

CORRESPONDENCE

Richard Vengroff's *Botswana: Rural Development in the Shadow of Apartheid* was reviewed by Absolom Vilakazi in our last issue (V. 4, 1978, pp. 33-35). Mr. Vengroff has sent us a copy of his response.

Dear Dr. Vilakazi:

I recently received a copy of your review of my book (*African Studies Review of Books*, v. 4, 1978), *Botswana: Rural Development in the Shadow of Apartheid*. Although I obviously disagree with your overall assessment of the book, I do not feel that it would be productive for me to comment on matters of opinion only. I do feel that I must respond to clear factual errors which appear in your review.

1. You stated that Seretse Khama would have formally become the paramount chief of the Tswana had he not been denied his rightful position by the colonial administration. Khama was in fact denied his position as chief of the Ngwato, not as paramount chief of the Tswana. I must state once again that there is not now, nor has there ever been a paramount chief of the Tswana. Furthermore, the chief of the Ngwato traditionally ranks third, after the Kwena and Ngwaketse chiefs, in seniority in Botswana. It was the colonial administration which, at first inadvertently, but later consciously elevated Seretse to his current status.

2. You seem to raise doubts about the verity of kin group involvement in obtaining confessions in judicial proceedings in the kgotla. Such involvement, coupled with an admission of guilt and regrets often serves to decrease the severity of the sentence to the individual as well as decreasing the moral approbation attached to the kin group. I can assure you that even a relatively short visit to a rural kgotla will confirm this. It should be noted that the kgotla considers cases as serious as cattle theft.

3. You state that I must be unaware of the negative connotations attached to women who brew beer for sale. However, it is just such women who were able to break the sex barrier and successfully guide village development committees and contest district council elections in the rural areas. Such women are able to develop a strong political base because of their control of significant financial resources and communication centers (shebeens). I must stand by my description of these women as successful.

4. I find rather puzzling your suggestion that theories which derive from the American model are inappropriate (p. 34), while on the other hand you suggest that local desegregation and the Concord controversies are somehow relevant for Botswana. I do not think that you can have it both ways.

5. In the first line of your review you state that the "title is misleading for the book is not about rural development." You suggest that only the last two chapters deal with this topic. Perhaps I am mistaken, but it was, and still is my impression that local organizational and institutional capabilities are among the most crucial components of rural development. Thus, traditional authorities (chapter 2), the local political party system (chapter 3), the district council (chapter 4), village development committees and self help efforts (chapter 5) all form an integral part of the process of rural development. Clearly, if one read only the concluding chapter which places rural development in Botswana in a comparative perspective, one would get a somewhat distorted view of the depth and scope of rural development. To conclude that only those chapters whose titles includes the words rural development are related to this topic is rather bad form.

I hope that this letter has served to clarify matters for you.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely
Richard Vengroff
Associate Professor