

BOOK REVIEW

Attitudes toward wildlife in Botswana, by A. R. Mordi. Garland Publishing Inc., New York, 1991, 200 pp. \$46.

"In the end, we will conserve only what we love, we will love only what we understand, we will understand only what we are taught" (Baba Dioum). An educated populace is more interested in conservation than is an uneducated one is Baba Dioum's message. Education is not the only factor of importance, though. Richard Mordi's study of attitudes to wildlife and conservation among 555 citizens in Botswana confirms other studies conducted elsewhere in demonstrating that two other correlates are wealth and place of residence. Relatively well-off people and those who live in towns are more interested in conservation and have more positive attitudes about it than do the poor, especially the rural poor. Indeed the rural poor are often adversely affected by wildlife. They don't just see the wildlife on television screens or in magazines; they experience it trampling their fields and taking their livestock. The shopkeeper sitting in his townhouse can afford to like elephants, buffalo, wolves; the small-scale farmer often cannot.

Nevertheless, even among the rural poor, exposure to publicity about wildlife, natural history, and conservation can change opinions. Weber's study of attitudes among rural farmers in Rwanda demonstrates that Dioum is correct in suggesting that knowledge alone, through education, can have a major influence on attitudes, even among the poor. Four years of conservation-oriented publicity in the rural villages around a National Park in Rwanda correlated with a major change in attitude to the Park (Harcourt, 1986; Weber, 1987a,b). The proportion of farmers who saw some value in the Park rose from 49% to 81%; and the proportion who thought that the Park should be degazetted and converted to agriculture dropped from 51% to just 18%.

Being educated, relatively well-off and urban were pervasive and strong correlates of attitudes in Mordi's survey. Another correlate that fairly consistently appeared was gender: men were more knowledgeable and concerned than were women. And cattle-owners tended to differ from those who did not own cattle. These results appear in the book in three forms. We are given the proportion of responses to each of the statements on Mordi's questionnaire that were "agree," "disagree," or "neither"; the mean scores and their statistics for a number of contrasting categories

of the populace; and the results of multivariate statistics which indicate the categories mainly responsible for the differences. I have two different sorts of problems with the results.

One is the nature of the statements on the questionnaire. The statements are not only reversed in content, e.g., lions eat fruit, worms play no part in the ecosystem, the giraffe is not beautiful; they are also sometimes reversed in form. Here I think respondents might have had difficulties. I certainly did double-takes. "A parrot's ability to speak is not fascinating." "What attracts me to a zebra is not its skin markings." If I were in a hurry, distracted by my children, nervous of being asked questions by 'The Government', I can imagine that I would misinterpret some of these statements. Even if we accept the results at their face value, there is still a difficulty. As far as I can see, variables in the middle five tables are presented the wrong way round. High scores should indicate attitudes favourable to conservation, according to the text. However, the data in the tables on 'ecologistic', 'moralistic', 'naturalistic', 'scientific', and 'humanistic' attitudes show the opposite, so that text and tables contradict one another. When we get to 'neutralistic', 'negativistic' and 'theologistic' attitudes, text and tables once again agree.

There are not many studies of attitudes and their correlates in Third World countries. For this reason alone, this book deserves to be widely read, even if it does come across as the Ph.D. thesis that it is. However, I am afraid that the carelessness in the tables will turn readers away if they notice it, or lead to mistaken perception of the results if they do not. (As an aside, can I ask why the social sciences are so prone to unnecessary neologisms? What is wrong with 'ecological', 'neutral', 'negative', 'religious', or 'scientific' as adjectives, especially when in fact, for example, 'negative', not 'negativistic', is surely the intended meaning? Or do social scientists not wish their work to be understood and used by people from other disciplines, or by those whose first language is other than English?)

In his opening chapter, Richard Morti describes the all important socioeconomic and ecological situation in Botswana. In Botswana, as in many African countries, conservation was and is largely imposed by governmental decree, as opposed to the will of the people. There are few grassroots' equivalents to America's Sierra Club, for example. He is clearly impressed with the government's attitude and efforts, but makes some perhaps exaggerated claims about its preeminence. "More than any other country in Africa, the government in Botswana has gone to extraordinary lengths . . ." But Tanzania, too, has two wild animals prominent as part of its coat of arms; Tanzania too, and Rwanda, have animals on their banknotes; both have issued many stamps displaying animals of the country; and both have large proportions of their land area gazetted as wilderness Reserves. President Nyerere of Tanzania's Arusha Declaration made a quarter of a century ago is famous among African conser-

vationists for its prescient attitude to conservation of the country's wild-life. I am not denigrating Botswana's conservation efforts, or Mordi's appreciation of them, but I think it important for people in the industrialised world to realise how deep is the commitment to conservation of many African states and individuals in the face of far more severe socioeconomic problems than we in the West face.

Let me say that I read the book and wrote this review as a conservationist. The results are important, and should reinforce our attempts to persuade some conservation organisations that provision of education, rather than guns, might be the better long-term solution. The book could also be read as a case study by a sociologist or social psychologist, or by anyone else interested in how peoples' socioeconomic background influences their attitudes to anything. As far as I can tell, Mordi wrote for both audiences, conservationist and social scientist. The topic is attitudes to conservation, but he applies Everett Rogers' ideas about diffusion of innovation and Abraham Maslow's about hierarchies of needs to the results. Conservationists have become interested in the field of determinants of attitudes with the realisation that what goes on outside ecosystems is just as important, maybe even more important, than what goes on inside them. The people on the ground charged with management of wilderness have known this for a long time, of course. Nevertheless, up until the last decade or so, conservation was done by biologists and the equivalent of policemen. That is now changing, and many different disciplines are becoming involved in conservation oriented studies, and indeed, conservation oriented development programmes. I hope that this book will stimulate both further study and action.

What action? Richard Mordi's findings emphasise yet again the tragedy of conservation in the Third World. The people of the Third World need to conserve the environment more than the West does, for they are so much more immediately dependent on it. In the USA, when a forest goes, we lose a place to take an afternoon walk; in the Third World, a source of fuel and a barrier against flood and erosion disappears. The poor should benefit most from conservation of Africa, because they depend the most on a healthy environment. And yet it is often the poor who can least afford to adopt the long-term thinking that is so necessary. They cannot cut back today to ensure enough for tomorrow: they do not have sufficient for today. Over much of Africa, wilderness is invaded neither for pleasure, nor for profit, but out of necessity. Only by removing that necessity can the wilderness be saved in the long run.

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