

MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY

The African e-Journals Project has digitized full text of articles of eleven social science and humanities journals. This item is from the digital archive maintained by Michigan State University Library. Find more at:

<http://digital.lib.msu.edu/projects/africanjournals/>

Available through a partnership with



Scroll down to read the article.

R. Renee Hitchcock and Mary R. Smith (eds.) *Settlement in Botswana*, Heinemann Educational Books Ltd., in collaboration with the Botswana Society. The Rustica Press (Pty) Ltd., Wynberg, 1982, xvi + 140 pp.

This review has three main parts. The first outlines the thematic scope of the purported objectives of the study of human settlements. The second discusses the contents of the constituent parts of the text under review. The third is an overall evaluation of the text.

The study of human settlements involves the analysis of the dynamic adaptive relationship by communities to the biophysical and sociological milieu, through an examination of the cultural landscape. This landscape is defined by such items as buildings, transportation networks and fields. "Settlement in Botswana" attempts to explore this man-environment relationship primarily within the Botswana situation and to assess its implications for policy planning, that is:

The primary assumption of the Settlement Symposium is that an understanding of settlement pattern is predicated on observations of the interaction of a people with the environment, a study of archaeological and anthropological data, and an examination of history. Heeding the lessons of the past can assist modern planners and politicians in working to develop models for settlement that are not only relevant to modern life but also take into account the inherited past (xiv).

This Reader opens with introductory highlights on the aims of the text, by the President, which are elaborated upon by R. Hitchcock, M.R. Smith, and R.K. Hitchcock. The rest of the book has five Parts each of which is interspersed with Discussion or rejoinder subsections. A gist, synthesizing the symposium theme, is furnished by Cooke's summation speech. The end is marked by Schapera's closing speech, followed by an extensive bibliography.

A concise synopsis of the contents of each Part is essential at this juncture for the reader. Part I consists of background papers. Cooke's paper examines the ecological conditions, against which settlement has evolved. A prehistorical dimension to the analysis is added by Campbell's settlement background discussion on Stone Age Man, the San, the Khoi and the early Blacks. This paper serves as a prelude to the rest of the prehistoric setting in Part II in which anthropological and archaeological data are marshalled, in R.K. Hitchcock's discussion on prehistoric hunter-gatherer adaptations, to demonstrate that archaeological remains provide insight into adaptive strategies of past populations. Caister's paper on archaeological perspectives on settlement patterns in southeast Kweneng presents a summary of archaeological evidence which tends to suggest that Early Iron Age settlements were determined by ecological considerations, whereas defence had become a major determinant in the location of later Iron Age sites. Seemingly, from the 1840s onwards political factors must have taken increasing precedence over ecological considerations in the choice of settlement locations. Denbow's study of the socio-economic change of the Toutsie tradition is based on new prehistoric data which facilitate his discussion of that culture's origins, florescence and eventual decline. Wilmsen's investigation of exchange, interaction, and settlement of the Herero and Zu/óasi of north-western Botswana attempts to show how the distribution of people in this area reflects a long process of interaction involving complementary and congruent social concepts and economic systems. Mason's paper focuses not on the sub-regional aspects of settlement, as is done by the above studies, but rather on the prehistoric origin and development of the entire Tswana. Finally, evidence is provided by Steel to suggest

possible early contacts of this area with the outside World through metal working related trade.

The historical background to the analysis of settlement in Botswana is furnished by Ngcongco's account of the emergence of large Sotho-Tswana states and their subsequent fission which was not only attributable to natural disasters but also to dynastic turbulence among the contending parties. The historical theme is taken up in earnest in Part III which tries to relate settlement to traditional economic, social and political systems. Here Ngcongco examines the shattering impact of the Defaqane period on the Tswana Kingdoms, such as the Hurutshe, Ngwato, Ngwaketse and Kgatla, and the fragmentation and destructive consequences this had on settlement. This condition was exacerbated by natural catastrophes such as rinderpest. The rest of the historical papers investigate the Part III theme at a sub-regional level. Parson's study of settlement in East central Botswana, Campbell's review of certain aspects of settlement in Northwestern Botswana, and Nangati's analysis of the impact of pre-colonial trade in Kweneng all demonstrate the ability of the strong Tswana groups with centralised political systems, such as the Ngwato, Kwena, and Tawana hegemonies, to incorporate the displaced, less numerous, and politically weaker groups.

Hitchcock and Campbell in their examination of the settlement patterns of the Bakgalagadi show how settlement in the Kalahari has over time reflected change in the degree of mobility; group size and cohesion; environmental and technological factors, economic, social and political organisation.

Settlement patterns in Botswana have not only been a sole function of endogenous social forces. The impact of outsiders, such as the Ndebele and Europeans, in determining the stability as well as location of indigenous settlements, is explored in Tapela's account on movement and settlement in the Tati region.

Part III ends with Wetherell's paper, on colonial settlement in colonial Zimbabwe, who demonstrates that such settlement was similar to that of the Cape because its territorial expansion was linked with the expansion of White farming.

Silitshena's background paper on population movements and settlement patterns in contemporary Botswana attempts to distil a settlement typology, and further examines the evolution and policy implications of the development of settlements. This discussion sets the stage against which the theme of contemporary patterns of settlement and land use is elaborated upon, in Part IV. The dynamic of spatial organisation at a micro-level is presented in Hardie's analysis of Mochudi, the traditional capital of the Bakgatla ethnic group. Briefly, it is demonstrated that during traditional times the evolutionary pattern of Mochudi resulted from the changing status of individuals, whereas its contemporary organisation reflects externally initiated influences which express a fundamental breakdown of the kgosi and the former system of land allocation. There are two other presentations which invoke social and political factors in explaining settlement pattern at sub-regional levels. First, Kuper demonstrates how Kgalagari settlements have developed initially within the sphere of influence of Tswana states, and subsequently under the impact of political circumstances in the east of the country. Second is Werbner's study of settlement in the Northern district. He highlights the importance of various micro-structures of production and exchange and of marriage and labour relations. Kin group development, according to him, is crucial in determining the way the cultural landscape evolves.

Three papers address the issue of movement between settlement types at the macro-level.

Silitshena examines migration from the large villages and permanent settlement at the lands areas in response to economic and government policy effects. Kerven analyses the thesis that the dispersion of family units into different settlement types is intended to optimise economic and social returns accruing to each family unit in the face of uncertainty. Cooper investigates urban class articulation with the rural milieu. Using Selebi Phikwe as a case study he suggests, for instance, that most Government and large company unskilled/semi-skilled workers are inextricably linked to the poor and middle peasantry lands and cattle situations combined. His evidence indicates, disturbingly, that the lot of the peasantry is worse off and is continuing to stagnate economically.

The way settlements evolve has direct planning and implications, as suggested by the bulk of the preceding presentations. These policy implications are explicitly dealt with in Part V. Three types of policy papers characterise this section. One is preoccupied with urban settlements. Another concerns itself with the entire hierarchy of settlements. The others focus on rural settlement planning issues. An abstract of their contents is given below.

Letsholo examines the evolution and functions of the new towns of Botswana including their attendant problems such as urban growth control and squatter upgrading. The joint presentation by York-Smith and Temane underscores the need for a settlement policy that is responsive to the objective of social justice. Such a policy should identify a structure or hierarchy of settlements, their existing and potential role, their relationship with one another and their respective capacities for the dissemination of developmental impulses.

There are three rural-oriented policy papers. Odell examines the evolution of a planning and development strategy for communal areas in Botswana.

His paper demonstrates the success with which traditional institutions of Kgotla, chief, headman and modisa have handled disputes, land management, and planning matters. Unlike the project approaches to rural development he convincingly suggests that the institutional approaches remain intelligible, practical and thus ideal development-management mechanisms for the rural milieu. Lawry using a CAPAD - imbedded blueprint attempts to derive a landuse plan which addresses the problems of settlement and agricultural development in Matsheng Village. Greenhow's paper on Ngamiland Villages has a similar orientation.

Fortman and Roe review literature on the role of water in encouraging permanent settlement at the lands, within a more realistic push-pull framework. Whilst conceding the crucial role the water could play in such relocation they nevertheless maintain that it is not a sufficient condition. Other variables such as social activities, alternative economic opportunities, convenience and reliability of water sources and other amenities are also important in determining where respective segments of the population decide to settle permanently. A water policy emphasising reliable and convenient supplies is deemed essential for the productive activities of those who elect to settle permanently at the lands.

Implications of Agricultural Development planning to rural settlements in the form of stabilization and alienation of nomadic populations, encouragement of movement to the land and their inadvertent promotion or rural-urban migration are examined by Jones.

This text is strictly idiographic. That is, the overall theme is in the main devoid of theoretical referents. As a result even the key term "settlement", whose semantic is so much time and place dependent, is not defined at the outset to eschew any potential conceptual ambiguity. While this may appear inconsequential to the reader who is already familiar with the settlement situation in Botswana, it has the potential of generating puzzlement on the part of other readers.

An approach similar to that adopted by Mabogunje in his book on Urbanisation in Nigeria, wherein he pivots his analysis within a well-defined general conceptual framework of urbanisation would have definitely been of help to that reader who might not be familiar with the Botswana situation.

A serious omission is that of freehold areas. These undoubtedly form a significant ingredient in the Botswana settlement pattern.

Apart from these shortcomings the text serves as a useful and vivid case illustration of important concepts which are normally encountered by the student of man and his environment such as cultural ecosystems, cultural landscape, cultural areas, and cultural history. From a practical point of view, the informed planner who is disillusioned with theoretical and aspatial economic models will find herself/ himself securely anchored on terra firma, and from that vantage capably formulate down to earth models for the betterment of the Batswana.

DR. THANDO D. GWEBU
University of Botswana
Department of Environmental Science