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Daughters of isis, daughters of demeter: when women sowed and reaped

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Synopsis

Evidence from anthropology, archaeology, mythology and primate ethology indicates that women were the main gatherers, processors, and storers of plant food from earliest human times onward, and thus the most logical ones to have invented the tools and methods involved in this work, from digging stick and carrier to cooking and sophisticated methods of detoxification. Anthropologists now generally agree that women also invented horticulture, the intentional cultivation of food plants in specified areas. This paper details women's early accomplishments in food-gathering, processing, and cultivative technology, including the domestication and improvement of all the world's major food plants, early irrigation, and early ploughs, documents the trend toward male dominance of cultivation as a society depends progressively more upon cultivation for its diet; and presents a composite theory to explain the trend. A population explosion and a patriarchal religious takeover are important factors.



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