

**Land, Labour Migration and Politics in Southern Africa: Botswana, Lesotho and Swaziland - D. K. Kowet - 290 - pp.**  
**The Scandinavian Institute of African Studies, Uppsala 1978**

Kowet's book which was published in late 1978 helps to increase the number of publications on the Botswana, Lesotho and Swaziland (BLS) countries' economic and political development further towards an already considerable figure. Naturally one would expect some new information, ideas or insight from any forthcoming study of these aspects, especially when a renowned research institution like the Scandinavian Institute of African Studies in Uppsala (Sweden) renders its support for such an undertaking. Has this expectation been met?

The book has been divided into eight chapters of which three (chapters 2, 3 and 6) deal mainly with the political development of BLS in historical dimensions while chapters 4, 5 and 7 analyse the socio-economic patterns of the three countries. It might be argued that this arrangement of the book, which in the first instance, is orientated along historical lines, makes reading rather difficult. Instead of organising the main subject areas in such a way that they are covered in coherent sections, the author splits them up, which necessitates numerous repetitions and leaps. Taking the extent of BLS migrant labour as an example, the reader looking for statistical information in this matter is referred to three scattered places: figures for 1969 are quoted on p. 10, for the period 1911-1966 on p. 97, and for the years 1967, 1970, 1973 and 1976 on p. 105. Obviously, the given figures are not consistent as some of them refer to recruited (organised) migrant labourers only while others reflect private or official estimates

of the total migrant labour force from BLS including 'spontaneous' migration mainly to South African farms.

The data supplied by the author are indeed one of the weak points of the study. It is difficult to understand why Kowet was unable to draw information from more up-to-date sources than those quoted here. In his introduction, for example, many of the figures presented are those from the late 1960's, e.g., South Africa's GNP for 1968 (p. 13), South Africa's intraregional trade 1965-1968 (p.13), Botswana's foreign trade composition 1962-1968 (p.14), Swaziland's employment figures for 1967 (p.16) etc., although more recent information is easily available and in fact used by the author in the final chapters.

Illustrating the stratification of cattle ownership in Botswana, for example, figures are cited from 1967/1968 in section 3 of chapter 5, while in section 4 of chapter 7 (p.216) and also in the Appendix to chapter 7 (p.228) data for 1974 are given. Furthermore, Kowet states on p. 25, that 'Details for (cattle) ownership (in Lesotho) are not clear, but, from scattered information, it has been estimated that about 70 per cent of the population owned livestock'. Quoting here from Lesotho's First Five-year Development Plan which was published in late 1970, the author at a later stage of his study obviously came across more recent figures and discusses them on p. 220.

The lack of adequate data, therefore, leads the author to various outdated results and even wrong conclusions. On p. 135, for example, he maintains that 'there was no textile industry in Swaziland', although in May 1974 the first project phase of the 'The Textile Mills of Swaziland' had already been completed. Then, on p. 187, the author argues that 'Despite expectations arising from South African support for the post-colonial regimes of Botswana, Lesotho and Swaziland, there was no large-scale economic investments forthcoming from the Republic'. It seems that Kowet has missed some important

developments in this connection, as, for example, Anglo American's activities and investments both in Botswana and Lesotho. Therefore, discussing the diamond business in Lesotho (p. 127), the author does not even mention the new Letseng-la-Terai Mine in the Maluti Mountains which started production in early 1976.

Furthermore, he names the U.K., the R.S.A., Zaire and Zambia as Botswana's principal markets for livestock (p.14), drawing on a study published in 1970. Since then there has been a definite change in the direction of beef exports, with the bulk of meat sales still directed to the U.K., while the R.S.A. has imposed a small weekly quota for Botswana beef and Zaire and Zambia have virtually ceased to import beef from Botswana. Instead, new markets in the Near East and Far East have been developed.

It is stated on p. 133 that '...the Republic (of South Africa) had obtained winter grazing rights in the country, bringing an average of 150 000 sheep, a few goats and horses into Swaziland every year'. These grazing rights were secured by individual trek-sheep farmers from Transvaal, and since 1964 the figure for Transvaal sheep, goats and horses in Swaziland never exceeded 100 000, with roughly 58 000 animals, for example, in 1970.

Several factual mistakes need to be corrected. Kowet, for example, writing on the history of Botswana in colonial times, maintains (p.17): 'The various colonialists started to divide the country amongst themselves... The Southern part was handed over to the Boers in an effort to check their northern advance..., while the eastern part of the country was given to the British South African Company for its ambitious rail project...'. In fact, that part of Bechuanaland which lay south of the Molopo River was declared a British Crown Colony in 1885 while only certain delimited areas in eastern Botswana were ceded to the British South Africa Company.

Discussing the revision of the 1910 Customs Union Agreement in 1969, the author claims (p.23) that

'Infact Lesotho's share of customs duties in the 1969 revised agreement was drastically reduced while that of Botswana and Swaziland were slightly increased'. Again this conclusion is false as both the real income as well as the percentage share of the BLS countries were remarkably increased, as in the case of Lesotho (1969/70) from 1,85m Rand (according to the 1965 distribution formula) to 5,00m Rand (1969 distribution formula), corresponding to a 0,47 resp. 0,92 percentage share of the Common Customs Pool. Although the 1965 formula reduced Lesotho's share from 0,88575% (1910 agreement) to a mere 0,30971%, the revised agreement of 1969 allotted a higher share of the customs pool to all BLS countries than ever before. It is difficult to understand, therefore, why Kowet maintains (p.118) that 'The overall share of the poorest country in the region, Lesotho, was again reduced compared to the other two,...' as under the new 1969 agreement there are no longer fixed percentage shares like under the 1910 and 1965 formula but variable portions for each member state. One is inclined to doubt whether Kowet understood the new distribution formula properly which he cites on p. 117 without even explaining the symbols used.

In this context two other points are slightly incorrect: 'Botswana and Lesotho, together with the Cape Colony and the Orange Free State, were brought into a customs union in 1893... Swaziland was not included until the 1910 customs agreement with the Union of South Africa'. (p.112). Instead, Basutoland and Bechuanaland had joined the Cape Colony and Orange Free State already in 1891, with Swaziland following in 1903, together with Natal, Transvaal and Southern Rhodesia. On the previous page Kowet claims (p.111): 'The Customs Union maximises the extraction of raw materials from the three (BLS) countries, for processing in the Republic.' It would be interesting to know on which provisions of the 1969 agreement Kowet based his assumptions, as in practice the bulk of BLS' raw materials is in fact sold to overseas customers for

further processing (e.g., Botswana beef and minerals; Swaziland sugar and iron ore).

Insufficient information or even omissions of relevant developments and facts help to weaken the quality of this study further. In section 4 of chapter 5 which, besides others, deal with financial institutions in BLS, there is no comment either on Botswana's new currency (since August 1976) or on Swaziland's Lilangeni (with its pari-link to the Rand). Only in one sentence (p.23) does the author indicate that he is aware of new developments in this field. Another relevant information gap might be seen in the lack of any discussion of BLS' link with the EEC within the framework of the Lomé Convention (1975). As most of the provisions of this Convention affect BLS' external trade in one way or another, an analysis of the economic structures of BLS and their dependence on South Africa (section 3 of chapter 5) remains incomplete without looking into the diversification effects of Lomé I. The description of Swaziland's sugar exports (p.130 ff) or Botswana's meat industry (p. 122 ff) is, therefore, outdated and rather of historical value only.

In addition, new developments in the intra-regional physical infrastructure remain untouched, e.g., the new railway link between Phuzumoya in the central Lowveld of Swaziland and Golela (Natal) with its connection to the new Richards Bay harbour; the Lesotho-Transkei border conflict with the resulting improvements and extensions of Lesotho's internal transport network; or the new international airports in Lesotho and Botswana, now under construction.

Finally, some formal points are to be made. First of all, a list of maps is missing in the table of contents. The map on land tenure in Botswana (p.44) is misplaced and should have been included either on p. 34 or p. 35. Secondly, the description of tables in the table of contents differs from that which is actually used on the pages where they are placed (e.g., p. 97, table ?; p. 215, table 3), and/or do not explain the

meaning of the figures quoted there (e.g., p. 188, table 1). Thirdly, authors are named without quoting them in the bibliography (e.g., Marwick - not Marawick - on p. 25), or they are even quoted in different ways (e.g. Berlesen (name!) on p. 143, footnotes 27 and 33 resp. on p. 237 (title, name of magazine!)). Fourthly, a great number of recent important studies on BLS have not been considered by the author, to name only a few: R. Bodenmüller (1973), International Monetary Fund (1973), C. P. Potholm and R. Dale (1972), E. Moody (1974), R. F. Weisfelder (1970 and 1971), J. C. Williams (1972), etc.

All these shortcomings contribute to the general impression that Kowet's study could have benefitted tremendously from a thorough streamlining effort, the checking of new consistent data, and the interpretation of BLS' economic development during the last six years or so. As it is, the book gives hardly any new insight into the problems of land distribution or allocation, labour migration and the political development of BLS but is rather a descriptive summary of already well-known facts, figures and facets.

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