

The Cult of the Mother-Goddess: An Archaeological and Documentary Study. E. O. JAMES. New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1959. 300 pp. \$6.50.

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The last decade has produced a large number of books on various aspects of the Great Mother Goddess. Among these are Jean Przyluski, *La Grande déesse* (Paris, 1950); Robert Briffault, *The Mothers* (reissued, London, 1952); Mircea Eliade, *La Terre mère et les hierogamies cosmiques* (Zurich, 1954); Uberto Pestalozza, *Eterno femminile mediterraneo* (Venice, 1954); Erich Neumann, *The Great Mother* (New York, 1955); and O. G. S. Crawford, *The Eye Goddess* (London, 1958).

Professor Edwin O. James has now added another volume to these. His book has many merits: it is jammed with facts from archeology and written records, supported with 766 reference notes to the scholarly literature, and has almost no factual errors. But, in a field which is over-run with untenable theories, James avoids offering any theories of his own except in a casual and implicit way. This is doubly unfortunate, since any reader experienced in this subject can see that James' unstated theories are generally correct. Failure to state theories, combined with lack of clear discrimination between different aspects of the Mother Goddess Cult, a certain amount of chronological disorder, and poor organization prevent this book from providing a clear picture of the growth and spread of the Cult.

The eight chapters of this volume are organized about a central core of four geographic chapters dealing with Mesopotamia-Egypt, Palestine-Anatolia, Iran-India, and Crete-Greece. These are preceded by a chronological chapter on the antecedents of the Goddess cult in the Palaeolithic, Neolithic, and Bronze ages and are followed by three topical chapters on the Magna Mater, the Madonna in Christianity, and the "Dying god." Such an organization is not very helpful, either geographically or chronologically, and results in a great deal of repetition. In the four geographic chapters the evidence is assembled without any real regard for chronology, except for incidental and unhelpful interjections of words like "earlier" or "later." As a result, the impression is curiously old-fashioned, like reading scattered passages from Sir James G. Frazer. The last three chapters on the Magna Mater, the Madonna, and the "Dying god" are clearly out of chronological order and repeat much of the evidence previously presented in the geographic chapters. Chapter one, dealing with "antecedents," does little to clear up the confusions because its three divisions in terms of Palaeolithic, Neolithic and Bronze Age fail to indicate the profound changes which the female cult underwent in these three periods (from reference for the fecundity of nature to the Earth Mother to the spouse-mother of a cyclically-dying god, and, ultimately, to a sacral kingship).

In a field as rampant with extravagant theories as this, rigorous definition of terms and equally rigorous chronological discrimination are essential. Otherwise we might

accept the arguments of Pestalozza that social matriarchy and an Earth-Mother religion were prevalent in the palaeolithic period (U. Pestalozza, "The Mediterranean matriarchate, its primordial character in the religious atmosphere of the palaeolithic era," *Diogenes* No. 12, 1955, pp. 50-61).

Any book on this subject must attempt as its chief task to establish a tentative development sequence for the various aspects of the Mother Goddess Cult. Then the distorting forces on this development should be pointed out. One of these distortions was the intrusion of pastoral patriarchal peoples (Semites and Indo-Europeans) who originated on the southern and northern grasslands and worshipped storm and sky deities. Another distortion, associated with the cyclical process of agriculture, the dying god, and the death, burial, and resurrection of seed, arose from the fact that the growing season in the south depended on winter's rains, that of the north depended on summer's sun, while that of the alluvial valleys was based on the annual flood. These points are not explained by James and the casual references to them are confusing and sometimes confused (pp. 48, 233). The latter can be clarified by the well-known facts of geography, while the impact of the former has been handled well by Raffaele Pettazoni, notably in his *La Religione nella Grecia antica* (Bologna, 1921; French edition, revised, Paris, 1953).