THE POSITION OF WOMEN ON RURAL DEVELOPMENT SCHEMES IN TANZANIA*

by

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In this paper I am taking up a position which is contrary to that adopted by many of my own profession. For many years I have accepted the dicta of the anthropological sages regarding the position of women generally, but find now that the qualms I had at first have been revived by the efforts of the feminist movement. For instance, for some time now I have been at pains to try to avoid the use of the word "girl" when I mean "woman". It seems to me extraordinary that those anthropologists who attacked white settlers in Africa or white southerners in this country for calling men of African origin "boy" on the grounds that it showed an underlying psychological perception of them as not adult should not have observed that they did the very same thing in referring to women as "girls". As a gross example of the kind of thinking to which I refer I quote from the work of a very distinguished anthropologist for whom I have an enormous respect in other ways, the late E. E. Evans-Pritchard. In his essay entitled "The Position of Women in Primitive Societies and in Our Own" (1955/65) he writes,

> *We observe, for example, that in some societies women crawl in the presence of their husbands or that people never eat in the presence of the other sex, but if we were to take these as signs, as we would be inclined to do, of abject female subservience or of a relationship of extreme reserve, or even of hostility between the sexes, we would draw entirely wrong conclusions.*[1]

His point is that we cannot compare other societies directly with our own for they have other ideas of what is or is not normal. I agree with the principle, but at the same time feel that in practice the result is in the same category of thought as that which labels women "girls". Take for instance the following quotation from *Notes and Queries on Anthropology*, the bible of the social anthropologist:

> (These) *entail difference in status and civic rights... in the access to positions of power and infludnce, in wealth, and also in occupation and habitual modes of living, in apparel and the right to use certain ornaments.*[2]

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I have removed the first words of the sentence to illustrate how appropriate this passage would be to describe the condition of women in most societies. In fact the missing words are "Social classes". If we were describing relations between groups of men and found that one group of men had to crawl or were not allowed to eat in the presence of the other, or only consumed the food that the other group left over, then at once we should assume that they were of a markedly lower status than the other group. Why then do we not assume this to be the case when describing the relations between men and women? It is instructive to note that in Beals and Hoijer's *Introduction to Anthropology*, an excellent and widely used introductory text which thousands of students must have used, we find the statement that "... in most societies, nonliterate or otherwise, the difference in status of men and women are relatively slight".[3]

A similar situation appears when the institution of bridewealth is discussed. Again let me use Evans-Pritchard as my exemplar. He writes, "For example, that payment for a bride constitutes a sale is now recognized to be a gross distortion of the facts."[4] And it is true that I always emphasize the same when teaching in class, but I have to admit to some misgivings when we come to the three sets of rights acquired by men and their families over women by the payment of bridewealth: Rights *in personam* (sexual and domestic exclusive rights); *in rem* (as a piece of property against which offences can be committed); and *in genetricem* (over the offspring). It is the second one which I always have difficulty in explaining away. Any examination of court records in Tanzania will show that a very large proportion of the cases which come to court are of adultery. On the one hand I applaud the fact that rarely if ever is adultery grounds for divorce; but it is grounds for compensation to the husband in that someone has, in effect, used his property. Were we to hear of women taking similar cases against their husbands then the idea that bridewealth does not connote the notion of sale would carry more weight.

I do not wish to belabor this point too much, nor my own profession, but let me once more quote from Evans-Pritchard to express the complacent attitude adopted by us. He notes that Lowie has shown that the position of women among the Crow was "far from unfavourable" and that "socially, the women enjoyed a good deal of freedom", and goes on to tell us that even a woman anthropologist, Phyllis Kaberry, has shown that among the Australian aborigines women "take an interest in all social activities and often actively participate in them".[5] The key words to me seem to be "far from unfavourable", "a good deal of freedom" and "often actively participate". Cultural relativism is all very well, but carried to its logical conclusions it always seems to me to justify Russian persecution of Jews or cross-burning on lawns in the south, since it is after all part of the culture.

In 1966 I read a paper at the University of Dar es Salaam on the position of women on government settlement schemes which aroused a great deal of controversy among my African colleagues. That paper forms much of the substance of this one, but now I wish to add to my theme which was at that time that women on these schemes were incalculably worse off than in the traditional society. It is hence expanded to suggest that there has been a steady down-grading of the position of women in many African societies since the beginning of the colonial era. This idea was suggested to me in the special issue of the *Canadian Journal of African Studies* (Vol. 6, No. 2, 1972) and especially in the very interesting article by Judith Van Allen on the subject of Igbo women. Van Allen points out that traditionally Igbo women were very independent and had a number of institutions which ensured this, including collective action known as "sitting on a man", but that this situation was ignored by the British colonial officers, imbued as they were by the values of Victorian society (and, I would add, of "public school" morality). So today the position of Igbo women is, she claims, poorer than it was in the last century. This has led here and elsewhere to what the editor of this special issue of the *Canadian Journal*, Audrey Wipper, describes as a "kind of coalition between western and African men about what their roles should be."[6]

The question of women's status relative to their participation in the means of production has recently been considered in depth by Peggy S. Sanday (1973, 1982-1700), reviewing the works of de Beauvoir, Marx, Engels, D'Andrade, Murdock, and Ember and Ember, among others. She too considers the case of the Igbo women, and using the observations of Levine and Ottenberg comes to a very different conclusion from that of Van Allen. She points out that prior to the colonial period Igbo women were necessarily subservient because (a) men were engaged in warfare and (b) men controlled the prestige crop - yams. With the coming of peaceful conditions women adopted cassava, a crop despised by men. It rapidly achieved an economic importance much greater than that of yams so that women were able to achieve a vastly enhanced status through this and through trading activities. She quotes Ottenberg to the effect that, "Once a woman becomes self-supporting in this way, she can say, in the words of an elderly Afikpo woman, 'What is man? I have my own money.'"[7]

This does not necessarily contradict Van Allen's conclusions. Sanday herself shows that among the Somali the women's contribution to subsistence is high yet their status very low. What seems more important is that women should (a) produce something which has a value outside mere subsistence, and (b) be organized in groups, as in the case with the Yoruba women whom she cites as having perhaps the highest status of any women in Africa because of their trading and trade guilds. What one would like to know further from Van All

is precisely when the women's associations of which she speaks started. Were they not perhaps in rapid growth after the beginning of colonial conditions which then as rapidly withered under the influences she describes?*

That women in Igbo society have a potentially better economic position than that of women in many East African societies is probably true, but economic position alone, while important, is not the sole factor in determining the status of women. An interesting point noted by Sanday, and also emphasized in a recent article by Goody and Buckley[8], is that where one finds plough agriculture men always predominate in agricultural activities. In Africa, this is only true of the Mediterranean and a few other areas. Elsewhere we find hoe agriculture and a general predominance of women in *food* production.

We have seen from the Igbo example that where women have been able to extend their traditional role of food producers to producing food for sale they have been able to improve their economic status. The only parallel in East Africa is that of the activity of beer-brewing. This was always a women's task and continues to be, with the result that where it is now produced commercially women have achieved a remarkable economic improvement of their position, to the extent that research in Kampala and Dar es Salaam in the 1950s showed that about one third of the real estate was owned by women.[9] Elsewhere in Tanzania women still tend to provide the greater percentage of labor in food production as was the case in the past in the conditions of subsistence agriculture. Today, however, a totally new factor has entered the situation in that, except in environmentally poor areas, an economy has developed in some ways analogous to peasant agriculture elsewhere in the world. This implies not only that most of the food consumed is produced but that some crops are sold.

In the United States and Europe the crops sold are commonly food crops, but in Africa, except where there are major urban centers, there is little point in growing food for sale since everyone else is growing his own food too. Thus, cash crops such as cotton, coffee, rubber, tobacco, cocoa, etc., have tended to be, in the main, necessarily crops for export to the industrialized, non-tropical countries. Without exception the major control of such crops has been taken by men. This has tended to increase the amount of labor expected of women, since they are now involved in producing food crops in addition to helping their menfolk in the production of cash crops. It is true that men probably help women in food production to a greater extent than might have been the case in the past, but the total amount of labor needed is undoubtedly greater than it used to be.

*Van Allen observes that (a) the Afikpo Igbo represent a special case and (b) the associations have been in existence for a long time.

The coalition between western and African men to which Audrey Wipper refers, and which I have mentioned, has not, I think, been conscious, but this does not lessen its reality. Most European men serving in Africa tend to envy African men for their much more overt position of dominance, their ability to take several wives, and their ability to divorce them without too much difficulty. This covert envy has undoubtedly led to something of a feedback effect in terms of reinforcing an already existing inequality. The Victorian and "public school" values which emphasized male supremacy, taking their cue from the perceived position of female inferiority, led to an under-valuation of the status of African women. In effect they have tended to be almost totally ignored -- a situation which has continued into the independence era in spite of the fact that nationalist parties, imbued with the spirit of western democracy, have enfranchised women. During the colonial era, a further push in the direction of male supremacy was given by the activities of missionaries who themselves were the product of the Victorian period, and who thought of women as being good wives and mothers (as was indeed the case in the social classes from which they sprang). This attitude has been absorbed by African church elders, and it is surely significant that the overwhelming majority of African political leaders are products of mission education. Not only did Christian missionaries encourage the housewifely virtues thought to be proper in Europe, but they also undermined the strength of traditional women's groups, as Van Allen observes in the case of the Igbo, since meetings of such groups were labelled as "pagan rites".[10]

To summarize then, it is evident that in the pre-colonial period African women predominated in agricultural activities, such activities being directed toward subsistence agriculture. They also had, in some areas at least, institutionalized group activities which gave them strength as a group. In some cases this relatively good position was enhanced by actual political office. Carol P. Hoffer shows that this was true to a very large extent in Sierra Leone[11] and I have personal experience of three women chiefs in pre-independence Tanzania who were no mere figure-heads, but who have now disappeared from the political scene. Due to the attitudes of the colonial officers during the colonial period and the introduction of cash crops, the control of which fell largely into male hands, the traditional position of women in African society has been eroded except where women have been able to expand on some previous activity and take it into the commercial sphere, and where they have well-established institutionalized groups.

The people among whom I was working in 1965-66, the Luguru and Kutu of eastern Tanzania (see Biedelman 1967) are two of the matrilineal peoples of that area. The Luguru, as their name

implies, live in high mountains which are extremely inaccessible and the Kutu live in the plains at the eastern foot of the mountains. The Kutu have been subject to many outside influences whereas the Luguru have been relatively undisturbed in their mountains. Land is extremely plentiful in the plains and most Kutu women are able to cultivate small fields separate from those considered to be the family fields. Among the Luguru, almost uniquely in this part of Africa, women possess similar rights in land to those of the men, so that any married couple has at least four pieces of land, one each from their maternal uncles and one from the fathers' sub-clan. This system has led to division and sub-division, so that land is very fragmented and in short supply. But no one in Uluguru goes hungry, for it is possible to grow some kind of food crops at any time of the year.

Another very unusual feature of Luguru society is that the women choose the leader of the autonomous political unit, the sub-clan, which is the land-holding group laying claim to a particular tract of land, and whose claim to the land is validated in a mystical way by the presence of the ancestral graves. Not only do they choose this man, but it is said that they can, if dissatisfied, depose him, though cases of this are very rare. However, as in other similar circumstances, the idea that it can be done is often as important as its execution. Since they practice matrilineal descent the woman gets custody of the children in the event of a divorce, the opposite of what takes place in patrilineal societies which predominate in Tanzania. Perhaps being secure in their rights to their offspring coupled with having real rights in land leads to a marked degree of outspokeness among the women not always found in other societies. In contrast, when I carried out a two week visit to the Ngoni people in southern Tanzania, a patrilineal people related to the Zulu, I found myself embarrassed by what seemed to me to be exaggerated respect shown to me by women of all ages, after being accustomed to the much more free-and-easy attitude of the Luguru and Kutu women.

Lest it should be thought that the position of women in Luguru and Kutu society was idyllic, however, it is necessary to note that they have one of the most elaborate and lengthy rites of passage for girls at puberty.[12] At her first menstruation a girl was incarcerated in a darkened hut and kept there lying on a shortened bed until her coming out ceremony, which is usually concomitant with her marriage. Today it is hard to say how long a girl remains inside since it is generally assumed that the government has banned the custom. Women whom I interviewed claimed to have been inside for two to three years, and in the 1930s it was recorded that many were kept inside for up to six

years. The ostensible purpose of the rite was to make the young woman as fat as possible and as pale colored as possible, both considered marks of beauty in this area. In symbolic terms it is obvious that the rite is a ritual representation of rebirth — the darkened room/womb, the fetal position on the bed — and at the end the debutante is apparently reborn of *man*, for she appears carried on the shoulders of a man, naked, or nearly so, her eyes closed, shimmying, and waving a fly switch (the cord?).

I find it interesting that in my field journal I noted at the time as an aside to myself, "Is this not perhaps a means of keeping women in their place?" The notion that men envy women their ability to bear children and hence wish to simulate rebirth of initiates by men rather than women has been commented on extensively by Bettelheim.[13] In effect the great secret imparted to men at most of their initiation ceremonies is that there *is* no secret, and that therefore they must pretend to have a great secret analogous to the secret of birth in women. Parenthetically it is of interest to observe that this Luguru and Kutu seclusion of women, known as the *mwali* rite, has been modified in the modern cities to the detriment of women. What happens is that, because it is impractical to seclude a maiden for a period of months or years, she is shut up at her first menstruation and a marriage arranged immediately. Thus girls of 13-14 are getting married, though this is now illegal, whereas traditionally, however much as one might deplore the custom of shutting a person up for a long period, it did have the effect of removing a woman from potential motherhood until she was about 16 or 17. As I know from painful personal observation, a number of young women in this area die giving birth to their first child.

Shortly after independence (December 1961) it was decided in Tanzania to try to establish villages and a number of pilot projects were planned. It might be thought bizarre that a country like Tanzania should plan to have villages. Surely, one might think, people already live in villages. In fact this is not so. Except for a minority of peoples, most rural Tanzanians lived in small homesteads based on an extended family situation, or a lineage group. It was felt that, in the words of Julius K. Nyerere, the president (1962):

> *Before we can bring any of the benefits of modern development to the farmers of Tanganyika, the very first step is to make it possible for them to start living in village communities.*

Unless this should be done, he said:

> *We shall not be able to use tractors; we shall not be able to build hospitals, or have clean drinking water; it will be quite impossible to start small village industries, and instead we shall have to go on depending on the town for all our requirements, and even if we had a plentiful supply of electric power we should never be able to connect it up to each isolated homestead.*

One might argue that, with the exception of the electric supplies, none of these points is necessarily valid, but it should be remembered that at the time of this speech Tanzania still relied heavily on expatriate advisors. This was particularly true of the village settlement agency, which was almost entirely staffed by former British colonial civil servants. These men were honest, hard-working and sympathetic to Tanzania's development, but, because of their background, totally incapable of grasping what Nyerere had in mind when he talked about *Ujamaa*, which has been translated as African Socialism but means in reality something like "familyness". Today Nyerere and others have visited China and have realized that large-scale capital investment in tractors and so on is not necessary to effect rural transformation. But, at that time the expatriate planners from the west were still in charge and the settlement schemes reflected their ideas.

Most of the village settlements were designed to have 250 men and their wives, but in the case of Bwakira Chini, where I worked, there were only to be 80 because of the amount of available land. Parenthetically one might observe that it was symptomatic of the attitudes of the planners that they felt that this scheme could only take 80 families because of the acreage available. A former German freehold farm was purchased from the widow of the owner and used as it was. Outside the boundaries of the farm the land extends virtually unoccupied and in bush for about twenty miles. Ukutu is one of the few areas of Tanzania where almost unlimited fertile land is still readily obtained. So it would have been perfectly easy, especially in independent Tanzania, to have obtained all the land needed for 250 families, but this possibility did not seem to occur to the planners.

Part of the intention of the scheme was to tempt the Luguru down from their overcrowded hills to where it would be possible for them to practice larger scale farming and hence obtain, hopefully, a higher standard of living. Actually, because of local political pressures which regarded the scheme as a form of political patronage for disposing of troublesome people, half of the settlers came from surrounding Ukutu. The temptation to attack the planners is almost overwhelming. I must point out the supreme irony that whereas in Tanzania generally, as I have already observed,

there are no villages, in Ukutu there *are*. That it might have been possible to develop the existing viable, kin-based, established villages did not seem to be a possibility that anyone ever entertained. Instead, what the planners called a village was laid out in a gridiron pattern, each house occupying a one acre lot, the final result being rather more like a Long Island suburb than what one would elsewhere recognize as a village.

The villages were to be run by a manager and his staff -- an accountant, clerk, storeman, tractor drivers, truck and Land-rover drivers, a dispenser, etc. -- some sixteen in all. And, like the Marxian state, there was a vague notion that somehow they would wither away after an indefinite period of years when the settlers would be responsible for their own futures. The entire capital cost of the scheme, and this was to include the salaries of all the staff, was to be charged to the settlers, who, it was hoped, would be able to pay this off somehow over the following twenty years or so. In the meantime, the staff lived in a totally different lifestyle from the settlers, and elaborate housing for them was planned. As a result a rigid social stratification rapidly developed to the extent that at one scheme near Lake Victoria which I visited the settlers called the staff the *Wakoloni* -- the colonialists; and, at Bwakira Chini the area inhabited by the staff was known as *Uzunguni* -- the European area, though in both cases the staff was African.

Initially the idea had been that all work would be done collectively, but the spirit of the settlers was so poor in most places that the land was divided into individual plots. At Bwakira Chini a compromise solution was reached by dividing the settlers into teams of five, that is, ten people including the wives. Where there was a prior unifying bond of kinship or affinity this worked fairly well, but where there was no such bond quarrels developed and the land came to be divided individually. Settlers joining the scheme had to be members of the TANU (Tanzania African National Union), and were said to be chosen for their good farming qualities.

It was a condition of joining that each man should come accompanied by a wife. In the event, it was found that 23 of the 80 men came with common-law wives, in some cases leaving their legal wives in the hills to retain rights in the land there. There is little doubt that many of the settlers and their women, whether legally married or not, were initially attracted to the scheme by the bait of free issues of food and by the idea that tractors would be doing the cultivation. The planners had hoped that both women and men would do an eight hour day in the fields every day -- quite possible, of course, but far more than most had been accustomed to doing, and added to the load of caring for small children, fetching water from a stream anywhere up to 3/4 of a mile away, carrying home firewood, pounding corn, and cooking, a staggering burden.

In local law, if a couple should divorce, the proceeds of any crop that they had grown together would be divided up between them, but in the case of a couple living together no such guarantee would be there for the woman. When I observed this I discussed it with the settlers, who immediately saw the point and suggested that a rule be passed ensuring that if a woman left her man at the end of the year she should be entitled to a share of the proceeds. I brought up this point in my paper delivered at the university, read before an audience composed largely of faculty members and senior civil servants. The discussant, who unfortunately could not be there but had read the paper and sent a prepared set of remarks, was the Commissioner for Community Development, a department of the government allegedly devoted, among other things, to improving the position of women. The position of the Commissioner was somewhat ambivalent. On the one hand, he claimed that most people would act decently and split the proceeds anyway (though the settlers thought not). On the other hand, he took a more brutal attitude, noting that:

> *Village Settlement makes it clear that only legal wives should accompany their settler husbands. Those not legally married, who accompany men, do so at their own risk, and I see no reason why such women should claim part of men's income.*

It was symptomatic of the gulf which presently exists between the peasants and the ruling elite (in spite of the rhetoric of egalitarianism) that in the discussion which followed many of the listeners agreed with this point on the grounds that the women concerned were "good-time girls", and therefore merited no consideration. It was pointed out that the element of "good time" involved on a settlement scheme of this nature is thin indeed, but the point was not taken.

Even in the cases of legal spouses it seemed to me that there was a danger that women might not get a very appealing deal on a scheme compared to the situation found in the traditional society. While it was true, as the Commissioner observed, that there should be little basic difference between a man receiving his cash for crops sold to a cooperative outside the scheme or to the cooperative organization inside it, at the same time it did seem to me to be qualitatively different.

To present a parallel to the situation described, Hortense Powdermaker writing about the urban scene on the Copperbelt notes that:

> *... there is no precedent for the new situation in which a wife is completely dependent on her husband who controls all the economic resources.*[14]

Whereas in Kutu and Luguru society women have very considerable rights in land which remain unaffected by matrimony, the government settlement scheme provided women with no rights whatsoever. It was as though they did not exist except as a piece of equipment that each male settler had to bring with him. Under the legislation which then existed, all rights in the land were vested in the husband and, as a corollary, all proceeds were handed over to him. It was theoretically possible for a woman to retain her rights in land outside the scheme, but for most Luguru women this would have been impractical for two reasons. First, it would have been extremely difficult for them to journey to and from the scheme to their fields up in the distant mountains, and if they were not there then they faced the danger of forfeiting the land under traditional tenure rules. Second, it would not be possible for them to hire labor to cultivate the fields in the hills since hiring is not part of the Luguru scheme of things. One cannot hire kinsmen, and virtually everyone in the hills is kin. It would be quite unthinkable to bring in outsiders, even if they were willing to go to such out-of-the-way places. It is true that other Luguru do sometimes obtain and work land in other areas of Uluguru, but this is by payment of a tribute in the form of grain to the head of the sub-clan, for the benefit of the sub-clan. This tribute is quite different from hiring labor.

For Kutu women some compromise might have been possible, since the hiring of labor was commonplace in Ukutu for both men and women, and a businesslike woman could and did supervise land not too far from the scheme. However, if the scheme had developed as intended there would have been little time for any other than scheme pursuits.

At Bwakira Chini during the first year of operation this situation had only just begun to dawn on the women. A few of the more observant ones were beginning to grumble as the cultivation season wore on, but they had not reached the stage of outright revolt reached on one scheme in the south of Tanzania called Kingurungundwa. I was asked to visit this scheme early in 1966 with a government officer since there had been reports that women were refusing to work and the local agricultural extension officer, himself a Chagga (a strongly patrilineal society), had suggested that the reason lay in the fact that the local people (Yao, Makonde, Mwera and Makua) were matrilineal, and that therefore the men did not have proper authority over their wives. I found out that this was not the case. The women were bitterly disgruntled to find that they were incomparably worse off than they had been before joining the scheme, when they had their own cashew nut orchards and other crops, apart from the land worked jointly with their husbands. I pointed out in my report to the government that if I had been a woman on the scheme, I would have led the revolt.

This brings up a further point. We have seen that in Uluguru and Ukutu women did have rights in land, though in the case of Uluguru this land was used mainly for food production. Elsewhere in Tanzania and in Africa generally it can be found that even though women have no rights in land other than to use the land assigned to them by their husbands' groups, they do, as Beattie observes, "hold small amounts of personal and domestic property in their own rights", property which often allows them to obtain a certain amount of private pocket money. There is a parallel to the American farm family where the wife kept the cash obtained from the sale of eggs or other smaller items as her personal perquisite. Generally, since the beginning of the cash economy, African women have always been able to obtain similar amounts of personal pocket money from the sale of eggs, vegetables, roots for medicines, bananas, to mention just a few. This situation was also true of Uluguru and Ukutu.

In his book *The Preindustrial City*, Sjoberg contrasts the situation of women in the traditional rural societies with that of women in the towns and notes that the former "have and had greater freedom and less differentiation by sex than in the town."[15] I entirely agree with his conclusions. Also, I feel that this was true as well of the settlement scheme vis-a-vis the traditional society. The problem of the country woman going to the city and suffering from the perplexing problem of how to occupy the time which she had previously filled by a multiplicity of chores was certainly not one of the problems of the women on the scheme. The other problem which vexes the rural woman accompanying her husband to the town was certainly there. She not only had far less freedom, but was also deprived of the opportunity of making any kind of personal pocket money.[16] The only solution to this may be what Southall observed to be the case in Kampala, where

> *illicit brewing and various forms of prostitution may provide the only economic opportunities available to the town woman to fill the vacuum left by the loss of her rural tasks.*[17]

This was discussed with the male settlers who very rapidly grasped the point, and therefore I conducted a survey of 75 of them with the following result*:

Consider that a proportion of the land on the scheme should be the wife's property — 5

Think that the women should have a cooperative field with the proceeds of the harvest going to them — 3

* These were not suggested answers between which they had to choose, but volunteered responses.

Think that the government should issue some order on the subject --- 4

Consider that there is no need for any special arrangement --- 8

Consider that the wife should receive 10% of the profits as her own personal property separate from joint household income -- 57

Among the 76% who thought that the women should have 10% of the profits were some of the older and more traditional men. Those who opted for a cooperative field were not able to suggest when the women might find time to cultivate it, and those who felt there was no need for any special arrangement were basing their opinions on what they called Christian principles, i.e. the notion that man and wife are one flesh and therefore the man would be bound to give his wife her fair share. Observations of supposedly Christian countries around the world do not, one would think, lead one to such an optimistic conclusion. Leaving this apart, however, one would think that it is significant that 89% of all the men recognized that a problem did exist. This view was in marked contrast to those of the senior civil servants and faculty members who attended the seminar at the university. The proposal that women might be entitled to any fixed share of a man's income filled them with horror. In the words of the Commissioner for Community Development:

> *Might not some new rules set up by the authorities cause discontent among the people because they bring to the forefront problems which they would not have thought so important? Women may demand their new rights and this would disrupt the relationship between husbands and wives.*

There was a clear implication in the discussion which followed that even raising the issue with the settlers constituted what in other contexts might be termed dangerous agitation.

Another aspect of the women's role on such schemes raised during the seminar with totally negative results was consideration of the relative availability of men and women for work. In all the planning for the settlement schemes the implicit assumption was made that a man and his wife equalled two working units which could produce the same labor on the farm. It might be argued that in many simple societies women carried out the majority of the agricultural tasks while the men were concerned with hunting, herding, or defence, and that therefore it would be reasonable to expect that women might be more productive units than men in this new situation. What this argument neglects to consider however is that the amount of labor

required for solely subsistence agriculture, while still high, is very small compared to that needed to produce both food and cash crops. If one is thinking in terms of an eight hour working day, which is what the planners reckoned on for both partners, then it would seem more reasonable to assume that a woman (especially if she is caring for a small child) should only count as a half unit, unless some provision is made to reduce her tasks. The logical result of trying to make women and men equal in farm tasks can only be seen on an Israeli kibbutz, where all the burden of cooking, child-rearing and feeding is removed from the mother. The notion of central feeding would probably be too radical to consider at this juncture, but it certainly would not be impossible to arrange for some kind of day-nursery for pre-school age children. At the time when I presented my original paper, I made the suggestion that the day nursery might conceivably be run by the wives of the staff, of whom I was very critical. Not only did the staff form a superior social class, definable in terms of life-style, clothing, housing and so on, but their spouses, who in many cases were temporary mistresses, lived a life only comparable to that of the colonial wives - spending their days in gossip, while a small portion of the day was taken up with cleaning and cooking, but even this was usually done by servants. It said a lot for the humility of the settlers' wives that one rarely heard from them any overt criticism of this situation, possibly because the realization that these superior mortals were to be supported by them had not sunk home. I commented at the seminar that the scheme bore a marked resemblance to a feudal manor, with the manager as the squire, his staff the nobly born, not soiling their hands with manual toil, their wives idling away the hours while the peasants sweated in the fields.

This comment aroused immediate hostility both from the Commissioner and from the audience. The feelings are well represented by the Commissioner's written comments which are interesting for their divergence from the announced policies of the government. He said:

> *Why limit the development of a group of people who have risen a bit above the others? Should everyone stay along with everyone else without trying to better herself? Is it improper to take care of oneself, individually, first? This in turn will help the community.*

Let us contrast this for one moment with Nyerere's view of villages. He writes that:

> *A nation of such village communities would be a socialist nation. For the essential element in them*

would be equality of all members of the community, and the members' self-government in all matters which concerned only their own affairs. For a really socialist village would elect its own officials and they would remain equal members with the others, subject always to the wishes of the people.[18]

As a contrast to the situation on the government schemes I visited a village in the south which was one of a group of eleven based entirely on local initiative and receiving no assistance. Here I found exactly what Nyerere proposed and the results in productivity and general atmosphere were startlingly different from the staff-managed scheme. Women were allowed to go to the fields at eight (whereas the men went at seven) and the women left at noon to return to their domestic tasks, it being explicitly recognized that domestic work is just as much work as any other kind, and that it was just as important to the effective running of the village. One point which did surprise me and which seemed to me to contain the possible seeds of dispute, though it was based on true equality, was the idea that everyone should receive equal shares of the year's proceeds, men and women alike. While this is fair in theory, in fact it might lead to the man claiming that his wife has received the housekeeping money and has no further need of support from him. If there were central feeding the situation would, of course, be quite different.

Another feature of the settlement scheme which showed a disregard for women's rights was the question of inheritance. In Tanzanian traditional societies women rarely own land, but in patrilineal societies the woman is allocated land to use. Should her husband die she can either take advantage of the levirate, by which one of her deceased husband's brothers will take her over as one of his wives so that she would continue to use the same land, or she can opt to return to her own people. If she does this there are two probable options. She can marry again or she can remain there and recieve land allocated by the elders of her father's group. In Luguru society, as we have seen, women actually have rights in land unaffected by marriage, so that if a woman divorces her husband or becomes a widow, her position is little changed in an economic sense.

The government scheme, presumably basing its planning on the partilineal notion that women are given land by their husbands, made no provision for them at all. Under the then legislation a man had to nominate an heir to the land. Precisely who this might be was rather fuzzy, but it was generally presumed that it would be the settler's son or sons. A survey conducted among the

settlers revealed great confusion on this point. No provision was made for the wife. In the traditional society this would not be a matter of great moment, as we have seen, and particularly is this true of the Luguru and Kutu, the former having inalienable rights to land in the hills. However, these rights are contingent upon occupation and use, and any land not utilized will ultimately revert to the common pool to be redistributed by the sub-clan head. In the present situation of acute land shortage a person who moves away permanently is likely to forfeit any chance of retaining land in the hills. Some Luguru do manage to retain their foothold in the hills in spite of living away in town, but they do so by returning home for a portion of each year. For settlers engaged in full-time agriculture this would hardly be practical, as the demands become ever more insistent. For men this problem might be solved to a certain extent by the strong bond which exists between a man and his maternal uncle, the one holding and using the land on behalf of the other. For women it may not be quite so simple. There is a pattern of late divorce in Luguru society which often results in a woman going to live with her son in late middle age. If, however, her son is living on a settlement scheme as the presumptive heir of his father, what then will happen to the mother?

During the year in which I was resident on the scheme two settlers died (both of tetanus - the government considered it would be pampering people too much to give protective shots), and in neither case was there a son of sufficient age to take over the land. It was therefore assumed that the wife would leave the scheme and return to her family. The idea that she might work the land alone, or even more radically, recruit a man as the men were expected to recruit women, was not entertained. In fact, in the second case, the woman was only allowed to remain on the scheme because a brother of her deceased husband took over both the land and the widow. It is, however, quite easy to imagine a situation in which a widow might be pushed off the scheme, in which she herself had no rights whatever, and sent back to her home area where, because of long absence, she would find it difficult to sustain a claim to land for her subsistence.

The response of the Commissioner for Community Development (which was heartily endorsed by the audience) was thus:

> *Why does a woman on a Settlement need any more safeguards than her counterpart who is not on a settlement? ... Are there safeguards for wives of farmers in other countries? If women consider that they are not getting their full rights, they, themselves, will quickly demand them, as the suffragettes demanded the vote in England.*

I hope that it has been made clear up to this point that this piece of rhetoric was as barren as the rights of the women on the ground.

Partially as a result of the research conducted by a Syracuse University team, in which I was a participant, it was found out that the government policies toward settlement in Tanzania changed totally. Bwakira Chini is now one of many Ujamaa Villages. The managerial staff disappeared altogether and when I visited briefly in the summer of 1971 the settlers had just formed a committee which was passing resolutions which bore a marked resemblance to those passed in the first months of the Fall of 1965. It is very hard to obtain information about the Ujamma Villages. In a recent report it was claimed that since 1967 over 2 million people have moved into them,[19] but the degree of success is hard to estimate. A small booklet produced by the Political Science Department at the Dar es Salaam University contains essays by various people, most of them critical of details of organization, but some adulatory. Newspaper reports continue to speak glowingly of the progress, but so far as I have seen nothing yet is said about women *per se*. There are reports about primary schools, dispensaries, clean water supplies, but nothing about the position of women. The implicit assumption seems to be that by enfranchising women at the time of self-government, women were thus in one stroke made not merely the political but also the economic equals of men. If this is not the case then, presumably, they will speak up.

The status of women in Tanzania generally was considered by Marjorie J. Mbilinyi in an article in the special issue of the *Canadian Journal of African Studies*. She notes the male control of cash crops, the increasing labor demands on the wife, the system by which a woman traditionally obtained some pocket money, and she goes on:

> *Up to the present time, if a husband died or if they were divorced, the wife had no basic rights to the house, land, or household properties, other than the cooking pots, not even to her children. She was a perpetual 'minor', legally dependent on her husband, father, or other male kinsfolk.*[20]

However, she notes that in the traditional society the woman's interests were protected in many ways. The position of women has, she tells us, been under active consideration by the government and the Marriage Contract Law is an attempt to equalize the position of the sexes. The most important provisions of this law are:

1) *The wife's right to ownership over all properties she has acquired before or during the marriage.*

2) *The provision of inheritance for a widow.*

3) *The regularization of divorce procedure through the institution of Conciliatory Boards.*

4) *The provision for the maintenance of divorced wives.*

5) *The wife's permission, to be registered in court, before a husband is allowed to marry an additional wife.*

6) *The establishment of minimum ages for marriage: 18 years for men and 15 for women.*

7) *The free consent of both parties to the marriage.*[21]

Mbilinyi is excited about the Ujamaa Villages, which she says, "involved collective production in agriculture and in certain areas, collective residence as well."[22] Whether the provisions of the Marriage Contract Law will indeed make a great difference to the position of women is yet to be seen, but at least one must applaud the effort of the Tanzanian government to improve the situation. Mbilinyi observes that there was much opposition to the new law both in the press and in Parliament, and she makes the same point that is made by Audrey Wipper when she considers the attacks by African men on the use of western clothes and cosmetics by African women when she notes that:

> *Underlying the mini-skirt debate is a similar negativism towards educated and economically independent women who represent a threat to the status quo.*[23]

So far the vast mass of rural Tanzania women have remained inarticulate. It is just possible that greater involvement in decision-making in the Ujamaa Villages will make them more vocal, though it has to be conceded that experience on Israeli kibbutzim does not lead one to such an optimistic conclusion.

FOOTNOTES

1. E. E. Evans-Pritchard, *The Position of Women in Primitive Societies and Other Essays* (London, 1965), p. 41.

2. The Royal Anthropological Institute, *Notes and Queries on Anthropology*, Sixth Edition (London, 1960), p. 93.

3. Ralph L. Beals and Harry Hoijer, *An Introduction to Anthropology*, Fourth Edition (New York, 1971), p. 373.

4. Evans-Prichard, *op. cit.*, p. 42.

5. *Ibid.*, p. 43.

6. Audrey Wipper, Editor and Contributor to *Canadian Journal of African Studies*, Special Issue: African Women, Vol. 6, No. 2, 1972, p. 145.

7. Ottenberg, 1959, quoted by Peggy R. Sanday in "Towards a Theory of the Status of Women", *American Anthropologist*, Vol. 75, No. 5, 1973, p. 215.

8. Jack Goody and Joan Buckley, "Inheritance and Women's Labour in Africa", *Africa*, Vol. XLIII, No. 2, 1973, pp. 108-9.

9. Aidan Southall, Editor and Introduction, *Social Change in Modern Africa* (London, New York, 1961), p. 51. See also J.A.K. Leslie, *A Survey of Dar es Salaam* (London, New York, 1963).

10. Judith Van Allen, "Sitting on a Man: Colonialism and the Lost Political Institutions of Igbo Women", *Canadian Journal of African Studies*, Vol. 6, No. 2, 1972, p. 171.

11. Carol P. Hoffer, "Mende and Sherpbro Women in High Office", *Canadian Journal of African Studies, op. cit.*, pp. 151-64.

12. T.C. Beidelman, *The Matrilineal Peoples of Eastern Tanzania* Ethnographic Survey of Africa Series (London, 1967). See also Anna vol Waldow, "Mwali Custom: Uzaramo Transformation", (Dar es Salaam, 1935).

13. Bruno Bettelheim, *Symbolic Wounds* (Glencoe, 1954), p. 170.

14. Hortense Powdermaker, *Coppertown: Changing Africa* (New York, 1962), p. 203.

15. Gideon Sjoberg, *The Preindustrial City Past and Present* (Glencoe, 1960), p. 170.

16. Dan McCall, "Trade and the Role of a Wife in a Modern West African Town", in Aidan Southall, Editor, *Social Change in Modern Africa, op. cit.*, p. 286.

17. Southall, *op. cit.*, p. 50.

18. Julius K. Nyerere, *Socialism and Rural Development* (Dar es Salaam, Government printer, 1967), p. 18.

19. *Africa Digest*, Vol. XX, No. 6, December 1973, p. 133.

20. Marjorie J. Mbilinyi, "The Status of Women in Tanzania" *Canadian Journal of African Studies*, Vol. 6, No. 2, 1972, p. 374.

21. *Ibid.*, p. 376.

22. *Ibid.*

23. *Ibid.*

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