



Matriarchal and maternal values can change the world.

Motherhood Movement Conference, October 25, 2008

York University, Toronto Canada
Keynote Panel 3: Global Perspectives

Keynote-Speaker:
Gudrun Frank-Wissmann

Firstly, I want to thank Andrea and the entire Motherhood Movement for what they have done over the past years. Secondly, for the invitation to come here to present MatriaVal. And thirdly, please excuse my clumsy English.

In October 2006, M a t r i a V a l, the association for supporting matriarchal societies and conveying matriarchal values was founded; three years after the First World Congress on Matriarchal Studies "Societies in Balance" in 2003 in Luxembourg and one year after the Second World Congress on Matriarchal Studies "Societies of Peace" in 2005 in Texas.

Heide Göttner-Abendroth organized and led the first congress. Genevieve Vaughan and Heide, the founding mother of Modern Matriarchal Studies, together brought the Second Congress into being.

Genevieve Vaughan, the founding director of the "Center for the Study of Gift Economy", developed the theory, vision and practice of gift-economy and generously sponsored the 2nd World Congress on Matriarchal Studies "Societies of Peace".

These extraordinary women put together their power and wove together their nets since 2003, a big step forward for us in Germany.

Already at the first congress we met people from still existing matriarchal societies but at the second congress Heide and Gen not only brought together people from Europe and America but from all over the world especially from living matriarchal societies.

Some told us that they didn't know there are still so many societies with a similar matriarchal structure like theirs, that there are people who care for that, and that such congresses gave

To implement a science on mothering at a faculty of a university is nearly impossible to think of in the German society, where it is discussed whether taxes should be spent to keep mothers at home with their children or to create more kindergardens to get them to work. And where we all feared to get applause from the wrong backward corners if we would organize a mother summit.

Because we still have our his-story in our bones, where a "mother-cult" had been celebrated, which was awful and an error. Anyhow we risked it.

As Siegrun Laurent, the founding director of ALMA MATER and initiator of the Mother Summit, put it: "The fact that all life is given by a mother, who gives birth to the born to live on and on, is the basis for all parts of society, civilization and culture."

And a second motto of the Mother Summit was: "When we talk about Mother, we mean every woman, young or old, because every woman has the potential to be a mother, even though she may not give birth to children for whatever reasons. She herself decides in what way she will realize her motherly potential."

About five hundred women and some men attended the Mother Summit. It was one step toward more respect for mothers and mothering in a society where mothers without husbands are still the poorest group.

MatriaVal will publish a book-documentation, if possible in a bilingual German and English version.

In 2007 two women, Krista Köpp-Blodau and Kerstin Pilop, who are studying at ALMA MATER and are members of MatriaVal as well, started the MatriaVal Journal, a matriarchal magazine, to promote matriarchal and maternal values. The magazine is aimed to connect maternal oriented people to demand for and promote matriarchal values in our society. Just one quotation from the editorial of the latest issue Hekate "Ancestress' power":

"The elder woman holds the key. Rooted on her we are part of her power. Today we get in line with the long chain of our Ancestress. Now she, the old wise woman, hands over the key to us. The key that opens us new rooms, that empowers

them hope, the hope to be able to preserve their tradition.

For us it was the time to realize that we already are in a network of mutual support and that we must contribute.

Uschi Madeisky, my comparièra, and I, in the declarations of the 2nd Congress took our chance to

Quote

“call on all sisters to join the “Association for the protection and promotion of matrilineal/matriarchal societies and their values” because these societies provide us with the insights we need to live in a peaceful world”. We called for an association that didn’t exist at that time.

For me as a filmmaker and researcher this wish was grown because I had the great fortune to live more than three years of my life in different matriarchal societies in Africa, North-India and the Pacific. How I was welcomed, how these women opened their houses and hearts and let me know more about their lives was a great gift. There I was able even to find the loving mother I was longing for such a long time, but that’s another story.

I experienced these societies as a big treasure for all of us. And we need them to survive.

They are the living proof that it is possible to live with matriarchal values.

Where love is flowing naturally and giving is held in higher esteem than hoarding, where individuals know that they need the community, that children are respected as well as elders, (children are not possessed by their parents, they belong to their mother’s clan and they may choose one of their mother’s sisters, because they are also their mothers, if they can’t get along with their own.)

In matriarchal societies it is a traditional wisdom that we can’t own the world but are part of nature, giving is a paradigm for communication with each other, the ancestors and the gods and goddesses.

So the Kula-ring of the Trobriands or the so-called “stone money” of the Palauans enable the people to keep peace or to honor others.

To communicate with their ancestors, the Kunama whenever they eat give something to the ancestors spirits by libation or by drinking the blood of animals during a ritual.

The Garo in North-India share commensality with their gods and goddesses at an Amua, a healing ritual, something the Modegknei of Palau do in

us to realize our authority, to say “No!” and to tell truth – as a sign back to the right track – in a world deathly threatened. We are part of the ancestress’ power, which is in the world and goes on and on and evolves a new eon: the other, the more, the motherland!”

Just to tell you the goals of MatriaVal,

To promote

- – research and education
- – equality
- – intercultural exchange and support for threatened peoples. •

These goals shall be achieved by: •

Drawing attention to and supporting matriarchal and matrilineal societies and social structures

Supporting networks of individuals and groups coming from matriarchal societies as well as those who are studying these cultures. •

Proposals for social, political and ethical changes for people of the dominant patriarchal societies •

Creating awareness for this subject: using films, books, exhibits, magazines, television, radio, congresses, conferences, other events, etc. •

Supporting projects which reinforce matriarchal structures. •

Creating a library and archive with relevant books, research papers, films, art and recordings •

Promoting and constructing educational institutions in matriarchal societies as well as in non-matriarchal societies.

Still a lot to do! We are far from being international and have got 62 members up to now, but 230 subscribers for the Journal.

We supported books like this of Dr. Kirsten Armbruster “Starke Mütter verändern die Welt”, “Strong mothers change the world”, still only available in German, hopefully soon in English and we are planning to produce an Audio-CD of it.

We have published a CD with songs about being daughter and mother, had articles in different magazines and brought the film of the 1st World Congress on Matriarchal Studies “Societies in Balance” to a Khasi and a Palauan audience with great success, reinforcing the self-esteem of Palauan women, who are quite stressed by the consequences of Palau’s “Compact of Free Association” with the USA.

their services as well.

During the year all of these societies traditionally have got rituals where the surplus is handed out to keep the society in balance, to guarantee an equal wellbeing for all.

(Here, I may refer to Gen's talk in the afternoon. In her work she explores that it is only logical that giving, especially gift-giving, is essential for all of us.)

In matriarchal societies women are economically secure by the social structure and also against violence.

And last but not least, in matriarchal societies mothers and women are in the center of the community, honored for their power to give birth. – Sometimes still treated like goddesses as in Palau. –

The members of our association appreciate these values and are deeply aware that we all need peace.

We want the matriarchal societies to be able to live in peace and not be forced to convert, – neither to any monotheistic religion, – nor to patriarchy or – capitalism.

In October 2006 Dr. Heide Göttner-Abendroth, Dr. Malika Grasshoff, Siegrun Laurent, Uschi Madeisky, Dagmar Margotsdotter-Fricke, Dr. Christa Mulack, Gudrun Nositschka and I, founded the association.

(This might be the right time and place to ask Genevieve Vaughan to become an honorary member of MatriaVal? May I?)

In May 2008 together we organized the "International Mother Summit 2008".

MatriaVal together with ALMA MATER ACADEMY, a feministic-matriarchal academy for culture, ethics, religion and spirituality, and matria-Oasis, an offspring of ALMA MATER, founded by Dagmar Margotsdotter-Fricke.

Genevieve Vaughan told us about Andrea O'Reilly and A R M. We asked her and Andrea to come to Karlsruhe where Andrea gave her speech "A room of one's own".

Seeing the homepage of "The Association for Research on Mothering" struck me like a flash of lightning,

what already has been done and what is possible to do.

We are networking with other associations like the "Gerda-Weiler-Stiftung", which, run by Gudrun Nositschka, cares for the spiritual heritage of Gerda Weiler, who discovered the matriarchal roots in the BIBEL.

And last but not least together with ALMA MATER we are planning a new Summit in May, 28th to 30th 2010, ten years after the "Exclamation of the women's millennium" in the year 2000 at the castle of Hambach, a quite historical place for Germans, – a summit for the great mother, the ancestors and the grandmothers.

Let me end with a quote from the declarations of the 2nd World Congress on matriarchal studies "Societies of Peace",

Benedette Muthien, from the Khoisan-Society, and executive director of Engender, a South African NGO:

(Engender is focused on changing patterns of violence (including gender-based violence) and inequality in South African society and the necessary transformation from victimhood to agency.

"Matriarchies encompass completeness, harmony, and interdependence of all creations.

And hence scholarship should balance with, and be relevant to actual communities of (grassroots) people, ...

In this compassionate, respectful way, Matriarchal Studies can be the most powerful revolutionary movement we have ever had. Matriarchy is less 'hail the goddess', and more 'love the self (and others) as an embodiment of the divine'. ..."

Lastly, I may express my admiration for the wide and colorful range of groups and opinions your motherhood movement sums up under her wings and makes it big and strong. I've learned a lot. Thanks and congratulation!

Thank you for listening!

October, 25, 2008

MatriaVal is co-founding association of

