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DEVELOPMENT PLANNING, GOVERNMENT POLICY,  
 AND THE FUTURE OF THE BASARWA IN BOTSWANA

Robert K. Hitchcock

Introduction

The Republic of Botswana is one of the few countries in the world where foraging populations continue to exist in relatively large numbers. Consequently, it has attracted the attention of anthropologists who wish to learn more about the people who do not grow crops, keep livestock or participate in wage labor activities. Botswana is unusual in that social scientists have played a significant role in providing information to government administrators and in policy formulation involving the future of a minority population (see Bieseke, this volume). Yet a recurrent theme in the history of the Bechuanaland Protectorate and later Botswana is the struggle between anthropologists and administrators over the direction of development planning. All too often the sentiments of the people themselves are largely ignored, even though the discussions have implications for their future.

Concern for the rights of minority populations in Botswana has long been a feature of governments in the region (whether tribal chiefdoms, a British Protectorate Administration, or the legislative and administrative body of a newly independent African state). The two main issues which faced the British Protectorate Administration after its establishment in 1895 were slavery and controlling the actions of the Basarwa.

The Current Status of Botswana Basarwa

The modern state of Botswana is in many ways a model for Third World countries to emulate. It is one of the few Parliamentary democracies in Africa, and it has open elections in which all citizens, including Basarwa, are allowed to vote. It has an excellent balance of payments, with foreign exchange revenues flowing into the country from mineral and beef sales. It is noted for its forward-thinking development planning and a series of five-year plans have been largely successful in bringing about economic growth.

With a firm commitment to economic development and social justice, Botswana could be said to have an enlightened policy regarding its hunter-gatherer minority. Government White Papers often state that all citizens have the right to as much land as they need; basic services such as health and education are considered as requirements for all citizens, no matter how remote, and increases in productivity and incomes are national objectives. Yet in the midst of fast-paced growth and rising incomes, the situation of some sectors of Botswana's population is worsening. The Basarwa in particular are becoming increasingly impoverished, and as a result they are having to turn more and more toward dependency strategies. Botswana, unlike Australia, does not have a welfare system for its minority populations (see Beckett, this volume), the only semblance of cash assistance being destitute payments which average less than \$3 per month for a family. Many of the economic development

strategies being pursued by Botswana, notably the commercialization of the livestock industry and reform of the land tenure system, are having adverse impacts on Basarwa and other remote area people. Without a major re-orientation of government policy and a shift in the direction of development planning, it is likely that Botswana will have a significant proportion of landless, poverty-stricken and embittered people in its rural and peripheral urban areas.

One often hears the statement that the Basarwa as a population are dying out or are becoming assimilated into other groups in Southern Africa. Although this may be the case in such countries as Lesotho and South Africa, it is certainly not the case in Botswana. Recent attempts to enumerate the Basarwa population in Botswana reveal that there are at least 30,000 and possibly as many as 60,000 people.

The pace of socioeconomic change among Basarwa in Botswana is picking up. One of the major causes of this change is the expansion of the livestock industry. Livestock is the backbone of the rural economy of Botswana and is an important source of employment and foreign exchange. A great deal of government effort has gone into developing the livestock industry: borehole drilling has increased; veterinary programs have expanded; and cordon fences have been built in order to prevent the spread of hoof-and-mouth disease. All of these activities have had significant impacts on Basarwa populations.

The expansion of boreholes has provided access to water in parts of the country where previously people had to depend upon melons and roots for moisture during a substantial part of the year. Water points have attracted Basarwa who settle on the peripheries in order to gain access to water as well as to livestock employment and livestock products. In addition, some benefits do accrue to Basarwa working on cattle posts, in that they are allowed to use the milk of cows, mainly during the rainy season.

Commercialization of the cattle industry has had negative effects on the position of Basarwa in Botswana. The expansion of fences has cut off game migration routes and has caused widespread deaths; in 1980, for example, tens of thousands of wildebeest died along the Kuke Fence and near Lake Ngami. There has been a change in the employment picture, with Basarwa, who are largely unskilled herders, being replaced by more highly trained non-Basarwa herders. The emphasis on beef production for sale to the Botswana Meat Commission and eventually to the European Economic Community has resulted in Basarwa not being allowed to use the milk, which should instead go to calves, according to cattle owners. They are also not allowed to use oxen for traction purposes, since this might reduce the sale value of the animals. There has been a decline in the subsistence use of livestock among Basarwa, and this has had negative implications for the nutrition of the population. There has also been a decline in wages; I undertook surveys in 1975-78 which showed an average of about \$10 per month being paid to herders, but by 1982, this amount had fallen to about \$6 per month, ostensibly because of restrictions placed on marketing due to the outbreak of hoof-and-mouth disease in November 1977. Income from livestock-related employment, therefore, is also on the decline.

### The Impact of Land Reform

In 1975, Botswana embarked on a major livestock development and land reform program. Known as the Tribal Grazing Land Policy (TGLP) (see Lee, Wilmson, this volume), this national effort had three major objectives: (1) to stop overgrazing and degradation of the range; (2) to promote greater equality of incomes; and (3) to allow growth and commercialization of the livestock industry on a sustained basis. The policy White Paper paid lip service to taking the poor into account in planning activities and protecting the rights to land. In actuality no specific provisions were made for rural populations who did not own livestock, other than setting aside reserved areas as "safeguards for their future." The process of zoning the land into three categories, commercial, where leasehold rights would be granted; communal, where the land tenure would remain the same; and reserved, which would be set aside for the future, took place in 1975-76. As it turned out, no land was set aside as reserved. The land that was zoned commercial turned out to have substantial numbers of people residing there, most of whom were Basarwa. As of 1982, seven districts had declared commercial areas, and some 300 ranches were demarcated. Dispossession was occurring, and in most cases compensation was not paid to the people removed from the ranches. If the process continues as it has in the past, literally thousands of Basarwa face the prospect of landlessness.

One strategy for ensuring that the impact of the Tribal Grazing Land Policy is not too negative was the establishment of Communal Service Centers, or blocks of land where social services would be provided and where there would be sufficient land for production.

The land reform program in Botswana was established in order to promote increased productivity on the one hand and enhance social equity on the other. An examination of the implementation status of the ranching program in the period through 1982, however, reveals that neither of these goals has been achieved. Range degradation is on the increase, particularly in the First Development Area of the Ngwaketse District, where at least one rancher has overgrazed his ranch, abandoned it and returned with his herds to the communal areas. Social equity is not being achieved because economic returns have not increased for the majority of ranch owners and residents. Labor opportunities are declining, and people are being told to leave the ranches and even some communal area boreholes where no change in land tenure has occurred. Discussions with livestock owners and ranch lessees suggest that the main reason many of them want to have exclusive rights over blocks of land is so that they can rid themselves of the excess people and thus pressure on their herds, water and grazing resources. Basarwa, in particular, are being requested or even forced to leave water points and ranches.

The Government of Botswana, hoping to ensure that the rights of resident populations in commercial ranching areas were taken into consideration, commissioned population surveys of proposed commercial areas. In the largest such area, the Western Sandveld region of Central District, it was found that 2,709 of the 3,529 residents of the region were Basarwa (76.8%). If these people are denied access to land on the basis of their type of adaptation or because they supposedly do not have the same kinds of land needs as other groups, then literally thousands of people will be forced to move away from their home areas. Most if not all of them will move to the communal areas,

thus exacerbating the problems of overcrowding and overutilization of this land. In this sense, the Tribal Grazing Land Policy will achieve just the opposite of what it set out to do.

Basarwa and other people have been encouraged through consultation campaigns and discussions to put forth their claims to land. A massive consultation exercise conducted over the radio in 1975-76 reached tens of thousands of people. In many remote areas which were destined to become commercial ranches, however, Radio Learning Groups were not formed and few people had access to radios in order to listen to the broadcasts. The result was that the people to be affected most by the land reform program were the ones who heard the least about it.

Remote Area Development Officers, government workers, consultants and anthropologists working on land use surveys and planning exercises attempted to come up with strategies for providing resident populations with land. An adjudication process was set up whereby people could put forth their claims. During the process of ranch allocation, public hearings are held, announcements are made and visits are paid by Government officials to the proposed ranch area to discuss the implications of leasing and ranch development. The problem, however, is that sometimes allocation hearings are held far from the ranch areas and people, particularly Basarwa, are often unable to attend the meetings due to lack of transport, so that their claims are often not taken into account.

Provision of alternative areas of land has been proposed as a way of overcoming the problem of dispossession. One suggestion has been to establish Wildlife Management Areas (WMA's) in which foraging would be permitted to continue. In other cases, Communal Service Centers (CSC's) have been established in order to provide social services and land for production purposes. Some commercial areas saw already demarcated ranches dezoned when it was found that too many claims existed. The pace of ranch allocation has slowed considerably as more people have been found, but the pressure to get the policy implemented continues unabated.

#### Government Policy and Remote Area Development

The result of increased attention paid to the problems of Basarwa both within and outside Botswana was a call for a special program of assistance to a disadvantaged and impoverished population. In 1974, a Bushmen Development Office was established in the Ministry of Local Government and Lands. The Bushman Development Officer was given the task of enumerating the Basarwa, finding out what their special needs were and planning projects for Basarwa development. Education, handicraft marketing, water development and agricultural extension work were initiated. In 1975, Basarwa Development was incorporated into the Botswana National Development Plan under the sub-heading LG 32. While the original intent of the Basarwa Development Program was to focus on the problems and needs of Basarwa citizens, it soon became clear that the Basarwa were not the only people in rural Botswana who were out of the mainstream of development. Accordingly, the program expanded its focus in 1977, becoming the Remote Area Development Program.

In spite of the Botswana Government's oft-stated commitment to social justice and rural development, most investment went into physical and social infrastructure for village areas. By 1976, after a massive effort called the Accelerated Rural Development Program, it was realized that there were still large numbers of people who lacked access to basic social services. A major focus of the Remote Area Development Program has been on extension of education and health to remote areas. Less emphasis was given to problems of production and employment, though rural industries were expanded as a result of improved marketing through an organization known as Botswanaacraft. Income levels of a number of Basarwa households increased, thanks to the sale of handicrafts, but these have fallen in the past two years due to shifting emphases in the marketing strategies.

Since many Basarwa continued to hunt, a major focus of the Remote Area Development Program was on wildlife. The problem was that the Fauna Proclamation Act of 1961 and subsequent amendments disallowed hunting by people without licenses unless they used traditional means. One Game Scout told me that he arrested any Basarwa who were wearing pants while hunting.

One goal of the Remote Area Development Program has been to ensure the land and water rights of Basarwa and other remote area citizens. Under traditional law, Basarwa lacked civic and property rights. Even today, many Land Boards refuse to grant individual Basarwa rights to arable land. Getting the land rights of remote area people recognized has been a significant preoccupation of Government's Remote Area Development Program. One way of bringing this about was to establish co-called "Settlement Schemes," areas where people would have access to water, schools, health facilities and enough land on which to make a living. This strategy fitted in nicely with Tswana sentiment that Basarwa should be settled in villages. In fact, no force has been used recently to require people to settle. Although "villagization" has been espoused by many government officials and politicians, in fact the few settlement schemes that exist are limited in extent and are confined almost entirely to the Ghanzi District, where squatting and landlessness have been features of Basarwa life since the 1890s. Today less than three percent of the Basarwa population of Botswana is in either privately-sponsored or government settlements.

Since 1978, there has been a subtle shift in the goals and strategies of the Remote Area Development Program. Faced with the criticism that the program fosters "separate development," the Remote Area Development Officers working with the District Councils have begun to place more emphasis on community development and less on ensuring rights of Basarwa and developing projects which will increase productivity and incomes. There is a widening gap between national policy and practical, on-the-ground developments. While ostensibly Basarwa are guaranteed the right as citizens to land, in fact relatively few individuals have been allocated plots by Land Boards and Sub-Land Boards. In some cases, anthropologists and Remote Area Development personnel have come to strong disagreements over policy decisions. In one case, Remote Area Development personnel advocated drilling a new borehole for a large cattle owner in exchange for his giving his old water point and the exhausted grazing nearby to a group of remote area dwellers. In another case, a borehole was recommended to be drilled for a group of 25 mobile hunter-gatherers who travelled over an area some 2,000 square kilometers. Unfortunately, however,

such a development would only have been taken over by a wealthy cattle owner, a process that occurred all too often in the schemes that were intended to guarantee Basarwa land and water rights.

It is clear that all is not well with remote area development policy in Botswana. Thus far, the government programs have generally had little impact on rural incomes and subsistence levels, which over the past several years have been on the decline. Few new strategies are emerging, though development of social infrastructure continues. Literacy rates are on the rise, thanks in part to Councils taking over small private schools and, in some cases, building hostels near schools where Basarwa children can stay. Nevertheless, there are few Basarwa in Botswana who have completed secondary school. Rural health programs are also having important impacts on Basarwa populations. Major epidemic diseases such as measles no longer wipe out entire groups in the Kalahari; access to health posts has meant that fewer people die of injuries or illness; and infant mortality is declining thanks to the efforts of Family Welfare Educators, nurses and extension personnel. The problem is that while health programs are having marked effects on survivorship, populations are increasing quickly, and this means more difficulties in terms of poverty and unemployment.

Government policy in rural Botswana is increasingly contradictory. While on the one hand it is said that self-reliance is the goal, on the other the government is attempting strategies which reduce independence and economic autonomy. Agricultural projects provide people with extension advice and inputs such as implements and seeds, but arable production remains marginal. A livestock loan scheme has been established, but thus far only a small number of households have received cattle. Labor-intensive development projects have enabled Basarwa groups to get food in exchange for such work as road building. Drought relief feeding since 1979 has caused more people to concentrate in village areas. There are more problems of environmental degradation, reduced returns to labor and increasing frequency of social conflict over access to resources. In a sense, the government is fostering dependency through pursuing a policy of more and more handouts. Commercialization of livestock, land and wild food resources causes a reduction in subsistence security of remote area populations. A whole series of transformations in Basarwa society are beginning to occur, including a reduction in the extent of sharing networks, a tendency toward removing productive items such as guns and plows from sharing networks altogether, and a move away from group-wide consensus-based decision-making procedures. Political role differentiation is on the increase, and women in particular are having less say in the affairs of groups than was the case in the past. In general there has been a loss of local autonomy among Basarwa groups.

Development has brought relatively little material benefit to the rural poor in Botswana. In some ways the Basarwa remain on the peripheries of Botswana society. They have difficulty getting redress of wrongs in Tswana customary courts; compensation is rarely paid to them for crop damage by livestock or forced removal from residential areas, and cases persist of children being taken away from their parents without permission. The adjudication process instituted as part of the Tribal Grazing Land Policy pays lip service to Basarwa land needs, but to date procedures designed to ensure that Basarwa are not dispossessed are inadequate.

Some Remote Area Development personnel have pushed hard for a "villagization" strategy, on the pretense, as they put it, that this would be better for the Basarwa "since nobody should be allowed to live such a primitive and demanding life." Most anthropologists, on the other hand, have consistently pushed for a policy which would allow people the freedom to choose their own way of making a living. It must be stressed that there are Remote Area Development personnel and other development workers in Botswana who do have the best interests of Basarwa and other groups at heart. Many of the principles upon which their work is based are emerging directly from discussions with remote area communities themselves. The majority of Basarwa want the benefits that development could bring; the problem is that they lack the means to achieve a new way of life.

The future of the Basarwa in Botswana will depend very much on how the land issue is resolved. Thus far, the Remote Area Development Program has been only marginally successful in ensuring that Basarwa needs are considered in planning. A major difficulty is that the development plans are often incomplete in execution. Settlement schemes, for example, may provide land, but they usually do not provide people with sufficient resources to enable them to make an adequate living in the absence of outside inputs or employment. Undoubtedly, foraging will continue, but it will in all likelihood represent more of a buffering strategy than a primary means of survival. The search for alternative means of making a living must continue, and these will have to include not only foraging, livestock production and arable agriculture, but also fishing, rural industries and wage labor. Working conditions for Basarwa, whether in the informal or formal sectors, are badly in need of improvement. Future policies will have to address this issue in depth.

On the positive side, government and local initiatives have brought about the expansion of needed social services, physical infrastructure and transportation. There are other important issues such as production and income generation which have yet to be dealt with effectively. Change in Basarwa subsistence and settlement strategies is less of a result of government intervention than it is a response to environmental and economic pressures. Ad hoc and uncoordinated policy, poor communication between the center and the local level, and a general lack of political priority being given to rural poor have all contributed to the declining position of Basarwa in Botswana. Without a shift in the direction of government policy and development planning, many Basarwa face the prospect of dispossession, marginalization and increased poverty.

In spite of the many problems faced by Basarwa and others in rural Botswana, there is a definite shift in attitude in the country. More attention is being paid to their needs, and their voices are heard increasingly in local level meetings and in the national news media. As anthropologists it is crucial that we cooperate with Basarwa in their efforts to create their own futures. There are constraints that must be overcome, and it is apparent that a *laissez-faire* approach will only hurt people in the long run. What is needed is an active intervention approach, one which will guarantee Basarwa rights and allow them self-determination. Only in this way can self-sufficiency, economic development and social justice be achieved.



## APPENDIX 1

The term "Basarwa" is used by the Government of Botswana as well as most of the Botswana people to refer to aboriginal people of hunting and gathering origin and/or practice. Many anthropologists prefer the term "San," but the Basarwa include so-called "Black Bushmen" who speak a click language, hunt and gather for a living, and who are ethnically distinct from San as seen in sero-genetic studies. Recent estimates suggest that there are approximately 35,350 Basarwa in Botswana, but the numbers may in fact be somewhat higher.

Major references on the Basarwa include the following:

Lee, Richard B. and Irven DeVore, eds.

1976 *Kalahari Hunter-Gatherers: Studies of the Kung San and Their Neighbors*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

Silberbauer, George B.

1981 *Hunter and Habitat in the Central Kalahari Desert*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Tobias, Phillip V., ed.

1978 *The Bushmen: San Hunters and Herders of Southern Africa*. Cape Town: Human and Rousseau.

Wily, Elizabeth

1982 *A Strategy of Self-determination for the Kalahari San (The Botswana Government's Programme of Action in the Ghanzi Farms)*. *Development and Change* 13(2):291-308.

There are also some important Botswana Government reports, including those of the Remote Area Development Program in the Ministry of Local Government and Lands. A major report on the land reform program which will affect the Basarwa in the east-central Kalahari is as follows:

Hitchcock, Robert K.

1978 *Kalahari Cattle Posts: A Regional Study of Hunter-Gatherers, Pastoralists, and Agriculturalists in the Western Sandveld Region, Central District, Botswana*. Gaborone, Botswana: Government Printer.

## AUSTRALIAN ABORIGINES AND ACADEMIC SOCIAL ANTHROPOLOGY

Peter J. Ucko

## Introduction

This is an analysis of how social anthropologists interacted with Aborigines in Australia between 1972-1983 through membership in the Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies. Although the two parties started off respectively as academics and indigenes, as time went on some congruence was achieved through Aboriginal membership in the Institute and assumption of active roles on committees within that organization. Both parties were therefore in a position to use their Institute affiliation to achieve various ends. The way in which this was done is illustrated by an analysis of positions on various issues such as Aboriginal advancement, access of anthropologists to Aboriginal communities, and the role of both parties with regard to Aboriginal Land Rights. A significant thread running through the discussions is the way in which anthropological "objectivity" was seen in the course of events and the attitude of parties towards each others' perceived identity and aims. Although I deal exclusively here with a local situation, insights gained may be of relevance to other situations, specifically to the interactions of anthropologists and native peoples in Canadian events. Finally, it should be made clear that this is a brief and often superficial view that is intended as a general statement rather than a detailed analysis of the situation.

Before outlining the main events of the decade under discussion, a few points need to be made. First, I was Principal of the Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies (hereafter AIAS or "the Institute") from 1972 to 1980, and it is on this short period of Australian Aboriginal history that I concentrate.

Second, AIAS is a Statutory Body of the Federal Government and has the main responsibility for national funding of research topics on almost all subjects related to Aborigines. The membership of its Social Anthropology Advisory Committee included, during the period under review, academics from a wide variety of Australian universities.

Third, I have already looked in some detail at the interaction of Aborigines and prehistorians during that period (Ucko 1983a). Finally, whereas in 1964 the rationale of the Institute had been simply to record the last activities of what was then generally assumed to be a dying race close to extinction, by 1974, it had transformed its image and effective scope to cover detailed research on all aspects of Aboriginal activities.

## Social Anthropology Advisory Committee of the AIAS

Before 1972, the AIAS had almost no Aboriginal membership on Advisory Committees or on its governing council--the main exception being the few years when one Aboriginal Federal Senator was appointed by Senate to serve on Council.