

# A New Definition of Patriarchy: Control of Women's Sexuality, Private Property, and War

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**Carol P. Christ**

## Abstract

Carol P. Christ discusses her new multi-pronged definition of patriarchy as an integral system: male dominance is enforced by violence which is a product of war; the control of female sexuality ensures the transfer private property and slaves which are the spoils of war in the male line; and the system as a whole is legitimated by religion. She argues, based on the new research on matriarchies (which are not the mirror image of patriarchies) that patriarchy is not eternal or universal, but that it arose in history, and is inseparable from the rise of warfare and other forms of domination.

## Keywords

Definition of Matriarchy, definition of Patriarchy, male dominance, matriarchy, patriarchy, patriarchy and war

*Patriarchy is a system of male dominance, rooted in the ethos of war which legitimates violence, sanctified by religious symbols, in which men dominate women through the control of female sexuality, with the intent of passing property to male heirs, and in which men who are heroes of war are told to kill men, and are permitted to rape women, to seize land and treasures, to exploit resources, and to own or otherwise dominate conquered people.<sup>1</sup>*

1. An earlier version of this essay was published in three parts on the Feminism and Religion blog, Part 1: <http://feminismandreligion.com/2013/02/18/patriarchy-as-an-integral-system-of-male-dominance-created-at-the-intersection-of-the-control-of-women-private-property-and-war-part-1-by-carol-p-christ/>; Part 2: <http://feminismandreligion.com/2013/02/25/patriarchy-as-an-integral-system-of-male-dominance-created-at-the-intersection-of-the-control-of-women-private-property-and-war-part-2-by-carol-p-christ/>; Part 3: <http://feminismandreligion.com/2013/03/04/patriarchy-as-an-integral-system-of-male-dominance-created-at-the-intersection-of-the-control-of-women-private-property-and-war-part-3/>

## Corresponding author:

Carol P. Christ  
Email: [cpc@otenet.gr](mailto:cpc@otenet.gr)

Patriarchy is often defined as a system of male dominance.<sup>2</sup> This definition does not illuminate, but rather obscures, the complex set of factors that function together to create and sustain the patriarchal system. We need a more complex definition if we are to understand the patriarchal system as a whole. If we do not understand the complex set of factors that come together in patriarchy, we will not be able to challenge and dismantle it effectively. In this essay I will discuss patriarchy as an integral system created at the juncture of the control of women, private property, and war.

I will be discussing a functional definition of patriarchy here; I do not address the separate question of the reasons why cultures became male dominant and accepted warfare as a way of life. My hypothesis is that patriarchy and war were introduced into Europe, India, and Persia by invaders who had domesticated the horse and who spoke Indo-European languages.<sup>3</sup> But this does not provide an answer to the question of why the Indo-Europeans became patriarchal and warlike or why those speaking Semitic, Asian, or other languages did so as well. Expansion of populations, exhaustion of farmlands, and drought or other climate changes may have led to internal stresses in early agricultural cultures that could have been exploited by invading groups. Peggy Reeves Sanday writes that environmental stress may upset the positive equation of women and nature on which egalitarian societies are based – leading to the development of societies in which men decide that they need to rule and control women and nature.<sup>4</sup> James DeMeo argues that widespread drought in ‘Saharasia’ led to rise of patriarchy in the Indo-European homeland and forced the Indo-Europeans to migrate from their homeland.<sup>5</sup> While cautioning against a single cause explanation, Gerda Lerner concluded that patriarchy is not universal and noted that the direction of change is always from societies that were matrilineal and matrilocal to societies that become patrilineal and patrilocal – never the opposite.<sup>6</sup> I will not be evaluating competing theories on the origin of patriarchy here, nor will I be able to review theories about how it functioned.

While I consider the modifications of the patriarchal system that occurred with the rise of modern science and industrialization to be significant, they also are

2. Patriarchy literally means rule of the fathers or the father principle and is generally understood to mean a society in which power is held by males or by elite males and where power is passed from father to son. See Biaggi C (ed.) (2005) *The Rule of Mars: Readings on the Origins, History and Impact of Patriarchy*. Manchester, CT: Knowledge, Ideas, and Trends. Here Biaggi gathers together a variety of definitions, theories, and hypotheses written by spiritual feminist scholars and others. Also see Lerner G (1986) *The Creation of Patriarchy*. New York: Oxford University Press.
3. According to Marija Gimbutas, the hallmarks of the Indo-European culture were the domestication of the horse, nomadism, patriarchy and patriliney, bronze weapons and war, big man graves, and indifference to art. See Gimbutas M (1981) *The Language of the Goddess*. San Francisco, CA: HarperSanFrancisco.
4. Reeves SP (1981) *Female Power and Male Dominance: On the Origins of Sexual Inequality*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
5. DeMeo J (2009) Saharasia: the origins of patriarchal authoritarian culture in ancient desertification, in Goettner-Abendroth H (ed.) *Societies of Peace: Matriarchies Past, Present, and Future*. Toronto: Inanna Publications, 407–23.
6. Lerner G (1986) *The Creation of Patriarchy*. New York: Oxford University Press, 53.

beyond the scope of this essay. It is my opinion that in the eras of modern science and industrialization some aspects of the patriarchal system were intensified (for example, technology made war and the exploitation of resources more efficient), while others were mitigated (for example, movements to abolish slavery and for the rights of women began), but these developments are also beyond the scope of this essay. For now, it is sufficient to note that neither modern science nor industrialization led to the demise of the integral system of patriarchy based in the control of women, private property, and war. In this essay, I will focus on the patriarchal system at the time of its European and Middle Eastern origins and consider some of the ways it continues to function today.

My new definition of patriarchy involves the weaving together of various threads that have already been brought to the fore in feminist and other discussions of the nature of patriarchy. Friedrich Engels theorized that the patriarchal family, private property, and the state arose together. Though his understanding of the societies that preceded 'patriarchy' was flawed, I believe that his allegation that patriarchy is connected to private property and to domination in the name of the state (which was originally governed by warrior kings) is correct.<sup>7</sup> It has long seemed to me that patriarchy cannot be separated from war and the kings who take power in the wake of war.<sup>8</sup> Many years ago I was stunned by Merlin Stone's statement that in matrilineal societies there are no illegitimate children, because all children have mothers.<sup>9</sup> In recent years I have been thinking about forced marriages after having been told about them by Greek women in Lesbos where I live. Lately, I have been trying to figure out why Roman Catholic and evangelical Protestant churches and the American Republican Party are so violently opposed to women's right to control our own bodies that they are trying to prevent access to birth control and abortion in the US. I have also been pondering the depth of the opposition to gay marriage. In the definition of patriarchy I propose, I bring all of these lines of thought together in a definition that describes patriarchy as an integral system created at the intersection of the control of women, private property, and war – which sanctions and celebrates violence, conquest, rape, looting, exploitation of resources, and the taking of slaves.

The system I am defining as patriarchy is a system of domination enforced through violence and the threat of violence. It is a system developed and controlled by powerful men, in which women, children, other men, and nature itself are dominated. I do not believe that it is in the 'nature' of 'men' to dominate through violence. Patriarchy is a system that originated in history, which means that it is neither eternal nor inevitable. Men in matriarchal societies are taught to be as loving and giving as their own mothers. Some women and some men have resisted patriarchy throughout

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7. Engels F (1972 [1884]) *The Origin of the Family, Private Property, and the State*. New York: Pathfinder Press. Introduction by Evelyn Reed.

8. Many feminists in both the nineteenth and twentieth centuries understood that patriarchy and war were integrally related and this is reflected in 'women for peace' movements in both centuries.

9. Stone M (1976) *When God Was a Woman*. New York: Dial Press.

its history, and a few cultures never became patriarchal. Women and men can join together to resist patriarchy today.

My definition of patriarchy is influenced by new research on ‘matriarchal’ societies collected and analyzed by Heidi Goettner-Abendroth in *Societies of Peace*. The term ‘matriarchy’ is generally not used in a positive way by scholars in the US and UK. The word matriarchy can be translated as ‘rule by mothers’ or as ‘the mother principle’. However, the term ‘matriarchy’ is usually (mis)understood to mean ‘the opposite of patriarchy’. The mere mention of the term ‘matriarchy’ conjures up unconscious images and fears of societies in which women dominate men, rape men, hold men as slaves, have more than one husband or even harems of men, use men as breeding machines, start wars over the control of men, and so forth. The fact that so much negativity is attached to bad things imagined to occur in matriarchy ought to alert us to the fact that such things are just as bad when they occur in patriarchy (but it usually does not).

Goettner-Abendroth, rejecting common fantasies, defines matriarchy as meaning ‘the mothers from the beginning’.<sup>10</sup> *Arche*, from the ancient Greek, means beginning and it also means (ruling) principle, the principle which defines something. In Goettner-Abendroth’s theory matriarchal societies recognize human beginnings in the bodies and nurture of mothers, and they are organized around the mother principle. Goettner-Abendroth finds that matriarchal societies are not mother ‘dominant’, but rather are ‘egalitarian’ ‘societies of peace’. She identifies the deep structure of matriarchies using four markers:

1. Economic: these societies usually practice small scale agriculture and achieve relative economic equality through gift-giving as a social custom.
2. Social: these societies are egalitarian, matrilineal, and matrilocal with land being held in the maternal clan and both men and women remaining in their maternal clan.
3. Political: these societies are egalitarian with both grandmothers and uncles holding power within well-developed democratic systems of consensus.
4. Culture, spirituality: these societies tend to view Earth as a Great and Giving Mother. Most importantly and permeating everything, these societies honour principles of care, love, and generosity which they associate with motherhood, and believe both women and men can and should practice.

It is important to note that matriarchies do not ‘essentialize’ women’s biology. In typical matriarchal societies, all women are considered mothers whether or not they have children, and all women work in the fields as well as the home. Nor does ‘matriarchy’ separate the sexes according to rigid gender binaries – as occurs in patriarchy. Both sexes are expected to embody the principles of care, love, and generosity in all aspects of their

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10. See her ground-breaking theoretical essay, The deep structure of matriarchal society: findings and political relevance of modern matriarchal societies in Goettner-Abendroth H (ed.) *Societies of Peace: Matriarchies Past, Present, and Future*. Toronto: Inanna Publications, 17–28.

lives. Men and boys are taught to be as loving and caring and generous as their mothers and sisters. Acts of power over and domination are not celebrated or valorized for either sex. I will be using the term matriarchy in this sense in the discussion that follows.<sup>11</sup>

The Mosuo culture of the Himalayas which has been recently studied, even as it is disappearing, is a classic example of a matriarchal society.<sup>12</sup> I first learned of it while watching Michael Palin discuss Mosuo sexual customs with a Mosuo woman in his well-received documentary *Himalaya*. This woman explained to Palin that in her culture women and men define themselves through their connections to maternal clans. When a girl reaches the age of sexual maturity, her mother prepares a room where she can invite a man to dine with her. If she chooses, she invites him to spend the night with her. Children produced from such unions become part of their mother's maternal clan. The 'fathering' role is assumed by the uncles and brothers of the mother, while the mothering role is shared among sisters. If either member of a couple tires of their sexual relationship, they end it and seek other partners. This system is so different from our own that Michael Palin quite obviously had a hard time believing what he was being told.

This story illustrates an important difference between the matrilineal and matrilocal customs of the Mosuo and those of the patriarchal cultures with which we are familiar. Among the Mosuo, women choose their sexual partners and are free to end one sexual relationship and find another. There are no illegitimate children because all children have mothers. There are no 'loose' women (think about the meaning of that term) because women are free to have sex with whomever they choose. There are no 'whores' because there is no shortage of sexual partners and no exchange of sex for money. The Virgin-Whore dichotomy – so well-known in patriarchal cultures – simply does not exist.

The contrast to patriarchal control of female sexuality provided by the Mosuo led to the first part of my definition: *patriarchy is a system of male domination in which men dominate women through the control of female sexuality*. The control of female sexuality through the institution of patriarchal marriage is not incidental to patriarchy, but rather is central. While it is relatively easy to know who a child's biological mother is, it is not so easy to be certain about the biological father. If a woman is free to have sex whenever and with whomever she chooses, then without DNA testing, which has only recently become discovered, it is nearly impossible to be absolutely certain who a child's

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11. My reflections on matriarchal societies on the Feminism and Religion blog include: Exciting New Research on Matriarchal Societies. Available at: <http://feminismandreligion.com/2011/08/05/exciting-new-research-on-matriarchal-societies-by-carol-p-christ/>; What Might It Be Like to Live in a Matriarchal Society of Peace? Available at: <http://feminismandreligion.com/2013/03/25/what-might-it-be-like-to-live-in-a-society-of-peace-can-you-imagine-by-carol-p-christ/>; A Gift Economy. Available at: <http://feminismandreligion.com/2013/04/15/a-gift-economy-could-it-be-better-to-give-than-to-recvie-by-carol-p-christ/>; Is the Spirit of Great Generosity in Crete a Survival of Ancient Matriarchal Values? Available at: <http://feminismandreligion.com/2013/10/28/is-the-spirit-of-great-generosity-in-crete-a-survival-of-ancient-matriarchal-values-by-carol-p-christ/>; and Matriarchy: Daring to Use the 'M' Word. Available at: <http://feminismandreligion.com/2014/02/17/matriarchy-daring-to-use-the-m-word-by-carol-p-christ/>
  12. There are three essays on the Mosuo culture in *Societies of Peace*. See Goettner-Abendroth H (ed.) *Societies of Peace: Matriarchies Past, Present, and Future*. Toronto: Inanna Publications.

biological father is. One solution to this dilemma is to define fatherhood in other ways. This is the choice of matrilineal societies. A second solution is to control women's sexuality absolutely. This is the choice of patriarchal societies.

The customs that surround patriarchal marriage have the intention of making certain that a man's children are his biologically. These customs include: the requirement that brides be untouched sexually or 'virgin'; the 'protection' of a girl's virginity by her father and brothers; the seclusion of girls and women in the home; the veiling or covering of women's hair or bodies; the requirement that wives must be sexually faithful to their husbands; and the enforcement of these customs through shaming, violence, and the threat of violence. In matriarchal clans, sons and daughters, boys and girls, men and women remain with their families of origin and are valued and cherished. In patriarchal families, girls are not valued as much as boys because they will marry 'out' of the family, becoming part of another man's family and producing sons who will inherit his property. When a dowry is required as part of the marriage contract, daughters are viewed as a burden. The psychological wounding of girls in this system should not be underestimated. The wishes of boys about who they will marry are also not considered important.

While a girl's virginity before marriage and a wife's fidelity within marriage are given the highest value in patriarchal societies, neither is required of boys and men. The reason for this is not simply that boys and men have more freedom and power in patriarchal societies. The reason is more precise: boys and men can be punished for having sex with women or girls under the protection of another man and therefore jeopardizing patriarchal inheritance. In the case where a man has sex with or rapes another man's daughter, he is often forced to marry her, with no other form of punishment being exacted for a rape. In the case of consensual sexual encounter with or rape of a married woman, both the woman and the man are likely to be killed, with no distinction made between a woman who consents and a woman who is forcibly raped. In this case the man is punished for violating another man's property, while the woman is considered defiled even if she is a rape victim. Men are not punished for having sex with or even raping women of the enemy, slave women, women of lower classes, or women defined as 'loose', 'free', or 'whores'. This explains why even today a woman's sexual history is brought up in rape cases.

One might ask why it is so important for a man to know who his biological children are that a complicated system of secluding, shaming, and punishing women in order to control their sexuality had to be developed? The answer is found in the next clause of my definition: *patriarchy is a system of male dominance in which men dominate women through the control of female sexuality with the intent of passing property to male heirs*. Prior to the institution of patriarchy, land was held in common by communities, for example by the mother clan, and farmed communally. There would be no need for a man to be certain of the paternity of his children if the institution of individual private property did not exist and if the value of individuals was not defined by the property they own and pass on to their heirs, usually sons.

Recently, I realized that the word for inheritance or inherited property in modern Greek, *periousia*, a word taken from ancient Greek, illustrates the connection of property and identity more clearly than the English word inheritance. *Ousia* in ancient Greek

refers to one's being or essence. *Peri-ousia* is that which surrounds one's essential being and thus defines 'who' one 'is'. Its clear meaning is that 'who one is' is defined by 'the property' one inherits and passes on. Without the close identification of the 'essence' of a man with his property, there would not need to be such a strict concern with knowing that the inheritors of a man's property 'really are' his biological sons.

The next question is: how did the institution of 'private' property come about? And why did a man's essence become identified with his property and the ability to pass it on? I suggest that the answer to this question is war and the 'taking' of 'property' or the 'spoils' of war by warriors. *Patriarchy is rooted in the ethos of war which legitimates violence, and in which men who are heroes of war are permitted to seize land and treasures, to exploit resources, and to own or otherwise dominate conquered people.* My hypothesis is that the notion of 'private' property, defined as property owned by a single (male) individual, and as that which defines the 'essence' of that individual, originates in the seizure of land, treasures, and people defined as the 'spoils' of war by victorious warriors. The notion that victorious warriors have the right to take or exploit treasures, land, and people of the 'enemy' they conquer is a tenet of colonialism. Colonialism thus is not a phenomenon only of the last five centuries, when superior technology enabled Europeans to colonize the Americas, Africa, Australia, and much of Asia. Colonialism began with the beginning of conquest. The rights of warriors to the spoils of war is as old as wars of conquest. This, I argue, is also where the notion of private property began.

The 'spoils' of war may be the treasures 'looted' or taken by the victors from the conquered, such as jewellery and sacred objects. The 'spoils' of war include land 'taken' as the result of warfare, along with the right to exploit resources, directly or through taxes and levies. The 'spoils' of war also includes the right to 'take' the women of the defeated enemy and to confirm ownership of them (and humiliate their fathers or husbands) by raping them. The 'spoils' of war also includes the right to 'take' raped women and their young children to serve as slaves and concubines in the warrior's homeland. In some cases warriors 'married' the women they raped, as in the case of the Roman soldiers and the Sabine women. This type of 'marriage' would have been most likely in cases where warriors settled in the lands they conquered rather than returning home.

Many people were surprised when the rape victims of the war in the 1990s in Bosnia began to speak out about the use of rape as a tool of war by Serbian soldiers. In fact, rape has always been an 'ordinary' part of war. In the 'great' epic known as *The Iliad* which is said to be the foundation of western culture, Achilles and Agamemnon are fighting over which of them has the right to rape a 'captured' woman named Briseis. The term 'spear captive' used by scholars to describe Briseis masks the reality that Briseis and other women like her were 'rape victims' and that the 'heroes' being celebrated were their 'rapists' and 'jailers'. I believe that the institution of rape and the (twisted) notion that men have a right to rape (certain kinds or types of) women originated with war.

The institution of slavery also originated in war. Both the Bible and the Greek epics testify to the ancient custom of enslaving the women and children of the enemy. Slave women in every culture, like the slave women of plantations in the Americas, are at the mercy of their owners and their owner's sons, who can rape them when and where they feel like it. The 'custom' of taking slaves from the enemy and the 'custom' of taking enemy women sexually, is deeply intertwined with the history of war. The Africans who

sold other Africans into slavery in the Americas were selling Africans they had taken as the spoils of war.

I would argue that exploitation of the environment is also a consequence of the patriarchal system. *Patriarchy is a system of male dominance, in which men who are heroes of war are permitted to seize land and treasures, [and] to exploit resources.* Killing to eat occurs in nature and in prepatriarchal societies: it is an aspect of the interdependence of life. When and where did exploitation of the environment by human beings begin? Some trace the beginning of human exploitation of the environment to the beginning of agriculture, when human beings began to exercise a certain degree of control over plants in farming and over animals in herding. However, early small scale agriculture, which is sometimes called horticulture, took place within a symbol system that recognized human interdependence in the web of life.<sup>13</sup> Early agriculturalists set their planting and harvesting and killing of animals within a ritual system that respected and honoured the cycles of birth, death, and regeneration they observed in all of life. There is evidence that early farmers abandoned fields which they may have exhausted. It is likely that they began to recognize this and to take measures to prevent it. Small-scale agriculture has built-in protections against over-exploitation of the resources of land. These include love of the land that provides for the community, ties to places where the ancestors lived and are buried, and concern for future generations. When land is 'taken' as the spoils of war, these ties are broken.

If patriarchal warriors settled on the land they had taken, then some ties to land might be reestablished. But in the new system of domination that included slavery and the control of women, as well as the accumulation of property in the hands of individuals who hoped to pass it on to heirs, the intimate ties of individuals in communities to each other and to the land they cultivated could not be fully rebuilt. Both the land and the people of the land came to be viewed as valuable in relation to the power of the warrior/owner, rather than in terms of value in community and the web of life. When the warrior lived on the land he conquered, some concern for the long-term consequences to the land of short-term exploitation of resources might have occurred to him. But when victors began to exploit the resources of far-away lands, the long-term consequences would have seemed less important.

As can be seen in the conflict between Achilles and Agamemnon over Briseis, the worth or 'honour' of the warrior was defined by the value or values of the spoils of war he could claim as his. Their story also illustrates the inherent lack of equality in the notion of private property created through the spoils of war. The heroes or leaders in battle competed with each other to gain control of the largest and most valuable portions of the spoils of war, which led to the attribution of the greatest 'honour.' The ordinary soldiers got little or less. And women became property to be seized and exchanged.

If we entertain the hypothesis that land was once held in common and that wealth was once shared, then we can see that the notion of individual powerful men's *peri-ousia* being defined as the treasures, land, and people they 'took' and claimed to 'own' would have involved a massive cultural shift. The shift to defining powerful men by the

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13. For one example of this worldview, see Mann AB (ed) (2008) *Make a Beautiful Way: The Wisdom of Native American Women*. Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press.



property they owned also required that these men 'own' and absolutely control their wives and daughters so they could pass their wealth on to legitimate heirs. Women who had previously been free were subordinated to men. Such a cultural shift could only have been instituted and maintained through violence. *Patriarchy is a system of male domination, rooted in the ethos of war which legitimates violence.*

Warriors who have learned the methods of violent domination of other human beings – not only 'enemy' men, but also the women and children of the people they conquer – bring the methods of violence home. Violence and the threat of violence can then be used to control 'one's' wife or wives, in order to ensure that 'one's' children really are 'one's' own. Violence and the threat of violence can be used to ensure that 'one's' daughters are virgins who can be 'given' to other men to perpetuate the system of patriarchal inheritance. Violence and the threat of violence can be used to hold enslaved people 'in line'. Violence and the threat of violence can be used to ensure the submission of the common people to overlords. In addition, violence can be used to eliminate those within one's own culture who are unwilling to go along with the new system. Women who refuse to let men control their sexuality can be killed with impunity by their male relatives or stoned by communities as a whole. Slaves who attempt to flee and common people who refuse to submit to the new world order can also be killed.

How does such a violent system legitimate itself? *Patriarchy is sanctified by religious symbols.* Clifford Geertz taught us that religion is 'a system of symbols that acts to create powerful, pervasive and long-lasting moods and motivations'. He added that religious symbols make the moods and motivations they create seem 'uniquely real'.<sup>14</sup> Patriarchy employs religious symbols to create the illusion that violence and male domination are 'in the nature of things'. In Greece, warriors were 'in the image' of the 'warrior God' Zeus whose rape of Goddesses and nymphs was celebrated. In Israel, the power of warriors is mirrored in a male God who is called 'Lord' and 'King' and who achieves his will through violence and destruction. Sadly, this is not an exclusively western problem. In other 'highly developed' cultures defined by patriarchy and war, symbols of divine warriors justify the violence of war. Kings are viewed as semi-divine beings or as ordained by God or Gods. Laws said to have a divine source enshrine men's control of the sexuality of their wives and daughters, permit some men to rape some women, justify conquest and exploitation of resources, and allow some people to own other people as slaves. While patriarchal religions are often imposed by force, once they are accepted and internalized, the need for force is lessened. If those who are dominated believe that their domination is ordained by God or by karma or that they will be rewarded in another world, they are less likely to protest or rebel or even to recognize that their oppression is wrong. This of course is why Marx called religion 'the opiate of the people'. While religion may also have other functions, and I believe it does, it has all too often functioned to legitimate oppression.

As this discussion shows, patriarchy is not simply the domination of women by men. Patriarchy is an integral system in which men's control of women's sexuality, private property, and war (including violence, conquest, rape, and slavery) each play a part.

14. Geertz C (1972) Religion as a cultural system. In: Lessa WL, Vogt EV (eds) *Reader in Comparative Religion*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. New York: Harper and Row, 206.

These different elements are so intertwined that it is impossible to separate one as the cause of the others. Patriarchy is an integral system of interlocking oppressions, enforced through violence, and legitimated by religions.

The model of patriarchy I have proposed argues that the control of female sexuality is fundamental to the patriarchal system. This explains why there is so much controversy about the 'simple matter' of access to birth control and abortion in the US today. It also explains why so much vicious anger is directed at single mothers by politicians and commentators. Any woman who dares to control her own sexuality is questioning the foundations of the patriarchal system. Women's right to control our bodies and our sexuality alone is not enough to end the system of male domination. But the right of women to control our sexuality – and yes to have sex whenever and with whomever we please – is the beginning of the end of the patriarchal system. Virulent opposition to homosexuality and gay marriage also has its roots in the integral system of patriarchy. Heterosexual marriage has been defined as the control of women by men to ensure that inheritance passes to a man's legitimate heirs. Women marrying women and men marrying men disrupt the hierarchical system of male over female that has been one of the foundations of patriarchy. Issues concerning sexuality are sometimes dismissed as 'soft' or as only part of the 'culture wars'. The definition of patriarchy as an integral system shows that sexual matters are 'integrally' related to the 'hard' 'social' and 'economic' issues that are sometimes viewed as more real or important than cultural issues.

The model of patriarchy as an integral system enables us to see that in order to end male domination we must also end war – and violence, rape, conquest, exploitation, and slavery which are sanctioned as part of war. In societies where the violent behaviours of warriors are celebrated and in which soldiers who have been trained in the methods of violence come home, it is unlikely that anyone can succeed in eradicating rape and violence against women. In the US military the rape of women soldiers by other soldiers is common, and the military is covering it up.<sup>15</sup> This needs to stop and the men who rape in the military must be punished. However, the fact that rape has been permitted as the spoils of war from the inception of war up to the present day is rarely considered as one of the reasons for the rape of women in the military. Can justice for raped women be achieved in an institution that has always permitted rape? And even if rape can be stopped within the military will soldiers still continue to rape the women of the 'the enemy' and bring learned violent behaviours with them when they come home? Do we have to end war to end rape?

If we wish to end patriarchy, we must also address the unequal distribution of wealth inherent in the notion of 'private' property, much of it the 'spoils' of war, which led to the concept of patriarchal inheritance, which in turn required the control of female sexuality. It is important that the model of communal land ownership in prepatriarchal societies and the principle of sharing wealth through gift-giving systems become more widely known. Knowledge is power. Knowledge of more communal alternatives exposes the injustices in systems of unrestrained accumulation of private property in the hands of powerful individuals. While we may not be able to return to a system of communal land

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15. Benedict H (2008) The Scandal of Military Rape. Available at: <http://www.ms magazine.com/Fall2008/TheScandalOfMilitaryRape.asp>

ownership any time soon, we can support universal health care, progressive tax systems that redistribute accumulated wealth, and social safety nets for the poor and the vulnerable. When we recognize that the desire to pass property on to heirs is one of the roots of the patriarchal system, we might also become more sympathetic to serious reform of the inheritance system. If individuals were only allowed to leave a set amount to each child and none to family-controlled charities, there would be less incentive to accumulate large amounts of wealth in the first place. When we recognize the injustices involved in acquiring people and property as the spoils of war, we might also become more sympathetic to the idea of paying reparations to indigenous peoples and to people whose ancestors were enslaved. We could fund such initiatives through the money that wealthy individuals would no longer be allowed to pass on to their heirs. We might even begin to view all of these measures – and others like them – as neither unjust nor even as extraordinary, but simply as what is required to repair the injustices inherent in the patriarchal system of private property.

Feminists in religion must also identify and challenge the complex interlocking set of religious symbols that have sanctified the integral system of patriarchy. These include but are not limited to the image of God as male. Images that associate divine beings with warfare and violence are also part of the problem. Feminists have begun this task, but it is not an easy one. The justifying of injustice within patriarchal religions is a worldwide phenomenon. Increasing secularization means that secular symbols, especially those created by advertising, must also be criticized. Heidi Goettner-Abendroth describes matriarchal societies which perceive Earth as a Great and Giving Mother. She said that matriarchal societies honour principles of care, love, and generosity which they associate with motherhood, as models for the behaviour of women and men. In this age where humanity is poised to destroy itself through war, overpopulation, and disregard for the environment, images that celebrate interdependence in the web of life are profoundly needed. We must recreate the understanding that ours is a relational world. Care, love, and generosity are not contrary to human nature, but rather they stem from recognizing that individuals are related in an interdependent world. We must not only find and create images of female power. We must take care not to valorize Goddess images that celebrate warfare or domination. At the same time, we need new images of male power as care, generosity, and love. While it may not be possible or even desirable to return to the past, the example provided by matriarchal societies suggests a way forward, a path towards re-imagining the symbols that have legitimated and sanctified patriarchy, war, and the accumulation of wealth.

When we see patriarchy as an integral system, we can see that seemingly unrelated struggles – for example, those concerning war, rape, environment, family violence, birth control, abortion, gay marriage, gun control, redistributing wealth, racism, and the sex of God – are in fact related. Each of these ‘single’ issues represents a challenge to the pillars of the integral system of patriarchy which was created at the intersection of the control of women, private property, and war. When we understand patriarchy as an integral system, we will be able to challenge it more effectively.

In support of this claim, I offer my own experience in developing the theory I have discussed here. I have long been a political progressive who wishes to end poverty and redistribute wealth. I have known that Engels wrote that the patriarchal family, private

property, and the state arose together. However, it was not until I began thinking about the communal ownership of land in the mother clan of the Masuo, that I had a clear image of an alternative to private property. While I was writing about patriarchy as an integral system created at the juncture of the control of women, private property, and war, I made the connection between the spoils of war and private property and between inheritance and the spoils of war. I have become more deeply convinced of the injustice of any system of private property that allows wealth, especially great wealth, to be accumulated and passed on by individuals. I have also become more sensitive to the ways in which wealth has been accumulated through warfare and violence.

Until I wrote this essay, I would not have opposed the idea of paying reparations to Native Americans and to the descendants of slaves, but neither had I given these ideas much thought. In the process of writing this essay, I have come to see the logic behind the arguments for reparations. The accumulation of wealth in the hands of a few has always come at the expense of others and usually through violence. We know that the cumulative wealth of the American nation was created by 'taking' land from the Indians and by 'taking' people and 'owning' them as slaves. But until recently, I have had trouble connecting myself to these actions. Now I see that all us who have accumulated wealth through the opportunities provided in the American nation are the beneficiaries of those who took land from the Indians to create America. Slaves were not only held in the South, but also in the North, and even after the abolition of slavery, the Northern economy was profiting from slavery. Are ancestors who settled in the tenements of New York and who escaped poverty after one or two generations any less the beneficiaries of the taking of land from Indians or of an economy built on slavery than those who actually held slaves or fought in wars that drove the Indians from their lands? Those who have accumulated great wealth have benefited more than those who have accumulated some wealth. I can see no reason why all of us who have some wealth, and especially those who have great wealth, should not, as part of a larger programme of the redistribution of wealth, give some of it back to the descendants of the people whose land and labour were stolen in the formative years of the American nation. The goal of a programme of the redistribution of wealth is not to punish some for the actions of others. The goal of a larger programme of the redistribution of wealth is the creation of the 'just society' that many of us were taught was the reason for the American experiment. Whether or not the creation of a just society was the reason for the founding of America, it should be the goal of all of us who are struggling against the injustices inherent in a patriarchal system created at the juncture of the control of women, private property, and war.

The worth of a theory should be judged by its ability to help us to see the world more clearly. I rest my case.

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