

ARCHEOLOGY

The Eye Goddess. O. G. S. CRAWFORD. New York: The MacMillan Company, 1958.
168 pp., appendices, 46 figures, 48 plates. \$10.00.

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The older generation of British archeologists was sadly depleted by death in 1957. V. Gordon Childe, A. J. B. Wace, and O. G. S. Crawford were lost in the space of three weeks in November. Of these three, Crawford was distinctly the least scholarly and made few direct contributions of significance to archeological knowledge, but his influence might be more permanent than the others. His own archeological work was done in the Sudan (*The Fung Kingdom of Sennar*, 1951) and on the British Long Barrows, but, in the former at least, his contribution rested rather on his summation of the work of others than on his own digging. His great contributions were made rather by his concern with methodology and by his successful efforts to arouse popular interest in archeology.

Crawford's service with the Royal Flying Corps in World War I taught him the value of air reconnaissance. He was a pioneer in the use of air survey in archeology, and

in 1928 published a book publicizing the fact that photography from the air could reveal ancient disturbances of the soil resulting from habitations, field systems, or tracks, even when these were quite invisible at ground level. He is the direct source of such recent books as John Bradford's *Ancient Landscapes in Europe and Asia* or the *Cambridge Air Surveys*.

As a civilian employee of the Ordnance Survey of Great Britain from 1920 to his retirement in 1946, Crawford used all his influence to direct that agency's activities toward archeology. This influence was decisive in establishing a new relationship between archeology and mapping. He abhorred maps of "mixed dates" and advocated "distribution maps," each concerned with a single artifact, and "period maps" of a narrow chronological range. These activities resulted in government publication of maps of "Neolithic Wessex," "Roman Britain," "Seventeenth Century England," and "Britain in the Dark Ages." These methodological interests culminated in Crawford's handbook on archeological techniques, *Archaeology in the Field* (1953).

Crawford's greatest achievement is *Antiquity*, which was his personal journal from its founding in 1927 to his death thirty years later. When Crawford first became concerned with archeology, more than fifty years ago, it was dominated by elderly (usually wealthy) eccentrics whose interests were narrowly restricted, largely to classical antiquity and to objects for collections. Crawford sought to broaden the subject in three ways—so that it would include all periods and areas, would seek to use archeological evidence to reconstruct the total way of life of vanished peoples, and would be of interest to all educated men. *Antiquity* was founded to further these aims and has been more successful than anyone, even Crawford himself, could have dreamed. It is reassuring to know that the magazine will be continued along the same lines under the capable editorship of Dr. Glyn Daniel of St. John's College, Cambridge.

The Eye Goddess is concerned with a fascinating subject and is filled with factual details, illuminated by almost a hundred plates and text figures, but the discussion is not of the high quality the subject needs. The work shows haste, forgivable in a man of 71 with heart trouble, but it fails to use those necessary techniques (such as distribution maps and period maps) which Crawford himself long advocated and which the subject demanded. As a result, I fear, his general thesis, which I personally accept, will not seem convincing to the much larger group of interested persons who do not now accept it. And Crawford's task in this book was not so much to present a theory of cultural diffusion, since the theory had already been advanced by others, as to mobilize the evidence in such a way as to convince those who had rejected the theory when it was previously offered. Crawford's book gives a great deal of evidence, but it is not mobilized and as a result will not, I fear, convince the sceptics.

The thesis itself is not completely clear. It seems to have three parts: (1) that there was a wave, or several waves, of cultural diffusion from Syria about 3000 B.C., westward by way of the Mediterranean to southeast Spain and thence, via the Straits of Gibraltar and the Atlantic, to the Canary Islands, Brittany, Ireland, England, and Denmark; (2) that, as a part of this cultural movement, there passed a religious amalgam concerned with a female fertility deity who was also a goddess of death and resurrection; and (3) that "eyes" were a symbol of this deity. As the title suggests, Crawford centered his attention on this last point. Why he did so is a puzzle, since his decision to write the book was based originally on R. J. C. Atkinson's discovery of a carving of a "Mycenaean" dagger and several axes on the sarsens at Stonehenge. In working backward toward Syria, Crawford tells us, "The axes receded and the Faces [especially

eyes] obtruded themselves." In consequence, Crawford begins his book with the Temple of the Eye Goddess at Tell Brak in eastern Syria. He could hardly have picked a worse point of embarkation.

The Eye Temple of Brak is a poor place to begin because of the site and because of its date. Syria, on the ancient channel of communication (the "Syrian saddle") linking Mesopotamia and the East with the Mediterranean and the West, has always been an area of blurred cultural outlines and of syncretic confusions. And the date of the Eye Temple, about 3000 B. C., is too late in this history of the diffusion of symbols to provide any clarity to their meaning and history.

Any history of symbols must begin at the earliest stage possible, because in the course of time they come to be used as decorative motifs by people to whom they have no meaning, or a different meaning or, worst of all, who take them to be different objects. In this way the United States government placed a fasces on its ten-cent coin and a pyramid-and-oculus on its dollar bill without any idea of the meaning these symbols had thousands of years ago.

If Crawford had followed the axes on Stonehenge backward to their earliest symbolic use on the Iranian plateau more than six thousand years ago, he would have found that the axe symbol developed from two symbols whose meaning was perfectly familiar to him: the triangle and the rod as female and male symbols (H. Rydh, "On Symbolism in Mortuary Ceramics," Museum of Far Eastern Antiquities, *Bulletin*, No. 1, 1929, pp. 81-85 and 99-100). Placed together, they symbolized fertility, a vague concept which included biological fertility arising from sexual union, the burial of seed leading to rebirth of the crops, and the burial and resurrection of the dead. This vague concept provided the motivating power which took the axe symbol and other symbols from the Highlands of Western Asia to Britain and beyond.

Crawford's late beginning for his story leads to confusion of the symbols of three different cultural stages—the Neolithic garden cultures (incipient agriculture) of the High lands, the pastoralism of the grasslands, and the urban societies of the alluvial river valleys. These cultures had entirely different social organizations and quite different ideologies and symbol systems. Even when they used the same object as a symbol, its meaning might be different. But in Syria by 3000 B. C. these had become confused. Paleolithic hunters marked time by the moon, while agricultural peoples (except for paleolithic survivals) marked time by the sun. The latter regarded the sun as a male deity and the crescent moon as his consort, while Semitic pastoral peoples not only preserved the lunar calendar but regarded the moon as a masculine god and the sun as female. The pervasive influence of urban civilizations in the ancient Near East spread the solar disk (eventually confused with an eye) as a male symbol and the lunar crescent (eventually confused with a ship symbol) as a female symbol. Combinations of these such as disk and crescent, or oculus and ship, became representations of the whole fertility-resurrection ideology. That the eye was originally a male symbol (as in the eye of Horus or Osiris) like the bull, the fish, the vertical rod, or the menhir (obelisk), and that the ship was originally a female symbol, as was water, the triangle, the crescent, or a bundle of foliage, is as certain as we can ever be about such remote matters (C. Hentze, *Mythes et Symboles Lunaires*, Antwerp, 1932; R. Dussaud, "Motifs et Symboles du IV^e Millénaire dans la Céramique Orientale," *Syria* XVI, 1935, 375-392; F. Dölger, *Ichthus*, 5 vols., Munster, 1922-1939; A. Roes, *Greek Geometric Art: its Symbolism and its Origin*, London, 1933; J. Sainte Fare Garnot, *Symbolisme Cosmique et Monuments Religieux*, Paris, 1952; E. E. Herzfeld, *Iran in the Ancient Near*

East, New York, 1941). Unfortunately, Crawford gives little attention to this side of the question.

In beginning his discussion with the Eye Temple at Brak, Crawford fell into the middle of a confusing situation. In reference to both temple and goddess the word "eye" should be plural, for, as Mallowan recognized ("Excavations at Brak and Chagar Bazar," Iraq IX, 1947, p. 35) "The eye-idols . . . must have been a peculiar localised adaptation of a more widely propagated cult," namely the "spectacle-idols." The latter were derived either from symbols for breasts or, as Frankfort believed (Journal of Near East Studies III, 1944, 198-200; and VIII, 1949, 194-200), from the Mesopotamian "hut symbol." Both referred to the fertility goddess we are studying. The difficulty arose because the early worshippers, being concerned only with the goddesses' female attributes, dispensed with head, arms, and legs and represented the deity by a torso marked only with breasts and pubic triangle (examples in C. Zervos, *L'Art de la Mésopotamie de la fin du quatrième millénaire au XV^e siècle avant notre ère*, Paris, 1935, plates 51, 157, 174, or E. Neumann, *The Great Mother*, New York, 1955, plates 6, 8, 10-14 16-17, 23). The breasts and triangle, apart from the torso, became the spectacle symbol with the same significance. At Brak some of the "eyes" are really breasts (Mallowan 1947:plate 25). Crawford was aware of this symbolic confusion of eyes and breasts (pp. 41, 48, 82); in one case (plate 11) he reproduces two similar pot-handles, calling the symbols "eyes" in one case but "breasts" in the other (p. 46). The confusion is understandable because by 3000 B.C. pious persons were drawing "spectacle" symbols without any clear idea that they stood for anything except the general fertility-resurrection conception. Moreover, torsos with two circles and a triangle were carelessly drawn and came to be regarded as faces. Ultimately this developed into the "owl face," the symbol of Athena and other goddesses, such as appears on the famous Athenian tetradrachma. Crawford realized some of this confusion (pp. 91-92) but he never went far enough behind Tell Brak, either in time or space, to see that a fundamental distinction must be made between the "eyes" of the Neolithic earth goddess and the eye or oculus of the urban solar deity. He should have been aware of Margarete Riemschneider's warning against this confusion (*Augengott und heilige Hochzeit*, Leipzig, 1953) because his bibliography lists E. D. van Buren's discussion of this work (in Iraq XVII, 1955, 164-175) but he failed to avoid the error.

In fact, Crawford seems to be quite unaware of the many fundamental books on the early history of religious symbolism. He seems to have depended entirely on A. E. Douglas van Buren's *Symbolism of the Gods in Mesopotamian Art* (Rome, 1945) although this is not mentioned in his bibliography, but he would have profited greatly by pondering on the many other available works. Discussion of some of these works with an indication of what they have to contribute to the early history of symbolism will be found in a recent article by the present reviewer ("The Origin and Diffusion of Oculi," *American Neptune*, January 1958).

If Crawford had made a list of the divine symbols of ancient western Asia and traced the diffusion of each symbol separately to northwestern Europe, coordinating their movements with other examples of cultural diffusion such as the use of metals or faience beads (J. F. S. Stone, "The Use and Distribution of Faience in the Ancient East and Prehistoric Europe," Proceedings of the Prehistoric Society XXII, 1956, 37-84) or techniques of ship construction (as I did in the *American Neptune* for January 1958), he would have achieved a work able to convince many sceptics. But instead, he concentrated on the misconception of an "Eye-Goddess" and organized his book in a series of geographic areas westward from Syria. Since the "Eye-Goddess" evidence

from some areas was not satisfactory he then tried to link these unsatisfactory areas into his diffusion chain by discussing other symbols or artifacts (such as croziers, pp. 74-76; axes, 76-77; or baetyls, 82-86). This method results in considerable confusion of symbols, areas, and chronology. Crawford was aware of this methodological confusion, especially of his chronological violations, for which he apologizes in several places (as pp. 23, 56), but he failed to take the time and hard thinking needed to organize the subject according to the methodological principles to which he was really devoted.

The Eye Goddess is not Crawford's last book, since the Hakluyt Society will publish his completed manuscript on the medieval roads of Abyssinia. His many admirers can but hope that this posthumous work will be a more typical example of its author's many valuable contributions to archeology than is the present work.