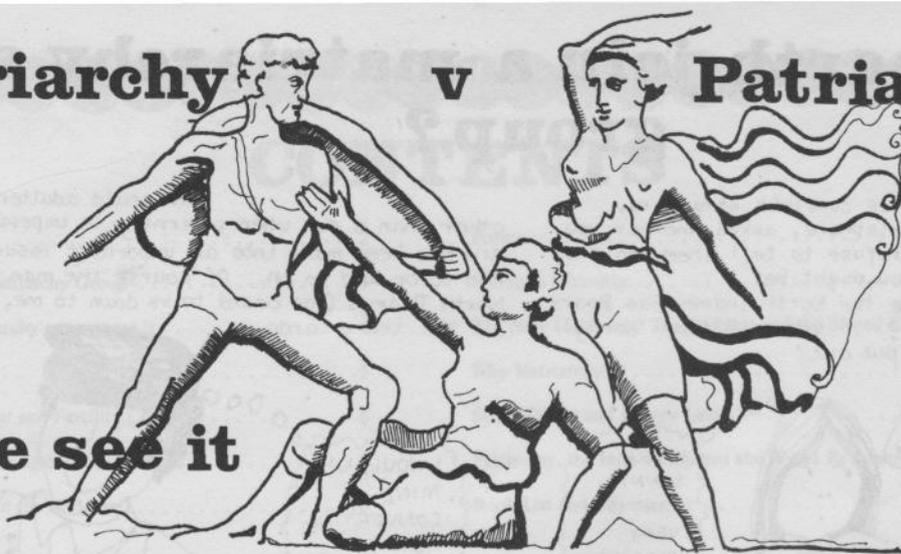
Having got over that, there is still patriarchy to deal with, and it isn't easy. There is no getting away from the word:

If matriarchal societies were overthrown and put down by men who were concerned about the paternity of their children, who invented a lot of rules and religions and beliefs to keep women down, then we still live in a patriarchal society. There is a lot of patriarchy about - a lot of brainwashing to make women feel inferior and guilty.

Guilt about not having children or, having had children, guilty about neglecting them in any way: not buying the right baby food, not attending to their every need, twenty four hours a day. Guilty about maintaining an identity of ones own. Guilty about men too. Guilty about not being supportive enough, not looking or behaving like the right sort of packaged inferior animal. Guilty about damaging the all-important male ego.

However, patriarchy is so outworn that it doesn't even do many men much good either. It has got to go. Not to be replaced by matriarchy, but perhaps a bit more trust and respect would be a start.

# Matriarchy v Patriarchy



THE BASSAE RELIEF  
BRITISH MUSEUM.

## as we see it

THE notion of a matriarchal stage in social history seems to be dead and buried with the 19th Century of Engels and Bachofen. Modern anthropologists do not hesitate to tell us that men have always been dominant, even in matrilineal systems of social organisation, and say that the evidence of surviving matrilineal societies as vestiges of earlier matriarchies does not hold up! But is their evidence really conclusive?

For instance, there seems to be some confusion over terms of reference. We, along with other feminists, do not envisage matriarchy as a mirror image of patriarchy, so that as patriarchy = male dominance, so therefore matriarchy = female dominance. Dare we suggest that this could even be a 'Patriarchal' notion. We are indeed investigating women-based culture as part of a search into our cultural past, but also, and equally importantly, as a kind of vision of a society in which women would be truly free. We are exercising our imagination, imagining ourselves with power, but with a very different sort of power. As Murray Bookchin has said:

"the very essence of the matricentric world is that it vitiates rule as such."

He maintains that polarities cannot be found between patriarchy and matriarchy as two differing forms of rule: the comparison must be between rule and anarchy, between the presence and the absence of domination. A world with less of the hierarchy that seems inherent to male society would be a far cry from the very structured one we now inhabit!

Our starting point has been the Neolithic period of prehistory. In this pre-dominantly agricultural society, many functions belonging to women were given structural expression; security, receptivity, enclosure and nurture. The rounded womblike house and temple forms and the early importance of containers for storing food, keeping out insects and storing surplus in good harvests are a contribution to culture often overlooked in favour of the machine.

There was also an intimate biotechnic relationship with the soil and the seasons which we are only beginning to rediscover. Knowledge of the calendar was vital in this cycle and was recorded in stone in megalithic cultures all over the world (see article on Stones). The material and spiritual worlds were united long before the mind, body split of Platonic thought, and later of Christianity. We have been inspired by the seemingly guilt-free and joyful religion of the Goddess, illustrated in Crete, with its concept of life in life, as opposed to life after death.

We are searching to find why this rich cultural heritage has been lost to us for so long. Our evidence for the once widespread women-based culture has been emphasised more by the force of its suppression and annihilation than anything else. Aspects of our studies have involved:

1. The evidence of the world-wide worship of the Goddess religion, through the Palaeolithic and Neolithic eras, from 25,000 to 5,000 B.C. (Compare the relatively short timespan of Patriarchy!)
2. The importance of the women's role in societies where they served as priestesses and priest-queens.
3. Our analysis of world-wide takeover myths, and the changing mythologies synonymous with religious or political takeovers.
4. The suppression of the knowledge of earlier cultures, changing of religious imagery, mistranslation of myths for patriarchal ends, burning of libraries. (See articles on Old and New Testaments).
5. The survival of the memory of the earlier culture in customs, folklore and legends.

We believe that at some time, approximately 5,000 years ago, simultaneously all over the planet, there was what has been called a Patriarchal Takeover. It lasted roughly 2000 years and was complete by 500 A.D. We believe that the takeover happened by force, and that the Amazon legends may describe the last groups of women who defended themselves against it.

In Europe and the Middle East, the takeover involved the invasions of the Aryans or Indo-Europeans, hunter-fisher tribes from the Caucasus, with a strongly patriarchal culture. Their volcanic sky gods replaced the earth goddesses of the earlier cultures and their own myths and values succeeded the earlier ones. These included:

1. The appropriation and ownership of the sources of production, including women.
2. Opportunism - the myth of infinite development within a finite world.
3. The worship of power and domination leading to armed and military violence.
4. The monopoly of force.

We believe that as men discovered the concept of paternity, they began the appropriation of agriculture. The Neolithic culture based on cultivation of the soil by hoe, was replaced by an agriculture based on fire and irrigation, which began the devastation of the planet and depletion of resources, by destroying vast areas of land which had been the granaries of the ancient world. Together with this, there was the beginnings of the population explosion caused by the over-fertility of women and men's appropriation of the means of contraception. This is why we have included an article on contraception in ancient Egypt which shows its ready availability to women compared to all the centuries following, up to our own.

We believe that capitalism is only the last stage of the much wider problem of patriarchy. The technological society and all that follows come from the premises of patriarchy. Our work is set in a historical context, and the images of our own, pre-patriarchal culture that have emerged, have inspired us as painters, architects, poets and writers, as well as in our everyday lives. A reply to those modern anthropologists is, in Mumford's words:

"No reference to village life among surviving tribes, supposedly primitive, can hope to give a true account of that early inchoate culture, still in the making. For what we call primitive today, even when it shows few traces of recent contact with more developed cultures, has behind it continuous linkages and changes over as great a span of history as any more complex national group or urban unit. Perhaps the best sources of early village culture remain in the surviving customs and superstitions, still kept alive in rural areas until our own day. This archaic culture ... seems to be the unweathered stratum beneath all the Old World cultures, however civilised and urbanised."

So we look to poetry and myth, to trees and stones, to the form of the landscape ... and dedicate our inspiration to the Muse.



Specific refs:

Matriarchy: as women see it. Esther Newton & Paula Webster (Aphra-Mag.

Vol.4 No.3 USA)

Feminism & Ecology. Article by Francoise D'Eaubonne. Peace News 19.11.76.

The City in History. L. Mumford. (Secker & Warburg)

Women and Ecology. Article by Nancy Jack Todd in Journal of the New Alchemists No. 3 Spring 1976.

# WOMEN'S SPIRITUALITY

I would like to try and make clear why understanding the ancient Womenscultures is so very important to me..Also would like to say that I've not been trying to understand and communicate (through painting and writing) the ancient religion of the Cosmic Mother of All as some form of escape from having to face up to the very real and acute economic and sexual oppression of women in present capitalist societies. On the contrary it was precisely the knowledge of the existence, in the ancient past, of cultures initiated and shaped by collectives of strong and creative women - who were the mothers as well as THE producers and also the seers, shamans and communicators with the living spirit and energies of Cosmos and Earth - that gave me strength and hope to struggle the long years before the rebirth of the Women's movement. This knowledge made it clear to me that the oppression of women during the past thousands of years has nothing to do with our biology as women but has all to do with patriarchal culture and economic structures..and as I was feeling very isolated then, as self-taught artist and mother living in poverty, this made all the difference to me at the time.

Women were beginning to develop a Lunar calendar (Menstrual count) around 30,000 B.C. which laid the foundation for notation and early mathematics. women were the ancient potters and it is quite likely that they first developed also written language through the development of the religious symbols used on the pots as a form of communication of myth and ideas..They were the early farmers (so still in Africa), they were the leather-workers, the basket-makers, the weavers and textile artists, builders and engineers..women developed ancient medicine, drugs and magic powers and skills through the knowledge of plants and herbs.

In the ancient culture productive work/art/craft/magic/religious rite were closely integrated and the sexual sphere was part of the sacred..after all had not the Goddess given birth to the entire Universe out of Her womb. Her shaman/priestesses were also midwives and healers and the women's birth-precincts were the first temples or sacred places.. where no man could come.

With the male takeover and beginning patriarchy divisions and splits were created and now"women's work" became the inferior and non-sacred while the "men's work" was seen to be sacred and superior and classes of professional and privileged men arose on the backs of women. Women's work in early patriarchy created the "Man's" leisure and so he could become specialist artist, warrior, priest, poet, lawyer, doctor, etc.. (of course the majority of men are also workers in present capitalist society) and this is still very much so to this day.

The concept of "power over nature", and private ownership of land and property, was alien to the Womenscultures as the Earth and its riches was seen as being of the body of the Great Mother and their society was structured around communal living within clans/tribes of mothers and their children of many generations (Matrilinear family). Societies centred around Motherhood have NO need to force aggression and competitiveness on their men, also the beloved sons of the Mother, and women had no need to prove their natural Motherhood at the cost of imprisoning and sexually mutilating the men (as men have done to women in all patriarchal societies).

Most of the violence in "our" society originates from "the Man" (obviously NOT underprivileged men) having taken and institutionalised "Fatherhood" - through church, law, government, medicine, industry etc. over women, children and the Earth.

Property in men's hands and "Fatherhood" can be established and perpetuated only through violence and warfare as it is in itself anti-natural and was established at a certain time in history for the sake of centralising power with a privileged upper-class of men.

In fact implied already in the idea of "God-the Father" is alienation and a sense of no longer belonging and partaking in the ONE - a separateness from Cosmos and Nature (She). This then leads to the possibility to think in terms of mind/body and spirit/matter as opposites and antagonistic and then identifying body-matter with the Mother (lower) and spirit-mind with the Father (higher).

In the ancient religion of the Cosmic Goddess there was no need for such divisions and opposites as Cosmos, Earth, humans, plants, animals were seen to all partake in Her vastness that waxes and wanes like the Moon, the tides, our menstrual periods and the magnetic currents of the Earth.."The subtle form of the human body may be seen as a subtle form of Cosmos, no less vast but totally alive"... The Earth was seen as a "living, breathing organ which by its expanding and reverting breath brings everything into being" and the Spiral and the Serpent (Dragon) symbolized this energy of the Living Earth.

The ancient women appear to have developed psychic techniques (Shamans still today among the Eskimos, North-American Indians etc. keep this "Technique of Ecstasy" alive) perhaps based in the taking of mind-expanding drugs like peyote, sexual rites and connecting with the spirits and the Dead in a "different reality" and Astral or psychic journeys were undertaken to the Other world to gain knowledge of healing and of the future from the Dead who were seen to be directly of Her essence ("Tell them as I dying live so they will dying live again").



Dancers. The religious setting is shown by the horns of consecration Kamulari tomb near Phaistos c. 1500 BC.

There are some extremely mysterious connections between the Shaman's rebirth in the cave (the womb of the Mother), the Dead, the Earth's serpentine magnetic force ruled over by the phases of the Moon, the ancient Stone circles and underground chambers, divination, prophecy and oracular sleep.

We know that vast areas of our minds now stay almost permanently shut and if they occasionally open more than likely we are put in the "looney-bin" for treatment! Psychiatrists talk of the "subconscious" which in fact is the "Superconscious" and is the real wisdom of our Being directly in tune with the Mother.

The "subconscious" will remain fearful as long as the Cosmic Mother remains submerged and so it is only in cultures that are directly in tune with Her that we can develop the powers of our naturally bisexual (rigid heterosexuality is an invention of patriarchy?), productive and psychic beings - flowing and unhindered.

In patriarchal cultures we have all (also men) been cut in half in our very beings and as a result this Earth is being fast reduced to dead matter and its plants, insects, animals and we, ourselves, are dying with it.

THAT is how important I think it is to understand what ancient Womenscultures were about. I also think that the ancient women might now be trying to reach out to us and communicate to us some of their ancient knowledge as perhaps after all past, present and future may all co-exist in another dimension. IT MUST NOT BE TOO LATE!

I have tried to make clearer what I mean by the ancient Womenscultures and the religion of the Cosmic Mother in a pamphlet costing 50p. + postage from Monica Sjöo, 18 Beaufort Road, Bristol 8. OR Compendium books in London Camden High street.

Books: Michael Dames: "The Silbury Treasure" - Mircea Eliade: "Shamanism" - Merlin Stone "Paradise papers" - John Michell: "The Earth Spirit" - Guy Underwood: "Patterns of the Past" - Sibylle vom Cles - Reden: "In the Realm of the Great Goddess" - E. Neumann: "The Great Mother" etc.

Monica Sjöo

## WOMEN IN ANCIENT EGYPT and fertility control



Winged Isis 6<sup>th</sup> century B.C.

I am often criticised by other feminists for my interest in studying women in ancient cultures. Those who criticise regard this as largely irrelevant to our present struggle, yet many of them may be hard pressed to present a coherent picture of where the struggle is going and the kind of society which they want to create. It is for this reason that some of us are examining ancient forms of society where women had roles which were vastly different from those assigned to women in the Hebrew-Christian tradition. Many of these ancient societies were matriarchal or matrilineal, which meant that women had much more power over their own lives than in our own patriarchal/patrilineal society. The study of ancient societies offers women other models from which to examine their own lives, based on thousands of years of history which is usually ignored by conventional educational channels.

There is ample evidence to show that in the pre-dynastic period Ancient Egypt was a matriarchal society and that subsequent to the founding of the dynasties 3200 - 2780 B.C. the line of descent continued to be matrilineal. This gave Egyptian women power, though not absolute power, in affairs of state and a degree of control over their sexuality which was foreign to later Christian forms of social organisation. Matrilineal descent also had important implications for the legal position of children in society, none of who, were regarded as illegitimate.

Matrilineal line of descent encouraged incest. A brother would marry his sister in order to gain the family estate and property. Although women only assumed power over their estates when their husbands were at war or after their death, a husband could not dispose of property without his wife's consent. Marriage was free from the restrictive notion of 'guardianship' of women which fettered Greek and Roman women. Women led an active life, carrying on the business of the market place, had social and economic influence and were often depicted socialising and drinking beer together. Although the Pharaoh was the supreme ruler, he only assumed that power through marriage to an heiress, who then became the Great Wife or Queen. In practice this gave the heiress a lot of power in affairs of state.

Egyptian women had achieved a degree of control over their sexuality which was to be completely lost and suppressed in the dark ages of Christian history and which we are only just recovering today. Women controlled obstetrics and gynaecology. Women trained in medicine at the House of Life at Heliopolis; they are often shown in illustrations conducting surgical operations. All midwives shown are female. Egyptian interest in contraception was motivated by the quality of small family life rather than the conservation of resources which were plentiful in the Nile valley. Many of the papyri also suggest

that the practice of contraception was related to the Egyptian concern with health and beauty. There also seems to be an historical continuity of control of female fertility through the dominance of the goddesses right from early matriarchal times.

Contraception was preferred to abortion for religious reasons as the Egyptians believed that the soul entered the foetus when the movements started in the uterus. But the papyri suggest that medicines were sometimes given to procure abortion and to induce or ease labour. Prolonged lactation was also used as a contraceptive measure. Women nursed their infants as long as three years. If all else failed, the Egyptians practiced infant exposure for unwanted children.

The contraceptive practices which the Egyptians developed had varying degrees of success and some were extremely effective. A number of papyri deal specifically with contraception. Some methods are crude or relied on myth and magic or amulets. Fumigation of the vagina before and after intercourse with the smoke of burning drugs is mentioned along with potions of grease, herbs and ale. Although some of these methods have survived until quite recent times, by 1850 B.C. more modern methods were mentioned which would have been much more effective.

The Edwin Smith Papyrus, thought to date back to the First Dynasty, about 3200 B.C. devotes space to gynaecology and pregnancy tests, together with descriptions of seemingly modern surgery. Later papyri are devoted to contraception alone. One, about 1850 B.C. mentions three different methods of birth control. The first is to sprinkle a gummy substance on the female genitals, allowing the gum to cover and block the cervix. The second is to put honey and sodium carbonate into the vagina, in much the same way as jellies and pastes are used today. Honey and gummy substances generally would have some sort of contraceptive action, by lessening the mobility of sperms. The modern suppositories, promoted by Margaret Sanger, (pastes, jellies and suppositories) have basically the same double action as the ancient recipes - a base such as starch or glycerine, combined with an acid such as lactic acid or sodium bicarbonate which foams in the vagina. These methods are known to have a 42% failure rate and are being replaced by the latest more efficient type of aerosol foam spermicide.

The third type of contraception mentioned in the 1850 Papyrus was that of crocodile dung pessaries. The document recommends that the dung be pulverized with a paste-like vehicle and the resulting mass be used as a pessary and placed in the vagina. Other sources claim that the priestesses in charge of contraception baked the dung pessaries in the temple ovens. This kind of pessary would have had a dual contraceptive effect, that of blocking the cervix and also a spermicidal effect as the warmth of the body released acid from the pessary. The crocodile pessary is not only one of the most ancient methods of birth control, but also one of the most effective. There are records of its use dating back 3000 years in Egypt and in other parts of the world women substituted crocodile dung with elephant dung.

By 1550 B.C. the idea of blocking the vagina with some sperm-killing substance had developed into a more sophisticated procedure. The Ebers Papyrus contains the first reference to a pessary used with a sperm-killing chemical, lactic acid. The spermicidal properties of lactic acid were not "rediscovered" until the end of the nineteenth century. The Egyptians had discovered by that date that if acacia leaves were fermented, they would produce lactic acid. Another papyrus describes how to prevent conception for periods of up to three years - a lint tampon should be left blocking the vagina soaked in a mixture of honey and fermented acacia shrub.

Egyptian womens' knowledge of efficient contraception was surprisingly modern in its effect... Lactic acid is used as a modern spermicide, and when combined with a 'plug', such as the cap, or the crocodile dung, has a high efficiency rate.

There were of course contradictions in Egyptian society. Egyptian female slaves would not have been accorded the privileges of citizens and their life would have been one of constant servitude and childbearing. Women sometimes had their ovaries removed as part of the Egyptian fanatical search for youth and beauty, rather than as a contraceptive measure. There is also some evidence that female excision or clitoridectomy was practised in the later dynasties, from examination of the mummies, e.g. Cleopatra. In spite of these contradictions, Egyptian women still held on to a fantastic degree on control of their fertility which was denied to women in contemporary societies and was completely abolished under the Christian patriarchs who punished women who dared to seek such control (i.e. the witches) with persecution and death. Some attribute this Egyptian control factor to female participation in medicine, but there were relatively few women doctors. I feel that the main factor which allowed this control was the Egyptian respect of the female goddesses which consequently elevated the position which women held in the whole society.

The goddesses controlled the birth house at the temple - one was a general obstetrician, one had special charge of the birth house, another aided a woman in labour and a fourth took charge of infant feeding and sterile women. Early on women were aided in delivery by squatting over hot bricks with a crossbar to support them. Later dynasties developed the delivery chair still used by the Egyptian fellaheen.

The cow-goddess Hathor was concerned with love and joy as well as pregnancy and childbirth. She was the main descendant of the Mother Goddess of the prehistoric cultivators and in later Egyptian society she merged with Isis, who had a special relationship with the throne through Osiris. Ta-urt the hippopotamus goddess was used for women in childbirth. Sekhmet, the lion-headed goddess was patron divinity of medicine. The Pharaohs were linked to the sun god Re through Isis and thereby to the ancient fertility cult. Ma'at was the goddess who embodied the ideals of Egyptian civilisation - best translated as 'truth, justice and perfect order.'

It is this degree of dominance of the female principle in Egyptian daily life and mythology which I feel allowed women the relative freedom and degree of control over their fertility which was lost under patriarchal law and patriarchal, male-dominated mythologies.

Pat Whiting



Queen Hatshepsut,  
Pharaoh of Egypt  
from 1511-1480 BC

Prehistory - A Unesco Study, 1963, ed. J. Hawkes  
The Fight for Acceptance, Birth Control in the Modern World,  
Clive Wood and Beryl Sutters.  
The First Great Civilisations, 1973. J. Hawkes.

# OLD TESTAMENT



Fish - or Egg Goddess, Danube Basin, c 6,000 BC.

## Covenant against the Goddess

THE BIBLE, Old Testament and New, was created as propaganda to enslave women. It also recorded the annihilation in the Middle East of the previous universal Goddess worship. It provided an alternative religious philosophy whose aim was to underpin concepts of male superiority. Joseph Goebbels, during the rise of the Nazis to power in Germany in the 1930s, said: "Historical truth can be studied by professors of history. The purpose of propaganda is success".

The success of the Bible's message about the inferiority of women and its attempted destruction of almost all evidence about their previous leading and honoured place in the world's community is the basis of Western civilisation.

Women have been conditioned to believe that they are the 'weaker sex', that power must be left to men, that they must feel guilty most of the time. This guilt, in connection with child care, man service, work, one's own appearance, and any specific personal need is common to all Western women, at least, and has its roots in the Biblical description of women and their role.

Even women awakening to liberation still have unexplained guilt and inferiority feelings, all nurtured by society and blessed by every article of its Establishment.

The Old Testament is a collection of writings by men first published as a whole in 100 A.D. in Hebrew, and about one hundred years later in Greek, the latter version containing added material. A great deal of so-called scholarly interpretation and higher criticism exists, and deals with methods of analysing who wrote what and when. The Old Testament's subject matter deals with the creation of the universe and the animal kingdom, by a patriarchal god, who enters into a compact with a pastoral tribe. They, the Hebrews, (otherwise Israelites), will worship him monotheistically, and he will look after them. The adventures of this people, their heroes and prophets are dealt with, and eventually provide the basis of the later patriarchal stage of the same religion, Christianity, documented in the New Testament.

Basic to the whole is the story of the Fall of Man, and in its Christian form, his subsequent redemption. The Fall is occasioned by Eve who listens to the advice of the serpent to disobey God's injunction not to eat of the fruit of the tree of knowledge; she tempts Adam to eat; they both do, so God punishes them, and humankind for ever. Eve, in one version has been created by God out of Adam's rib, to be a "helpmeet to him": in another the record merely says "male and female created he them". Extra Biblical material suggests that Lilith was the female. However, Eve's appearance from the rib and her tempting of Adam are intrinsic to the Judaeo-Christian religion. She was at fault, was evil, she did the bad thing, and look what happened.

The events of the Old Testament are fairly well-known, and it would be tedious to re-document them. This survey will attempt to deal with only a few and to show how history was re-written with the purpose of subjugating the female religion.

This was the worship of the Great Goddess which existed from earliest time until the period of the Old Testament - which deals with events from about 5000 B.C. to just before the birth of Christ. During those years the Goddess religion which had flourished in the Middle East where the chronicled events took place, was overthrown. It appears that the purpose of the Old Testament was to make sure that it disappeared from human history. Descriptions of the evidence for the Goddess religions will be found in the book list. There is no doubt that despite extreme prejudice and sabotage by male anthropologists and historians, this evidence is now generally accepted. But the work which was done to destroy it, has stood for 2000 years as the cornerstone of religion, ethics and morality. This survey can only deal with some of the clues; work is going on to root out more.



Marduk chasing Tiamat across the sky. Assyrian cylinder seal.

In ancient Babylon, the Mother Goddess was called Tiamat, who was the sea, and also a sea-creature, a dragon, or sea-serpent. She was represented as chaos, encompassing a total world of sea and sky together. The Babylonian Creation Epic tells how she is cut in two by her son Marduk, the sea going below, the sky above.

In the Old Testament Genesis the word 'Tehom' to describe chaos in the beginning has the same linguistic root as Tiamat. "The earth was without form and void (Tehom)" then god divided the "waters which were under the firmament from the waters which were above the firmament ... he called the firmament heaven, the dry land earth, and the gathering together of the waters, the seas". Obviously Tiamat's being cut in two by Marduk, and God cutting chaos in two have similar roots.

Tiamat's form as a sea serpent or dragon (remembering that she is the most ancient Mother Goddess) leads to more about her being put down by the God of the Old Testament. Rahab and Leviathan, both names for the sea dragon, are referred to in the Psalms and in Isaiah: Is. 27.1 says: "Yahweh with his sore and great and strong sword shall punish Leviathan the swift serpent and Leviathan the crooked or winding serpent and he shall slay the dragon that is in the sea". In Is. 51.9-10 "Art thou O Lord though that cut Rahab in pieces, that pierced the dragon." There are many other such references. Students of the Goddess religions will also know that the serpent (which, of course, tempted Eve) was the symbol of the Mother Goddess and can be seen today in statues of the Goddess in Crete while St. George is seen slaying the dragon in Christian mythology, in the so-called service of a holy helpless virgin, who stands there ready to serve her hero.

Of Eve, who was created from Adam's rib to be a helpmeet to him: the Babylonian earlier version tells another story. Professor Hooke in Middle East Mythology recounts: The Goddess Ninursag caused eight plants to grow in the garden of the gods: the god Enki ate them and as a result, eight of his bodily organs were attacked by disease; Ninursag created eight goddesses of healing to heal each of the diseased part of Enki's body. The goddess who cured the rib was named Ninti, which means lady of the rib. But the same word also means life; The Hebrew name for Eve was Havvah, or life. Obviously Ninti and Eve were the same person, and healed the rib rather than were created by it.

## Noah was a Woman

A similar trick with names was played in the story of Noah and the Flood. Babylonian literature is rich with stories of great floods and prayers to avert them - Babylon itself being built on the two great rivers, Tigris and Euphrates. The prayers were addressed

to the Goddess of Floods, by name, Nuah; her symbols were an olive branch and a dove. It will be recalled that in the Bible story both these symbols are used by God's righteous man, Noah. Throughout the early part of the Old Testament, there is constant source material from the earlier mother religion. Moses placed in the bulrushes in a casket by his mother and found by the Egyptian princess, in the waters of the Nile, recalls according to Freud's 'Moses and Monotheism' as well as Esther Harding's 'Women's Mysteries', the Moon Boat built by Isis in which to carry and then search for her child. The flood goddess Nuah also built a crescent boat to carry her children, the seed of all living things. Moses's sister Miriam was Queen of Heaven.

## Moses & the Serpent

Later in his life, there is a curious incident involving Moses and a 'brazen serpent'. Numbers 21.6-9 tells how serpents bit the Israelites in the desert; Moses made a serpent out of brass which allowed anyone who had been bitten to look on it and live. Later kings and prophets denounced this episode: 11 Kings 17 says: "Hezekiah brake in pieces the brazen serpent that Moses had made for in those days the children of Israel did burn incense to it and he called it Nebushtan." This last name appears to mean serpent and comes through in a number of biblical references. There is no doubt that the Israelites were worshipping the great Goddess through her major symbol.

## Sarah in Egypt

Earlier, Abraham, father of the Hebrew people, came from Ur of the Chaldees, itself documented as a Moon City worshipping the Goddess. His father Terah appears to have been a moon priest. The story of Abraham's wife Sarah, whom he pretends is his sister when he goes into Egypt, shows that when the Pharaoh there treated her with full honours, and when the deception was found out, Sarah left with gifts and procured by her status her husband's safety. There are two very similar episodes telling this story. Later it will be recalled that Abraham was about to sacrifice his son Isaac, and God told him to put a ram in his place: this was the start of the original covenant with the Hebrew people, and has been used countless times, to show that their God was of a higher form than those who required human sacrifice. However, Isaac was, of course, male; an equivalent story with a different ending is seen in Judges 11.30.40.

## Jepthah's Piety

During the war between the Israelites and the Ammonites, Jephthah of Israel vowed that if he could succeed in battle he would then sacrifice as a burnt offering the first living things he met coming from the doors of his house: after "a very great slaughter" when the children of Ammon were subdued, Jephthah returns. The first person to come from his house is his daughter meeting him with "timbrels and dances". Her father "did with her according to his vow". The daughters of Israel "went yearly to lament the daughter of Jephthah four days in a year". There is more information in this story, apart from her sacrifice: that appears to indicate she was part of a group of women worshipping on the mountains. Possibly this was the reason that the male God saw no reason to save her as he had saved Isaac.

## Lot's Daughters

Other things that happen to women in the Old Testament: Lot (Gen.19.4-8) is besieged by men of the City of Sodom who want two angels who have gone into Lot's house. He says: "I pray you, brethren do not so wickedly. I have two daughters who have not yet known man. Let me I pray you, bring them out to you and do ye to them what is good in your eyes: only unto these men do nothing". One can imagine what a mob would do to these young girls.

Queen Vashti, in the Book of Esther, refused to obey her husband in shewing the people and princes her beauty when they were "merry with wine". She was banished and her "royal estate given to another" (Esther), in order that "wives shall give to their husbands honour, both great and small". In fact, many scholars suggest that Esther herself is derived from Ishtar the Babylonian Mother and Love Goddess, and Mordecai is Marduk, son of the ancient Mother Goddess Tiamat.

## Israelite Goddess

There is direct evidence of the worship of the Goddess, which the Israelite prophets and heroes are continually fighting. There are numerous references to Asherim, wooden posts that "served as symbols of the Goddess" (Ringgren, Israelite Religion). 11 Kings 9.16,17 says: "They burnt incense in high places; they set up images in groves on every high hill and under every green tree". Many writers make the point that in the arid land of Palestine

green trees were symbols of life, fertility and survival.

Jeremiah addresses his erring nation again (2.20): "Upon every high hill, and under every green tree, thou wanderest playing the harlot". But Ezekiel (6.13) has the answer: "Then shall you know that I am the Lord. When the slain shall be among the idols around about their altars, upon every high hill and under every green tree, and under every thick oak, the place where they did offer sweet savour unto all their idols, so will I stretch out my hand and make the land desolate, and they shall know I am the Lord".

## Tabu

There are many more references, but one more area is important to mention:

The laws given to the Israelite people in the first five books of the Old Testament include a whole range of those establishing paternity, punishing by death female adultery, emphasising the uncleanness and the male abhorrence of menstrual blood, and all matters connected with parturition and childbirth (basis of the uncleanness and the later Churching of Women before they could join a congregation, basis too, of the ban on women handling any kind of "holy" sacrament or becoming priests.) In addition, the well-known Jewish dietary laws are set out with stress on utter avoidance of eating pig meat. Freud in 'Totem and Taboo', Briffault in 'The Mothers', Evelyn Reed in 'Women's Evolution' all make the point that what becomes tabu was originally sacred. Marija Gimbutas; 'The Gods and Goddesses of Old Europe', speaks of "the curious connection between the Vegetation Goddess and pigs. Sculptures of pigs are known from all parts of Old Europe and date from every period ... The fast growing body of a pig must have impressed early agriculturalists. Its fattening compared to corn growing and ripening, so that its soft fats came to symbolise the earth itself, causing the pig to become a sacred animal no later than 6000 B.C." Later the many-breasted Diana, Demeter the bare-breasted Queen of Corn and Queen of the Dead, and her daughter Persephone, herself called killer of suckling pigs, are all connected with mysteries involving identification of the pig with the Goddess. Kerneyi and Jung ('Introduction to Science of Mythology') write of a "Moon maiden who is linked with a pig, becomes a pig, her child is a pig and her second form is a pig".

In bringing anything to do with the pig into outstanding abhorrence, the writers of the Old Testament were certainly trying to banish links with the Goddess.



Whilst this survey has dealt only with the Old Testament, it should not be thought that matters improved with the New Testament. In fact, women's position became even worse: the Church identified women and sexuality with sin, and all women's matters were cast aside as being at best of no importance, and usually evil and of fearful temptation to men. This is a matter for another survey.

Also, the reasons why patriarchy took over from Goddess worship, how women were so enslaved (Engels termed it "the first world defeat of women" in 'Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State'), the different areas of the world where there is overt evidence of Goddess worship (Crete, Catal Huyuk, Etruscan remains, Carthage, Malta, and many others) are being researched and written about by women authors today. In particular Monica Sjoo, Merlin Stone and Elizabeth Gould Davies have produced comprehensive authentic research material on these matters. There is much more to do and to come. Let everyone who can, join in.

Lastly, the Magnificat in Luke runs: "he hath put down the mighty from their seat; he exalteth the humble and meek; he feedeth the hungry with good things, the rich he hath sent empty away". Now here is a prayer, recorded and translated by Professor S.H. Hooke ('Babylonian and Assyrian Religion') from the ritual texts of the Babylonian religion of about 2000 B.C. addressed to the Goddess Beltia:

"She is mighty, she is divine, she is exalted among the gods. Zarpanit, brightest of the stars, dwelling in E-ud-ul. Shining Beltia, exalted and most high, Among the goddesses, there is none like her.

She accuses and intercedes.

She abases the rich and vindicates the cause of the lowly;

She overthrows the enemy, he who does not revere her godhead;

She delivers the captive, she takes the hand of the fallen;

... Let them tell of thy glory, let them exalt thy kingdom;

Let them speak of the prowess, let them glorify thy name;

Have mercy on thy servant who blesses thee.

Take his hand in need and suffering

In disease and distress give him life.

May he go forever in joy and delight.

May he tell thy prowess to the people of the whole world."

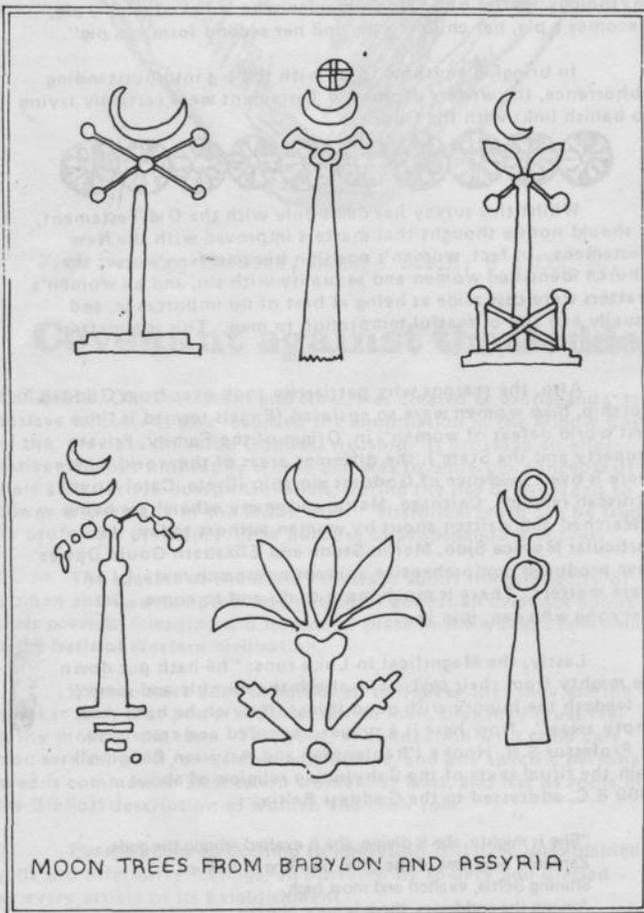
*Pauline*

# TREES and their significance in the Goddess religion.....



TREES were sacred to the Goddess and the sacred groves were one of the main places of Her worship. The following shows how the traditions surrounding species of trees have undergone the same changes (iconotropy) as those myths and religions with the takeover by patriarchy.

The asherah, or moon tree, appears in many of the Goddess cultures and their descendants, indicating its symbolic importance. In Crete and Greece the moon goddess (Ashtarte) was often shown in the form of a tree trunk with branches, a pillar or a cross. In Babylon also she was symbolised as a tree with branches. Many Egyptian murals show the Goddess in a tree.



MOON TREES FROM BABYLON AND ASSYRIA.

Trees are often shown in pictures of the moon. In Western Europe the man in the moon is said to carry a bundle of faggots - and in Greece is depicted cutting down a tree which grows up again every month.

Soma, the drink of the Gods, was the juice of the fruits of the sacred moon tree, and those who drank of it were believed to acquire both knowledge and immortality. In Egypt to eat of the fruit of the moon tree was to eat of the flesh of the Goddess.

Different types of trees had their own particular significance. One of the most commonly referred to is the apple tree. It could be interpreted as being the moon tree, the sacred tree, or the tree of knowledge. It is used as a symbol of immortality, fertility and of consummation. It is sacred to Aphrodite/Venus, the goddess of love.

The Goddess Hera was given an apple tree by Mother Earth, which she kept in her garden at Mount Atlas. The Serpent Ladon was coiled round the trunk to protect the fruits from thieves. The tenth labour of Hercules was to steal three fruits from the tree, which he did by shooting Ladon and getting the three daughters of Atlas (the triple Goddess?) to pick the fruits for him. This gave him immortality.

Adam, by eating of the fruit of the apple tree offered him by its guardian, Eve, again with reference to the serpent, learns of the knowledge which God has kept secret from him: the knowledge of his sexuality. God then denies him his own personal immortality, but the human race becomes immortal by reproduction.

Nemesis, the Goddess of Jurisdiction, carries an apple bough.

The winner of the first Olympic games was given a prize of an apple bough, which promised him immortality when he had been duly killed by his successor.

If an apple is halved horizontally, each half shows a five pointed star, the symbol of immortality - and perhaps representing the five fingers of the Goddess.



Another commonly referred to tree is the fig. References to the maple and plane, mulberry and sycamore are probably to the same tree - the ficus sicamorus is commonly known as the sycamore fig, or black mulberry. This tree seems to have been a symbol of knowledge and wisdom, fertility and sexual consciousness. Again we have the five-pointed star of immortality in the five points of the leaf.

In Greece the domestic fig was infertile and had to be fertilised by wild figs hung in its branches - women were always assigned the task of hanging these figs.

In Egypt, many murals show the Goddess in a fig tree, and the fig is symbolised as the fruit of the dead. These is a mural at Knossos (Crete) with a fig tree near the altar. Gold fig leaves have been found in Mycenaean tombs.

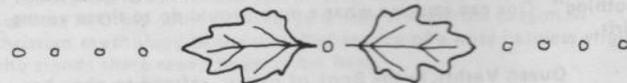
Osiris was buried in a mulberry coffin in a sycamore tree.

Culpepper claims that the juice of the leaves of the mulberry are a remedy against serpents.

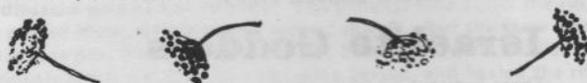


The black poplar has five-pointed leaves again, and is sacred to the Goddess in her dark aspect, or as death. The white poplar, with leaves like the vine, is sacred to the White Goddess, or Persephone, Goddess of Regeneration.

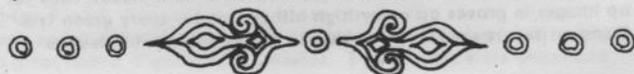
The Pool of Memory, in Hades, was shaded by a white poplar, which was the nymph Leuce metamorphised after she had been raped by Hades.



The Elder has white flowers in spring, symbolising the White Goddess, and black berries in the Autumn, symbolising the Black Goddess. It is constantly associated with death, ill luck and witches. It is the tree of the thirteenth month, the one done away with by Julius Caesar. Judas is said to have hanged himself from an elder tree, and the cross of Jesus to have been of elder.



The ivy has a five-pointed leaf. It was sacred to Osiris and Dionysius. It was used as an intoxicant by the Bassarids and Maeniads. Ivy ale was a medieval drink. It grows spirally like the vine.



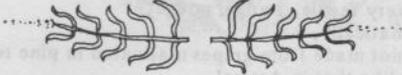
The hawthorn, also known as whitethorn or may, is again a tree with five-pointed leaves. It is the tree of the Goddess Maia, whose month is May. She uses a hawthorn branch with which to cast spells. Olwen, the Celtic May Queen, was a daughter of the hawthorn.

The hawthorne is a symbol of cleanliness and chastity. It was traditional in the month of May to clean out temples and images, wear old clothes and abstain from sex. It was, and in places still is considered an unlucky month for marriage, the Goddess hating marriage.



The willow is associated with water and the moon. Culpepper says that it is owned by the moon.

It is the tree of the death goddesses: Hecate, Circe, Hera and Persephone. The River Helicon, sacred to the three muses, was named after the willow. The words 'witch' and 'wicked' derive from the word 'willow'. Orpheus received the gift of mystic eloquence after touching willow trees in the grove of Persephone.



The laurel, also the bay and the daphne, is evergreen and a symbol of immortality.

The Maenads, the priestesses of Daphne at Tempe, chewed laurel to bring them into a frenzy - the chewing of laurel was taboo in Greece for all but priestesses. Daphne was turned into a laurel tree after Apollo had captured her shrine.

It has constantly been associated with poetry and the muses - because of its power as an intoxicant and its relationship to the Goddess.

Culpepper claims that laurel resists witchcraft.



The oak became sacred to Zeus, Jupiter and Hercules. It was originally sacred to Diana and Hera, and associated with killing of the divine king. By marrying the Oak Goddess, Zeus took over the symbol.

Diana's woods of Nemi were oak groves. Julius Caesar cut down the oak groves at Marseilles, but had to cut down the first tree himself. In the sanctuary of Dodona, Zeus was revered in an oracular oak.

It is the tree of endurance, of each and heaven. The roots go as far into the earth as the branches go into the sky.

References to holly are very likely to be evergreen oaks, The scarlet oak, the kelm oak, and the holly oak. The royal scarlet dye was obtained from the kelm oak. Red is also relevant to the sacred king.

Mistletoe traditionally grows on the oak, and was said to keep the spirit of the tree alive during the winter. It was also sacred to the Druids as it came neither from heaven nor earth, but was suspended between them. They cut it with a golden sickle (moon-shaped). The mistletoe was used in Nordic cultures as a stake to kill the sacred king (see New Testament article) and is still a symbol of fertility at Christmas.



The Celts developed a poetic language based on an alphabet of letters which also corresponded with different species of trees sacred to the Goddess. This was the Tree Alphabet, of which Runic language (of the witches) and Oghum are a part. Each letter or tree coincided with an important festival in the year and these were at points where the lunar and solar calendars coincided, making up the fourfire festivals, solstices and equinoxes. So naming a tree in their rituals and poetry had a really profound significance - both astronomical, religious and truly poetic.

The Asherim were the Groves of the Goddess Ashartate. In the Bible the Lord is constantly being made angry by, and destroying these Asherim, as they were temples of the Goddess and not the God.



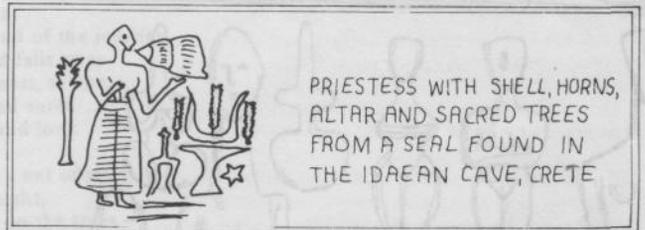
SHRINE OF THE SACRED MOON TREE.  
FROM THE BARBERINI PALACE, ROME.

In II Kings 23.4-7: "The king commanded the priests to bring forth out of the temple all the vessels that were made for Baal and for the Grove, ... and he burned them ... and he brake down the houses of the Sodomites, that were by the house of the Lord, where the women wore hangings for the grove."



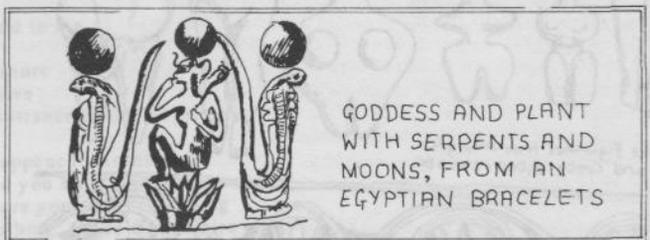
PRIESTESS WITH SACRED TREE.  
FROM THE HAGIA TRIADA SARCOPHAGUS, CRETE.  
1400 BC.

In II Kings 17.10: "And the children of Israel did secretly those things that were not right against the Lord their God ... and they set them up images and groves in every high hill, and under every green tree".



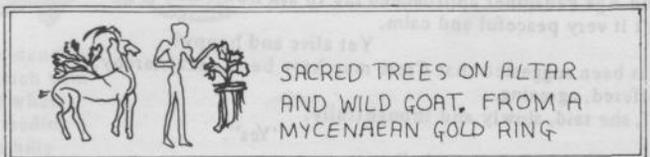
PRIESTESS WITH SHELL, HORNS, ALTAR AND SACRED TREES  
FROM A SEAL FOUND IN THE IDAEAN CAVE, CRETE

In Deuteronomy 16.21, the Lord says: "Thou shalt not plant thee a grove of any trees near unto the altar of the Lord thy God."



GODDESS AND PLANT WITH SERPENTS AND MOONS, FROM AN EGYPTIAN BRACELETS

And in I Kings 14.23: "For they also built them high places, and images on every high hill, and under every green tree".



SACRED TREES ON ALTAR AND WILD GOAT, FROM A MYCENAEAN GOLD RING

These recurring references certainly indicate a significant reluctance to give up the worship of the Goddess.

By destroying both the concept of the Goddess and her places of worship, these sacred groves, patriarchy was able to devastate and literally to rape Mother Earth, devour her offerings and to see nature as something outside human life. The urban and technological society followed naturally .....

Angela

Sitting on the roof of the Heraklion Youth Hostel  
I spoke to a self-confessed expert on classics:  
"It has been suggested that Minoan Crete may  
Possibly have been  
a matriarchy."

"A What!" he said aghast,  
"There is absolutely no evidence anywhere  
or at any time  
to support matriarchy".

Self-assuredly and finally he folded his arms in satisfaction.

"Most experts agree it was matrilineal  
And an omnipotent Goddess was worshipped,"  
I tried to re-open the question.

"Oh, there have been so many far fetched religious theories  
postulated on those three Goddess figurines in the Museum."  
Full stop.

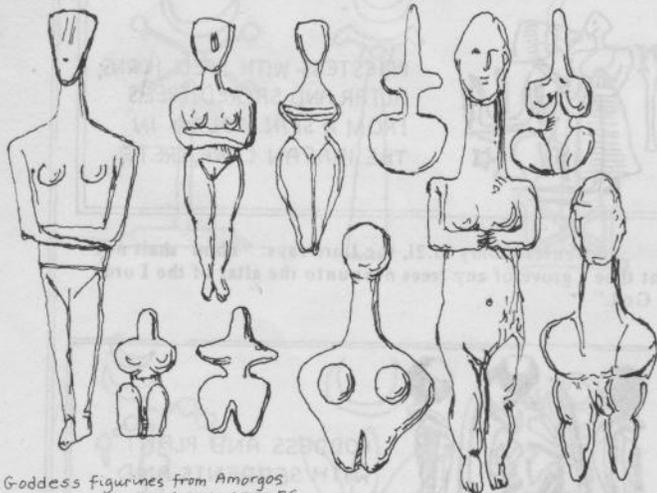
"But if a patrilineal, omnipotent God worshipping society is  
patriarchal . . ."

"No evidence for matriarchy -  
Men have always been in charge -

always will be

No evidence. No evidence."  
He rushed to buy another bottle of Retsina.

\* \* \* \* \*



Goddess figurines from Amargos,  
Naxos and Crete 6,000-2500 BC



An Old Age Pensioner approached me to ask how I had found Knossos:  
Wasn't it very peaceful and calm,

Yet alive and happy?

"It has been suggested that Crete may have been a matriarchy,"  
I proffered, agreeing.

"Oh", she said, slowly and thoughtfully,  
"Yes".

The beautiful rounded eggshell pots,  
So different from the later mainland influence.  
"Yes".

\* \* \* \* \*

Two Cretan men,  
Polite and gentle Cretan men -

But:

"It has been suggested that Minoan Crete might  
at some stage  
quite possibly  
have been a ....."

Matriarchy is not an English word  
With which Greeks are familiar.  
It doesn't come into a tourist vocabulary  
Which does manage to encompass Loch Ness plus inhabitant.

No, it was not possible for women to rule.  
The Goddess was one of fertility only,  
Important in those days,  
And weren't my boobs large like the figurines' -  
I must be very fertile, nudge, nudge;  
And, dogmatically,  
Retsina is not made from grapes marinated in pine resin -  
They grew like that in Attica!

Amazing.

\* \* \* \* \*

Sitting on the boat to Rhodes  
Comparing ideas on the symbols - bull's horns, double axe -  
I suggested to the English teacher that

"It is possible that Minoan Crete was a matriarchy."

Silence.

"What do you think?"

Silence.

Then, thoughtfully: "Hm."

Gazing out to sea, she said:

"We spent a day at Phaistos,  
Comparing the old and new palaces.

It was tremendous ...  
And the feeling very different from  
Anything I had seen on the mainland."  
Thoughtful pause.

"Yes, yes. Perhaps it could have been,  
Couldn't it!  
Why not?"

The conversation exploded and continued for hours.

\* \* \* \* \*

On the plane back from Athens with a history student:  
"After seeing the Minoan stuff"

I said casually,

"Most of the Greek seems very dead and lifeless."

"But it's the Zenith,  
the zenith  
of European Civilisation"

he screamed hysterically,

"How can you write it off like that."

"It doesn't say much for European Civilisation  
If the zenith is reached by the exclusion  
of the majority of the population.  
In Crete, on the other hand, . . ."

"But it's marvellous, so beautiful, so enlightened,  
Democracy, philosophy, logic, brotherhood" . . .  
He agitatedly altered the airblower to blow into his face.  
"There's no evidence for matriarchy!

No evidence at all.

None.

Nothing to indicate it!"

The plane descended rapidly and jolted to a halt.  
"So you think Crete's worth visiting, then"  
he said, seriously.

\* \* \* \* \*



Half Over Heard

As the hills  
I shall be  
vast  
my bones are miles  
long  
under hills  
under fields  
deeper than fields  
I should away  
silence

As the sea  
I shall be  
dark  
and darker  
I shall have  
sand veins  
stone nodes  
and my breathing  
will follow  
the tide

swimming naked  
in fresh dark water:  
a snake  
I shall be supported  
by my element  
water:  
an eye  
I shall be guided  
by my element air:  
a spiral  
on the shore I shall see  
celebrants with torches

and they all danced round her in a ring ...

What happened: nothing  
Who did you meet on the spiral stair: nothing  
What have you to day in summing up: nothing

Nice nothing:  
the trees step off over water  
the reeds lean into silence  
hidden in wood  
a candle burns for my daughter

for my daughter, in darkness

Nice fire:  
at the end of the journey  
the road falls away  
in darkness, softness,  
crumbled earth  
Listen and look

there is a net of stars  
in the night,  
leaning on the trees  
in the night  
the house is clattering with streamers  
the windows are full of electricity  
the door is open: enter:  
a nice end ...

They said to me

on the shore  
in the cave  
at the entrance to the labyrinth ...

What happened: nothing  
Who did you meet: nothing  
What have you to say: nothing  
Nice nothing: a nice fire: a nice end



This poem is an invocation, evidently; it is also a spell for getting in touch with your own historical memory of when you ... etc, and is intended for reading aloud. It works best spoken on hilly sea coasts, where all the things mentioned can be seen at once. You just try it and see where you find yourself. (The nature was observed at and around Laurieston Hall in Scotland). I was moved to choreograph a dance to this poem, with a professional dancer, something I would not have expected to be able to do before, which went on with the Prodigal Daughters show at Lancaster University. Blessed be.

Miriam Scott

# WOMEN'S SEXUALITY

THIS is the time to speak about sexuality.

The worship of the Goddess showed understanding of the whole of life, in which ordinary tasks were considered important and sacred. The totality of birth, living and death were expressed through magical rituals restating the cycles of fertility and survival, and bringing a sense of the immanence of the sacred to everyday events. These were expressed sexually in women-led cultures.

Far from Hollywood style "orgies" this sexual activity was a demonstration of the unity of the whole person with nature; of body and spirit with mind and intellect. To find out how to make fire, with which to bake pots, in which to cook and preserve food; to make tools for digging the earth to grow food; to take precious goods from nature: wood, stones, earth, and build them into dwelling places to protect oneself and one's children; to take animal fleece and hair, and vegetable matter to spin, knit and weave into clothing; to discover colourings in the earth and in vegetables, observe their properties, deduce how best to work them, and then use them for decoration; by trial and error and close attention, to choose those herbs which assist in illness, childbirth and wound healing: all these scientific activities, carried out by women, were part of the religious observances of the Moon Goddess, whose priestesses expressed her worship through sacred marriage.

Esther Harding, in 'Women's Mysteries', describes the heiros gamos - sacred marriage - which came down into patriarchy as 'temple prostitution'. The ritual of the Goddess required dedication of woman's sexual and love life; her priestesses expressed this through acts of 'prostitution' performed in the temple.

These so-called 'sacred harlots' were held in highest honour; and every woman, at least once in her life, was required to go through the heiros gamos in the temple. "In that holy matrimony" says Esther Harding, "it did not matter who the man might be, as long as he was not the chosen man. He must be a stranger. .... the ancients felt it to be essential that every woman should once in her life give herself, not to one particular man, for love of him (that is, for personal reasons) but to her own instinct ...the significance of the experience must have lain in her submission to instinct, no matter in what form the experience came to her".

Woman's instinct, or the feminine principle, is here explained: it is communion with the instinctual life, with nature, with the cosmic forces of life, and it also recognition that these are a starting place and a support for intellectual and scientific activities. The sexual life is a part of and support for the whole.

It was the patriarchal input to the world that, with Marduk, cut the totality of the Mother and tore her apart; with Yahweh, put the sky above, the earth beneath and the waters below the earth; and then abstracted the godhead into the sky, invented the dichotomy of the human person, with instincts wicked, dogmatic assertions good; and, with the Christians, make all sexual matters evil. Women, incarnations of evil and temptations to men's higher thoughts, had to be put aside, put down, and kept from the holy things of life. In 1977 the Pope again has pronounced that women may not be priests. He follows Tertullian, c.220 A.D.: "Women: the judgment of God upon your sex endures even today: and with it inevitably endures your position of criminal at the bar of justice. You are the gateway to the Devil."

What has this to do with sexuality today?

I believe that the Judaeo-Christian patriarchal attitude to women has degraded them, and degraded men, too; women as sex objects, sex itself as a matter of violence, negligence, male benefit, cut off point for more than superficial pleasure, are as much part of today's society as that of 2,000 years ago. History has conned women into becoming guilt-ridden, if they do not 'satisfy' their male partner, or he them; guilt-ridden, if they become tired of eternal womanly virtues of patience, submission, maternal solicitude. Even current progress towards female as well as male orgasm places the 'thing' as the ultimate object of sexual activity. Women's instincts for totality are the subject of men's bored indifference, indulgent scepticism or outright opposition.

Return to knowledge of the Goddess has meant for women, confidence in their own sexuality as part of the world of nature, of intellectual endeavour, of progress to better forms of society. Where are the men? Oh, where are the men?



This last thought provokes its own answer: many members of all parts of the Women's Movement today suggest that we should do without men. They say: that women's loving and sharing can be done together; that lesbianism is the emotional as well as the political answer; that there should be no dependence, financial, social or sexual on men; that women will build their own world, as sisters together, sexuality can blossom without the torture of men's participation; women relating to women could make a better society.

Other women declare for celibacy; not wishing to enter lesbianism, they will not co-operate with the oppressors. Sexually, there is help from masturbation or vibrators.

Ideology about orgasm, clitoral v. vaginal, is used also in the argument. What need is there for men in women's sexual intercourse?

J. Markdale, in 'Women of the Celts', discusses this in relation to the Celtic goddesses and their heritage. Remaining outside patriarchy until a late stage, the Celts followed a woman-led culture, with women entirely free in matters of sexual choice. When Christendom enveloped the Celtic countries, and imposed the subjection of women in every sector of life, the legends remained and sometimes were converted to carry messages of the past within the orthodox culture.

Celtic myths show that women must in matters of love and sexuality, assert their personality. "Woman is an initiator, or rather she should be one, if it were not for the fact that her deepest instincts and natural dispositions have been stifled. While at present it is usually the man who initiates, and then in a brutal, traumatic and violent fashion for both partners, it would be more normal if the woman did so because she holds the secret of life within herself. The Celtic example teaches us that woman, the mistress of feeling and impulse, is the centre on which the rays of world activity converge." Further: "Women must achieve sexual equilibrium. It does not matter whether it is found alone or in homo- or heterosexual practices; whether it is found in vaginal or clitoral orgasm, or any other sensations; a woman's body must belong to her alone, ... She must have the opportunity of choosing between a sensuality directed towards conception ... with all the troubles and joys that entails, and one directed towards pure eroticism, in which case she will be a lover, a virgin lover, a priestess of love, the hierophant of a goddess, as in ancient religions".

Markdale is a man, and he has gone a long way. As women we can go further in the knowledge of totality, of the Goddess: why choose? We can and should have both: motherhood and eroticism, vaginal and clitoral orgasm. Some of us, indeed many of us, in perception of wholeness, would wish to share with men. But I come back to my question, asked earlier: Where are the men?

*Pauline*

# THE NEW TESTAMENT

## THE GODDESS AND THE SACRED KING

Mary Daly has suggested that for women to ask for equality within the Church is like a black person asking for equality within the Klu Klux Klan. Those feminists who want to stay in or around Christianity and fight for the "true" Judaeo-Christian tradition, to be true to the living God, who is both male and female and beyond Personality, will have to argue that the ancient Klu Klux Klan society originally meant 'Society for Black-White Equality', as Keith Paton has expressed it.

In this article, I shall take another rather extreme and now old-fashioned viewpoint, that of mythologist, and try to analyse Christianity as a feminist in this sphere. I have to assume therefore, that all supposedly real events are reported incidentally to serve mythological ends. These myths, naturally go back into the realms of the Great Goddess, and I hope to show that the dialectic between God and Goddess, male and female, seems to reach its ironic climax in the Christian religion.

The Bible, as it stands today, was not compiled together until about the beginning of the 5th Century. The selection of books, to be included, was made by Councils of the Early Church Fathers. Many books, often heretical and unacceptable to them, were omitted and make up the Apocrypha, the Gnostic Gospels Pseudepigrapha and other fragments. I shall include information from all these sources, in my analysis.

### The Messiah as Sacred King

The concept of the Hero, in relation to the Goddess is, in fact, comparatively late. In ancient lore, the Mother Goddess arose from Chaos, and gave birth to herself before anything else had been born. She was known as the Great Creatrix, as Queen of Heaven, and "She Who Created Without Spouse". Later, in late Neolithic times as an understanding of mans role in conception emerged, and as secular kingships developed, She was given a Consort, The Divine King, Her lover. Their offspring was the Divine Child - Isis and the Horus child in Egypt, and Dionysus or Zeus in Crete.

Her daughter, the Moon, appeared in Babylon as the Triple Goddess. She was, as the New or Waxing Moon, the White Goddess of birth and growth. As the Full Moon, she was the Red Goddess of love and battle, and as the Old or Waning Moon, she was the Black Goddess of death and divination.

The Mother, as Earth, needed strengthening, and a renewal through blood sacrifice, and what was taken from her in the form of Harvest, had to be returned as human, or later as animal sacrifice. The corn dolly was her sacrificed daughter and the green man, Her sacrificed son.

When the Goddess bears a son, he is, at first, the Moon Hero. He is Tammuz, the God of the Barley Sheaf, who dies by sacrifice. His blood is used for sprinkling on the fields, 'to make the crops to grow'. The Goddess goes to the underworld to restore him to life. The Madonna and Child and the Pieta are both, therefore, pre-Christian concepts.

The Divine King of mythic tales like the Canaanite Epic of Karit is presented typically in the annual life story of the fertility god - his nuptials, wedding procession, marriage to the Goddess, and the birth of his son, who guarantees the renewal of life and the triumph of the powers of good over death. Moreover, Karit is a royal king, like Gilgamesh, who founded a dynasty and has now been Heroised. As the God becomes a royal Hero, the event is set in history.

The Jewish Priest Messiah of Aaron and King Messiah seem to be an ambiguous evolution of this idea. At first influenced by the local kingship ideologies, it gradually changed in importance from the renewal of the cyclical king to the strengthening of the Jewish religion in time of stress, the renewal of the Davidic dynasty and the ideals attached to this specific King.

Christianity is a fusion of the Jewish idea of a coming Messiah and pagan ideas of a redeemer who has already been on earth, and had suffered and died there.

Jesus, as Rabbi, fulfilled his role as Messiah and as Sacred King, with the necessity for self-sacrifice and crucifixion. In John vi 22-68 he claims to be sent down from Heaven by God to perform for all men who accept his claim, a service that is analagous to, though infinitely more valuable and wonderful than, the service that is performed for Mankind by the Spirit of Vegetation. The Vegetation Spirit provides material bread for a single year; Jesus is spiritual bread that confers eternal life.

### The Sun God, Son of God

The changeover from lunar to solar time paved the way for Sun gods to appear. Originally the king died at the seventh full moon after the shortest day, with the year divided up into lunations or moon cycles. There were thirteen lunar months in the year. When the shortness of the kings reign became inconvenient, the thirteen month year was extended to a Great Year of a hundred lunations, in the last of which occurs a near coincidence of lunar and solar time. The king agreed however to suffer an annual mock death and to yield his sovereignty for one day to a surrogate or scapegoat who was killed in his place. (The sacred king became a permanent secular king).

The rites of incarnation of Jesus are governed by the Solar calendar. The birth of the Sun God, the Son of God, is at the winter solstice, as were other Sun gods, Dionysus, Apollo, Mithras and Zeus.

In the Roman calendar, December 25th was called Natalis Solis Invicti, the Birthday of the Unconquered Sun, as the sun started to rise again in the sky after reaching its lowest point. It was the first indication that winter would come to an end, and spring would follow. The Venerable Bede still calls Christmas Eve, 'The Night of the Mothers'.

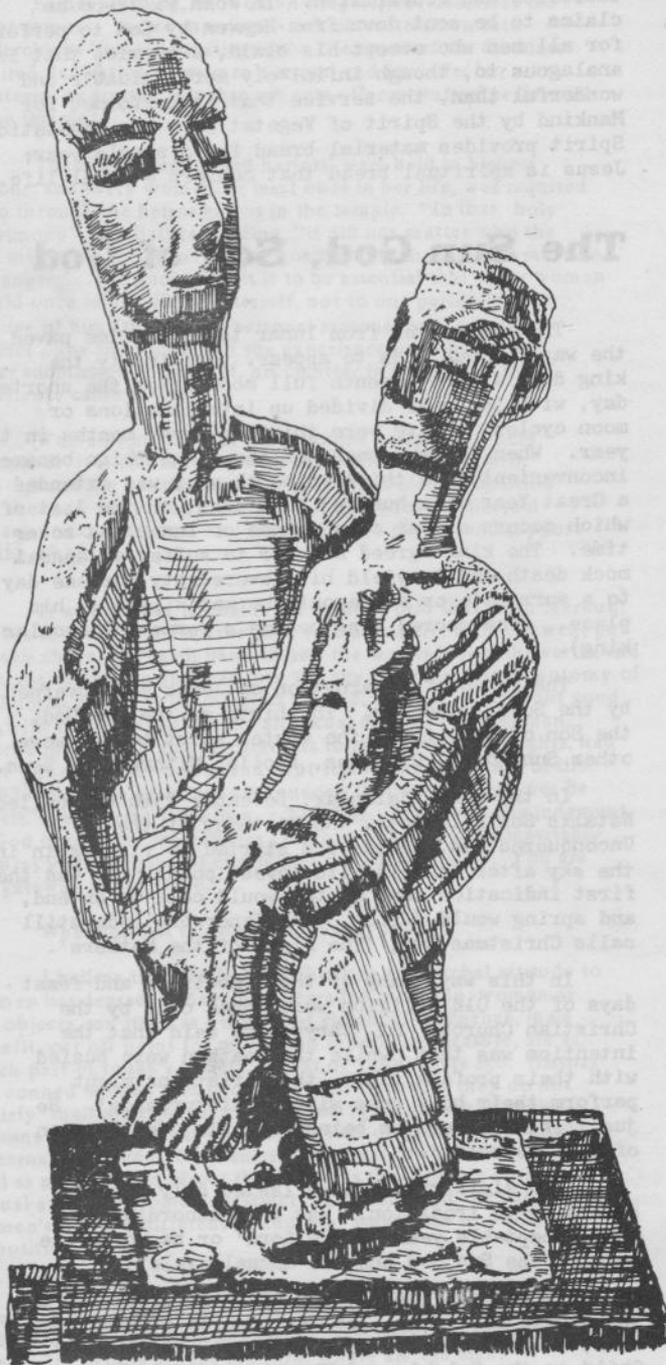
In this way, many of the symbolisms and feast days of the Old Religion were taken over by the Christian Church. St. Chrysostom said that the intention was that 'while the heathen were busied with their profane rites, the Christians might perform their holy ones without disturbance'. He justified the date as being suitable for the 'Sun of Righteousness'.

(The ministry of Jesus lasted only a year according to tradition. Was this according to 'the acceptable year of the Lord' or based on the myth of the Sun God and his annual cycle?)

The birth of Jesus took place by tradition in the Grotto of Tammuz. He was born in a manger or crib, as were Moses, Horus in Egypt, and the Divine Child in the Delphic and Eleusinian mysteries. He was visited by shepherds as was Zeus and Mithra.

opposite: from a 15th Century manuscript.  
 Personification of the Church (on the right, identified with Mary) and of the Synagogue (here identified with the Sinful Eve).

below: The Mother and her dead Son in bronze, a primitive pieta from Sardinia, about 700BC National Museum, Cagliari.



(in the later Miesianian mysteries, the child is carried in by shepherds, ousting the mother's role). He was visited by 3 wise men or kings reconciling the Divine and Royal Kingships. Gold represents the Secular kingship, Frankincence the Sacred, worship, and the sacrificial victim, and Myrrh symbolises death and resurrection and the embalming of the body. The bull and ass nearby are sacred to the prophesies for the Messiah, son of Joseph, and son of David respectively (Isaiah 32). Jesus was born of a worldly father Joseph, in the House of David, his royal line, (through his mother).



There is also an astronomical explanation for the Nativity. The constellation of Virgo appears above the horizon at the moment of birth. Three bright stars in Orions belt were known as the Three Kings. Sirius, the brightest star, rises in the east with them, and was known as the Herald of the Sun. Other important births were also heralded by unusual stars including Buddha, Krishna and Moses. Capricorn, The Stable of Augeas, is directly under the Earth. The stable in the constellation of Auriga is surrounded on one side by Taurus the Bull, and on the other by Ursa Major known in Egypt as the Ass of Typhon, the animals of the Nativity.

The title of 'Christ' may have its origin in the Chaldean 'Chris' a name of the Sun. In the New Testament, it is said to mean 'annointed'. An annointed person becomes shiny like the Sun, and olive oil, generally used, was mystically related to the Sun.

## The Virgin Birth

Races as far apart as the Mexicans, the Chinese, the Indians, the Etruscans, the Teutons, and the Scandinavians all knew the Virgin-Mother Goddess.

The translation of passages referring to the Christian Virgin Birth however have gone from the Hebrew word 'almah' meaning 'young woman', via the Septuagint, to the Greek 'parthenos' meaning 'virgin', and stayed there. According to Mowinkel:

"The young woman (galmatu - Hebrew almah) is the stock expression for the goddess who gives birth to the child. The word also occurs in Ugaritic as the name of a goddess, who is a variant of the typical Canaanite mother-goddess and goddess of fertility, who also bears the name of 'the virgin Anath'. She is called 'the virgin', although in the myth she is the beloved of the god and bears his son: indeed, she even appears as the goddess of love. The reason is, of course, that in the myth, and in the cult which the myth reflects, all these things take place anew each year. "...Thus there is something in the old translation of 'the woman' as 'the virgin': Greek speaking Jews must have known that behind the expression lay the idea of a woman who was a mother and yet ever became virgin again".

Later Rabbinical Orthodoxy must have pushed these ideas into the background. The mythographer can often therefore accidentally or deliberately misinterpret a sacred picture or dramatic rite. Graves calls this process 'iconotropy' and it must coincide with political and/or religious takeovers.

Thus later Greek heroes/gods after the Mycenaean invasion (such as Dionysus or Cretan Zeus), are born either from nymphs, or parthenogenically, as Athena, from Zeus' head, denying totally the role of the mother, and natural birth.

In Christianity, 'She Who Created without Spouse' becomes 'the Virgin who conceived without sin' representing in time, the complete reversal of the ancient myth.



## The life of Christ

The life of Jesus represents the coming of the Second Adam, who is not tempted and seduced by Eve (and Evil). The Ave-Maria expresses more than the counter-point between them. Mary is the Christian solution to the Jewish problem of Eve.

The early massacre of the innocents is a variation on 'the myth of the dangerous child' which included Zeus, Krishna and Moses. The dangerous child is of course the infant Sun, who is destined to destroy the evil tyrant, Winter.

Jesus must fulfil the prophesies of the Messiah. He is tempted like Theseus and Psyche. In one of the apocryphal gospels he is lamed like a sacred king. He is also married to Lilith, the goddess.

The parable of the loaves and the fishes has been interpreted as a Cabalistic discourse on the change-over from the lunar to the solar calendar, and the importance of the role of Jesus (Joshua - the fish) to this change.

The Palm Sunday rite is similar to a Persian rite, 'The Ride of the Beardless One', in which a rider, mounted on a horse, ass or mule, rides through the city at the head of a cortege, for the apparently magical purposes of bringing warmth back to the Earth in spring. Compare also, other Heroic rides, Lao Tzu on a water buffalo, Buddha on an elephant and Krishna as charioteer.

## The Moon Hero

The rites of atonement, death and resurrection in the life of Jesus are governed by the lunar calendar. They coincide with Eostre, the Anglo-Saxon goddess of dawn, at the vernal equinox.

The Passover Supper and the slaying of the Paschal Lamb are also part of the spring festival. The ram was the yearly surrogate for the earlier human sacrifice. The slaying of the Paschal Lamb in Judaism coincided on Good Friday with the traditional time of Jesus' death. In John, Jesus is clearly seen as the final and universal Paschal sacrifice.

The Christian eucharist is the bridge between Judaism and the Graeco-Syrian mystery cults. The sacred body of Tammuz, God of the Barley Sheaf, was sacramentally eaten as barley cakes, the unleavened bread of passover and Holy Communion. The blood of Dionysus as wine was sacramentally drunk.

## The Moon Goddess

The role of women in the New Testament is most important when a death and mourning occurs. The profusion of Marys, at least eight seem to appear, suggests something beneath the surface. The Resurrection of Lazarus earlier on, is witnessed by Mary (and Martha). The four gospels all agree that the burial of Jesus' corpse and the subsequent emptiness of the tomb are witnessed by women. Mary Magdalene, out of whom Jesus cast seven devils, features in all lists relating to Jesus' resurrection.

These many Marys may represent the varied facets of the Moon Goddess. Mary as the Virgin and Mother, the waxing moon, Mary (and Martha) the Lover, and Mary Magdalene as the Black Goddess of the waning moon. The sepulchre cave is the womb of a second rebirth like that of Mithra. It is inevitable that Christ must appear first to Mary Magdalene at his resurrection. The rituals of the vernal equinox involve the symbolical death, search for the body and finding of it.

## Death and Crucifixion. The reign of the Mock King

The Perso-Babylonian festival of Sacaea and the Roman Saturnalia saw the old year out and the new year in. A mock king was enthroned and slave and master changed roles for a day. The 'king' was decided by lot, and "they stripped him and scourged him and crucified him".

(Dio Chrysostom account of Sacaea in Oratio IV 67).

Frazer suggests that 'Carabas' a name, according to Philo, used for a gentle madman who paraded as a Mock King in the Alexandrian charade of AD 38 is a corruption of Barrabas, and Barrabas is not a name but a title meaning 'son of the father' in Hebrew. In some translations his name is Jesus Barrabas. Frazer suggests that Barrabas was the Mock King, derived from the time when the first born son of the authentic king was sacrificed to the gods. Origen says that Jesus Barrabas was the accepted reading of Matt. XXVII 16,17. in the early Church.

As in the Sacaea, Jesus has to bear the insignia of royalty at his crucifixion. The crown of thorns used in this ritual, later passed into a May Day game for king and courtiers.

The ominous cock crowing at dawn is sacred to Hermes, conductor of souls. Socrates last words were a vow to the cock for hope and resurrection.

Jesus was then crucified like a harvest Tammuz on a truncated moon tree or tav cross, and his blood like the soma moon nectar poured into the Holy Grail. The same sign of the tav cross was used as a tattoo among the Kenite clansmen among whom the sacred king was chosen (c.f. the mark of Cain). The tree was traditionally the terebinth, reserved for sacred kings and the tree of Adam. The place was Golgotha, the place of Adams skull.

The mistletoe was used as a stake to kill the sacred king, and is still used as a symbol of fertility, at Christmas. It is of course, the Golden Bough.

Jesus' cry to Mary Magdalene of 'touch me not' signifies his uncleanness. Jehovah put a curse on the crucified man, and he was barred from the Hebrew afterworld.

All hanged men in ancient Jewry were sacrificed to the Sun God or Rain God.

He was crucified with common criminals, often used as surrogate victims. The offering of a drink follows the custom, used by the Khonds from Orissa as late as the nineteenth century, of drugging the victims before execution.

The moment of Jesus' death is similar to Hercules, another Sun God. Both say 'it is finished', and commend their spirits to their heavenly father. Hercules prays to the sun to cease to shine, Jupiter to rend the earth from pole to pole. He prophesies that buried giants will break out from the mountains that cover them and that Pluto will throw open the gates of Hades. c.f. Matt XXVII 51,52.

## Resurrection, The rebirth of the Sun

On December 25th, three days after reaching the lowest point of its annual course through the heavens, the Sun begins to rise once more into the sky. This idea is prevalent in pagan mythologies. In the cult of Cybele and Attis from Anatolia, the son as an effigy was tied to a tree and then buried. Three days later, a light was said to appear in the burial tomb whereupon Attis arose from the dead, bringing salvation with him in his rebirth.

# M

## ary as Mother Goddess

Mary as the Mother Goddess for the first time in history, bows down and worships her own son. Her role in the New Testament is certainly ambiguous. As Ashe has shown, there is really not sufficient evidence in the Bible to justify the importance of the Mary cult. He sees the basic human need for a goddess as so powerful however, that Mary, from her modest role, grows out of all proportion to become the Mother of God and the Queen of Heaven with her own Immaculate Conception and Assumption becoming Catholic dogmas.

The expediency of using the Goddess imagery must certainly have been used by the early Christians and Church Fathers to influence the conversion of Gentiles to Christianity.

It seems from this analysis, however, that the Goddess imagery was really there from the beginning, misinterpreted and misused by the Christians to destroy the power of the Old Religions for all time (The mediaeval witch hunters cleared the way once and for all). In the New Testament, the Goddess is restricted to virginity for life, and the sexual love and sensual relationship of the Goddess and her Son/Lover are frozen forever.

## Jesus as Saviour God

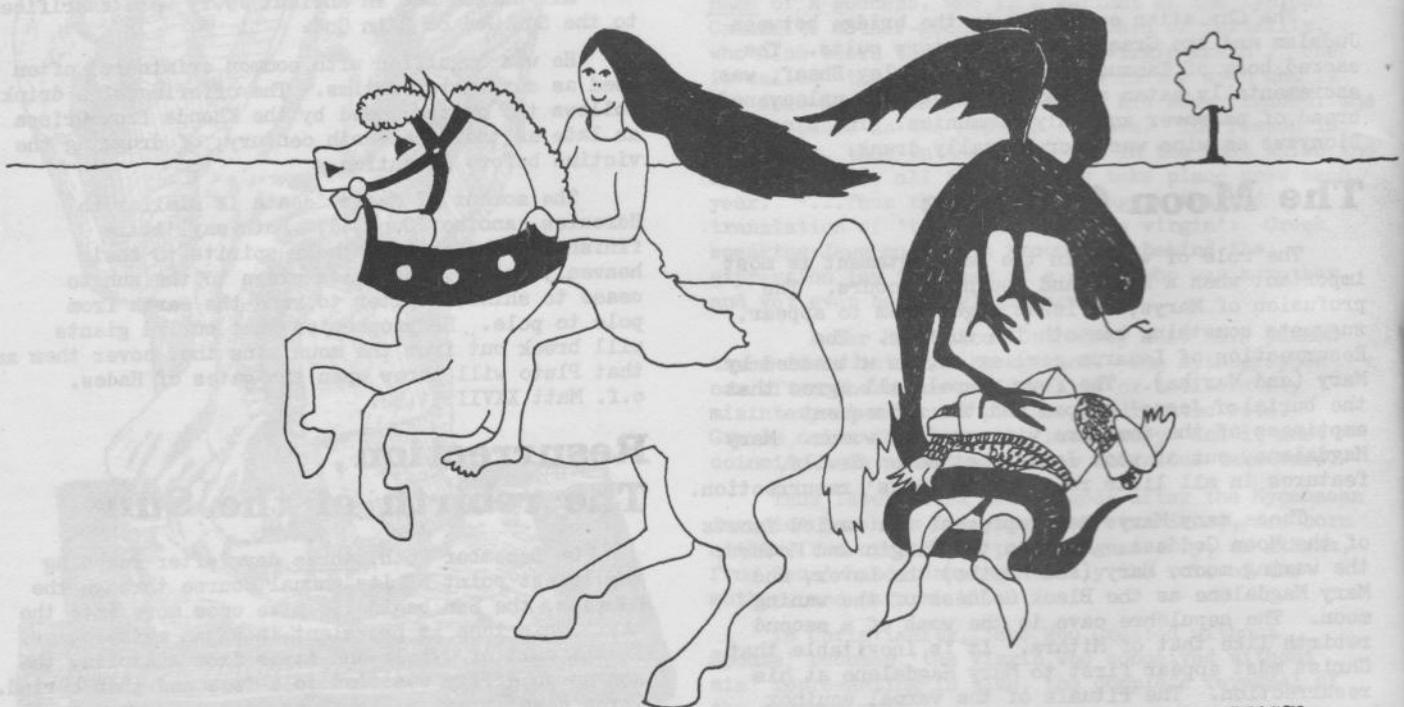
The historical existence of Jesus is still accepted today as he was assigned by the Gospels to a definite historical situation, whereas this is not true of the pagan saviour gods. If a god is worshipped by a primitive society before it acquires written historical records, there is no historical framework into which to fit him. The worship of Jesus is not documented until the end of 1st century AD however, and appears as the cult of a new divinity.

He denies the role of the Mother Goddess at his birth, as his lover, and in his death and resurrection. He descended to Hades alone and ascended into Heaven to sit at the right hand of the Father. His words 'I come to destroy the works of the female' have moulded history. The eternal cycle of the dying and rising god is ended for all time, and the cyclical timescale is replaced by a linear history based on just one moment in the cycle. By his own self-sacrifice, he abolishes 'Sin' for all time, when 'Sin' is understood in its original form, the old Moon God of the Babylonians, worshipped at Mount Sinai, Mountain of the Moon, when the Goddess was still powerful.



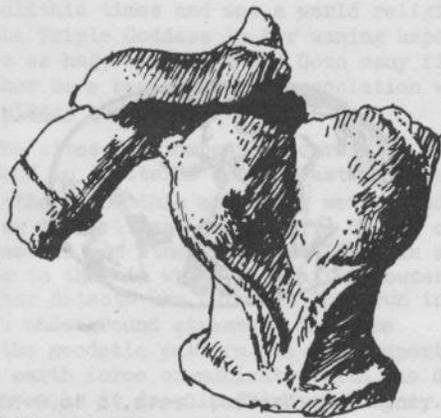
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THE DAMSEL ESCAPING FROM ST. GEORGE, WHO HAS FALLEN VICTIM TO A FRIENDLY DRAGON.

# WHY MATRIARCHY



Goddess in Temple at Ayia Irini on Keos, Cyclades, 2nd Millenium BC.

- MATRIARCHY:** Government by a mother or by mothers. An order of society where the descent is reckoned in the female line.
- MATRILINEAL:** Property and name reckoned through the mother or through females alone.
- MATRILocal:** A form of marriage where the husband goes to live with the wife's community.
- MATRIARCHATE:** A matriarchal condition or community.
- MATRIX:** The womb.  
The cavity in which anything is formed.  
That in which anything is embedded.

## GOD HAS BEEN WORSHIPPED AS A WOMAN FOR AT LEAST 25,000 YEARS:

as a man only during the last 5,000. The earliest creation myths feature a goddess, with occasionally a hermaphroditic deity. Goddess figures made from stone and bone have been found all over the world, out of all proportion to figures of gods, over a period of many thousands of years.

The importance of the observation of lunar phases in order to predict seasonal changes, and later to regulate the agricultural calendar, was paramount in human settlements. A connection was seen between the women's monthly cycle of bleeding and the monthly lunar cycle; this was a basis for women's position as moon-shamaness, the oracle and prophetess for the community. Women were also skilled house-builders, fire-makers, farmers, potters, stock-breeders, weavers, calendar-makers, as well as being mothers, fertile like the earth. They were immortal souls, perhaps continually reborn, like the moon; they were astronomers, mathematicians, and creative artists, singing and dancing and painting and making pots and sculpting. From 9,000 B.C. onwards they began to organise themselves and their children and men into urban communities, with female control of religious practice, and matrilineal inheritance of name and property. Their reproductive ability was honoured and revered; their prolific and varied productivity constituted the root from which the urban settlements grew.

In Crete, c.2,000 B.C., as these towns grew into cities and society grew more complex, an upper class and a monarchy developed. The sacred queen represented the Goddess for the people, perhaps as an incarnation, and she was part of a far older tradition of female monarchy, which was eventually overturned by the growing power and status of the male in general and the kings in particular. Robert Graves talks about an interim period where kings wore the robes of the queen and performed some of her ritual functions, as her substitute

However, Crete, being protected by the sea and her strong navy from invasion, did not develop a military or warrior tendency; and it is quite probably that dynasties of women continued to rule at the palaces of Crete until 1450 B.C., when the island, having been devastated by volcanic eruption and earthquake, was invaded by Mycenaeans from the Greek mainland.

There was no matter/spirit split in the culture; the earth embodied the deity, flesh was spirit; sexuality and fertility were untainted by the concept of sin.



It is interesting to examine a certain strand of irrationality which often appears when male archeologists talk about matriarchy. In response to Michael Dames' discovery that Silbury Hill is an earthwork of the Great Goddess, Glyn Daniel expostulates "Absolute nonsense. It's the wilder shores of archeology, and very sad. It's the biggest round barrow in existence, no more than that;" R.J.C. Atkinson is very categorical: "It's a waste of time talking about the religion of pre-history, because there's no written evidence of it ... We can know nothing about prehistoric religion except that they believed in an after-life - but only because of objects found buried with their dead ... The mystery of Silbury Hill is unanswerable and always will be." ! There seems to be an injunction here that one must only use one's eyes for reading; Dames' visual evidence happens to be particularly clear. And the shrines of pre-history with their contents and imagery contain a great deal of information about early religions.

Nicholas Platon, the director of the Archeological Museum in Heraklion, Crete, and excavator of the palace of Zakro, in his introduction to the museum guide, says: "It is fairly certain that there was no polygamy in Crete." He goes on to say: "The women took a notable part in religious life. They also participated in dangerous and active sports, and hunted wild animals with spears and bows, and with hounds." But ... "This freedom of women does not seem to be based on any kind of matriarchy."

I agree that there was no polygamy; I think polyandry (marriage of the woman to more than one husband at a time) is more likely in that context. The organically developing cellular architectural structures were ideal for accomodating large extended family and clan groupings. Women may have customarily chosen new mates at cult festivals.

Sinclair Hood, in 'The Minoans', also does an about turn: "The dominance of goddesses in religion meant that women took an important part in religious rites and ceremonies, as well as in the bull-leaping games. The queens as high priestesses clearly had important ritual functions, if not themselves divine.

"Matriarchy or mother rule seems to have been likely".

"Matrilineal traditions persisted on the nearby Anatolian coast until 400 B.C."

"Paintings repeatedly show women in the place of honour."



Fresco of Queen & attendants, Knossos, Crete, c. 1,600 BC.

Then ... "Tradition and analogy suggest that Crete was ruled by kings, with succession to the throne by marriage to the royal daughter ... It does not necessarily follow from the undeniable importance of women in ritual and cult, that they enjoyed more respect and freedom than they did in later Greece."

Tradition and analogy ... The Cretan women were heiresses to an ancient neolithic matriarchal tradition. One can make analogies with the people of Western Anatolia, Libya, Greece, Thrace, the Cycladic islands, Malta, as well as northern Europe, all of whom grew up within this tradition.

I suggest that if women controlled the organisation of religious practice, and if property remained in female hands, and if women were active in organic and manufacturing production as well as in reproducing the species, then they probably enjoyed a great deal of respect and freedom, not to say power, quite unlike the women of classical Greece, who had been deprived of all political voice.

Keith Branigan says that traditional female activities such as pottery making and agriculture moved into the hands of male specialists in Crete between 3 and 2,000 B.C. I don't know on what he bases this statement; the Kamares ware of 2,000 B.C. to take one example, doesn't look as though it were made by a man; the smallness and delicacy of much of the art is remarkably feminine in style. Platon says: "Traces of a woman's hand can be felt in many masterpieces (sic) of decoration." The magnificent and minute seal-stones could well have been cut by women, as could the exquisite stone necklaces. Possibly metallurgy was originally the women's province, as keepers of the fire and kilns. There is nothing to say whether the directions for running the farm issued from the women's quarters or the men's, except that the land and the house belonged to the women, not the men.

It seems that the status of men in the society steadily improved, once they were initiated into female trade secrets, and once their role in conception became known. They could probably own property, and participate in city and district politics, in trading missions, in naval organisation, and in the creation of works of art. They were undoubtedly builders and masons, hunters and fishers. There is no trace detectable of repressive attitudes toward either sex; much evidence of co-operation and communication. These city-states did not waste time battling each other for supremacy; on the contrary, they were closely linked by a unity of economic organisation and religious theory.

Crete, Nicolas Platon.  
The Minoans, Sinclair Hood.  
Foundations of Palatial Crete, Keith Brannigan.  
Greek Myths, R. Graves.

Elizabeth Moore



Gold ring from Vaphio, Crete, c 1600 BC.  
Spring Dance in honour of the Sacred Tree.

## STONE CIRCLES AND ENERGY LINES



Any culture radically different from our own must have other customs, other religions and a different built environment, in which another life style can exist. The rhythm of life could have been expressed in the landscape rather than in buildings. We are conditioned to think of the country as the space between towns, other cultures lived in and used the landscape as a life force. They knew the changing seasons, the waxing and waning moon, death and rebirth. As a celebration of their lives they changed the landscape around them and expressed its force in their monuments.

Before god the father there was the Mother.. The Babylonian Goddess Tiamat originally reigned supreme. Later her son Marduk rebelled and divided her into the earth below and the sky above. Tiamat was. Marduk tore her apart.

Since the patriarchal revolution worship of the Goddess has been associated in men's minds with witches, evil, the dark side of the moon, sin, the

left, the sinister and the dark feared power of women. We know little about the Goddess worshippers life styles but there are clues. These clues lie amongst the pursuits that conventional patriarchal thought has labelled either frivolous or dangerous. Ley lines, megalithic tombs, stone circles, ancient calendars and folk lore all help us to understand how the landscape might have looked in ancient times and how people might have used it.

In a world devoid of cities and the internal combustion engine, the yearly cycles are of paramount importance. Life follows death as summer follows winter. The spirits of the dead do not cease to exist or live isolated in a heavenly paradise. They are on earth with the living. In Gozo, an island near Malta where there was a flourishing neolithic culture, the priestess of the Goddess slept in a cave and the ancestral spirits communicated with her through dreams. In later times the Sybil at Delphi foretold the future and spoke with the voices of spirits who entered her when she was in a trance.



Sleeping Goddess, Malta, 3rd Millenium BC.  
20

The living dead are with us. When they are ready the spirits enter the womb and are born again. Such is the importance attached to the dead and to spirits, that tombs and houses for the dead are amongst the earliest known remains of primitive people and survive when all else has vanished. The cult of the dead stretched from the Near East to the Orkneys in late neolithic times and was a world religion. Death is the Triple Goddess in her waning aspect. The Goddess as hag. In Malta and Gozo many figures of the Mother have been found in association with tombs and places of worship.

The sites for tombs were carefully chosen. Guy Underwood in 'Patterns of the Past' argues that tombs and other neolithic monuments were sited on aquastats or track lines. A positive dowser can detect aquastats and other geodetic lines in a similar way to that in which a negative dowser or water diviner detects the currents that run in the earth above underground streams. The more important the geodetic pattern the more important the tomb. The earth force communicated with the dead through graves as it does in Chinese geomancy. In Imperial China geomancers sited buildings in the landscape so that any proposed building would harmonise with its environment and with the earth forces.

Megalithic tombs were built of stones and generally followed a clover leaf pattern as did the temples of the Goddess at Gozo and Malta. These temples were experienced as an internal womb-like space and painted red. There were altars and statues of the Goddess, one as large as eight feet high. The stone was the image of the Goddess and an expression of her power. Stone expressed the life force and the polarisation of geodetic energy. In Corsica and Sardinia the stones themselves took on anthropomorphic characteristics, so that some stones can be identified as male and some are female with breasts.

There are references to stones in the Old Testament and to their power. The Canaanite god El-hin or Bethel was worshipped in the form of a menhir or standing stone. In Leviticus XXVI Moses received the order from God to destroy the stone idols of Canaan 'Ye shall make you no idols nor graven images, neither rear you up a standing image of stone (maskit) in your land, to bow down to it.' The fear of the image of the Mother lead to a prohibition against representational art forms in the Jewish and Moslem faiths. Yahweh and Allah are abstract gods and are never depicted in human form. In Islamic art the human form itself is seldom shown. The Judaeo-Christian religion broke with the nature force, wholeness and integrity of earlier cultures and introduced blind obedience to an abstract concept.



The builders of the old temples, burial chambers and stone circles understood much that is lost to twentieth century people. Some of this esoteric knowledge was still known to the medieval freemasons who were responsible for the cathedrals. The pattern of the geodetic lines in the ground governed location and spatial organisation. Altars were sited on the spiral patterns of 'blind springs', which are a specially strong geodetic formation. In the temple at Hal Tarxien the spiral eyes of the Goddess are engraved on the altar stone. Spirals and mazes have their own significance as the ritual dance between life and death. The labyrinth at Knossos is one of the most famous and though it has never been found, symbolic mazes figure on Cretan seals. Many cathedrals such as Chartres and Salisbury have mazes marked out in the floor tiling, but the present day authorities obscure them with chairs. In medieval times esoteric knowledge and its expression in built form was a secret known only to the initiated, but we do not know how far this was the case in ancient times.

Our commitment to our own civilisation

may have lead us to belittle the achievements of previous civilisations. It is only now that we are starting to unravel the mysteries of the stone circles. The work done by Professors Thom and Hawkins has shown us how advanced mathematical and astronomical knowledge was in ancient times. Civilisation spread from the Middle East to Scandinavia. The megalithic yard was standardised as a precise unit of measurement from Brittany to the Orkneys. Our foremothers knew the triangles of Pythagoras and thus irrational numbers and could predict the eclipse of the moon by the earth. The stone circles acted as calenders and by observation of the heavens day to day life could be ordered and festivals pinpointed. Astronomical knowledge was set in stone for all time.

The efforts of moving the stones into place must have occupied the energies of generations in much the same way as the cathedrals of the Middle Ages. The Department of the Environment's booklet 'Stonehenge and Avebury' shows artists' impressions of skin-clad savages (men) precariously hauling rocks along on wooden rollers. Elizabeth Gould Davis suggests that women moved the stones in a more dignified way. Could levitation have been used? If the trumpets of Joshua caused the walls of Jericho to fall down, were they originally raised by a note of music, as the Inca cities of legend were?



Stonehenge

At Stonehenge and at Carnac many of the stones are reputed by folk legend to have special healing or fertility powers. At Carnac these stones are known as 'hot' stones and women or childless couples would slide naked down the stones on certain nights to obtain lovers or children, through the power residing in the stones. Until recently the Catholic clergy followed by the local women would go in procession to certain 'hot' stones so that the clergy could neutralise their power by Christian incantations. Many ancient menhirs had Christian crosses stuck on them by the Church in an attempt to negate their power through the symbol of Christ Crucified.

Certainly long barrows such as West Kennet 2500 B.C. are a part of the religion of the Goddess. The techniques for building the stone circles have much in common with that of long barrows and ~~chambers~~ chambers. The burial chambers are essentially underground but stone circles (cromlechs) are open to the skies and are dated by Thom at a few hundred years later. If we accept Robert Graves thesis of the importance of the calender in a Goddess worshipping agricultural community, then the knowledge given by the stone circles is essentially matriarchal in character. Certainly the people who expressed the natural forces of the landscape by realigning the Kennet so that it runs between parallel geodetic lines and by building Silbury Hill as a person-made mound knew something about the earth forces that we have forgotten and can no longer express. We must look to the Goddess for our past and then for our future.

Janet Payne

Eurynome lives.

Specific ref:

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S. von Cles Reden	In the Realm of the Great Goddess.

# Patriarchy, Indo-Europeans and major world religions



Kali dancing on Shiva.

a  
personal  
view

## Indian religions

Disciple: "How are we to conduct ourselves, Lord, with regard to women?"

Buddha: "Do not see them, Ananda!"

Disciple: "But if we should see them, what are we to do?"

Buddha: "Abstain from speech."

Disciple: "But if they speak to us, Lord, what are we to do?"

Buddha: "Keep wide awake, Ananda!"

Although 'enlightened' (some might say because he was ...) Buddha was extremely reluctant to admit women to his Order. We could be lay followers only: the life of the Order would apparently be shortened if we were admitted! We prevailed only so far - the female counterpart of the Order was subject to strict and humiliating rules, and whilst undertaking the same work as the men in the communities, women were always subservient.

The female aspect was, however, retained in many of the Bodhi-Sattvas. Indeed, the most popular is "Regarder of the Cries of the World", who appears in China as a woman who gives children, and is often referred to as the Goddess of Mercy. The Lotus speaks of her thus: "If any, carried away by a flood, call upon this name, they will immediately reach the shallows." They have only to call on her name to be saved.

When Mahayana Buddhism in Bengal became over-complicated and philosophical in the middle ages, ordinary folk turned to cults of female deities for self-fulfilment (introduced first as Bodhi-Sattvas). There was a link here with Tantra, particularly in the mystical exaltation of the female principle in the universe. The female deities were eventually absorbed into other religions of the area where mass singing and dancing induced states of mystical ecstasy and trance.

Buddhism came into being around 600 B.C. when the Indus Valley civilisation was undergoing a population explosion and the role of towns was becoming increasingly important, together with an emphasis on individualism. It arose in a background of a Hinduism with a rigid caste system instigated by the invading Aryan tribes around 1500 B.C. Power was concentrated in the hands of the Brahmins (the Aryan priestly caste) in what seems to be pretty much a blueprint for modern totalitarianism. Certainly the Aryans were patriarchal, as were other branches of the Indo-European tribes, who became the Greeks and Romans. Effectively even high caste women were excluded, along with men from the servile caste and outcastes, from reading the Vedas and worship, and this lowly lot was emphasised as in the cycle of rebirth, at this time, to be born a woman meant you had behaved very badly in a previous existence. In addition the Laws of Manu pointed to women as the root of all evil.

Evidence from pre-Aryan India reveals a totally different picture. Archeological finds show worship of the Mother Goddess was prevalent here too.

I feel the religious writings of the conquerors rather give themselves away with such statements as

"Woman is an all-devouring curse",

and the idea that: "noble man is unfortunately born out of lust engendered by blood and semen" and so "emerges mixed with excrement and water, fouled with the impurities of woman," therefore "A wise man will avoid the contaminating society of women as he would the touch of bodies infested with vermin."

Would there be a need of such polemic against a section of society which had no power at all and was not a threat?

Both Tantra and Yoga have their roots in the pre-Aryan period. Indeed, Tantra has been posited as a remnant of the original religion of the area. The counter-argument is that only a small part of it originated in folk-lore (!) whilst the rest suggests a sophisticated civilisation. Presumably such a society was inconceivable before the Aryans arrived! Unlike in orthodox Hinduism, women play an important role in Tantra. Followers have been described as "admirers to the point of frenzy, of Woman in all her aspects." The caste system is largely relaxed too.

In our times, one of the most important deities is Kali, often represented as dancing on the prostrate body of Shiva, her consort, to symbolise her supremacy. She is the Mother Goddess and still receives blood sacrifice. Often portrayed as terrifying (particularly to men?) to her worshippers she is the great and kindly Mother.

## Semitic religions

In 'The Paradise Papers' Merlin Stone postulates a link between the Indo-Europeans and the early Hebrews, particularly through the priestly caste system; the Levites as the Judaic Brahmins. This would mean that these patriarchal tribes have also influenced three further religions.

Women are excluded from worship in Judaism, sitting separately in a gallery in the synagogue, whilst the men regularly (i.e. daily) thank God they have not been born women. Strangely, although circumcision is indispensable for a non-Jew to be admitted to the faith, a man with a Jewish mother is a full Jew regardless of whether or not he has submitted to that rite. (see articles on Old Testament & Why Patriarchy).

Christianity, as heir to Judaism, would have got patriarchy (sounds like a disease!) from this source as well as originating and developing in the Graeco-Roman world. The Church Fathers were much influenced by Greek philosophy as they built up the patriarchal structure of the (Catholic) Church, whilst easing out (to put it politely) the more spontaneous, charismatic element of early Christianity in which women were more involved.

Jesus himself was, after all, a Jew, but one with an undoubtedly revolutionary attitude to women both then and now. There is no justification in any of his accepted teachings or ideas that we are either inferior or that we should be excluded in any way from worship. (I withhold judgment on odd fragments, the only information we have of which are late 2nd century writings that they were being misused.) Like Buddha he seemingly chose his 'inner sanctum' from men (though this is now disputed), but as a precedent this should carry as little weight as limiting Christian priesthood to Jews! In fact, all the synoptic gospels specifically distinguish the multitudes of women from Galilee who had followed him to Jerusalem, from others present at the crucifixion (Mt. 27.55; Mk. 15.40; Lk. 23.27/49). Incidentally the majority of non-conformist Churches have never barred women from the priesthood.

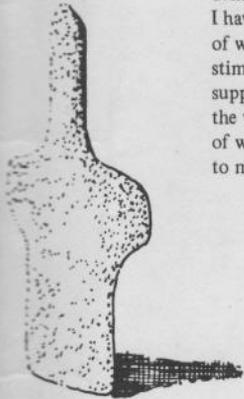
St. Paul's Hellenistic Jewish background is evident in many places where he appears to be criticising the role women were already playing in the Church around 50-60 A.D. (e.g. I Cor. 11.5 and 14.34ff). Elsewhere, however, he emphasises the equality of all (Gal. 3.28).

The youngest of the world religions really makes Christianity look like a breakthrough in the patriarchal stronghold. The position of women of Islam is only too painfully evident these days in London when we see them veiled and walking humbly several paces behind their men.

Women are excluded from the holy parts of the mosque and altogether at prayer time. The Koran decrees: "Women are your tillage," and the word for marriage is that of sexual intercourse. The object of marriage is stated to be the propagation of children and to that end the man may have four wives and unlimited concubines at any one time, though they should be treated with kindness and impartiality. A woman may not sue for divorce on any grounds and her husband may beat her.

The only hint of mutuality seems to be in the architecture of the mosque, with the rounded dome and minarets, though Sultan Ahmet Mosque in Istanbul has six of the latter!

Speaking from within Christianity (Though somewhat unorthodox), I am perhaps at variance with the rest of the group who clearly would demur from my Christian apologetic. I have nevertheless found the experience of working with the Shrew rather stimulating than shattering, as might be supposed. I do feel, however, that the virtual predominance (numerically) of women in Christianity is not due to mere perversity!



Carol

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- Buddhism. C. Humphreys (Pelican)
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- Judaism. I. Epstein (Pelican)
- Islam. A. Guillaume (Pelican)
- What World Religions Teach. E.G. Parrinder (Harrap)



THE SONG OF THE FEMINIST MATERIALIST

Matriarchies don't exist  
So anthropologists say  
Women were never equal  
Not in Canaan, not today

Images of Goddesses  
And fertility rites  
Sacred kings and crocodiles  
And dancing moonlit nights

A lot of pretty pictures  
Nothing can be proved  
Unacademic nonsense  
We will not be moved.

Fraser is discredited  
Engels got it all quite wrong  
Victorian imagining  
We knew that all along

We don't need a herstory  
We don't need a past  
Discard all the evidence  
Marx will save women at last!

Janet

SHREW is a magazine published irregularly by various groups of women on different topics.

- The First Sex. E. Gould Davis (Penguin)
- Women's Mysteries. Esther Harding (Hutchinson)
- Women's Evolution. Evelyn Reed.
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- The Silbury Treasure. Michael Dames (Thames & Hudson)
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For further information or more detailed booklist write (enclosing stamped addressed envelope) to:

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Blessed be.

- |           |         |
|-----------|---------|
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City of Mari, Sumeria, 3rd Millenium BC.

Back: Marble Goddess from Sparta,  
6th Millenium BC.

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