

*Ulla Vuorela*

**The Women's Question and the Modes of Human Reproduction.  
An Analysis of a Tanzanian Village.**

Helsinki: Lomakepainetus, 1987. 234 pp., SEK 120,—

For feminists and researchers in the area of Women's Studies the relationship between class and gender has always been a question of special significance. Is a class revolution or a gender revolution necessary to resolve social inequalities? Ulla Vuorela does not claim to solve this problem that has been puzzling feminists since the beginning of the early 20th century women's movement. Her study of a Tanzanian village provides us with a theoretical framework which offers new insights in the relationship of production and human reproduction.

Researchers of women in the Third World have concentrated on the role of women in production, the sexual division of labour, ideologies influencing women's position and the actual position of women in any society. How women could get their due share from economic development and what economic development itself had to offer to them are the central concerns in this research.

Ulla Vuorela aims to examine how the women's question could be approached in a study on the position of women in a Tanzanian village. She attempts to expand the historical materialist theory of the mode of production to incorporate the male-female relations in human reproduction. In analysing the village of Msoga in coastal Tanzania she does not claim to offer a full study of the village. Her work is geared to give an example of how a fuller study within the suggested framework could be carried out.

In the beginning she discusses the significance the relationship between the modes of production (MOP) and the modes of human reproduction (MOHR) has for anthropological research. The access a member of any society has to sexual union determines the formation of the MOHR. This access to a sexual union is regulated by social institutions, e.g. marriage. In many societies there is no access to a sexual union without marriage. The author points out that the specific form a marriage and the relations of kinship take depends on the relations of production. The MOP is producing the means of human existence. The output of the MOP influences the character of the MOHR. The MOHR is articulated in the MOP.

To engage in human reproduction requires a material basis. Wages are the basis for individual production. Vuorela focusses on the impact of the relations of production of the MOHR and the ability of the villagers to subsist and survive. She examines the relations of production from the perspective of human reproduction with special reference to women's position.

When applied to the social and economic structures of the Tanzanian village, her theoretical model contributes to the understanding of cultural institutions. Specific rules that define women's behavior during pregnancy and in the care of the newly born infant reflect a male bias. Men are the ones who ultimately appropriate the children. But women

are held responsible for raising the children. Vuorela interprets this as the ideological expression of a patriarchal MOHR.

Mating relations in Msoga are organized patriarchally. The husband is traditionally chosen by the father of the bride. After marriage the couple remains under the control of maternal uncles. This tradition resembles the hierarchy of elders over juniors, of men over women.

Vuorela points out that it is in the interest of men to procreate as often as possible to ensure the special value children have as an old age security. This subjects women to being the means of human reproduction for their husband. They become alienated from their reproductive labour and exploited within the social relations of human reproduction. Cultural traditions regarding marriage and marital customs are thus also an expression of the articulation of the MOP – MOHR relationship and have been developed in each social formation into a web of customs.

The sexual division of reproductive labour is not limited to raising and educating the children. Vuorela shows how it also extends into food production. Women are responsible for ensuring the basic staples for the household, while men's crops are used for communal celebrations, for bad times or for sale.

An analysis of these patriarchally organized mating relations exemplifies the oppression of women through a male dominated ideology and male domination regarding production and human reproduction in women's lives. The space left for women to assert themselves is through resistance and by seeking mutual support through sororal solidarity.

Although the traditional domestic community in Msoga is dissolving, its people still have to rely on the conservation of the patriarchal MOHR for economic reasons. Today the village and its social relations of production and reproduction extend beyond its geographical boundaries. Old age security is the main problem for villagers outside the traditional domestic community.

Vuorela does an excellent job when discussing several individual profiles of various people in the village to exemplify her model. The case of Martini shows the necessity of young Africans to rely on these traditional household structures for survival. Martini has found employment in the city. He cushions the risks involved in moving to a new neighbourhood with its new set of social relations by sending his wife and children to the original home village. This solution is practical as well as economically necessary, as it is imperative for Martini and his family to keep their access to land and housing in the village for long term security and old age. Being members of the domestic community and keeping living ties to the home village continues to be essential for the people's ability to reproduce themselves, even if they leave the village temporarily in search of employment elsewhere. For single women immediate problems of daily survival are in the foreground. Unless a woman can hire male labour, she will very likely not be able to cultivate her own fields but will have to seek other sources of income – a difficult task in an economy where it is already difficult for men to find employment through which to support their families.

In the end we are again confronted with the question of what comes first, the feminist or

the socialist revolution? Vuorela has exemplified how close class and gender are intertwined. It is impossible to separate the one from the other, both have to be considered as points of every analysis. Vuorela makes that clear. Even though it might at some points of her analysis seem questionable whether all aspects of a specific culture can be subsumed under the concepts of MOP and MOHR, her work does not become reductionist in that sense. It is an excellent example for understanding the modes of production and human reproduction as one system and an appeal to consider gender as well as class.

*Johanna Schoen*

*Eckart Putzier*

### **Die Ermächtigungen des Außenwirtschaftsgesetzes**

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Anlaß der ursprünglich als Freiburger Dissertation gefertigten Studie war wohl nicht zuletzt (s. S. V) ein Jubiläum – 25 Jahre seit Inkrafttreten der Erstfassungen von AWG (vom 28. 4. 1961, BGBl. I, 481) und der zu dessen Durchführung erlassenen AWV (vom 22. 8. 1961, BGBl. I, 1381), je zum 1. 9. 1961. Ähnlich wie bei einem ebenfalls vor kurzem gefeierten Jahrestag – 40 Jahre DM/Währungsreform (20. 6. 1948) – muß aber auch hier gefragt werden, ob denn die schiere Dauerhaftigkeit einer gesetzlichen Regelung bereits ihren Erfolg belege. Wenn nun die Deutsche Mark zwar nicht unmittelbar Gefahr läuft, von einer europäischen Währung(seinheit) verdrängt zu werden, so ist doch die Entwicklung der nationalen außenwirtschaftsrechtlichen Vorschriften durch einen zunehmenden Aushöhlungsprozeß gekennzeichnet: Putzier dürfte allenfalls bezogen auf das AWG selbst mit der Feststellung recht haben (S. 12), die Regelung habe »nur unwesentlich an Bedeutung verloren«. Im Hinblick auf den Waren-Verkehr zumindest hat sich die Funktion inner-/mitgliedstaatlichen Rechts weithin auf das Feld bloßer Anwendung gemeinschaftsrechtlicher Normen zurückgebildet, wie schon ein Blick auf die Ein- und Ausfuhrbestimmungen der jüngst neugefaßten AWV zeigt (BGBl. 1986 I, 2671). Der Autor verkennt dies keineswegs, zeichnet vielmehr die »Einschränkung der Anwendbarkeit des AWG durch EG-Recht« vorab allgemein (S. 10 ff.) und sodann bei den besonderen Ermächtigungstatbeständen (z.B. S. 54, 61, 83) nach. Aus der Themenstellung fast völlig heraus fällt (leider!) der heute – man denke nur an die Sujets der Uruguay-Runde des GATT – immer gewichtigere Bereich des auch hierzulande weithin spezialgesetzlich geregelten grenzüberschreitenden Dienstleistungsverkehrs, insonderheit im Finanzwesen. Das Buch befaßt sich lediglich mit den dafür maßgeblichen, aber nur eher periphere Probleme behandelnden §§ 15–21 AWG (S. 87 ff.), von deren Möglichkeiten immerhin kaum Gebrauch gemacht wurde.