The myth of the matriarchy

72 upvotes | 4 March, 2019 | by UsedToBeRadical

Feminists often promote the narrative that primitive societies tend to be matriarchal and that they're more "peaceful" and all that jazz. They also point to examples of modern day "matriarchies", like the Mosuo as if they are examples to follow.

Such arguments are flawed and I will explain why.

According to anthropologists there are no known societies that are unambiguously matriarchal. This person explains it well.

The matriarchy is a myth. It's as simple as that. The idea of the primitive, peaceful matriarchies are also pretty much a racist myth based on the noble savage trope. This book debunks the idea of a primitive matriarchy.

But what about the Mosuo and other people who are considered matriarchal? Well, the Mosuo are not matriarchal. Most of their leaders are men. The Mosuo women however do seem to have considerable power in the home and of course their family structure is quite unique. Basically, kids are not raised by their biological father usually. Instead they're raised by the family of the mother and her brothers serve as "father figures". Despite their unique family structure, the Mosuo women do not dominate men and do not have more political power than men, so it would be weird to call them matriarchal.

There have been societies where women had significant power, but no matriarchal societies. This does not mean that women cannot be involved in politics or anything like that. There have been many powerful women in history that had a lot of successes. The point is to not let the feminists perpetuate the myth of the "peaceful" matriarchal societies against the "oppressive" patriarchal ones for propaganda purposes.

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ThePigmanAgain • 19 points • 4 March, 2019 11:17 PM
It's all just a fantasy. They have no real matriarchies to which they can point and say, "See how much better they are than those nasty old patriarchies?" so they simply make up some fictional matriarchies and place them so far back in time that nobody can really say one way or another. And some of the "evidence" is hilarious. One of these goons claims cave paintings of bull's heads are in fact depictions of a uterus and ovaries! As if stone age man even knew what those things looked like!

DJ-Roukan • 6 points • 6 March, 2019 12:07 PM
Basic rule of thumb (which is, ironically, not the measure of the stick which a husband can beat his wife with, as feminist claim), if a feminist claims it to be true, do the research, it is typically a lie.

lostapwbn • 13 points • 4 March, 2019 08:21 PM*
Feminists often promote the narrative that **PRIMITIVE** societies tend to be matriarchal
That word is so important that it needs to be capitalized and bolded.
There are no pumpkin spice lattes and iPhones in The Matriarchy.

Every supposedly 'matriarchal' society is at, best, subsistence agricultural.

rationalthought314 • 3 points • 6 March, 2019 06:18 AM
There are no pumpkin spice lattes and iPhones in The Matriarchy.
My answer seems to have been removed but I had stated that the real myth of the matriarchy is that women of child-bearing age were in charge of the society which is what the pumpkin spice latte crowd seems to think. At best it was older women, grandmother types and typically within the family unit. I don't think there has ever been a case throughout history where a societal group was ruled by a collective group of women in their 20s-40s. Even when you have had female rulers, the admin was mostly done by men as in the case of Elizabeth I for example.

Mackowatosc • 2 points • 6 March, 2019 11:01 AM
also, most female rulers were actually quite far from benevolent....up to and including miss bloody Bathory. Or tzar Katherine. Thanks, I'd rather have men instead of those two empowered females, lol.

rationalthought314 • 2 points • 6 March, 2019 12:01 PM
and female rulers have a tendency for war as well so there goes the idea of a peaceful reign of the matriarchy

Sasha_ • 3 points • 4 March, 2019 08:36 PM
True, also worth noting that societies in history which have privileged women in their later periods (Sparta, Rome 3C+) inevitably collapse.

plainwalk • 6 points • 5 March, 2019 11:01 AM
Pretty much all societies have collapsed. The UK is the collapsed British Empire. The People's Republic of China is not the China of the past. The USA is a (comparatively) new society and appears to be on the decline (debatable). The societies of the Middle East have changed hands so many times that the 'for sale' stickers have piled up so thickly that books are ashamed.

Privileging women has no bearing on the success or failure of a nation.

Empires come and go but that is not the same as saying all societies collapse. In Syria insurgents took up arms against the government and anarchy ensued. You could claim civil society collapsed then. In gender terms you might say it was men who caused the anarchy but also men who reinstated civil society. Women didn't fare particularly well. Minority women were put in chains and sold as wives and sex slaves.

The USA is a (comparatively) new society and appears to be on the decline (debatable)

1950s - one male breadwinner enough to buy a house and support an entire family.
2010s - three minimum wages job and living under an overpass

At least we have fentanyl and mobile phones to keep us distracted now.

Privileging women has no bearing on the success or failure of a nation.

Just making an inane statement doesn't make it true. Men built all civilizations. Even Camille Paglia admitted that if civilization had been left to females we'd be living in grass huts. Alan Turing invented the computer - something that changed the world forever. He was an autistic mathematician and logician. In other words he had an extreme male brain.

1950s - one male breadwinner enough to buy a house and support an entire family.
2010s - three minimum wages job and living under an overpass

1850s UK - two wages were not enough to support a lower class family. That's why they sent their kids out to work. Yep I said two wages - the women were working too.

Children and then women left the workforce as societal wealth grew in the late 19th century. Then feminists argued that not working was oppressive and women went right back to the workforce.

It's possible that women entering the workforce contributed to wage stagnation, as well as outsourcing and automation. The more workers there are, the more it will overload supply and demand, driving down wages for everyone. This in turn, leads to both parents requiring to work to make as much as one did before, which impacts family integrity as well as their income level.

But look on the bright side, at least women are wage slaves too now.

In the 50's we had strong unions and labour rights (US, UK, Canada), and since the 80's those
rights have been under attack -- started by Reagan, Thatcher, and Mulroney. It wasn't the increase of women's rights, but the decline of unions and increased corporate mobility.

You're right, merely stating something doesn't make it true. Alan Turing was also gay, and the mathematicians for the early space launches were women. The inventors of modern astronomical measurements for stars were also women. Societies don't collapse for merely one reason... unless that reason is a Mongol horde.

goodmod • 4 points • 7 March, 2019 12:00 PM*
More like calculators than mathematicians. During the 1940s the women who performed these tasks were called *computers* - because they crunched the numbers.

Perhaps they really were as critical to the space program as recent entertainment suggests. On the first couple of Google pages, almost all of the references to this critical role are dated after 2015. Almost as if that's when these geniuses began to exist.

I'd love to see some authentic, contemporary material about them. There was plenty of propaganda about American women who built planes and flew them in World War II, so I'd be surprised if there wasn't an equivalent during the Cold War.

Future scholars will have decades of employment going through all the feminist "facts" and weeding out the fiction.

rbrockway • 4 points • 7 March, 2019 12:56 PM

Alan Turing was also gay, and the mathematicians for the early space launches were women.

Feminists are engaging in revisionist history when they claim it was women behind these great mathematical feats. As goodmod notes the women were really computers (which used to be a job title BTW).

goodmod • 4 points • 7 March, 2019 01:49 PM*

Check this Timeline of Women in Mathematics from Wikipedia. Oddly enough the five female mathematicians who put America on the moon are ... not mentioned.

(Archive link in case it gets 'fixed')

And here's a thesis from 2011, with a theme that women in mathematics are overlooked. (Women in Mathematics: An Historical Account of Women's Experiences and Achievement)[https://scholarship.claremont.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?referer=https://www.google.com&httpsredir=1&article=1154&context=cmc_theses]. Guess which women that overlooks?

So it seems pretty clear that these women suddenly became genius mathematicians in 2015, right in the middle of a world-wide wave of feminist historical revisionism. Astonishing!

The_Best_01 • 2 points • 7 March, 2019 10:45 PM

Feminists talk about revisionist history when it comes to anything.

rbrockway • 1 point • 8 March, 2019 01:32 AM
Very true. I'm writing a book on that exact topic.

The_Best_01 • 2 points • 8 March, 2019 10:06 AM
Oh cool, sounds very interesting. When do you estimate it'll be finished?

rbrockway • 1 point • 8 March, 2019 11:09 AM
Thanks. I'm aiming to make it available on Amazon within the next 2-3 months.

[deleted] • 2 points • 7 March, 2019 08:02 AM
All western countries gained their wealth before unions were on the scene. Before there was wealth there was no wealth for unions to redistribute. Even as late as the 1950s the German economic miracle came about (after the total destruction of WW2) because of Ardenauer's free market reforms. Contrast that to highly unionized, stagnating and declining Britain of the 70s and you'd wonder who won the war.

Not sure why Turing being gay is relevant. Does that disqualify him as a man?

Meyright2 • 1 point • 5 March, 2019 08:35 PM
So you're saying we live in a patriarchy?

[deleted] • 5 points • 6 March, 2019 05:52 PM
Considering that fathers are undervalued and disrespected then nope, we don't.

rbrockway • 4 points • 7 March, 2019 12:50 PM
Both matriarchies and patriarchies are myths. Societies are more complex than that.

rationalthought314 • 2 points • 7 March, 2019 02:46 PM
Very true. We live in a society where the old aristocracy has been replaced by the monied aristocracy. Feminists screaming patriarchy are part of the distraction many of whom come from a place of privilege to begin with.

[deleted] • 0 points • 7 March, 2019 06:17 AM
Our civilization was built under a patriarchy. We now have more of a matriarchy. It is a big part of our decline.

Kanonizator • 3 points • 6 March, 2019 01:20 PM
The largest problem with the mosuo is that they're stuck at medieval civilizational levels. If that's what a "matriarchy" gets you I'll stick with western civilization that had patriarchal roots, thank you.

perplexedm • 7 points • 4 March, 2019 08:24 PM*

Basically, kids are not raised by their biological father usually. Instead they're raised by the family of the mother and her brothers serve as "father figures". Despite their unique family structure, the Mosuo women do not dominate men and do not have more political power than men, so it would be weird to call them...
The same system were present in northern areas of Indian state of Kerala. Forms of matriarchy still is practiced within some hindu and muslims. But they are a very conservative society, father lives in wife's house, have full role in family even though property sharing, etc. is matrilineal.

Modern people: primitive societies were more peaceful

Primitive societies: let’s shove a pointed stick through this dude’s chest because they stole some food

Anybody who claims that women don't cause wars are being wilfully ignorant of history or are simply lying so they can get social justice points.

"Primitive" matriarchy is indeed a myth and no longer taken seriously by scholars, however the peacefulness question is more contentious. A few non-anthropologists like Steven Pinker and Jared Diamond have attempted to argue that nomadic foragers were even more violent than we are, however their work does not correspond with the archeological record and has been effectively debunked by actual experts in the field.

"[W]arfare is largely a development of the past 10,000 years," R. Brian Ferguson has written. “[T]he multiple archeological indicators of war are absent until the development of a more sedentary existence and/or increasing sociopolitical complexity, usually in combination with some form of ecological crisis and/or steep ecological gradients.”

Ferguson notes that a study of all skeletons from 100,000-10,000 BC in southwestern France found that only 2.5% showed any signs of fractures -- and even these could have been caused by accidental injury. In the Middle East, amongst 370 skeletons from the Natufian (10,800-8,500 BC), only 2 showed signs of trauma. In Phylogenetic Roots of Human Lethal Violence, Jose Maria Gomez et. al found about 2 percent total killing in Old World Paleolithic and New World Archaic populations. This is in contrast to the 8 or 9 percent kill rate found in hierarchical chiefdoms, the precursors to civilizations.

“[T]he archaeological facts speak clearly,” Fry noted, “showing for particular geographic areas exactly when war began. And in all cases this was recent, not ancient activity—occurring after complex forms of social organization supplanted nomadic hunting and gathering.”

"Other crucial factors falling under the “complexity” rubric were the earliest manifestations and subsequent development of class structures, divisions of labor and social status, concentrations of wealth and poverty, and hierarchies of power and subordination, including religious and military power structures—all of the sins still very much with us in the modern world.” (Herman)
I spent almost 10 years living with hunter-gathers. I saw the evidence myself. I don't need some so-called anthropologist telling me that hunter gather societies were noble without the savage part. Why don't you try getting circumcised by an old shale rock or better still subincised? Maybe you could try some tribal scarification all over your body. Just cut your skin diagonally and rub sand in to produce the scaring effect. Piece of cake. That's before we look at head-hunters, cannibalism or any other of the myriad customs that make hunter gathers fascinating but brutal. It just defies belief that an anthropologists could come up with something like that. And then there's black magic, tribal warfare and the status of women. In tribal Australia, aborigines had practically no material possessions so women were regularly traded to settle disputes or for other types of payments. So yes, the evidence is firmly on one side. And you have to do intellectual gymnastics to avoid seeing it.

Do you have a point or...?

Yes. You need to read real anthropology not political activist stuff. Otherwise you come across as grossly misinformed and ignorant.

Sorry guy but it sounds like it's you who hasn't read any books on anthropology/archeology.

Not the pretend ones, no.

So HAVE you read a single book about the subject? I'm honestly interested.

What do you think of this then? There are a few other sources there besides Pinker. It certainly seems like they have more evidence then "anthropologists" who could easily exaggerate certain claims or twist the evidence to fit their beliefs.

On a related note, I wonder how many of these anthropologists have also studied social sciences.

First of all, if you're going to talk about hunter-gatherers you need to distinguish between nomadic foragers and chiefdoms. This is anthropology 101.
Marx also claimed that primitive societies were communist utopias. It is common for leftists to make unverifiable claims about "primitive societies" and base the superiority of their ideologies on these claims. But let's say that these claims are true. This begs the question: If these societies were so perfect, why were their traditions abandoned?

I may be mistaken but I don't think Marx wrote much of anything on primitive societies. Engels did however. He noted (correctly) that such societies are egalitarian and hold most property in common, hence "primitive communism." Primitive anarchism would be a better way of describing it, since nomadic foragers have no "chief" and indeed "alpha male" behavior is considered the greatest form of social deviance.

These societies are not "utopian" or "perfect", obviously, and Engels never claimed as much. Indeed Marxism posits a very linear view of history; they regard capitalism as "progressive" in the sense that it is an "inevitable" stage on the road to the "proletarian revolution." Non-Marxist socialists dispute this claim.

As for why such societies were "abandoned," they weren't really. They were displaced. There is a lot of debate over how and why the first agricultural societies developed. Some argue it was a "Eureka" moment; others argue that it was born of necessity (ecological catastrophe in a particular area). What is clear is that almost all "primitive" societies were conquered; they didn't willingly abandon their traditional ways. All primary states were slave states.

There's an interesting book by Richard Heinberg called *The Universal Myth of a Lost Golden Age*. He argues that "fallen man" myths like the Garden of Eden are based on the development of agriculture (the apple is the seed, essentially). Despite popular belief, life among nomadic foragers is not "brutish and short." *The Original Affluent Society* notes that primitive peoples had lives of relative luxury; they had a rich diet and spent most of their time lounging around having sex and dancing around the fire. Some tribes didn't even have a *word* for "work." So you can see why later generations, steeped in brutal toil, war and slavery, would regard this as "paradise" in comparison. The oral tradition thus passed down myths such as Adam and Eve. This is not to say, again, that primitive societies were "utopian." There were all sorts of obvious drawbacks. Tooth ache? Tough luck: no dentist. Paralyzed in a hunting accident? Tough luck: no wheelchair. Extreme pain? Tough luck: no opium. And so on.

It sounds like a myth indeed.

That's only because you've been accustomed to brutality.

I refuse to believe nomadic foragers, with much more limited resources, weren't brutal and didn't fight each other often. That's just human nature. But you can believe the fantasy, I don't really feel like getting into an argument right now.

The archeological record is clear. You're simply wrong.
Can you link to a study that proves it, and not just speculation based on sketchy evidence?

I don't consider the archeological record "sketchy evidence."

Remember that link I posted? I did some research, and about half of the groups mentioned there were prehistoric tribes. So it seems we have contradictory "evidence". Or maybe it's not contradictory and the scale of violence varied depending on location? Sounds like common sense.

So it seems we have contradictory "evidence".

No, no we don't. Again, the archeological record is clear, and matches perfectly with extent studies of nomadic tribes.

Even if you want to ignore said studies, you're still left with the archeology.

pelasgian • 1 point • 6 March, 2019 11:36 PM

What about Sparta?

It was not a matriarchy. Their leaders were all male.

_pseudodragon • 1 point • 7 March, 2019 06:08 PM

Minoan civilization is thought to be a matriarchy but they were never "peaceful".

It was not. There is no evidence that a real matriarchal society ever existed.

really no evidence?

Yea, did you read the sources at the OP? Anthropologists don't recognize any society as unambiguously matriarchal.

None of it refers to the Minoans directly.

Anthropologists don't recognize any society as unambiguously matriarchal. ambiguous evidence is still evidence.

Having privileged women is not the same as being matriarchal. I have studied history and calling the Minoans matriarchal is simply a wild assumption.
WilliamMButtlicker691 points 7 March, 2019 07:37 PM [recovered]
damn you guys really hate girls

[deleted] • 1 point • 7 March, 2019 09:48 PM
I am a woman, how do i hate girls? The matriarchy is a myth.