

# Le Matriarcali

## Nicoletta Cocchi

I'm Nicoletta Cocchi of the Italian collective Le Matriarcali

I encountered the Modern Matriarchal Studies in 2004, at a time when I wondered about my relationship with the labour market, trying to find the conceptual and material means to face the lack of meaning in my jobs.

The more I entered the world of work the more I felt a pain induced by role models, mechanisms, expectations ... nonsense.

It was perfectly clear to me how work was a source of social unhappiness in a neoliberal system, but for women even more so.

Broadly speaking, I felt the ancestral awareness that we, the women, live in the asymmetric space of another economy of meaning, relationship and time.

At that time I was interested in feminist critical analysis of so-called "development" and sustainability, as well as in critical theories of post fordism, precarity and in the various epistemologies advocated by feminist economics. I questioned voraciously those theories which allowed me to see the logic-structural problematic onto which our political, economic, social and cultural systems are based, but it was as if they would not go beyond the *forma mentis* and the methods of the system they criticized.

I felt the need for a different lens to read reality in a more relevant and transformative way along with my intuitive thoughts: a social agreement that would enshrine our priorities, a social pact among women, real and not only symbolic, which would be expressed in a way of living our daily life, our way of working, our relationships with the other sex, spirituality and sociality. In short, a different grammar of living.

Modern Matriarchal Studies provided me with that lens, but not only that, it helped me to rid myself of the false objectivity of historical criteria and their repetitive canons, stimulating a new way of thinking and imagining the world.

Now I had confirmation that women had created civilizations prior to patriarchal ones in the past. They were not domination-based societies, as historians wanted us to believe - only because the patriarchal eye cannot see or imagine anything else to be different - but social organizations oriented to feminine principles and partnership, "developed in a large variety of structures and relationships, maintained intentionally through precise social techniques", as you, Heide, write.

Then, I could see that matriarchy, or better matriarchal societies, were not a myth nor a naive episode which happened at a certain time or somewhere in our history, and most importantly, they were not specular to patriarchy.

In these specific social forms, women, united in a social pact, have outlined parental structures, economical distribution models and decision-making procedures, as well as religious imagery, cosmologies and ontologies totally different from those that historians have told us for some millennia. There was enough to rethink community and human coexistence. Not only did those "enterprises" take place over a long time in human cultural history, but some of them are still existing in different parts of the world.

A fundamental tassel, the cornerstone of human history was finally set in place: matriarchy, alias mater – arché, that is to say, “in the beginning, there were the mothers“, and not the “mother’s domination”. Heide gave me the big, creative and transformative answer that I was looking for in the midst of a thousand contradictions of my life. It was not a Utopia but an Eutopia, a “good place” which had existed, a good place that asked to be lived again with the due differences in time and conditions, beyond any nostalgic past, or return to the origin, or the archaic. *Another world was possible*.

This is the imagination politics you delivered to me, you delivered to us, Heide. Furthermore, your invitation to look back to a pre-patriarchal time and to analyze the emergence of social patriarchal models in human cultural history – the powerful and totally original work that you have been furthering – is becoming for me ever more urgent today. It helps us to reconnect the threads and to weave new warps.

Because it is more and more evident that the thousand ways of male dominance, oppression, abuse and violence, visible and invisible, that are being imposed today with extreme virulence, also through the high-tech mega machine - which is becoming increasingly molecular and invasive - have their roots in the historical male project. The project of a male community that from the beginning has set itself as architect of a “new creation”, first of the nature and now of every living being.

But we are aware there is not a unique model of civilization, and our world was not a patriarchal one, originally. We are aware that there are many histories, each of which has left traces, permanent traces. All these different histories stimulated me to investigate the folds of the Great History searching for what the official narrative has expelled. It’s a work in progress, a work that concerns the de-colonization of my life, too. I share it with other women, I weave it with other studies and I am, we are, spreading it through talks, meetings, seminars, writings and workshops. And, not last, through the translation of your books into Italian, a privilege I feel honored to have.

All this work I am attempting to do with other women feeds not only on conceptual paradigmatic levels or packages of book notions, but also on spiritual practices. I like to call them “conspiracy practices”. “Conspiring”, is a subtle work of bodies which from a distance call to each other: one woman calls another and so on.

You taught us.

I hope to see soon women creating more affinity communities, women building clans where multiple generations of grandmothers, mothers and daughters can experiment new educational, social, cultural and spiritual practices. Women’s clans which invent the Eutopia we need so much; Eutopia which will re-enchant the world.

Thank you, Heide !

## Luisa Vicinelli

Buongiorno. My name is Luisa Vicinelli of the Italian group Le Matriarcali

Heide Goettner Abendroth's theories literally saved me from a feminist crisis. Discovering a social paradigm shaped by life models created by women, with mothers at the beginning and the regenerative power at the center, opened a totally new vision of how a society can be organized. That allowed me to see more clearly my life and the conditionings I received and ,even worse, I reproduced in a patriarchal system. At that time I was feeling caught in equal opportunities paths far from my idea of female freedom, neither I was able to grasp the materiality of many fascinating feminist theories.

I was looking for a social and political dimension which could unite women beyond various feminist currents.

Then in 2005 I met Modern Matriarchal Studies and the theoretical framework of matriarchal societies Heide admirably conceptualizes in her book *Matriarchal Societies: Studies on Indigenous Cultures Across the Globe*. They allow us not only to recognize those societies but also to see that we often move to combat patriarchal "avatars" like racism, capitalism, homophobia, sexism without catching the true essence of a social system which cannot meet vital needs and our planet happiness. Heide's important body of work is built on a method which tracks an historical map of who we are. It helps us to connect to our own strength and read the world using women's wisdom. Some "progressive" narrations which are so popular (for example Bhutan as happiest country) while evoking social models of widespread well being in balance with nature, hide nevertheless the importance of women's guiding roles.

Right now women are fighting again to maintain rights we took for granted and male violence doesn't decrease. We also endure constantly cancellation. In Italy this is valid mostly for mothers, which due to the double parenthood law undergo children abduction in case of splitting from husbands or partners. Paternal power is neutralizing mothers' right in a short circuit between recurrence to Parental Alienation Syndrome, unconsidered lawsuits in case of domestic/family violence (an abusive hitting partner can be a good father, they say), and innumerable interests of social assistance employees.

Many women are actively claiming their mother's surname as their own, but I cannot find anything more valid than Matriarchal Studies research to make us aware again as women why/how paternity is born and which family model supports it, because we need alternative forms of cohabitation. It is important to illustrate to younger women this new imaginary in order to dismiss the *family care of the good father* and restore an order centered on mothers and women. This could allow us to take the path outlined by Heide when she spoke in Bologna in 2014: "We must claim at least half of the money collected by taxes and spend it according to our values."

Heide proposes us to manage again all the aspects of a social organization following a matriarchal logic, and shows us the vision of viable solutions freed from the nostalgic and exotic imaginary which the word matriarchy evokes in many people.

Sharing information is our route, the route we three of Le Matriarcali chose years ago to contribute to the social change now truly necessary. We planned launching in spring 2020 a modern matriarchal studies school, but its start has been postponed due to Covid 19 pandemic Unfortunately there are still limits to free physical gatherings in Italy, so we

decided to jump into the virtual world, even if we don't like it very much. My contribution will be to hold a space of a matriarchal self consciousness to rethink topics as time, space, justice, reciprocity, love, sacred, death, birth ... following the path outlined by Modern Matriarchal Studies.

We know more and more women are eager and ready.

**"The time is ripe"** and actually we Le Matriarcali are a little late!  
Grazie Heide!

## Sandra Capri

Hi I am Sandra Capri ... the last one closing our ( Le Matriarcali) triple Festschrift in your honor Cara Heide

I wish to start quoting from your writings “*a societal system as matriarchy could not function as whole without a deep supporting and all-permeating spiritual attitude in matriarchies divinity is immanent, for the whole world is regarded as divine: as feminine divine ...*”

In the last 20 years in Italy many women's groups who practise spirituality connected to moon cycles, or seasonal celebrations linked to the 8 festivals have flourished. Also women's circles practising feminine shamanism and many red tents (tende rosse in Italian) and 3 goddess temples have been founded. In addition to christian base communities women and women who follow buddist feminine lineage teachings besides studies or artistic groups on goddesses and witches are active

Furthermore many books on women's spirituality and shamanism have been published and the web is rich of various sites, blogs and facebook pages plus films and documentaries... .. all of this accelerated the **Women spirit rising** enunciated by Carole Christ in 1979.

Places dedicated to women's knowledge are now transferring on line due to pandemic conditions and we see a tremendous increase of online meetings, schools, teachings, trainings and academies while the cornerstone of women's wisdoms like, women's bookstores, libraries and associations are in difficulty.

In Armonie association where we three met in 2004 and where we started our Le Matriarcali project, the spiritual and political practices of the last 17 years have evolved spirally.

We have been inspired by your Hagia Akademie activities and created women's circles celebrating rituals and festivals and also hosted feminine sciamanic practises gatherings.

Thanks to your work on matriarchal spirituality we have focalized better the concept of Female Divine and Sacred and we have engaged in honoring the woman blood cycles, connected to the moon phases and natural rythms.

We have launched in 2015 women's summer camps called Campeggia Matriarcale in collaboration with Sofie de la Vanth; end of august 9th edition took place. During these camps matriarchal theories' lenses have been used to discuss several topics ; for example in 2019 we discussed with one leader woman from Rojava about their Jineology.

Overall we witness in Italy a resurgence of women's culture particularly about *herstory* and spirituality ... The various forms of women's spiritual experience emerging in Italy far removed from traditional patriarchal religions ...are giving us joy, hope and faith.

Our contribution as mentioned by Luisa goes in the direction of spreading the knowledge of the different paradigm offered by modern studies on matriarchal societies including their symbolism and their spiritual traditions.

Keeping focused on **Eutopia** ( the good place) and aiming to jump in the biophilic era evoked by Mary Daly, I offer some food for thought on how we can enhance the rise of a culture where *all is one* and *“there is no separation between sacred and secular”* as you, Heide, taught us

We remember well when in 2009 at the first conference in Bologna you told us how crucial is the cooperation with Movement of Indigenous people (particularly with those which still preserve matriarchal patterns or at least matriarchal elements)

Indigenous women are in the front line in protecting Earth rights and in the fight against patriarchy supported by their ancestors spirits and nature’s energies. They continue tirelessly to teach their epistemology with strength and ancient wisdom

Making central the connection with Mother Nature in our daily life and for our planet is not only urgent but vital, essential!. We as eurocentric western women must further engage in integrating the *all-encompassing maternal attitude* valued in matriarchal societies with *care* activism for mother nature, along with the recovery of ancient women’s wisdom and knowledge memories.

We believe that actively supporting indigenous women who protect their cultures, their communities and their land is pressing and in this a way we can empower each other to resist patriarchal forces which are the same everywhere. Like the women of Movimiento de Mujeres Indígenas por el Buen Vivir (from 36 indigenous nations in Argentina) which march and manifest against Terricidio (crime against the Earth, Nature and Humanity). And by the way they wish to come to Europe next year and we need to join forces.

Governments and corporations are not focused on finding solutions to climate crisis, to improve planet and living beings health. Instead they are putting in place new control systems besides continuing their wicked plans of natural resources exploitation. We saw how they address covid pandemic by pushing only for vaccination without any investments in the prevention, in immune system and early domiciliary treatments support

Global military spending increased to 51 billion dollars while there are no plans in place to contrast hunger and famine (war being their first cause). We witness how food crisis has effected also Europe poorest areas due to the pandemic. Emergency is global and it effects vulnerable groups particularly women which are mostly at risk of violence and abuse (in Italy the number of women contacting women’s help centers has doubled during the lock down) The concept of CARE in terms of sustaining earth and living being vital forces has been dismissed in favor of chemical and technology.

My personal and our collective experiences show how spiritual practices can be effective (I mean beneficial) on health and well being.

This April a research on Spiritual Well-Being and Mental Health During the COVID-19 Pandemic in Italy has been published: it states that spirituality and religious practices are a protective factor connected not only with psychological and mental but also physical health We need more and more spiritual practices as healing and transformative paths.

Matriarchal societies preserve a millenary culture of alternative medicine which could be a life saver for our planet but instead it is under risk of extinction In Chile and Argentina

native medicine is not recognized and cannot be practised. Moira Millan of Mujeres Indígenas por el Buen Vivir told us that curanderas and machis are being persecuted

We are facing an inexorable biodiversity extinction and a cultural one ... and we are part of the problem with non eco-sustainable attitudes (including flying to Berlin!) It is crucial to dismiss technological solutions which increase the gap between humanity and everything else which exists.

To reach spiritual **Eutopia** (the good place) , we can only increase the connection to our natural world, immersing in its beauty (in the way described by Starhawk <sup>1</sup> ,) also by nourishing its vital and regenerative forces.

From matriarchal indigenous people we can learn how thru their connection *cuerpos territorios memorias* (body land memories) it is possible to do sanacion - healing and cleaning practices. We can get additional inspiration from Hagia Spiritual Healing Circles.

Attending Austin 2005 Congress I understood the importance of public spiritual rituals (and learned that matriarchal indigenous societies do rituals all the time) so dance, chants .. singing and other types of rituals will help to balance our own personal energies and those of our community. They enhance and align the connection with earth, water, plants and animals of the places where we live.

May we be inspired to help and free younger women from patriarchal structures by learning more about matriarchal spiritual wisdoms.

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We wish to close dear Heide thanking you for your studies which continue to nourish us and inspire our practices. The way you create communities for study and discussion has been an example and a model which continues to inspire and elicit our commitment to disseminating the gift of your theories.

We call the ancestral forces to join in with our strength to support you in your studies

May you live a long and healthy life

May you walk a joyfull path

Grazie Heide, grazie Madrina! Many blessings to you

Luisa Nicoletta e Sandra

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<sup>1</sup> *Starhawk long time ago wrote about the need to "transform nature aesthetical admiration in a true connection and to know the goddess not only as simbol but as phisical reality of the living world.*