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GALLEY

The Crossett Library's current lobby-exhibit, "Matriarchy: The Golden Age," is a collection of archaeological and anthropological falsifications which do not deserve the recommendation of display in an academic library. The material for the exhibit--photographs of ancient artifacts and captions that purport to explain them--appears to be drawn from the confabulations of Elizabeth Davis's muddled, ignorant, perhaps out-and-out fraudulent book, The First Sex, whose "learning" and methods have been roundly discredited by every scholar who has condescended to review it. (See, for example, Kay L. Cothran's review in the January-March '74 number of the Journal of American Folklore.) Davis had neither preparation in archaeology or anthropology, nor the scruples or mental balance to yield to the authority of those who had. She is even guilty of the elementary error of confusing matrilinear societies with matriarchal, and both of these again with societies that happen to support goddess-cults. Yet her misrepresentations are often too basic and too patent to be taken for honest errors: they have the character of flatly underhanded advertisement. (An example is the second paragraph of the long passage from her book adopted as an introduction to the present display, with its deceiving suggestion that Hesiod bears witness to the reality of an ancient matriarchy in his famous passage on the Golden Age--a suggestion which a glance at lines 109-120 of the Works and Days will quickly dispel.) Despite the charm of the fable, the fact is that archaeology and anthropology have not yet been able to unearth a single shard of evidence that any human society, however remote from ours in time or place, has ever been conducted in what the producers of the present exhibit seem to conceive of as matriarchal style. We urge the Library to arrange for the removal of this incorrigibly misinformed, unbecoming exhibit.

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