

Rematriation Of Women-Centred (Feminist) Indigenous Knowledge

by
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Rematriation

Objective: Discuss the relatively new Native notion of Rematriation and its relevance to Feminisms, and discuss ways Rematriation can contribute to concrete transformation of HeteroPatriarchy.

The Indigenous concept of Rematriation refers to reclaiming of ancestral remains, spirituality, culture, knowledge and resources, instead of the more Patriarchally associated Repatriation. It simply means back to Mother Earth, a return to our origins, to life and co-creation, rather than Patriarchal destruction and colonisation, a reclamation of germination.

Relevance: Rematriation is a relatively new concept among Feminists, little known, yet very powerful and potently relevant to Feminist thinking and activism. Much of the power of Rematriation is derived from its origins in Indigenous Feminist practice.

The term Rematriation seems to have its origins in Psychology and Creativity (especially in the UK). The more recent adoption of Rematriation by Indigenous Americans and Africans is used entirely differently as a Rematriation of ancestral remains, spirituality, culture, knowledge and natural and other resources, instead of the more Patriarchally associated Repatriation. In simpler terms, merely meaning back to Mother Earth, a return to our origins, a return to life and co-creation, rather than Patriarchal destruction and colonisation, a reclamation of germination instead of semination.

As a restorative imperative, it is most relevant to feminists in general, since we, like Native peoples, need to reclaim our Feminist ancestry, our feminist spirituality, our feminist culture/s, knowledge and control over natural and other resources. We need to chart paths, strategic interventions, dreams and realities that are not mere alternatives to HeteroPatriarchalCapitalisms, but entirely reconfigure our cosmos, Rematriate our societies.

Rematriation is not utopian, since the number of gender egalitarian and/or matriarchal societies that still exist today, despite centuries of patriarchal encroachments and colonisation, remains powerful testimony of the values of ancient sacred mother-centred and women-centred spiritual communities, across all continents, from the Akan of Ghana and KhoeSan of Southern Africa, to the Minangkabau of Indonesia, the Mosuo and Lahu of China and the Khasi of India; to the Iroquois of North America and the Kuna of Panama, to the Saami of Scandinavia.



We hope to birth a whole new Rematriation movement, among Indigenous peoples, and among Feminists, locally and globally.

We will show the relevance and contribution of indigenous knowledge and foster social change based on non-Western ways of knowing.

Feminists, like Native peoples, need to reclaim our Feminist ancestry, our feminist spirituality, our feminist culture/s, knowledge and control over natural and other resources.

We need to chart paths, strategic interventions, dreams and realities that are not mere alternatives to HeteroPatriarchalCapitalisms, but entirely reconfigure our cosmos, Rematriate our societies.

We hope this session will contribute to this restorative and transformative imperative.

Barbara Alice Mann – Iroquois
University of Toledo, Ohio, USA
Rematriation of the Truth

Genevieve Vaughan – European
International Feminists for a Gift Economy network, Italy / USA
Rematriating European Americans to the Mother
www.giftparadigm.org

Valentina Pakyntein – Pnar - Khasi
North Eastern Hill University, Shillong, India
In Life and Death: Reciprocity and Solidarity in Khasi- Pnar Society

Bernedette Muthien – KhoeSan
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Khoe = Human (People) = San

KhoeSan = collective (& unifying) noun for diverse indigenous peoples

A people (and person) belonging to (and of) other people

Pan-African *Ubuntu* (Archbishop Desmond Tutu) or KhoeSan *Khoe!na* :

- people's identities rooted in their communities
- "I am because I belong"
- rather than the Cartesian "I think therefore I am"
- indigenous identities as **human** rather than **man-centred**

"When we look at women's contributions and approaches to development in Africa, we see that generally women are guided by teachings deriving from what I would call a "relational matriarchal principle" that sees us all as human beings and children of one mother, *umunne*. I believe this to be a general and basic African ethic of kinship. It can further be a non-racist and non-patriarchal basis for an alternative global citizenship in the struggle for human rights, social justice and an inclusive development." – Ifi Amadiume (Nigeria/USA)

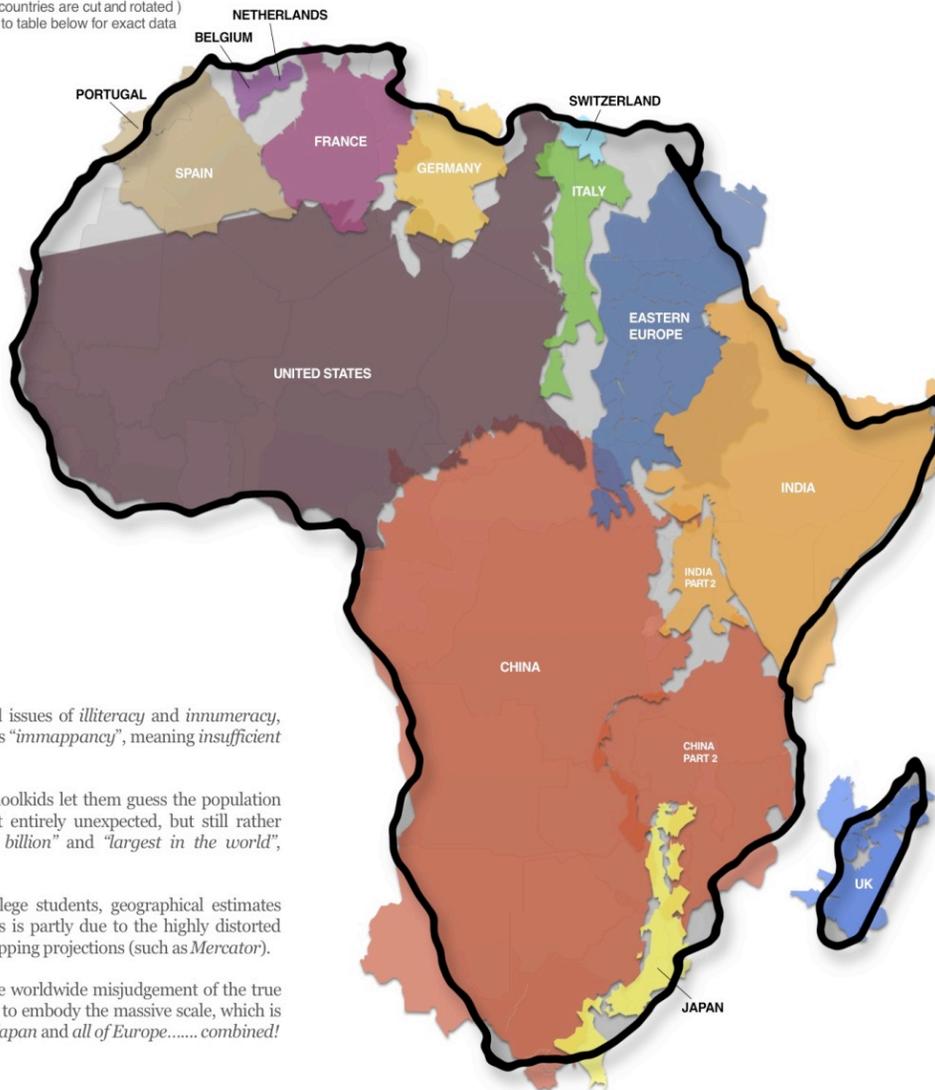
- **decolonising imperative of Rematriation**

The True Size of Africa

A small contribution in the fight against rampant *Immappancy*, by Kai Krause

Graphic layout for visualization only (some countries are cut and rotated)
But the conclusions are very accurate: refer to table below for exact data

COUNTRY	AREA x 1000 km ²
China	9.597
USA	9.629
India	3.287
Mexico	1.964
Peru	1.285
France	633
Spain	506
Papua New Guinea	462
Sweden	441
Japan	378
Germany	357
Norway	324
Italy	301
New Zealand	270
United Kingdom	243
Nepal	147
Bangladesh	144
Greece	132
TOTAL	30.102
AFRICA	30.221



In addition to the well known social issues of *illiteracy* and *innumeracy*, there also should be such a concept as "*immappancy*", meaning *insufficient geographical knowledge*.

A survey with random American schoolkids let them guess the population and land area of their country. Not entirely unexpected, but still rather unsettling, the majority chose "*1-2 billion*" and "*largest in the world*", respectively.

Even with Asian and European college students, geographical estimates were often off by factors of 2-3. This is partly due to the highly distorted nature of the predominantly used mapping projections (such as *Mercator*).

A particularly extreme example is the worldwide misjudgement of the true size of *Africa*. This single image tries to embody the massive scale, which is larger than the *USA, China, India, Japan* and *all of Europe..... combined!*

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Top 100 Countries

Area in square kilometers, Percentage of World Total
Sources: Britannica, Wikipedia, Almanac 2010

	AREA km ²	%	
1	Russia	17.098.242	11,50
2	Canada	9.984.670	6,70
3	China	9.596.961	6,40
4	United States	9.629.091	6,40
5	Brazil	8.514.877	5,70
6	Australia	7.692.024	5,20
7	India	3.287.263	2,30
8	Argentina	2.780.400	2,00
9	Kazakhstan	2.724.900	1,80
10	Sudan	2.509.813	1,70
11	Algeria	2.381.741	1,60
12	Congo	2.344.858	1,60
13	Greenland	2.166.086	1,50
14	Saudi Arabia	2.149.690	1,40
15	Mexico	1.964.375	1,30
16	Indonesia	1.860.360	1,30
17	Libya	1.759.540	1,20
18	Iran	1.628.750	1,10
19	Mongolia	1.564.100	1,10
20	Peru	1.285.216	0,86
21	Chad	1.284.000	0,86
22	Niger	1.267.000	0,85
23	Angola	1.246.700	0,85
24	Mali	1.240.192	0,83
25	South Africa	1.221.037	0,82
26	Colombia	1.141.748	0,76
27	Ethiopia	1.104.300	0,74
28	Bolivia	1.098.581	0,74
29	Mauritania	1.025.520	0,69
30	Egypt	1.002.000	0,67
31	Tanzania	945.087	0,63
32	Nigeria	923.769	0,62
33	Venezuela	912.050	0,61
34	Namibia	824.116	0,55
35	Mozambique	801.590	0,54
36	Pakistan	796.095	0,53
37	Turkey	783.562	0,53
38	Chile	756.102	0,51
39	Zambia	752.612	0,51
40	Myanmar	676.578	0,45
41	Afghanistan	652.090	0,44
42	Somalia	637.657	0,43
43	France	632.834	0,43
44	C. African Rep	622.984	0,42
45	Ukraine	603.500	0,41
46	Madagascar	587.041	0,39
47	Botswana	582.000	0,39
48	Kenya	580.367	0,39
49	Yemen	527.968	0,35
50	Thailand	513.120	0,34
51	Spain	505.992	0,34
52	Turkmenistan	488.100	0,33
53	Cameroon	476.442	0,32
54	Papua New Guinea	462.840	0,31
55	Uzbekistan	447.400	0,30
56	Morocco	446.550	0,30
57	Sweden	441.370	0,30
58	Iraq	438.317	0,29
59	Paraguay	406.752	0,27
60	Zimbabwe	390.757	0,26
61	Japan	377.930	0,25
62	Germany	357.114	0,24
63	Rep o.s. Congo	342.000	0,23
64	Finland	338.419	0,23
65	Vietnam	331.212	0,22
66	Malaysia	330.803	0,22
67	Norway	323.802	0,22
68	Côte d'Ivoire	322.463	0,22
69	Poland	312.685	0,21
70	Oman	309.500	0,21
71	Italy	301.336	0,20
72	Philippines	300.000	0,20
73	Burkina Faso	274.222	0,18
74	New Zealand	270.467	0,18
75	Gabon	267.668	0,18
76	Western Sahara	266.000	0,18
77	Ecuador	256.369	0,20
78	Guinea	245.857	0,17
79	United Kingdom	242.900	0,16
80	Uganda	241.038	0,16
81	Ghana	238.539	0,16
82	Romania	238.391	0,16
83	Laos	236.800	0,16
84	Guyana	214.969	0,14
85	Belarus	207.600	0,14
86	Kyrgyzstan	199.951	0,13
87	Senegal	196.722	0,13
88	Syria	185.180	0,12
89	Cambodia	181.035	0,12
90	Uruguay	178.215	0,12
91	Suriname	163.820	0,11
92	Tunisia	163.610	0,11
93	Nepal	147.181	0,10
94	Bangladesh	143.990	0,10
95	Tajikistan	143.100	0,10
96	Greece	131.957	0,09
97	Nicaragua	130.373	0,09
98	North Korea	120.538	0,08
99	Malawi	118.484	0,08
100	Eritrea	117.600	0,08
TOP 100 TOTAL	132.632.524	89,34	



United States



Europe



India



Japan



China



- 2km high Table Mountain, part of ancient chain
- serves indigenous spiritual & scientific purposes (e.g. Astronomy)
- Statue of Liberty & Eiffel Tower pale in significance
- Decolonising mindsets & Rematriating appreciation of indigenous

Modern Matriarchal Studies

Heide Goettner-Abendroth – *Societies of Peace: Matriarchies Past Present Future*

key principles:

- Concrete rather than abstract in world;
- Not mother rule but non-hierarchical;
- Consensus (unanimity) – systems of councils – grassroots – consultative, participatory – democratic;
- Distribution (sharing) vs accumulation (hoarding);
- Meeting needs vs power over;
- Motherly or matriarchal men;
- Humane society;
- Radically oriented towards life (not war industry);
- Political action always spiritual in matriarchy (vs detachment in patriarchy);
- All connected: science, politics, spirituality, all *ad infinitum*

African Matrilineal / Matriarchal societies include:

Angola, Botswana, Burkina Faso, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Ghana, Malawi, Namibia, Nigeria, South Africa, Zambia and the *country* known as North Africa (Malika Grasshoff)

South – East – North - West

The same is true for *every* continent

Rematriate Knowledge & Practices!

Ifi Amadiume - Matriarchitarianism

Necessity for feminist indigenous scholarship to be interdisciplinary and intersectional, including spirituality, and even *prophecy*.

She rematriates "the **concept of the traditional** in Africa to mean precolonial African cultures" that are *not static* or delineated by rigid time breaks. This **rematriated traditional** is **dynamic: past, present, and perhaps even future**.

“matriarchy is that the matri-centric unit is the smallest kinship unit. Its material basis is concrete and empirical, while the material and ideological basis of patriarchy embodies a contradiction. Patriarchy is disputable since fatherhood is a social construct.”

"matriarchitarianism" to capture a women-generated inclusive culture in the indigenous social structure as a *movement* - rematriating activism back to our centre, our core, our (African) calabash (European chalice)



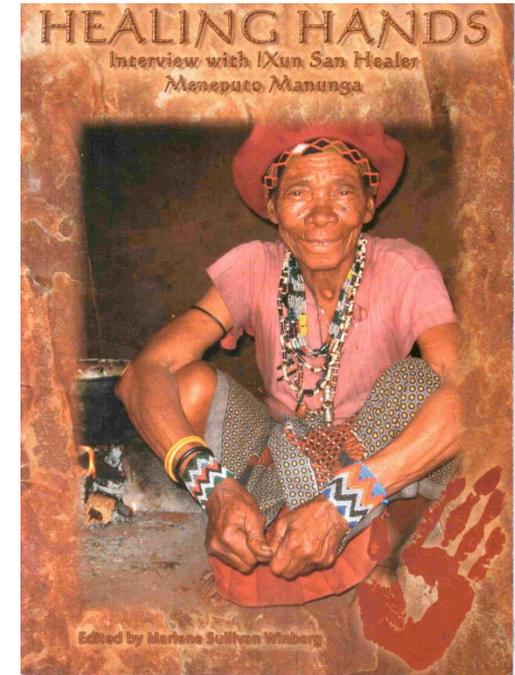
Amadiume speaks of “collective kinship”
like the pan-African concept of *ubuntu*
She speaks with poetry
And with love

It is this collective kinship and love,
compassion, gifting, trust and respect,
on which indigenous and KhoeSan values are based,
which grounds our structures as egalitarian and nonviolent.

This then is the Praxis,
rather than the Theory,
of Everything (Einstein),
of Love,
KhoeSan-style

Ma-Meneputo, Kalahari San Healer:
"The San people found power in the light of the moon. The ancients made a queen and hoisted her up into the sky where she became the moon. The people danced in the light of the moon. This is where we found (find) our healing power."

Kalahari desert spans 6 Southern African countries



Social Structure ↔ Social Values

Interdependent

Egalitarianism

(social, gender, generational, sexualities, all *ad infinitum*)

Amadiume: gender neutral Ibo term *ya*

European imposition of gendered concepts

such as male human being or humanity (e.g. Rights of Man)

and even male god (monotheistic Patriarchal religions - Christianity, Islam, Buddhism)

Nonviolence or Peace

Gifting

Love - Compassion

Trust and Respect

Women, Mothers, at Centre

The logo for Engender, featuring a stylized purple and white circular icon to the left of the word "Engender" in a purple, sans-serif font.

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For our European allies:

- Banish fear;
- Own your power & privilege;
- Claim your agency;
- BUT skip shame & guilt – too disempowering;
- Instead find *concrete* ways to *act* as ally;
- Try not to take up so much physical – emotional - spiritual-
psychic - intellectual space (think of how we feel about patriarchs & space);
- Rematriate own ancient knowledge & practice as women-
centred (instead of gawking at Native women as exotic & ideal);
- Redistribute ill-gotten Patriarchal-Colonial-Capitalist gains;
- Never lose hope – keep faith;
- **Change is not only possible, it is inevitable.**

Rematriation of Indigenous Knowledge & Practice (& Love)

How do we reclaim our:

- Ancestral remains (e.g. In musea around the world);
- Spirituality & Culture (women-centred & women-sacred);
- Knowledge & Resources (healing & medicinal knowledge)

How do we return

- to Mother Earth,
- to our origins
- to life and co-creation

How do we

- Rematriate Germination
- Give Birth to New Movements of Decolonised Feminists

How do we Decolonise & Rematriate Love...

