

To the one who shows us the way

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by Francesca Rosati Freeman

Dear Heide,

Your birthday celebration, that I have unfortunately been unable to attend, but that has brought so many of us together, is indeed a great gift. Thank you for providing all of us, through your relentless research on matriarchy, with an indispensable tool to help bring about a much-desired change in the framework of our society, beginning with an egalitarian matriarchal perspective. Thank you for being an inspiration to all those scholars who believe in the change and who are working diligently to bring it about.

When, in 2004, I learned of the existence of Moso women, of their family and social organization, of their culture and spirituality, I didn't know you. It was only when I set about writing a book about my experience that I began serious research. At the time there were few scholars who had written on the subject.

It was then that the name Heide Goettner-Abendroth caught my attention, but your work was in German, the English and Italian version had not yet been published.

Only a few short articles in Italian were circulating online after your invitation to the International Women's House in Rome. But not discouraged, I emailed you to ask if you would let me know if you ever organized another international conference on matriarchal studies. And it was a year following publication of my book on the Moso that I finally met you at the St. Gallen convention in 2011.

In my book I had used the word 'matriarchal' to define Moso society - more by intuition than anything else - but when I was finally able to read your book in Italian I understood that my intuition had been correct and enthusiastically welcomed your definition of *mater + arké*.

At last, by quoting a distinguished scholar like yourself, I could explain during public presentations the use of the word 'matriarchal', without the hassle of being criticized, especially in the academic field, by professors of anthropology who still dared to claim that matriarchal societies do not exist and have never existed. A real paradox.

Your book, Heide, was an epiphany and when I met you again in Pistoia in 2015, I had just finished making a documentary film about the Moso. I remember that during breakfast together - we were staying at the same hotel - we talked about how we might be able to spread the knowledge of matriarchy in France. It was there that the idea came up to have your work translated into French. It would not be an easy undertaking, but stubbornness and a passion for matriarchies - perhaps inspired by the Goddess - led to the right people and a positive result.

When it became possible to actually touch the new French edition of your book I was deeply moved. It was well received in France, reviewed on France Culture radio and mentioned in the press.

Further inspiration came from reading your booklet *Matriarchal Politics: The Vision of an Egalitarian Society*. Combined with the experience of several visits to the Moso, the work enabled me to reflect more deeply on the topic and to formulate clear and concrete proposals in discussion with the Crone group.

Founded at the beginning of the pandemic by Luciana Percovich, the group's purpose was to envisage a society of transition from patriarchy to matriarchy, inspired in particular by the contents of the booklet.

Thank you, Heide. You are the one who showed us the way. Your contribution is unique and of paramount importance to all of us.