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1. IMAGES, TEXTS, REALITY:

BETWEEN IMAGE AND REALITY – THE CULT OF CYBELE IN CLASSICAL GREECE

The great Anatolian mother goddess Cybele was introduced into the Greek world during the Archaic period. Cybele captivated a central position in the Greek pantheon, and she was honoured in traditional Greek manner with altars, temples, and sacrifices together with numerous votive offerings. Despite Cybele's conventional role in the polis religion, the literature presents her and her cult in a whole different light. That is to say, the Greek authors of the Classical period, quite consistently, constructed an image of the cult as abnormal and strange to the Greek religious norm. The goddess herself was presented marginal in her domain and functions, and frightening in her powers. Furthermore, Cybele's role in the celestial family was portrayed as ambiguous. The mysterious and ecstatic nature of her rituals was emphasized, thus, suggesting that her worship did not reinforce the communal identity of the polis. Instead, her cult was described to promote individuality and emotionality. In my paper I will discuss the literary image in relation to the cult reality, as well as the possible factors contributing to such an unfavourable image.