

S/HE

An International Journal of
Goddess Studies

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S/HE:
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AN INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF GODDESS STUDIES

Mission Statement: *S/HE: An International Journal of Goddess Studies* is a web-based, peer-reviewed international scholarly journal committed to the academic exploration, analysis and interpretation, from a range of disciplinary perspectives, of Goddesses and the Female Divine in all religions, traditions, and cultures, to be ancient, historical, or contemporary. The journal is a multi-disciplinary forum for the publication of feminist scholarship in Goddess Studies and for discussion, comparison, and dialogue among scholars of differing feminist perspectives.

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Mary Ann Beavis and Helen Hye-Sook Hwang, eds.
Goddesses in Myth, History and Culture
(Lytle Creek, CA: Mago Books, 2018)

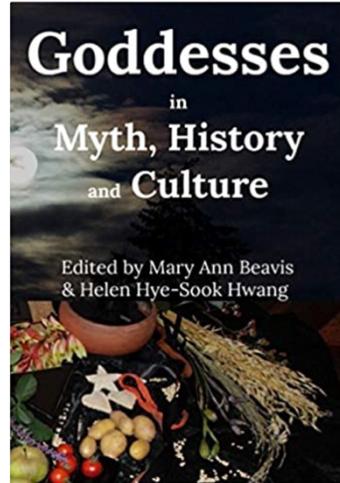
Reviewed by Jenny Cameron

This book is designed as a student and academic resource to those wishing to deepen their understanding of the origination and evolution of concepts of Goddess and related social systems in a range of cultures world-wide, from an evidence-based perspective.

This is a collection of papers from a total of 21 authors, edited by Mary Ann Beavis and Helen Hwang, who are also contributors. Each of the writers has experience and qualifications that reflect their authority on the topics upon which they write. The overview authority lies with the editors. Mary Ann Beavis PhD, is currently the Professor of Religion and Culture at St. Thomas More College, University of Saskatchewan and an author. Helen Hwang holds an M.A. and Ph.D in Religion and would be the world expert on Magoism (an ancient East Asian faith system and culture, recognising Mago as the Great Goddess), certainly in the English language. She is author or editor of a number of books on Magoism or inclusive of this tradition.

Each author is a researcher into a niche area of Goddess tradition and all chapters are extensively footnoted, indicative of the breadth of resources they have drawn upon, including, in some cases images of artworks under discussion. The authors and the chapter headings where images occur are as follows (the number of images or tables is listed in brackets):

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Goddesses in Myth, History and Culture explores the key theme that humans originally conceived of the spiritual realm in terms of a female deity – a Mother Goddess to be precise - and that traces of this can be found even in the religions that now place a male God at the centre of their belief system. The book further illustrates that this was a world-wide phenomenon with regional and local expression of it.

As the period of Goddess-centred cultures mostly occurred prior to written language, the writers are largely reliant on interpreting the archaeological record for support. However the writers also use linguistics to identify traces in languages today of the old languages that expressed the Goddess culture, lifestyle and spiritual context.

We learn in this book that when patriarchy (as opposed to a Goddess centred ideology) came to dominate – usually through invasion - a common strategy was to incorporate the local Goddesses into the invader pantheon, and then, over time diminish

their powers and importance. These authors have undertaken to untangle this web to bring to light the original Goddess and her attributes.

The book is not just embedded in the past however and also relates how the Goddess tradition is expressed today. Four chapters explore both the practice and the belief system informing this emergent spirituality.

This book is a major contribution to the field of Goddess Studies in that it makes readily available informed scholarship, in English, that could otherwise be hard to find. The material in each chapter expands on a specialty that that author has explored. Some interpretations could well be controversial because they shine light into some long-held (or long-assumed) beliefs about cultural origins. I was particularly struck in this regard by the work on the Mago tradition, the Norse Goddesses and Islam.

The chapters are written on the basis of an academic approach by the writers, not as believers in a particular religion – although undoubtedly the authors have their own belief systems which in some cases would assist their understanding of the topic of their chapter. This saves the language from the feeling that the reader must make a leap of faith to understand the positions being put, but can assess for themselves how valid they find the arguments made.

At points in the book typographical missteps can be identified though without damage to the content. I found the use of Korean/Chinese symbols important but sometimes difficult to fully understand in the translation – further editorial work would have helped here.

While I was aware of Heide Goettner-Abendroth's research that showed the movement of matriarchal peoples throughout Asia, I was particularly struck with the contributions of Helen Hwang with regard to Magoism in the book. She explores, even into historical times, the culture in coastal South-East Asia based on the Mother Goddess Mago and the social system that resulted. This would largely be hidden to the West if not for Helen Hwang's work.

Likewise the exploratory work by Bergstedt and Clausen provides an alternative understanding of the Norse Goddesses from that usually presented. As well, both Keller and Hawthorne in their separate pieces provide insights into the origins of Greek Goddesses,

which too often are assumed known from the patriarchal presentation of them.

There are many publications available relevant to Goddess Studies, starting with publications in the mid 1970s, which are still relevant today. This book furthers this in including insights from around the world and from all the major religions as well as the emergent Goddess spirituality. It includes original research as well as analysis drawing on past researchers. Its breadth in terms of time-span, geography and cultures make this an impressive contribution.

Note that the list of references is available online: <https://www.magobooks.com/textbooks/goddesses-in-myth-history-and-culture/>. Given this is a student and academic reference it is disappointing that an index was not included. As the book is available in a pdf format, in that form the search function can be used effectively in place of an Index.

CONTRIBUTORS

Jennifer Cameron

B.A.(History) Master of Enterprise Innovation, Graduate Diploma Environmental Sustainability, Diploma of Education. Jennifer is author of the recent publication *Ancient Ways for Current Days – Women, Goddess and Communities of Peace*. She teaches Goddess Studies at a community level; she is Co-Convenor of the Gaia Temple of Melbourne and has a lifetime of interest in the subject matter of the book under review. merrymeetjenny@gmail.com

Mary Ann Beavis

Dr. Beavis is Professor Emerita of Religion and Culture, St. Thomas More College, the University of Saskatchewan. She is the author of several books and many articles in the areas of feminist biblical interpretation, parable studies, goddess studies, and religion and popular culture. Her most recent publications attempt to reconstruct the experience of enslaved persons in early Christianity. She is the co-author of the Wisdom Commentaries on Hebrews and 2 Thessalonians.

Helen Hye-Sook Hwang

Dr. Hwang is the researcher, writer, publisher, and advocate of Magoist Cetaceanism, the matriversal consciousness embodied in the socio-historical-cultural expressions of traditional Korea and beyond. After earning her MA and Ph.D. in Religion with emphasis on Feminist Studies from Claremont Graduate University, CA., she pursued M.A. degree at UCLA, CA. Hwang's authored and co-edited books include *Goddesses in Myth, History and Culture*, *Mago Almanac*, *The Mago Way*, *She Rises* trilogy, *Celebrating Seasons of the Goddess*, *She Summons*, *The Budoji Workbook*, and *Return to Mago E-Magazine*.

Nané Jordan

Dr. Jordan is a Goddess scholar, birth-keeper, artist-researcher, community worker, and mother of two daughters. She is dedicated to an artful, relational, spirited scholarly pathway for women's thriving and wellbeing. Dr. Jordan completed her PhD in Education

at the University of British Columbia, her Master's degree in Women's Spirituality at New College of California, and held a Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada Postdoctoral Fellowship at the University of Paris 8, France, in Women's and Gender Studies. Her scholarship explores goddessing and women's spirituality through matricentric birthing threads, placental wisdom, the maternal gift economy, and feminist eco-arts. She publishes widely, including the anthologies: *Placenta Wit: Mother Stories, Rituals, and Research*, and *Pagan, Goddess, Mother* (Demeter Press).

Kaarina Kailo

Dr Kailo is a writer, former professor of women's studies and self-made artist who illustrates her books, integrating color and visuality to science. She has published hundreds of articles regarding folklore, spiritual bathing, saunas and sweatlodges, modern matriarchal studies, Northern women's culture, gift economy and the bear religion. She has held positions as scholar in Canada and Finland, and as senior fellow of the Finnish academy. She has held art exhibitions in Kiiminki, Oulu, Jyväskylä and Lusto Forestry Museum, Punkaharju in Finland. Kaarina.kailo at gmail.com.

Lila Moore

Dr Lila Moore is a pioneering artist film-maker, choreographer and visionary theorist. She holds a PhD in Dance on Screen, Middlesex University, 2001, MA and M.Phil in Film and Fine Art, Central Saint Martins, Postdoc in Technoetic Arts, Planetary Collegium, and her articles were published in academic journals. She is a lecturer and dissertation supervisor for the Alef Trust, MSc degree in Consciousness, Spirituality and Transpersonal Psychology, and recipient of the Outstanding Lecturer Award from the Department of Mysticism and Spirituality, Zefat Academic College. Her artworks are exhibited in curated exhibitions and archived by SIGGRAPH and Archive of Digital Art. cyberneticinstitute.com. cyberneticfutures.com.

Bojana Radovanović

Bojana Radovanović was born in Belgrade, Serbia, where she finished her BA studies in Classical Philology, and her MA in

Classical Archaeology. After having worked at the Institute for History in Belgrade, she moved to Vienna, Austria, where she finished her doctoral studies and obtained her PhD Diploma in History with the topic of early medieval „language of heresy“ in Greek and Latin selected texts. She is currently in the second year of her Postdoctoral fellowship funded by the Austrian Science Fund (FWF) at the Institut fuer Mittelalterforschung in Vienna on medieval dualist heresies. She is currently preparing her monograph and regularly publishes scholarly articles, as well as purely literary texts. Her research interests include: dualist heresies in the Middle Ages; historical and archaeological quest for the Great Goddess on the Balkans; pagan heritage of the medieval philosophical and theological concepts; dualist heresies in the Middle Ages; Slavonic apocrypha; inter-cultural transmission between Byzantium and the Latin West. Radboud University Nijmegen, The Netherlands (bojana.radovanovic@ru.nl)

Krista Rodin

Krista Rodin is Emerita Professor of Humanities at Northern Arizona University where she taught a variety of interdisciplinary courses relating to ancient cultures and sacred traditions. She received her Ph.D. in Comparative Literature from the University of Salzburg, Austria. During her lengthy academic career in Europe and the U.S., Dr. Rodin held a number of administrative positions, including Dean and Vice Provost of Continuing Studies and Engagement programs in Maine and Connecticut, and Campus Executive Officer for the Yuma campus of NAU. After retiring from NAU she moved back to Austria, where she continues her research on ancient and living goddess traditions, and teaches part-time for Salzburg College. Dr. Rodin’s extensive travel blog can be accessed at: <https://journals.worldnomads.com/krodin/>.

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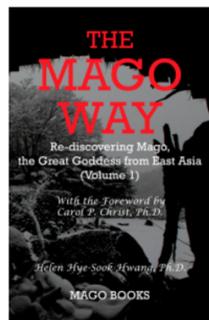
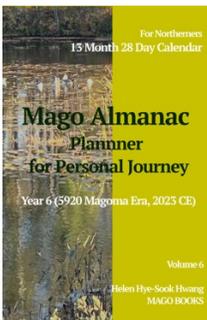
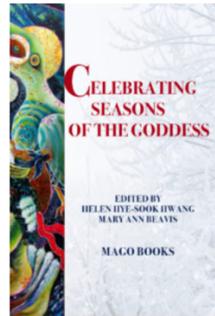
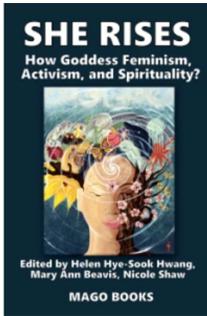
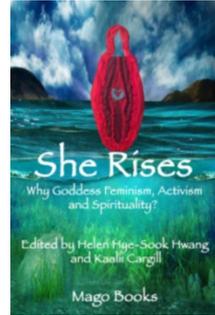
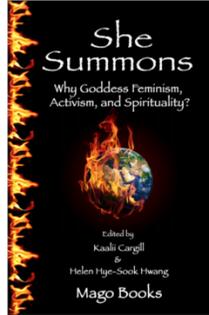
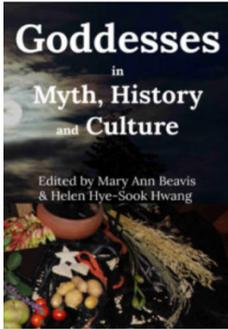


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