

popular use. Day-care centres or playgroups can institute a reading programme which could multiply to other centres. This is possible since at the initial stage the method suggested does not require expensive tools. As soon as the child begins to read books, it is necessary to keep up the motivation that will have been hopefully advanced.

Essentially, the book is of great importance to Tanzanians for the development of man since it is based on thorough knowledge of how the brain works and develops. As such, it requires studying and developing programmes suited for Tanzanian ideology and practice so that the individual talents are developed within the context of the whole society. Among others, components should include the motivation of adult readers, able parents to begin the programme with their own children together with their neighbours' collectively; developing children's reading materials and programmes, setting such materials in the Tanzanian context for uplifting abilities in a variety of areas. The radio and other forms of mass media should be used to cultivate and promote such needs and programmes.

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Jette Bukh The Village Woman in Ghana, Centre for Development Research Publications 1, Scandinavian Institute of African Studies, Uppsala 1979, pp. 118.

Jette Bukh's monograph offers a very comprehensive, well-documented picture of the social contradictions facing village women in Ghana. It represents an important contribution in the field of African women's studies.

The monograph is not a theoretical study, however, Bukh rightfully felt it necessary to set a theoretical point of departure. The point of departure is identified as "the transformation process in a peasant society" resulting in "a new social division of labour, new patterns of exploitation and oppression, new elements of class contradictions, and in particular an increased subordination of women". (p. 13)

In Chapter Two Bukh concretized the transformation process in terms of historical structural changes which had taken place in the village economy. The village understudy was situated in Ghana's cocoa growing

~~zone~~. In addition, the village had experienced four distinct waves of (primarily male) out-migration reflecting both the ups and downs of the development of commodity production vis-a-vis village cocoa production and the Ghanaian economy as a whole.

Chapters Three through Six represent unrhetorical, meticulous documentation of women's social and economic position in the village. Bukh left the facts unadorned, as if to speak for themselves and they do!

In Chapter Three on 'Household Economy', Bukh reported that 42% of the households in a random sample covering 20% of the village households were female-headed. (p. 43). Female-headed households had 2.2 children (under 15 years of age), just .5 less than male-headed households. (p. 43). Fifty-one percent of the women in the 18-25 age group were unmarried but almost all of them bore children before the age of 25. (p. 45). Sixty-five percent of the women over 18 were solely responsible for the provisioning of their children's daily needs. (p. 49). In other words, the traditional family/lineage structure with cohesion centering on extension of the lineage through the birth of children had gradually been eroded and replaced by independant peasant women with sole responsibility for the welfare of the children borne to them.

In Chapter Four, on 'Women and Resources', Bukh provided statistics pointing to the near monopoly of land held by men. Two-thirds of the total area with food crops belonged to male-headed households. The remainder belonged to married women or female-headed households. (p.61). Only about 10% of the women made use of their husbands' family land (p. 55), because of the risks involved in losing the fruits of their labour in the event of divorce. Women's access to land was contrained not only in a quantitative sense but also qualitatively. They were rarely afforded the rich, long-fallowed forest plots, but even if they were, they did not have the labour resources requisite to clear them. Women generally required land that could be ploughed without clearing; this tended to be the poorer grassland soils, that due to exigency were subject to shorter fallow periods.

Children in this village society were for the most part an economic drain rather than an asset to their mothers. Their care and maintenance was perhaps easiest when they were still being suckled and carried on their mothers' backs. Once they were too heavy to be carried they often had to resort to less than satisfactory arrangements involving very young

girls looking after the children or the children following their mothers wherever they went often slowing down their mothers' pace, as well as limiting her work. For example, part of the reason why women did not often clear forest land was because it was awkward to cut heavy bush and dangerous to use fire in the presence of small children. (p. 63). Children reached school age just as they were becoming helpful to their mothers. Their schooling caused them to be absent from the household for a major portion of the day, meanwhile they incurred heavy expenses vis-a-vis their school fees, clothing, books, etc.

As for the property, only 4% of the total cocoa acreage in the village was owned by women. (p. 65). The village women rarely had working capital to invest even if they did have small parcels of land to invest it in. With divorce being so prevalent, it was significant that in divorce settlements women usually got nothing except their personal effects. As mentioned before, women faced the risk of losing their labour investment when working on their husbands' land. So too, if they invested their labour on their fathers' land, it was with the knowledge that their children would never inherit the land under the prevailing patrilineal land inheritance customs. (p. 65).

Dispossessed and with dispossessed children, there seemed to be no apparent means of escape. Girls were oftentaken out of school upon reaching puberty for fear of early pregnancy. (p. 66). But it appears from what Bukh wrote that such action indeed doomed village girls to early pregnancy and frequent childbirth, since in the absence of education their primary role in the society became that of a mother providing for her children, with very meagre resources at hand.

Chapter Five charted 'Women's Strategy and the Result of the New Division of Labour' in the face of all of the above contradictions. Not surprisingly, women had to turn to petty trade as a means of subsistence; earning a small income, while having an occupation which was still conducive to child minding. As for women's agricultural activity, having poor access to land women had to resort to shorter fallow leading to declining land productivity. Specifically with reference to adaptation to the women's labour constraints, generally women had to forego growing yams, a traditionally male crop in any case, and instead grow cassava. Cassava was far less nutritious, but gave more returns to labour. In the

meantime vegetable production declined. The overall nutritional status of the women and their children necessarily suffered.

In Chapter Six, Bukh addressed 'Women's Protest and Organization'. For the most part, the village women's protest had taken defensive escapist forms: firstly, divorce; secondly, attempts to stop pregnancy through abortion not uncommonly leading to death. (Family planning methods introduced in the village had not proved very convenient or feasible, e.g. the pill and IUD were debilitating for women who engaged in such hard physical manual labour. (p. 90); and lastly, urban migration facilitated through education or marriage. The third form of protest was however qualified. Urban migration began to offer an avenue of escape for women in the 1960s, but the real urban wage dropped substantially during the 1970s economic crisis, making it difficult for family units to remain together. Many women without jobs were forced to return to the village.

As for more positive forms of protest, women had only recently organized a local chapter of the National Council of Women and through this organization they had begun to work around collective economic and service projects. (p. 92-93).

In Chapter Seven, Bukh concluded by stating that the growing crisis outlined in the text could only be resolved through the activation of social groups broader than village women who "can restructure the basic organization of society towards a more equal distribution of its material and social resources" (p. 97), but within this women had to demand their rights.

In this review, I have summarized the text at length to draw attention to its value as a careful dissection of the social circumstances of village women. These circumstances are indeed critical, but more often than not taken for granted, if not entirely ignored, because they involve women.

My main criticism of Bukh's monograph lies in the conclusion. The conclusion is extremely facile in light of the illuminating empirical material. The empirical material reveals that these Ghanaian village women have reached a stage where their oppression as members of the female sex is so great that they have chosen to disassociate from men despite major physical deprivation. True, by doing so they have not escaped the patriarchal conditions of society. They are in fact experiencing even more hardship vi-a-vis patrilineal land and property

inheritance. This is contingent on the fact that in the midst of having hardly any control over resources, women have been left with sole responsibility for their children. If comparison is made with most other societies we find women shouldering primary though not exclusive care for the children.

Bukh's monograph so vividly depicts the actual lives of the village women and in so doing seams with imperatives for women's struggle. Yet Bukh concludes with the understatement that women should merely demand their rights towards equitable distribution of resources within the vaguer call for overall structural transformation. But women's struggles are not just a segment of transformation, rather they are an inseparable part of an interwoven fabric of transformation. Structural transformation, if it is to be effective, genuine and real must include transformation of social production and reproduction, since all human existence is characterized by these two essential aspects. As Engels wrote:

"According to the materialistic conception, the determining factor in history is, in the final instance, the production of immediate life. This again, is of a twofold character: on the one side, the production of the means of existence, of food, clothing and shelter and the tools necessary for that production; on the other side, the production of human beings themselves, the propagation of the species". (Engels 1973, The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State, p. 71).

Clearly the living standard of the women and children in the village society Bukh has described will suffer abysmal degradation, under the present deterioration of women's productive base compounded with women's sole responsibility for their children. A rising mortality rate, food shortages and famines are bound to occur over time unless structural transformation takes place in the above dual sense. It is fairly clear as to what is meant by structural transformation in production, but it is far less clear what structural transformation in reproduction means concretely.

The Ghanaian village women have already begun to embark on structural transformation in this latter respect. Abortion is an attempt to control reproduction. These village women will increasingly feel that with decreasing means of subsistence, the birth of a baby is the beginning of a life not worth living - a life of suffering and hunger. This observation is, on my part, not intended as a melodramatic or neo-Malthusian interpretation

nor a humanitarian concern, rather it resides in the contention that it is a woman's choice to bear children or not to bear children and that this choice will begin to assert itself in the development of women's struggles under capital. This is generally true, but especially true in a society where women as mothers are given sole responsibility for the lives of their children in the absence of that society granting women any control over adequate resources for the procurement of their children's subsistence.

To a greater or lesser degree, this is the essence of women's oppression: responsibility in reproduction devoid of control in production (regardless of their particular class affiliations). The prescription arising from such an identification of women's oppression is simply stated, but never simply realized. Women's struggle is two-fold: to assume control in reproduction and in production. With regard to production, women must wage a protracted struggle for the democratic sharing of control with men within the general class struggle. With regard to reproduction, women's struggle is unique. Women are naturally childbearers, but their responsibility for, or exercise of control over, childbearing is social. Women's childbearing and childcare responsibilities are socially delegated and within this social context it is women's prerogative to assert control over childbearing.

The Ghanaian village women Bukh has written about are forced to begin their struggle for control with the assertion of control over childbearing, as an imperative strategy for survival. This control is a necessary precondition for any democratic sharing of control over production with their men.

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Ann and Neva Seidman, U.S. Multinationals in Southern Africa, Tanzania Publishing House (Dar es Salaam, 1977)

The book is written by a mother and a daughter team. Ann Seidman in particular is well qualified to write on this topic both from the point of view of her academic experience as well as her sustained interest in African Affairs.