

REASONABLE RADICALS

and Citizenship in Botswana

The Public Anthropology of Kalanga Elites



Richard Werbner

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African Systems of Thought

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TO PNINA
JUST FOR YOU

CONTENTS

<i>Acknowledgments</i>	ix
Introduction: <i>Reflections and Frontiers</i>	1
PART 1. CITIZENS NEGOTIATING POWER	
<i>Elites, Minorities, and Tribal Bureaucrats</i>	
1. Postcolonial Wisdom: <i>The Post–Civil Service and the Public Good</i>	13
2. The Minorities Debate	32
3. The Politics of Recognition and “Pressure Groups”	48
4. Cosmopolitan Ethnicity, Entrepreneurship, and the Nation	63
5. Official Blundering and the Discredited Commission	86
6. Land, Clients, and Tribal Bureaucrats	109
PART 2. THE RISE OF PUBLIC MAN	
<i>Elders</i>	
7. Bringing Back the Dead	133
8. Public Officer, Public Officer Emeritus	146
9. The Making of a Reasonable Radical	162
Epilogue: <i>Postcolonial Wisdom, Beyond Afro-pessimism</i>	188
<i>Notes</i>	205
<i>References</i>	221
<i>Author Index</i>	235
<i>Subject Index</i>	239

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Reasonable
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Introduction

Reflections and Frontiers

Reasonable radicals are apparently rare in postcolonial Africa. Commanding the center stage from one scene of crisis to the next, in innumerable accounts, are the vengeful agents of political violence, the dislocated and dispossessed; and, at their head, the predatory tyrants in the making, commanders of the “boys from the bush,” colonels, generals, and eventually presidents. Offstage, muttering their “hidden transcripts,” are the subaltern masses. The agents of political violence do not appear alone, of course. With them and often prominent in their midst stand the African Big Men, alias the kleptomaniacs, and somewhat behind their backs scurry the agents of mismanagement, the swollen legions of self-serving or mindless bureaucrats. Their unsavory reputations for turning the state into an amoral market for profit from the highest bidder or an extractive machine in the hands of a dominant class, beyond popular control, overwhelm the Africanist literature of the postcolony, at least since the nineties.

Virtually untold, and apparently out of the minds and well beyond the hopes of the people themselves, are African concerns for the public good. It is as if, for Africa, questions need not be asked about the force of ethics—professional, personal, communal, and commercial—or the weight of popular demand in the balance of power effecting better, more responsive governance. Instead, the answers are taken to be obvious; the lived-in African

world is envisioned as an anxious Western gothic nightmare. If wracked by emiseration, xenophobia, abjection, and run-away capitalism, it appears, on the waves of global markets, to be barely a bubble. The polemical rejoinder to any talk of civil society in Africa is a vision of “the potential ravages of an exploding and uncontrollable civil society” (Fatton 1995, 73). What largely rules debate is Afro-pessimism, that intellectual movement in which “analysts create generic models of African governments that include ‘lame leviathans,’ ‘swollen states,’ ‘kleptocracies,’ and ‘vampire states’” (Stedman 1993, 1). Indeed, so strong is the movement that only utter disbelief, well beyond mere critical doubt, can be expected for alternative findings and counter-arguments, “A Switzerland in Africa? You must be joking!”¹ Or, as one leading Africanist put it dismissively, “Do you mean Botswana? The place is boring, almost as boring as Malawi!”

Against Afro-pessimism, the public anthropology of Botswana has a critical part to play in rewriting the current Africanist agenda. The reasons for that spring as much from the fresh theoretical directions in public anthropology as from the increasing comparative interest in Botswana’s postcolonial transformations.

CRITICAL PUBLIC ANTHROPOLOGY AND THE EXEMPLARY POSTCOLONY

As more and more African countries move toward democracy, the historic moment calls for a new critical public anthropology to illuminate the unexpected and hitherto little considered transformations that are taking place in postcolonial Africa. This is not to advocate a return to romanticism, which ignores binding contradictions and endemic conflict. There is no excuse for the blind eye that was so often turned to tyranny, to “the politics of the belly” (Bayart 1993) and “the criminalization of the state” (Bayart, Ellis, and Hibou 1999). Nor can there be any retreat to the moment when the early postcolonial tide of enthusiasm for decolonization in Africa swept much critical analysis away. Instead, the needed vision in public anthropology is unblinkered—it keeps that murky background unobscured, while foregrounding a growing body of hopeful evidence from social scientists and historians which documents the emergence in Africa of another kind of postcolony. In that emerging postcolony, the capable state is not profligate or predatory but has institutional strength and legitimacy, and a substantial base in popular support. Leadership comes from elites, and if sometimes popularly perceived to be blunder prone, it is overwhelmingly seen to be subject to negotiation rather than driven by tyranny or unbridled exploitation.

Botswana exemplifies such a postcolony. How exceptional it is in Africa is controversial in wider debates, unconfined to an academic community of Africanists. Indeed, for citizens of Botswana themselves, the emerging postcolony is surprising, a new polity exceeding their past expectations and

INTRODUCTION

largely, if not wholly, desirable. The country's postcolonial development is hopeful and, in being full of potential and capability, is welcomed by citizens; it is increasingly being realized through a relatively open society that sustains values of civic virtue and civility in the public sphere. It is, of course, not without its fresh predicaments and uncertainties, strikingly manifest in intensified public debates, scare headlines in sensational newspapers, and passing moments of confrontation in long-term struggles over the direction of state and nation building.

There is a simple reason for the importance of Botswana in the revised Africanist agenda. It is not because so much is now being written for and against the view that Botswana is the best postcolonial proof of the possibility of a transition in Africa to a dominant model of liberal or deliberative democracy; or that in so many other ways—from the relative lack of corruption to the increasing public welfare—Botswana appears to be the exception that proves the rule in postcolonial Africa. Admittedly these debates are significant for Botswana's citizens themselves, and thus necessarily enter into the arguments by and about elites in Botswana. But even beyond that, what makes Botswana so important is both its similarity and its difference; the ground, with all its conflicting and opposing tendencies, is not totally unfamiliar to Africanists, and the country actually has its share of much wider postcolonial conflicts and predicaments. Botswana is, nevertheless, an extreme example of the postcolony emerging with the capable state and the relatively open society.

By focusing on Botswana, this book discloses postcolonial wisdom and practice that have largely been ignored in Africanist accounts of the contributions elites make to state and nation building, especially the contributions by minorities. My intent is to widen knowledge of and theoretical interest in public debates about rights, citizenship, and political morality in the postcolony at a time of historic transition in Africa—the so-called Age of Democracy or era of political pluralism (see Werbner 2004b). Another and even broader aim is to counter that intellectually dominant movement, Afro-pessimism, by rewriting the Africanist agenda.

Afro-pessimism has had its day. The time has come for a reevaluation of prospects for the continent, starting with a stream of hopeful yet informed and critical studies of postcolonial transformation in Botswana. In my view, the political scientist J. Stephen Morrison is right to argue that the building of a strong state in Botswana has been heavily influenced, from the very beginning of the postcolony, by an “ethos of state action”:

There emerged (1) a distinct *ethos of state action*, the primacy of commercial criteria, the high value placed upon compromise, stability, security and the systematic accommodation of competing interests, and (2) durable *patterns of elite interaction* linking producers, state authorities and external interests. (1993, 27)

The complement to Morrison's argument, put by the development economist Stephen Lewis Jr., on the basis of his considerable, long-term experience in Botswana, is well summarized by Stephen Stedman in his introduction to an important collection of essays on good governance, democracy and development in Botswana:

Botswana's leaders understood the importance of planning for sustaining long-term growth, of good organization for optimal bargaining with donors and foreign corporations, and of discussion and learning for reconciling tradeoffs between political and economic goods. (Stedman 1993, 3; summarizing Lewis 1993)

On the basis of analyses by Morrison, Lewis, and others, Pierre du Toit recognizes the postcolonial wisdom which Botswana's elites as state builders have brought to bear in deliberate policy choices, and suggests that their ethos of state action has had the following general logic:

(1) [The state builders] reached a consensus on the basis of shared commercial priorities. (2) They were aware of and appreciated the constraints inherent in pervasive conditions of scarcity and at the same time accepted the need for discipline and deferred gratification. (3) They made appropriate institutional arrangements to separate the private and public sectors and gave each sector adequate rules to enforce the discipline that is necessary when resources are limited. In addition (4), they realistically assessed regional and global forces and made an astute bargain between the constraints and the opportunities presented by those forces. (du Toit 1995, 65)

My analysis, like those of Morrison, Lewis, and du Toit, foregrounds not merely the ethos of state action but also its problematic realization in practice, pitfalls, blunders, failures, all seen in proportion to remarkable accomplishments in state building (see also Samatar 1999, and chapters 4 and 5 in the present volume).

FORUM AS PROCESS, "CULTURE," AND THE NEW PUBLIC ANTHROPOLOGY

Along with a revised Africanist agenda, my arguments advocate an approach through public anthropology to the forum as process. Public anthropology in Africa is navigating an uncharted course past the Scylla and Charybdis of a new moment in analysis. At one extreme, because of the very force of anthropology at its best—from rapport in depth through participant-observation during long-term fieldwork, from holistic analysis, from integrated ethnography, from middle-range theories not abstracted but culturally and socially specific—there is the hazard of disengagement. It is the temptation for anthropologists to go on doing the same things, fixed on usual approaches, illuminating for stability in the *longue durée* but perhaps less sensitive to emergence in the immediate moment, its demands and interests.

INTRODUCTION

In such overconfidence, the new moment and its fresh issues of the day get fragmented into familiar old pieces, and no more, a reactionary delusion likely to crush the voyage, at the very start, on the rocks of anthropological self-deception. At the other extreme, the very engagement in public issues of the day threatens to overwhelm the analysis in a whirlpool of the latest ephemera. Here anthropology faces the hazards not from making any special contribution of its own but from dissolving into other subjects, perhaps better equipped to navigate the flood of media representations, including the stop-press news.

The distinctiveness of the public anthropological perspective emerges in a productive tension. It recognizes, on the one hand, that the issues considered are broad and topical, and that they are controversial in local, national and international debate over public policy. But, on the other hand, it also keeps in view the requirement for the kind of intimate knowledge, personal understanding, and intensive fieldwork that mark an anthropologist's expertise. Meeting that requirement, the essential ground for any anthropological study of the forum as process makes it possible for public anthropology to turn usefully to newspaper columns and cartoons, court documents and archival records, no less than to the findings of other social scientists and historians. For public anthropology, crossing disciplinary frontiers is inescapable. However, that only gains its right momentum, productive in cross-fertilization, when anthropologists meet the further challenge of rethinking yet building on method and theory within the discipline.

Rethinking in anthropology has its ironies—indeed, all the more so when one of the issues of the day is anthropology's haunting specter, "culture." Morally and politically passionate talk about "our culture" and "their culture" is now a commonplace in Africa as elsewhere. More controversially, as the debate about minorities in Botswana shows, "the right to a culture" is often deliberately asserted in rhetoric that is global, and thus has an international appeal above all to United Nations agencies. Such culture talk often assumes that culture is a certain entity that belongs essentially to a particular group of people—national culture, to the nation; ethnic or tribal culture, to the ethnic group or tribe. Reified as an entity, "culture" turns out to be a popular version of the concept that historically has been contentious among anthropologists and which many are now increasingly rejecting, namely, a relatively stable whole of shared values, beliefs, and customs, some of which form an essential core reproduced from generation to generation.

In a discussion of rights and culture as emergent global discourses, Jane Cowan, Marie-Benedicte Dembour, and Richard Wilson remark on this.

The popular conception that a group is defined by a distinctive culture and that cultures are discrete, clearly bounded and internally homogeneous, with relatively fixed meanings and values—what we call an *essentialist* view of "culture"—echoes what was until recently a dominant, if con-

tested . . . , understanding of “culture” within the discipline of anthropology. (2001, 3)

Cowan, Dembour, and Wilson go on to spell out the clash of ideas and the surprising predicament in which anthropologists find themselves, both in fieldwork and as themselves citizens and parties to political debates about cultural rights.

Intriguingly, in the 1980’s, at the very moment in which anthropologists were engaged in an intense and wide-ranging critique especially of the more essentialist interpretations of the concept, to the point of querying its usefulness at all, they found themselves witnessing, often during fieldwork, the increasing prevalence of “culture” as a rhetorical object—often in a highly essentialized form—in contemporary political talk. (Ibid.)

The predicament, they rightly argue, is not one that anthropologists can resolve by dismissing “culturalist” claims as misconceived, on essentialist grounds, whether they be “the right to a culture” or rights derived from upholding the survival of a culture.

The comparative thrust in anthropology does give anthropologists a rejoinder, however. That is the relatedness and interrelatedness of cultures, none of which is a given entity bounded unto itself, but each of which people continually reconstitute in the course of their engagements with others more or less like themselves. Applying this concept of cultural relation opens the way for anthropologists to make significant contributions that are interventions in the public debate and, in turn, reflections on its course and consequences. It turns “culture” from being a self-contained monologue to being full of arguments, a more or less open dialogue, and it is thus a useful concept for an anthropological perspective on the forum as a public process. What comes to the fore, as a result, is a perspective more focused on the negotiation of difference, and hence a perspective more illuminating for the new forms of political and cultural pluralism now emerging in Africa. It is from this perspective that I make my relational analysis in this book, and put forward my own arguments about, among other things, permeable ethnicities, mirrored tribalism, cosmopolitan ethnicity, legal pluralism and transplanted quasi-bureaucracy, and the tradition of reasonable radicals.

A widespread truth of sociality in many parts of postcolonial Africa makes the public anthropological perspective especially promising for a relational analysis. More often than not, Africans living in postcolonial cities are urban villagers, straddling town and country; an urban villager is a villager *and* a townsman, if sometimes more one than the other.² At a distance, a home in a village or tribe is an imagined place for urban villagers, but it is also a social and cultural universe which they do not entirely abandon and from which they do not easily disengage, however much they try to finesse or even escape its pressing demands on them.

Given such rural-urban dynamics, the forum as process in Africa is nec-

INTRODUCTION

essarily translocal. Even more, it is a process that has to be studied with a depth of knowledge about home and village origins; it calls for an intimate understanding of the dense networks through which even remote villages penetrate the city and exert influence over city dwellers.³ In Botswana, for example, to analyze postcolonial citizenship in the context of current political debate requires addressing questions of the tribe, its contested political culture, its rights and claims, as well as the positioning of its elites in relation to the state and affairs at the capital. For such analysis, anthropologists have a well-known strength in Botswana, as elsewhere in Africa; they overwhelmingly start, like the people themselves, from the home universe, from the countryside, which they usually get to know well before researching the towns and cities. There are notable exceptions to this, even in Botswana where urban anthropological research is in its pioneering moment (van Binsbergen 1993, 1994; Durham 1995, 1999, 2002a, 2002b; Durham and Klaitz 2002; Klaitz 2002). But just as straddling is increasingly problematic for the people themselves, it also presents fresh problems for anthropologists committed to a public anthropological perspective. Perhaps most important is the translocation of anthropology itself.

In Africa, as elsewhere, anthropologists have a well-earned reputation for being comfortable in local settings. One reaction to that, increasingly important within the discipline, is the argument that this comfort now comes at the wrong time. Or rather, anthropologists may have to undergo the very real discomfort, methodological no less than physical, of doing multi-sited fieldwork in significantly unlike contexts in order to make the observations of cultural and social flows that are now needed (Gupta and Ferguson 1997). But anthropologists rightly take pride in letting the people they study lead them. In following the move from country to town and back there arises the immediate challenge for public anthropology in Africa: to straddle, both in fieldwork and in theory. The great issues of the day, no less than the people themselves, flow urgently across any supposed rural-urban divide, and so, too, must anthropological research. The ethnography of African capitals is only beginning to be written, and yet many a capital is to the countryside as the whale was to Jonah, but repeatedly so, first swallowing up vast numbers of people and then regurgitating them in great streams. The more public anthropology builds on its strength in countryside research, the more likely it is to reach greater strength in related research in town.

STUDYING UP

Public anthropology in Africa is ripe for what Laura Nader (1972), having America mainly in mind, long ago wryly called “Up the Anthropologist,” “studying up,” and addressing power and politics at the national level. The dearth of anthropological research in Africa on national elites and their upward mobility is remarkable. How do national elites manage their position-

ing at the capital in relation to their own and others' straddling? How and why do different national elites participate in various ways in the forum as process? How is that process constituted, as they see it? These are among the many pressing questions about which public anthropology should have much to say.

In my view, such a contribution calls for a shift away from the Machiavelian suspicion of elites. The anthropologist's guiding idea can no longer be that every elite act for the public good is no more than a dissembling appearance—power not naked but in one of its seductive disguises, another trick by the ruling group to maintain domination. That as a guiding idea—looking for the worst in the good—turns the anthropologist smugly to the muckraker's task of unmasking or, more pretentiously, to all-knowing deconstruction. It is as if the anthropologist were so objective an outsider as to be free of any illusion, especially not those of the subjects themselves. Instead, for a truly public anthropology, extending to the analysis of moral and political leadership in public life, anthropologists have to bring to elites, and to their public conduct, the same empathy and insight that anthropologists bring to the rest of the people they study. On that basis, as an essential requirement, public anthropology becomes informed by intimate understanding along with commitment to the subjects themselves, and yet still engaged in critique.

It may well be that "studying up," particularly in Africa, is a research strategy that demands the cultural competence and social networks of a known, experienced fieldworker. Possibly, also, the anthropologist must first become familiar with elites over a reasonable period on a casual basis, while doing other research, and not with the intent of doing systematic fieldwork among elites. Elites may have good reasons, not necessarily Machiavellian ones only, for wanting to observe and know the anthropologist closely before being ready to cooperate in the many ways needed for elite research.

This view of elite research reflects my own experience in Botswana. First, as I explain more fully in chapters 1 and 4, I got to know a circle of friends early in their careers and mine. Many years later I became conscious of the value and interest in urban elite research, and also its welcome among now prominent elites, on the basis of our mutual trust; and then I began the intensive fieldwork at the capital with a good deal of personal knowledge and a few general working hypotheses, perhaps more like curious hunches than anything else.

I want to stress my implication in elite sociality and the fact that this and long experience in other fieldwork in rural areas moved me toward the elite study at the capital. I emphasize that point, in part, to make the subjective dimension of my research plain. Another reason is to leave no doubt that I argue as an anthropologist who has enduring ties and strong commitments in Botswana, sustained over nearly forty years, that influence my perspective on controversial issues. When it comes to minority issues, in particular, I do

INTRODUCTION

not stand aside, nor do I pretend to have equal sympathy with all points of view. In taking care also to respect the confidentiality of what I was told and observed, I held long-distance conversations with some of the elites, even after I left the country; and they read and commented on drafts of nearly all the chapters of this book. The very nature of what I am studying, the forum as process, demands that one speak from a known position and with recognizable commitments. My contention is, therefore, that my arguments and explanations as an engaged anthropologist are all the more open to examination in the light of public and reasonable standards because I position myself and my contributions clearly within the various ongoing debates, which is the only meaningful basis for professional objectivity.

ETHNOGRAPHY IN A SECOND POSTCOLONIAL ERA

With that said about positioning and the relation between subjectivity and objectivity in research on elites and public debate, I want to conclude these initial reflections by commenting briefly on ethnographic method in public anthropology at this time in Africa. It is widely recognized to be a time of renewed political debate in a second postcolonial era, an era of emerging pluralism, after nearly all the nation-building tyrants have had their all too long day. Ethnography now has to show how far and in which ways that debate is constitutive of the public sphere. Instead of a focus on violence in collapsed states, the ethnography of the second postcolonial era has to pay more attention to reasonable deliberation, to the political art of negotiated power in good governance, and to the analysis in ethnic relations of the buildup of trust and accommodation, rather than merely conflict and competition.

Taking these requirements seriously, my study foregrounds the leadership of elites, their voice and agency. Aware of the intersubjective importance of conviviality in this era (Nyamnjoh 2002a; Werbner 2002a), I take care to locate a circle of national elites at the capital both within a leisure context, a favorite sports club and its Top Table forum, and within a wider network around the interlocking big-business directorates and the civil service's decision-making echelon. In following the circle further, I document the public argumentation through which minority members of the elite participate in a characteristic of this new era of pluralism, namely, the politics of recognition. By also documenting majoritarian reactions and counter-pressures, I am able to disclose how the adversaries have to put their arguments in terms of democratic ideals and appeals to shared nationhood. These and other steps in my account, covering a series of affairs, culminate in *reflexive unfolding*, an approach to relating the biography of an actual member of the national elite. In my view, this approach and the biography itself begin to shed light on crucial dimensions of elite voice and agency, which, until now, have largely been obscured. Social historians and anthropologists, sympathetic to urban

workers, rural villagers, or even chiefs, have illuminated their life histories, reporting them at some length. But when it comes to decision-making civil servants or company managers and directors, postcolonial studies have advanced their elite scenarios largely with faceless figures, “the ruling group.” What has been missing from postcolonial studies of Africa has been even a single *contextualized* biography of such a figure, and, by contextualized, I mean an account that presents the subject’s own words and self-representations within a full analysis, at once cultural, social, political, and historical. My account locates an actual individual, Gobe Willie Matenge, within a national elite circle and, looking back from his distinguished elderhood, traces his views, formative experiences, and substantial contributions as a public man through his public life course. In my view, the way forward for public anthropology in postcolonial Africa is through such biographical ethnography, illuminating the study of public man and the forum as process.

Part 1.

CITIZENS NEGOTIATING POWER

Elites, Minorities, and Tribal Bureaucrats

1

Postcolonial Wisdom

The Post–Civil Service and the Public Good

I began my southern African research among Kalanga in Zimbabwe, then Southern Rhodesia, in the aftermath of a state emergency, in 1960. It was after riots, both urban and rural, the recent banning of one nationalist party, and the rise of another. There was an atmosphere of suspicion. Police intimidation reached remote areas of the countryside, including Bango Chiefdom, the home chiefdom of the nationalist leader Joshua Nkomo, where I began my fieldwork. It was a time of troubles, about to get worse before getting better and, sadly, now even worse. It was an early moment, heralding the liberation struggle, the civil war, and the time of state terror among Kalanga about which I report in *Tears of the Dead* (Werbner 1991) and elsewhere (Werbner 1996, 1998a, 1998b).

Before I left Manchester, my teacher, Max Gluckman, gave me characteristic advice, based, so history tells us, on his own youthful mistakes, being politically outspoken, in Zululand: “Keep your eyes and your ears open, but your mouth shut.” It was hard, I learned to my cost. Admittedly I did try, more or less, to follow his advice, but I found it did not actually help me to avoid an occupational hazard of research by anthropologists in times of state emergency: I was made a prohibited immigrant in Rhodesia. It was only years later that I was allowed to return to that country, after Zimbabwe gained its independence.

Here I want to introduce an alternative perspective on postcolonial citizenship by drawing the contrast to my most recent experience of a state emergency, this time in Botswana. Scare headlines in Botswana's newspapers for September 1999 flash the state emergency in bold type, "**Mogae Blunders**"; "**The Buck Stops Here,**" and beneath the headlines is a photo of President Festus Mogae holding his head in his hands, in anguish (*Botswana Guardian*, 10 September 1999; *Mmegi*, 10–16 September 1999). It is all about a ballot blunder, not a matter of a deliberate election fraud, as in Zimbabwe in 2002, but a simple mistake. The fault was a mere bureaucratic technicality, but if not redressed, it would have undone a major registration campaign, lost sixty thousand voters from the roll, and possibly opened legal challenges to the legitimacy of the election. The President took full responsibility. He accepted the blame; the buck did stop there. He used the only constitutional way out of the mess. Having had parliament prorogued, he had to declare an emergency, recalling parliament, in order to validate a completed roll, including the nearly lost voters.

The outcome in Botswana was a state emergency like no other on the continent. No one was brutalized by thugs or by the police. There were no interruptions of public peace, no suspensions of civil order, no threats against a minority, no massacres, no waving of weapons by the police or army, no tanks rolling into the capital. Most people went about their everyday lives, as if it was business as usual. To top it all, the head of state took full responsibility and apologized to the nation for a political mess. Even his muckraking critics in the newspapers, somewhat grudgingly, had a good editorial to praise him for that. The contrast to the turbulent, brutalizing state of emergency, fresh and all too familiar in Zimbabwe and elsewhere in the region, is so stark that it speaks for itself.

In Zimbabwe, sadly, as in too many other parts of Africa, the state emergency, often under draconian laws from colonial or settler regimes, forces ahead deep alienation from the state. As in the most recent abuse of the electoral process, the thuggery ensuring Robert Mugabe's fraudulent reelection to the presidency in 2002, many citizens come away with the postcolonial wisdom that what they want from the state it cannot deliver, and what it does deliver they fear, suspect, or try to get around by any means, be it devious or subversive. They identify the state with the chefs, with the ruling few, with others not themselves.

That is not the case in Botswana.¹ Past the test of the country's first state emergency, popular identification with the state remains strong, full of demands and hopes for greater fulfillment in public welfare, social justice, and, in a word that has actually not gone sour in Botswana, "development" (on the perception of the Botswana state as "a civic state, enabling personal development and initiative"; see Durham 2003, 174). Such expectation is, after all, not fundamentally a matter of economics but of morals, of a vision

of the public good; and, in Botswana, popular sentiment still legitimizes the state as a leading source of the public good.

DEMOCRACY ON THE HORIZON

Here let me be faithful to a postcolonial perception that is widespread in Botswana itself—democracy is not a secured condition, democracy is a promise, ever to be more fulfilled by being fought for. Democracy is, as it were, a vision of utopia, a horizon of potential. People talk most of the actual shortcomings they find by their own measures and aspirations for governance and social justice (see Durham 2002, 2003). They are not content to be told that there is much fulfillment by comparison to the failures or collapse of other states elsewhere in Africa.

Originally, and for at least the first postcolonial decade, Botswana's citizens had to rely, for a newspaper, on the official representation of the order of things in a government handout, the *Botswana Daily News*. But the number and circulation of their newspapers has grown to match a voracious appetite for political gossip and exposes, largely sustained by advertising from state institutions, parastatals, public enterprises, and even the abundance of international or national nongovernmental organizations (NGOs).² This is not to say that the government has handed the right to sharp criticism on a platter to the free press. Rather, the battle has been uphill each major step of the way, as journalists and elite professionals described it to me.³ Sometimes it has been waged behind the scenes, with informal pressures, even threats, to restrain the press, and sometimes very openly, for example, in a government attempt, in 2001, to stop public funds for advertising in certain "sensationalist" newspapers, this being a move the press defeated in a landmark court victory for freedom of speech.⁴ The point is that the public sphere is thriving, for the very reason that the battle is still going ahead, and it is energized by critical demands for more open democracy, good governance, and a responsible press.

I want to stress the critical role of the press. Government accountability is not at the mercy of technocrat wisdom but, rather, is the result of intense public debate, arising from controversial exposure in the press. Other pressures making for good governance through accountability come from the struggles between rival or opposed ministries and, increasingly, in the rough and tumble of more informed and openly critical parliamentary debate. It is the press, however, that has most often spearheaded dissent in very sensitive issues, as the present critique of the government's relocation policy for Kalahari peoples shows. The press has fully reported San activists' objections to being dispossessed by the government's heavy-handed measures for relocation outside the Central Kalahari Game Reserve.⁵ Highlighting international opinion, now being mobilized in campaigns by NGOs concerned

about indigenous peoples, the press has also criticized the government for intransigence in its relocation policy. Only one San settlement is “in the vicinity of the mine lease area [licensed by the government for exploration and development], attracted to the site by the water that the prospecting company intersected during drilling” (Taylor and Mokhawa 2003, 278). Nevertheless, the press warns, implementing the relocation policy has put at risk not merely the country’s reputation for good governance but also the credibility of its diamonds as “clean” and “conflict-free diamonds.” As *Mmegi/The Reporter* editorialized,

The implications of this campaign [over the relocation of the San] will be far reaching for the economy. As the campaign has already hit Europe, chances are that it will sooner or later snowball to the United States and Japan [major buyers of Botswana’s diamonds]. Once this has transpired, recent initiatives by both Debswana [the country’s partially state-owned diamond mining company] and the government to depict Botswana diamonds as clean will come to naught. It will turn out that ours are also blood-stained diamonds, extracted from the suffering of the very people whom the Botswana government purports to develop. (15–21 February, cited in Taylor and Mokhawa 2003, 282)

Recently a woman from Botswana won the Miss Universe contest. But Botswana is not the unblemished winner of a Beauty Contest in the eyes of the country’s own people. Many feel that they know their own situation, warts and all, too well for that—they are too aware of scandals, newspaper revelations, and the thriving critique in the public sphere. They know about central planning and are beginning to fear overplanning and the endless paperwork for permits and other official documents. What used to be called the “bush wire” is now called Radio Mall, after the capital’s busy walkway, but the fine news of the human frailties of the powerful, especially their abuse of office for personal gain, still speeds by gossip and scandal to remote places. Botswana⁶ have long had a rich political rhetoric for what Max Gluckman called the Frailty in Authority (Gluckman 1955). Hence many citizens of Botswana are reluctant to take the award for having Africa’s oldest democracy, following Independence in 1966, in the same euphoric spirit as they feel toward Mpule’s winning the Miss Universe title for Botswana. But then some dare to be critical about that, too.

VISION 2016, POVERTY, AND THE FINANCIAL OPTION

In Botswana’s first decades the country had repeated floods of expatriates, known as “when we’s,” offering advice from “when we were” somewhere else, Ghana, Tanzania, Malawi, even Zambia. But Botswana’s citizens themselves now often speak as “when we’s”—as having been on missions abroad “when we saw” examples of failures in Africa or elsewhere, examples of what not to do in Botswana. To this chorus Stephen Lewis Jr., one of Botswana’s

most long-serving and influential expatriate consultants on economic policy, adds almost “a praise poem” for Botswana’s enviable record: “Some considerable share of Botswana’s economic success can be attributed to the government’s unwillingness to yield to pressures for ideologically based development policies that produced investment failures in so many other countries” (1993, 23). Possibly inspired originally by the former president Quett Masire’s trips to the Pacific Rim and the Tiger Economies, Botswana at last has an ideological manifesto of its own for the country’s big picture. It is a public vision for the future of the country as a whole, put forward under state sponsorship by a panel of eminent citizens in a position paper, *Vision 2016* (Republic of Botswana 1997).

Economically the scale of growth across the country is phenomenal, immense, and unprecedented. For decades Botswana has had among the highest rates of growth in GNP in the world (Edge 1998, 338). Formal sector employment more than doubled over a recent five-year period, a great boom from 1985 to 1991, when government-sponsored construction projects provided vast numbers of urban, mainly low-paid jobs (Edge 1998, 340). Expansion of both the civil service and the entire state sector has been at an exponential rate. Throughout the country vast public works are still in progress, from court buildings, hospitals, schools, and roads to many hundreds of other development projects, including widespread rural electrification, telephone networks, dams, cross-country water carriers, and other basics of infrastructure. Also introduced in the past decade are substantial measures for public welfare, including old-age pensions, and with the aim of creating a highly skilled workforce, the government’s policy, before the need for heavy expenditure to deal with the AIDS pandemic, was to make spending for free education the highest in the national budget. And in the face of the AIDS pandemic, the government, in cooperation with foreign donors, is taking a lead in Africa in the provision of a comprehensive HIV/AIDS prevention care and treatment program. During my recent fieldwork the Minister of Health, Joy Phumaphi, had a reputation for being both a pragmatist and a visionary determined to reform an over-bureaucratized health service in order to provide the essential infrastructure for AIDS prevention and care.⁷ As of January 2002 the government is meeting half the cost of this program, some \$100 million over five years, and the other half is being provided in the form of \$50 million from the Gates Foundation and an equivalent contribution in antiretroviral medicines from the U.S. drug manufacturer Merck (Rollnick 2002; United Nations Development Program [UNDP] 2000). In May 2003 the HIV Vaccine Trials Network launched a joint trial of a new vaccine in Botswana and the United States (Carrol 2003, 13).

It is worth saying that there has been international recognition, even *imprimatur*, for the country’s ongoing accomplishment. On the human development index of the United Nations Development Program, Botswana had the highest absolute increase for the period from 1970 to 1990 (Edge



Figure 1. The former Minister of Health, now Assistant Director General, World Health Organization, Joy Phumaphi MP, wearing the AIDS emblem, at an election fund-raising dinner in Francistown.
Photo by the author.

1998, 338; Jefferis 1998, 300), a standing that, more recently, to great public concern, the spread of the AIDS virus has seriously undermined. But important as outside recognition is for future growth with international investment, what counts is the widespread recognition within the country that a huge change is going ahead, backed by the state, under the credible name of development for the public good.

It is easy, I am well aware, to be full of doubts, skeptical, or uneasy about this ongoing accomplishment, and particularly about my underlying subject, the contribution of elites to the public good and their postcolonial wisdom as technocrats turned managers and directors (see note 1). Is the picture too rosy? Some anthropologists, if not most working elsewhere in Africa, might say yes. After all, most anthropologists, being populists, have precious little sympathy for the rich or elites, or even bureaucrats and technocrats for that matter. We tend to give them a bad press, while we want to identify with

the poor. And, as Africanists, we know too much by now about things falling apart to go back easily to the heady, optimistic days of *The Wind of Change* at Independence.

So even though my immediate interest is more in elites, I must say something, from the very start, about the poor and about poverty. As the political economist Wayne Edge reminds us, "At the time of independence, Botswana was the second poorest country in the world (next to Bangladesh), with a struggling economic base of cattle production, labour exportation, and customs union fees" (1998, 343). Even further, writing on the basis of his unrivaled anthropological knowledge of southeastern Botswana, Ørnulf Gulbrandsen sums up his arguments about the first decade of Botswana's political economy in his book's critical title, *Poverty in the Midst of Plenty* (1994; see also Jefferis and Kelly 1999.). Continuing the same theme, Edge also contends that, even during the period from 1990 to 1993, "real income for the Botswana working class shrank while the economy grew" (1998, 339).

I do not dispute this contention. Nor do I doubt the truth of the argument about the sharpening increase in the relative differences between rich and poor (see Jefferis and Kelly 1999), although I am not convinced that matters are as simple as they are sometimes made to appear (cf. Good 1993, 2001). It is beyond my scope here to show the actual struggles for prosperity and social mobility in the country, but a number of anthropologists, including Ørnulf Gulbrandsen (1996), Deborah Durham (2002), Fred Klaitz (2002), Isaac Mazonde (2002), Pnina Motzafi-Haller (2002), Pauline Peters (1994), Sidsel Saugestad (1998), Jacqueline Solway (1998), and others, are making important contributions toward a more informed understanding of these struggles.

But what needs to be said here concerns poverty as it is understood or imagined, as it is represented, and not only in official statistics. Tell citizens of Botswana that their country is called "the biggest success story in Africa," and they answer by talking about poverty; about the lessons to be learned from it, about its pressing existence now, and, indeed, about their own poverty, be they of the elites or not.⁸ "I am a poor man," an elite former civil servant told me proudly as we stepped out of his Mercedes. Hearing of this remark, an anthropologist with long experience in the Congo objected, "Mobutu, too, used to say he was a poor man." But contrary to such doubting Afro-pessimism, I think that what the elite businessman meant, among other things, was that he was not as rich as he might have been, if he were corrupt or bribable; and that he was, in another well-worn phrase, "financially disciplined," careful to save, however much he spent on consumption. In Botswana the rich are happy to claim poverty as their own.

Such "understood poverty," imagined in all its social reality, is a force in the postcolonial wisdom that has shaped, or at least underwritten, a crucial policy for Botswana's distinctive path in economic growth. As Roger Charlton observes, "Poverty, lack of infrastructure and lack of resources at inde-

pendence led organically to the BDP's [Botswana Democratic Party's] developmentalist perspectives and priorities" (1991, 275). I leave it to historians to trace who actually first hit on the idea for the policy, whether that person was a citizen or an expatriate economist. It is now conventional wisdom to talk of Botswana as a developmental state, dwarfing the minimalist state of the colonial Protectorate. I have myself contributed to some of that conventional wisdom in the past by not appreciating the importance of understood poverty in policy making and even in the negotiation of agreements for diamond mining. But were it not for understood poverty, Botswana might well have gone from dependence on livestock and international aid to dependence on diamonds; it might have gotten into the boom-bust trap for developmental states, which rely on a bonanza from a depleting resource. Developmental commitments can overstretch the state at the very moment when the bonanza is virtually exhausted.

Instead, Botswana chose the financial option: it went for vast "interest bearing foreign reserves carefully invested abroad and capable of supplying the import bill" (Edge 1998, 343) for years, more than U.S.\$5.6 billion at present. As the political economist Wayne Edge notes, citing from a Bank of Botswana report: "The income generated from these reserves is currently the second largest revenue item of the government budget, after diamonds" (*ibid.*). It is understood poverty that heightened the appeal of prudence and, even more, of putting something aside for the ever expected times of drought, the future times of anticipated but unpredictable contingencies, such as the AIDS pandemic. Hence the attractiveness of the financial option, and hence not merely diamonds but, as the very diamond-bearing design of Botswana's currency shows, the diamond pula. With the pula as a strong, investment-backed currency, Botswana makes money out of money and is a sought-after global player in the wider capitalist world. Finance is now regarded as one of the most important "engines of growth" (Sekgoma 1998, 482; citing the then finance minister Festus Mogae), and a huge financial district with its own skyscrapers is now being built to provide some of the infrastructure in the drive to make Botswana the prime banking and financial center for the whole region of southern Africa.

POSTCOLONIAL WISDOM AND THE INNER CIRCLE

My point is not to deny that there have been pitfalls in the way, which still remain. It is public knowledge, admitted to by Cabinet Ministers, that a series of past financial blunders and failures in government investment have occurred in the formidable effort to diversify Botswana's economy.⁹ Yet a great deal of postcolonial wisdom has gone into managing and directing this financial option, and it is the postcolonial wisdom that has to be seen in the effort to illuminate the transformative force of postcolonial elites.

To clarify that point, I address Abdi Ismail Samatar's penetrating argument

about the exceptionalism of Botswana's political economy, viewed relative to many others in Africa. Samatar seeks to explain why, where other African countries failed, Botswana's leadership succeeded in creating "an effective state machinery for capitalist development" (1999, 75). Building on a critique of arguments made in earlier studies about a united dominant class within the Botswana state, Samatar convincingly traces the rise of technocratic managerialism and its impact on the making of strong public administration. Under the extremely skillful and economically brilliant direction of the then vice president Masire, as the Minister of Finance and Development Planning, such managerialism, valuing "effectiveness, orderliness and accountability" (Samatar 1999, 88), was initially introduced by a young and largely expatriate staff, who were eventually joined by Botswana. Together, and along with their Minister as Vice President and eventually President, the young technocrats are the real heroes in Samatar's story of *An African Miracle*. Contrary to the conventional wisdom in much of the literature, Samatar's account rightly gives full weight to what I call the postcolonial wisdom of elites: their pragmatically informed understanding of the public good and their effective consciousness of the national interest (Werbner 1999a). Samatar is an advocate of centralization in state authority, and his main argument is as follows:

Two major factors contributed to Botswana becoming an autonomous state with capacity to effect planned change: insulating the policy-making process from society-centered group [*sic*] and protecting the MFDP [Ministry of Finance and Development Planning] technocratic cadre's ability to plan, budget, and monitor program implementation. It also enforced fiscal discipline while remaining free, for the most part, from "political" influence. (1999, 95–96)

One weakness of Samatar's analysis is that, despite his critique of earlier versions of the dominant class theory, he sticks to the dubious view that there was a unified dominant class throughout the move from one postcolonial phase to the next (*ibid.*). He does note Parson's view that "1980–83 was an era characterized by the appearance of fractures within the dominant coalition and the passing of Seretse [Khama, Botswana's first president]" and that "major cracks were appearing in the unity of the dominant class" (1999, 99 n. 43; citing Parson 1984, 88–99). But he goes on to say, somewhat dismissively: "Nearly a decade later, the fortress seems sufficiently strong, although one sees cracks" (*ibid.*). Not only does Samatar's own view exaggerate class unity, but it also hides the struggles between class fractions that redefine the class itself, rather than merely making "cracks." Even more, his argument obscures conflict over the restructuring of dominance in the state. Here, as I show in detail in chapter 4 for the case of the Leno Affair, a central issue is whether dominance by ethnic Tswana from the majority was to extend politically, culturally, and economically as well, or to be counterbalanced by the competition among different elites and entrepreneurs.

If the Ministry of Finance and Development Planning has been the dominant ministry in the government, it has also been a power base that could be captured and then turned, more or less successfully, to advance an ethnic majoritarian agenda for preference in the expansion of the economy. Samatar portrays the Ministry as neutral and, more strongly, not open to being captured momentarily even, in part, for an exclusive and preferential agenda.¹⁰

As I show in chapter 4, the Leno Affair, which Samatar himself does not consider, swung from one direction, majoritarian monopoly, to another, competitive pluralist entrepreneurship, but it was certainly a case of attempted capture. My point is that depending on the outcome of the conflict over restructuring and the opposition to a majoritarian, and initially Ministry-backed agenda, the state could have become more hierarchical, and marginalized minorities, rather than co-opting them as elites. Alternatively the state could and actually did become more pluralist, co-optive, and open to pressure from minorities, and perhaps most insistently from the elites who came to form the minorities' economically well-positioned vanguard. In my view, what now needs to be brought into the comparative perspective on Botswana's success in state formation is the move driven by minority elites toward pluralism in the postcolonial state, despite and indeed against such forces for centralized authority as the Ministry of Finance and Development has largely represented, under its first ministers.

Here we also need to get at least three dimensions of postcolonial wisdom in perspective. The first foregrounds the wisdom, the consciousness, and perceptions of postcolonial subjects themselves. The second perspective depends on my own reflexiveness, anthropological knowledge, and, I hope, wisdom reached through long experience in the postcolony. In my case, it is my coming to know, perceive, and rethink my understanding of sociality, while, over several decades, being drawn into an open circle of elites, long-term friends from their colonial youth to their postcolonial maturity and elderhood. Finally, given the first two perspectives, the third is revealing for our own postcolonial literature. This perspective shows received views of postcolonial transformations in Africa, always so dire, to be little more than conventional wisdom. Beyond that there is a whole world of African potential that is now being realized in unexpected and promising ways. The postcolonial wisdom among Africans is practical wisdom, which we must continue to seek, recognize, and engage with actively, despite the Africanist chorus ever crying of continental doom.

Botswana is a small country, in population if not in territory, and I easily came to meet and know most of a certain inner circle of the state-building elites early in their careers and mine, largely through the density of their own network, through the accidents of fieldwork for very different purposes in several parts of the country, and through their early study visits to Britain. For example, as one recently reminded me, I first met him, as the young

Principal in charge of Anthropological Research Permits at his Ministry, when he rescued me from my youthful folly in calling his British boss a schmuck. Now the chairman of Barclays Bank, this elite elder, like all the other notables, was a young recruit to the civil service from among the first postcolonial cadre of university graduates. Before them, at the end of the colonial Protectorate, there were no more than a couple of dozen graduates. Even that first postcolonial graduate cadre was quite small. It included a select few from the Lesotho-based predecessor of the University of Botswana and others, such as the founders of the Botswana Student Association in the United Kingdom, whose particularly close bonds with one another continued to be highly significant for an inner circle of elite friends. Were it not so awkward a metaphor for Botswana, one might speak of my engaging with a “snowball sample.” Or should I say a “sandstorm sample”? As a consequence of my early and long engagement, I was able to enjoy, during my recent fieldwork, the fellowship of being associated not only with what they poignantly call “the hard times” but also with the times of truly being, in another much loved and often used phrase, “down-to-earth and accessible.”

If you go on a Saturday night to an extreme corner of the capital’s Notwane Club, in front of the glass cases full of winners’ glittering trophies, inscribed sports shields, and silver loving cups, you might find many of the inner circle, drinking their rounds and mainly talking about business and politics, besides sports. Their favorite spot is known somewhat jokingly, perhaps after a place in the first president’s old college, Balliol, as the “Top Table.” But the Notwane Club is not posh, snobbish, or expensive, unlike its neighbor immediately up the road, the Golf Club, which attracts expatriates along with a city-smart set, including jet-setting academics. Instead, the Notwane Club is popular, with cheap beer, and despite the “Members Only” sign, it attracts mixed crowds, members and nonmembers alike, rich and poor, and many civil servants of different grades. It also has an unwritten rule of free speech. Open critical argument about issues of the day is, above all, the pride of the Top Table.

On one Saturday night I found a senior economist from the Ministry of Agriculture obviously rather drunk and, with perhaps that extra bit of license, aggressively laying the law down to the Chief Justice and the Chairman of Barclays Bank, among others. By muddling in a drunken way gross company income, the costs of diamond mining, and the net profits, matters about which accountants do disagree, the economist argued very loudly that the Chief Justice and the Chairman had failed, when, as permanent secretaries, they were the main negotiators with De Beers. He insisted, contrary to public belief, that they had not gotten a really good deal for the country’s diamonds. “You are biased,” the economist bellowed over the Chief Justice’s response. To which the Chief Justice replied, with good humor, when he could make himself heard, “How can you tell, when you haven’t let me get a word in?”

I was struck by the way that this exchange and others went ahead with great bonhomie. There was no hint of surprise from anyone—it was the way the Top Table should be, I was told. I was also informed that for the President, once a friend and frequent member of the Top Table, a going away party was held as he was about to take up his new office, and the farewell speech for him was full of banter about his banishment from the Club to prison, the State House. The phrase Kitchen Cabinet is now used, however, for the casual consultations and substantial arguments about politics and policy issues that the President is well known to continue having with members of the inner circle of friends, now on publicly visible visits, when he drinks at their homes. Indeed, since the President makes no secret of it, rumors fly about the inclusion in the Kitchen Cabinet of Gobe Matenge, a senior and very eminent adviser to the main opposition party, himself a retired permanent secretary, sometime managing director, and substantial investor (see chapters 8 and 9 for his biography). Against pressure from each of their parties, both have refused to give up their long and very close friendship, starting from many years of working together in the civil service, or their pleasure in drinking and talking freely with each other.

“Down-to-earth and accessible”—in the friends’ ethos, the beginning of elite wisdom is knowing oneself to be a man or woman of the people, not removed from the shared earth by rank, position, wealth, or power. Nevertheless, when not addressing me by one of my Kalanga nicknames or my clan honorific, Nkumbudzi [Remembrancer], some of the friends took pleasure in calling me Professor, to which I responded, as expected, in a mutual recognition of honor and distinction, CJ for the Chief Justice, AG for the Attorney General, and so forth. So, too, when my wife, Pnina, and I accompanied them or other dignitaries on civic occasions, we were always given rosettes, clearly marked V.I.P. It is no paradox, therefore, to say that, along with the admiration for leadership skills in being “down-to-earth and accessible,” the elite friends, like most of their countrymen and countrywomen, also have a fine sense of hierarchy and status; having an office does matter, though one has to wear it with modesty and, if possible, wit.

THE NATIONAL DIRECTORATE AND THE POST—CIVIL SERVICE

With an eye to the realization of unexpected potential in this circle of long-term friends, I want to introduce them, in a preliminary way, by saying that they are now leading members of the state and commercial elites. Among them are the Chief Justice, the Attorney General, former high commissioners, the former managing director of BP (British Petroleum), the Chairman of Barclays Bank, directors of this and other financial or investment institutions, the retired head of one of the biggest retail chains who is now an Assessor on the Industrial Tribunal, and the managing directors and important shareholders in some of the capital’s largest private enterprises un-

der citizen direction or ownership. All of them have been or still are top civil servants; they all own real estate in the capital; holding portfolios of company shares, each has become, in their phrase, “a man of substance,” “a substantial person,” without first, or indeed ever, becoming a successful or top politician, such as a minister, except for the one woman among the friends, and the current Minister of Finance, a brilliant economist and technocrat somewhat above party politics.¹¹ As this book goes to press, a change in career pattern seems to be emerging, as successful notables turn to become politicians late in their careers. Following the resignation from Parliament of the Minister of Health, Joy Phumaphi, to take up her appointment as the Assistant Director General of the World Health Organization in Geneva early in August 2003, Phandu Skelemani resigned his post as the Attorney General in order to campaign successfully in the coming election for Phumaphi’s old parliamentary seat in Francistown. Also campaigning, but for the new constituency in the North East District, is Mbiganyi Tibone, Chairman of Barclays Bank and former high commissioner and permanent secretary. There are expectations that either Skelemani or Tibone or both will be offered ministerial appointments.

The inner-circle notables are closely linked in big business. They are the directors or shareholders of a recognizable set of companies, which they formed mainly during the boom of the 1980s (see chapter 4, on the Leno Affair). Some have origins in local elites of the past, being the children or close relatives of schoolteachers and headmasters, minor chiefs or storekeepers, but they are very much aware of themselves as first generation elites in their own contexts. As they have advanced in their careers, most have shared in making from the state salariat the core of what I intend to call the national directorate.

Primarily based at the capital, the national directorate is an interlocking establishment of company directors who wear many hats, sit on many boards, and meet regularly on one occasion after another, again and again. There are now some outstanding directors who have made their way only through business or only through having been politicians, but the one-time top civil servants command many of the posts and still largely lead the national directorate. One might speak of the growth of a directorate-technocrat complex to convey the mutual interpenetration of establishments.

By this directorate-technocrat complex, I do not mean to convey a cozy monolith—quite the contrary. Members usually do know their rivals and competitors very well, often from their schooldays, and, if anything, it sharpens their formation and reformation of political factions and related blocs or sides in business, although my attention was repeatedly drawn to the exceptional individual who was often welcomed to be on both sides. “Business is politics, and politics is business,” one of the most influential directors told me in spelling out the connections between state and commercial elites, and between political factions and business blocs.

A great deal of information about the interpenetration of elites and establishments is public, although a past parliament shelved a bill for full declaration of cabinet ministers' own interests, put forward by Joy Phumaphi, a daughter of one of the post-civil servants and herself an assistant minister at the time. One can go, however, to chartered accountants, such as Price Waterhouse, or to the registry of companies, as I did, and get a list of a person's directorships. There, too, with time and patience, one can also, I found, trace shareholders from company to company, once one knows their names, which itself can be a difficulty. Admittedly some of the holdings are intricate, having companies within companies, and there are some investors, particularly settler citizens, whose holdings are said to be too labyrinthine for an outsider, even a tax accountant, to unravel. In my case, I was not only encouraged by inner-circle notables to trace the growth of companies but was also greatly helped by the company registrar himself. I say all this to highlight the areas of openness and transparency that I encountered and that inner-circle notables felt ought to be available (see chapter 4 on elite entrepreneurship and company formation).

There is obviously an order of things here, in which big business does have easy access to the inner ear of government and the other way around. But merely noting that familiar pattern is not enough for a reading of the post-colonial wisdom of elites. Having become prominent directors, some of the former technocrats and state elites form a pool of what in Britain would be "the Great and the Good." As one very successful director and former top civil servant said, "One must give some service. If those in government think you can contribute, then you do it."

Such state administrators turned businessmen are called on by government not merely as occasional consultants on areas of their past expertise and decision making but also to serve on various public bodies, from public enterprises, such as the National Development Bank, the Botswana Power Corporation, and the Botswana Development Corporation, to legal institutions, such as the Customary Court of Appeals and the Industrial Tribunal. Of special importance is their role and influence on Presidential Commissions, which lead to White Papers, stating which of their recommendations the government accepts or rejects for policy.¹² Examples are the recent civil service review under the former managing director of Shell and one of the first heads of the postcolonial civil service, Philip Steenkamp, or the earlier Commissions of Inquiry, appointed by the former president Masire, which thoroughly and fearlessly investigated a series of high-level scandals. These had far-reaching political consequences, including eventually his own handing over of his office to his successor, the then vice president Mogae, without an election.

I was told that, in the first instance, a recommendation for the composition of the Presidential Commission is usually made in the Cabinet by the responsible Minister, such as the Minister of Lands, Local Government, and

Housing for a land or housing concern. But the Minister and his staff do not always have it their own way. The strengths, weaknesses, and loyalties of likely Commission members are too well known for that. Other Cabinet members, being informed, and in the context of their own political competition, can and at times do insist on revising the list in order to include their own nominees. In the 1990s, during a period of fiercely open Cabinet factionalism in struggles over presidential succession, ministers have apparently insisted on nominations, I am reliably told, even against some opposition from the President himself.

Such technocrats or administrators turned directors are something of a post-civil service. Their reputation for earlier public service gives them a special legitimacy, public credibility, and independent influence. Little is known in the postcolonial literature of the developing world about such retired salarieds as post-civil service elites. In Botswana their public support is sometimes critical in policy making, and at crucial times, I was told, it is hard even for a president to avoid consulting certain ones among their number, at least informally. They keep social memories of good governance alive, memories of past practice, of the intent in policies, of public commitments. They are known to be experienced and are valued for that very reason. When retired, they are sometimes thought of as having the time and the vision to see the big picture, the long-term policy beyond the immediate personal interests or the daily demands of office and bureaucratic life. Not that they are always consulted in their areas of greatest expertise: I put my understanding of the post-civil service to the test of Notwane Club conversation, and about half-a-dozen former top civil servants took turns setting me right by pointing out that even though they had been on Commissions or served as government consultants, they were more often either ignored or not formally consulted at all, when it came to the ministries they had headed or knew best in the civil service.

It should be clear that the directors in the post-civil service are at once outside the civil service and yet still associated with it. As such, on the one hand, they are neither expected to be nor are apolitical or simply neutral; but, on the other hand, they are still expected to be able to operate with the ethos and ethics of responsible public servants. As one of the post-civil servants told me, after he played a fiercely critical part in a Presidential Commission leading to resignations from the Cabinet, "I swore an oath and I had to do what I did," and he defended himself against an exposed minister who complained, as if it were a personal matter and not a matter of acting as a responsible public servant. Admittedly the inner-circle notables do express dissatisfaction with the government and what is called the "system," sometimes in defending, even boasting about, the value of their own past contributions; they say, "The civil service has gone to the dogs." In recent times the mixture of the interested and the responsible in the role of post-civil servant has checked the civil service and made for more open gov-

ernance, rather than more white-washing or fudging of issues. In 2001 members of the post-civil service took the lead in founding a Botswana branch of Transparency International, published a critical volume on corruption in government and business (Briscoe and Hermans 2001), and held the first of an annual series of conferences making the results of their investigations public.

THE POST-CIVIL SERVICE AND CIVIL SOCIETY

In writing about major challenges for the future in Botswana, the sociologist and sometime Dean of Social Sciences at the University of Botswana, Patrick Molutsi, remarks that reform has “to address the antagonism and suspicion that exists between the state and civil society. There is a clear need to build relationships based on mutual respect, interdependence, and confidence in each other” (1998, 497). In my view, that is the better part of what is happening through the growth of a post-civil service. Its technocrats turned directors are well placed to build such relationships, and it is known that the government needs them. Within the context of the interpenetration of establishments, the growth of a post-civil service in Botswana is a further strength, contributing to the greater vitality of “civil society” as a whole. Later I discuss ways that elites reach beyond themselves and are accessible to a wider public, but here I simply want to say briefly that elites foster organic relationships, across emerging class oppositions, which sustain their special legitimacy and credibility as advocates of the public good.

ETHNICITY, TRIBAL DIFFERENCE, AND ELITE FORMATION

So far I have deliberately said nothing about the importance in elite formation of identity politics, ethnic or tribal difference, and relations between minorities and the country’s Tswana-speaking majority. I now add that the notables of the inner circle I have been describing all identify themselves as Kalanga. Their Kalanga ethnicity is very much a translocal phenomenon. They created it as they came together in external settings, such as the capital in the south, without losing home attachments to the north. Their original homes are in different northern communities; they are on the whole not close kin or affines, although some are related. Their children have largely not married each other, so that they are not reproducing the elite as a closed circle but are continuing to be more inclusive. Kalanga is their mother tongue. They come from communities mainly of Kalanga. They have all contributed substantially to finance the translation of the Bible into Kalanga in its Botswana version. Some of them took great pride in introducing me as the man who really knows about *mazenge*, the alien demons of the wild (Werbner 1989, chap. 2). It was as if these boundary-crossing demons, once so important in domestic possession ritual at home, had taken

on a new life in the ethnic imagination of Kalanganess away from home. Most of them actively support SPIL, the Society for the Propagation of the Ikalanga Language. They rally round to draft letters in defense of SPIL and in defense against anti-Kalanga defamation in the newspapers. The Attorney General himself told me that he made no bones about exercising his right to give advice and help freely in drafting such letters, and that, on one occasion, he had told President Masire that he would continue to do so, whether the President liked it or not.

Another one of the notables, in a celebrated case of conscience, even went to jail recently for seven and three-quarter hours for refusing to speak with a magistrate's clerk in Tswana. "That's not my language," he answered too sharply for the clerk's liking. Currently an assessor on the capital's Industrial Tribunal, he was respectfully, even apologetically, escorted to jail, driving his own Mercedes, and was released early after he began organizing the other inmates, Tswana and Kalanga alike, and writing letters of complaint on their behalf. Although it would be a mistake to suggest that in an earlier period, under President Khama, Kalanga simply acquiesced in the face of majoritarian pressures, such recent events do reflect increasing minority self-assertiveness and a change in the politics of recognition for public respect and dignity (Werbner 2002b, 117–18; see chapters 2 and 3 in this volume).

For this circle of leading Kalanga notables and elders, however, the balance between inclusion and exclusion is problematic and has been for a long time. That is all the more so because of the connection such balance has with ethnic inferiority and superiority. What is taken for granted is that this elite circle of elders is gendered, the Kalanga members being men, apart from one unmarried woman, but among them, within the inner circle of about ten men, interethnic marriage is the norm. All the leading Kalanga notables, who are now elders, have married non-Kalanga wives, from Sweden, from South Africa, from Zimbabwe, and from Tswana-speaking parts of Botswana but mainly from southern communities near the capital.

Asked why they married out, these notables, looking back as elders, now give various answers: for example, that as young men they married where they were working or being educated away from home and that there were virtually no Kalanga women in their midst, given the gender bias against sending Kalanga women any distance away for advanced education. The elite standing of the notables' wives in their own right, as independent career women, is striking. Among them are senior civil servants, such as deputy permanent secretaries of ministries; leading academics, including a distinguished microbiologist and sometime dean of her faculty; other professionals; and a former mayor of the capital. Although none of the notables volunteered the response that they were marrying up when marrying out, they were all well aware and accepted that, for Kalanga, the wife-receiver is the petitioner and the debtor, owing deference and much else to his wife-givers. "We have to get in bed with them," one of the notables insisted on

telling me, prophetically, as it has already turned out that the best way of dealing with the diamond cartel was to become more, rather than less, of a partner through Botswana's greater investment in Anglo-American and De Beers' shares. It is the same logic, among the notables, that has implicitly underwritten Kalanga interethnicity.

The notables remark, also, on a changing asymmetry in interethnic marriage in the capital and its surrounding vicinity. In the past their non-Kalanga peers, they said, tended to look down on Kalanga as inferiors and had not wanted to accept being below them as wife-receivers. Now, given the advancement of Kalanga elite women along with their own and their parents' prominence in the capital, interethnic marriage is becoming more common for them as well as for non-elite Kalanga women; they are sought after and married by their Tswana neighbors.

Stories are told among the notables that reflect their sense of the comic in all this. Inferiority/superiority and inclusion/exclusion in interethnic relations are not merely serious and problematic matters with which Kalanga deal politically, economically, and culturally. They are also matters to laugh over. The story is told by one of the notables whose face, as managing director of BP, inviting business calls, used to be blazoned at the head of that transnational company's front-page ad in the telephone book. One evening, Mr. BP, to use his nickname, found himself safely hidden behind the fronds in the Grand Palm Hotel, at the time the capital's Sheraton. In front were several Tswana women gossiping about men and marriage. One after another of the Kalanga notables was put on their scales, balanced against the opulence of his wife's life-style, until only one conclusion could be drawn, "You see, if you marry a Kalanga, you hit the jackpot—you get a big house and a white Mercedes." In relishing the story, partly as a joke on himself and his Tswana wife, who has the white Mercedes, the notable pointed out, to much amusement among his listeners, that he had to hide behind the fronds to avoid being recognized, until the women left. The notable added, for my benefit, that, in his opinion, "since Independence whenever there has been tribalistic pressure, it has been a matter of Tswana men against Kalanga, never the women. All the anti-Kalanga talk even makes Kalanga men all the more attractive to Tswana women, who want what Kalanga are."

That said, and I come back to the nature of this elite's Kalanganess in the next chapters, a caution is in order. Starting with ethnic or tribal self-identification or other-labeling, although not false, is misleading for this circle of notables as an elite formation. Or, rather, it is the ready answer within the conventional wisdom that puts paid to questions before they are asked. It is as if everyone knows the meaning of tribe or minority, as if it were fixed forever, and as if its salience is so dominant that it is easily the right starting point for analysis.

In Botswana, however, challenges are increasingly being raised over what a minority is, who belongs to it, with what rights and privileges, and for what

purposes. As in many other countries, an old form of assimilationist nationalism is being questioned. The rising demand is for recognition of the legitimacy of difference in the public sphere, be it cultural, ethnic, gendered, or tribal. Feminist and human rights movements alongside language associations are challenging the state to allow them a voice and representation in central political arenas (Selolwane 1998). Fresh conflicts, sometimes put in old rhetoric and calling on sentiments felt to be primary, are arising, particularly at the capital. Several decades after the founding of the capital, it is still largely a first-generation city, at least for adults, as very few adults have cut themselves off completely from homes in the countryside. The overwhelming majority, elites and non-elites alike, are what I call urban villagers, people who, while living in the city or sometimes having multiple residences in different towns, are proud of their origin in a village, claim it as the home where they truly belong, and feel obliged to care for fellow villagers, at the very least by attending their funerals. If “urbanized,” they are the classic African straddlers, balancing more or less successfully from one foot to the other in response to alternative pressures and opportunities, both rural and urban.

For such urban villagers, the recent elections, followed by a presidential commission—the Balopi Commission—and parliamentary debates, have once again brought to a head the arguments about tribal dominance and subjection, ethnic discrimination, denial of human rights, tribalism, and nepotism. Tribal land boards have become major battlegrounds for struggles over tribal citizenship. Representation has become a highly politicized matter. As Molutsi observes, “Different sections of the population, including ethnic minorities, increasingly want to be represented by their own people and not the former ethnic patrons as is currently the case” (1998, 497). There are effective demands for an end to tribal inequalities derived from the Protectorate and enshrined in discriminatory clauses in the national constitution. There is much that was long taken for granted—about ideals of unity, harmony, and cultural homogeneity for the sake of nation building; about tribal entitlements; about the economic and political advancement of minorities; about the regulation of relations between minorities and majorities; about the use of local languages, and the assertion of ethnic difference and tribal identity in public life. Almost all of that is now being contested or even quietly reconstituted through effective compromises. In chapter 4 I give an account of urban elites, super-tribalism, and nation building, but here I turn to this ongoing public debate about minority rights and its significance for the renegotiation of citizenship in Botswana.

2

The Minorities Debate

COLONIAL LEGACIES, NEW RHETORIC: MINORITIES AND CITIZENSHIP

Public debate about ethnic minorities in Botswana is ambiguous, struggling to reconcile problems of the ethnic, the tribal, the regional, and the national, of new and old (Mazonde 2002; Werbner 2002a). Because it is rich in legacies from the colonial past of the Protectorate, the debate is apparently old. Yet it is a new debate. It is addressed to demands for a better future; it is politicized by fresh claims and interests; and it draws, often through the Internet, on a global, now neo-liberal rhetoric of human rights.¹ One of its important sources is Article 27 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights,

In those States in which ethnic, religious or linguistic minorities exist, persons belonging to such minorities shall not be denied the right, in community with other members of their group, to enjoy their own culture, to profess and practice their own religion, or to use their own language.²

Another influential source is the rhetoric of cultural rights that African heads of state unanimously adopted for the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights at the Organization of African Unity (OAU) in 1981.³ This

human rights discourse, tied to advocacy for multiculturalism, is now being fostered across Africa by the United Nations through the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, the Working Group on Indigenous Populations, and the Working Group on Minorities. For Botswana, at a politically important moment in February 2002, the UN workshop “Multiculturalism in Africa” brought participants to Gaborone from more than a dozen African countries for the third in a series of workshops⁴ held across the continent to raise awareness of UN support for human rights and multiculturalism. With this proof of wider, international access, minority activists publicized their intent to carry their case to the UN and to attack the government’s reputation for good governance if it failed to respond to their demands for group rights (see Nyati-Ramahobo 2002). On this occasion, and earlier, the tactics and rhetoric of minority advocacy have reached for the backing of global opinion.⁵

THE LIMITS OF MY APPROACH

My own approach to ethnicity and the changing public debate about minority rights in Botswana has certain limits, which I want to acknowledge from the start. These limits are linked to my personal background, my research experience, and my theoretical interests. In the United States, my native land, ethnic pluralism is “an essentially contested concept” (Gallie 1955–56), and I grew up at a time when certain hegemonic understandings about homogeneity and conformity in public life—understandings summed up in the phrase “the melting pot”—had begun to lose their force. As the son of Jewish immigrants from Eastern Europe to America, I come from a minority background. Having lived most of my adult life as an expatriate outside my own country, I am the husband and father of immigrants from three different continents, and am an immigrant from a fourth continent myself. I find I more readily understand, even identify with, the self-assertiveness of minorities than I do with the dominance of the majority. Or, rather, I tend to see the latter from the perspective of the former. My observations in Botswana, like those of my students, have been primarily among people who are now being regarded as minorities—in my own research, Kalanga and Tswapong, respectively, from 1964 and from 1972 on; and in the fieldwork of my students, Birwa (Mahoney 1977; Mazonde 1987), Yeyi (Sutherland 1984), San (Mazonde 2000, 2002), and Kalanga (Nthoi 1995). In the discussion that follows I mainly refer to Kalanga, and I foreground Kalanga elites and notables against the background of other minorities and their contested ethnicity.

With Isaac Mazonde of the University of Botswana, I convened a conference at the University in May 2000 to address the linkage between the national debate and much wider arguments over citizenship and minority rights. Called “Challenging Minorities: Difference and Tribal Citizenship in

Botswana,” the conference was explicitly intended to consider the importance for Botswana of arguments raised by the philosophers Charles Taylor and Will Kymlicka about the politics of recognition, multiculturalism, and citizenship.⁶ We also problematized the relation between language politics in Botswana and more widely in Africa.⁷ At the conference and in the first volume arising from it, edited by my co-convener, Isaac Mazonde, we argued that the principles invoked for justice in Botswana reflect those used elsewhere in much wider campaigns on behalf of minorities disadvantaged by a majority, especially in the denial of public recognition and state support for minority languages.⁸

It is no paradox to say that the most marginal minorities, the peoples of the Kalahari, have so far commanded center stage, at least internationally and in academic debates, and with that importance has come a focus on the now familiar processes of stigmatization, marginalization, and then clientelization, even dispossession, by the state. In a Special Issue of the *Journal of Southern African Studies*, while addressing such well-recognized processes in papers by Robert Hitchcock and Edwin Wilmsen, we advanced the analysis of a whole range of other problematics, from the strategies of minority advocacy (Nyati-Ramahobo 2002), to the paradoxes of civic identity, public trust, and ethnic consciousness (Solway 2002; Werbner 2002d), to the revealing and concealing of sentiment and ethnic difference at funerals (Durham and Klaitz 2002). Our coverage extended across the country and to a comprehensive review of the representations of identity politics in the press (Nyamnjoh 2002b).

A major shift in public consciousness is now in progress in Botswana, our studies showed. At the capital, and in many different parts of the country, the ethnic minority question—who belongs to a minority or to the majority, and for what purposes—is now being raised. Often it is at issue in the passing moments of little-known incidents, but increasingly it arises in newsworthy encounters given big headlines by the press. There is a public, growing in awareness, who want to know the ethnic answers, who have a fund of stories to prove what happened and is or should be happening in actual practice, and who take sides, sometimes heatedly.

It would be a great mistake to think of this as if it were merely a matter of opposition between the majority and the minorities. Instead, the process of minoritization must be conceptualized as a changeable negotiation of opposition and cooperation, sometimes through the deliberate co-opting of potential enemies. Minoritization is not a uniform process but varies across the country, from ethnic minority to minority, and one cannot tell from knowing one minority how minoritization must work for other minorities. Some legitimize homogeneity, conform to majoritarian expectations, and are attracted to opportunities for upward mobility by concealing what might be denigrated as their minority origins. Others become assertive about their marginality, insist on being recognized as a minority, and demand what

THE MINORITIES DEBATE

amounts to affirmative action to compensate for a history of negative discrimination.⁹ Still others virtually deny that they are a minority or that it makes any sense at all to talk about minorities, given the dubious basis for reckoning the majority. What they demand is equality; their pressure is for what amounts to a level playing field, one in which they expect to excel because they have the merits to do so. Within the public sphere they want the same group-specific rights for all, the same state backing as any others have and no preferential treatment for any one group in particular.

TRIBE IN MANY GUISES

While having issues and politics of its own, the new debate about ethnic minorities in Botswana is mixed, more or less deliberately, with others about the tribe and tribalism. The ethnic minorities often wear tribal guises, except, of course, for the settler minorities, who are not salient in the current minorities debate. But defense of the tribe against the growing and encompassing power of the postcolonial state is not always in the interest of ethnic minorities. Nor is ethnic self-assertiveness merely tribal. If disguised by things tribal—names, histories, languages, traditions, preferred foods, local origins, rituals, and other customary practices—the ethnic minorities are not the same as the past tribes of the Protectorate or the present tribes of the post-colony. Even within a single minority, various options are emerging for identity or self-identification, and the new ethnic leaders and notables are not simply the heirs and successors to the old tribal spokesmen, although chiefs, headmen, and their traditional councillors, too, publicly drive ethnic minority debate forward, sometimes for historic reasons of their own.

In present-day Botswana the very tribes themselves, like the ethnic minorities, are distinctively postcolonial versions. An obvious question is this: Should we now speak of tribe at all? Clearly *tribe* is still a common term in legal usage as it is in everyday speech. But academics, like others advancing the public debate, are divided by the tribal question.

At one extreme, for a principal tribe of southern Botswana, some fieldworkers, such as the lawyer Athaliah Molokomme (1991) and the anthropologist Ørnulf Gulbrandsen (1993, 1996) prefer to use the Tswana term *morafe* (plural *merafe*). They want to be faithful to local concepts and social realities where the incorporated political community sustains a measure of highly valued, indeed sentimentally charged, semi-autonomy within the state. Their usage of *morafe* for a Tswana polity also brings into relief continuities in political culture from the colonial to the postcolonial state, and, perhaps most important, continuities that have influenced understandings of political morality and the rightful exercise of public authority. Elsewhere in the country alternative terms for similar, if not quite the same, concepts can be found in other local languages, but perhaps not all. Hence much of the actual diversity in Botswana's communal divisions could be roughly reflected

in a multilingual terminology. This would be to follow the suggested usage of *morafe* to its logical conclusion, in the current postcolonial context. In the present debate, however, the diminutive of *morafe*, *meratshwana*, has become the somewhat dismissive term for minorities.

At the other extreme, I suggested introducing the idea of a “galactic polity” (Werbner 1993), after South Asian usage (Tambiah 1985), for purposes of comparative political analysis. With an eye to the *longue durée* from pre-colonial times, across the country and beyond it, I had in mind the legacies coming from the rise and fall of state systems that were more or less hierarchical and centralized. These are legacies in political culture, in forms of dominance, rank, and stratification, in dispersed or nucleated settlement, and in orders of leadership.¹⁰ On the one hand, the precolonial legacies came from the expansion of competing, socially heterogeneous kingdoms centered on great capitals or towns—at the end of the precolonial period, the Tswana and Ndebele kingdoms—and, on the other hand, it came within and in between the kingdoms, sometimes in their buffer zones, from bands, such as those of the San and other peoples of the Kalahari, and from the remains of past states or empires among peoples who were then less centralized but, mindful of their imperial past, still culturally distinct and often relatively autonomous in dispersed settlements or hamlets, such as Kalanga, Wayeyi, and others.

The kingdoms, as in so many parts of precolonial Africa, had frontiers, not boundaries. Bounded territories were a colonial invention, which created clearly demarcated units of administration, ended the ambiguities of sovereignty in buffer zones, and placed formerly autonomous communities under paramount chiefs. For example, between the Ndebele and the Ngwato kingdoms, the buffer zone included Kalanga under their own rulers, Nswazwi and Mengwe, who were placed under Paramount Chief Khama of the Ngwato. In addition, the making of colonial territory left people in borderlands on both sides of international boundaries. For example, this divided Kalanga; some fell in Botswana, others in Zimbabwe. Appeals to past polities and precolonial autonomy are not only part of the continuing post-colonial struggle over the colonial legacy but also of the struggle to define the Botswana nation as heterogeneous, rather than being homogenized through ethnic assimilation.¹¹

For all this complexity of political development, terms derived from the colonial state were inadequate. The seeing of one polity or political community in isolation was also not useful. My usage of “galactic polity,” roughly after the south Asian case, foregrounds a constellation of greater or lesser centers, the highly nucleated towns and villages, and their hinterlands. Associated with a dynamic of expansion—cultural, economic, and political—is a public logic that, in the Tswana polities, is concentric. This public logic, which is centered on the ruler in his capital, values social zones hierarchically in their extension outward from heartland to hinterland. The most ap-

appropriate location for subject or marginal communities is ideally at the periphery, but the capital, as the center of highest value, and thus inclusive of subject powers and co-optive of their capacities, also has to accommodate people from the periphery, living in their own capital wards or sections.

Following Isaac Schapera on the nineteenth-century and Protectorate legacy for subject peoples, especially the Kalanga among the Ngwato, van Binsbergen rightly points out that despite “occasional and dramatic Kalanga challenges to Ngwato hegemony,”

the ordinary, and widely accepted, situation was one of peaceful accommodation, where the Kalanga, as “Northerners,” had their assigned places in the Ngwato polity, not only in distant homogeneous Kalanga villages at a distance from the Ngwato capital, but also in the Ngwato heartland, even in specifically Kalanga wards at the capital. (1994, 156)

From the buffer zone and now in the present-day North East District, other Kalanga, not being in subject communities, remained autonomous, beyond any Tswana polity, and virtually a test case for the outer limits to the potential expansion of galactic polities.¹²

Given the expansive dynamic, the Tswana polities also have legacies from encounters with culturally distinct outsiders or strangers, such as Kalanga and Wayeyi. To absorb outsiders and strangers is the galactic polities’ dominant thrust, which repeatedly elicits from some outsiders counter-thrusts against assimilation. Their alternative logic, with less stress on rank relative to the ruler, is somewhat more egalitarian; it is also not so centralized, hierarchical, or concentric. A Kalanga notable told me that when he was a permanent secretary he tried to explain to President Seretse Khama the cultural difference in logic of the following: If a Ngwato gets to know something valuable, he rushes to tell it to one person, his *kgosi*, [chief], but a Kalanga keeps it, until he knows who he wants to tell it to—there’s no one man at the center of everything.

Applying the notion of the galactic polity is a suggestion that, if useful for certain purposes of political analysis, has had, admittedly, little impact on debate in Botswana about communities as tribes or minorities. It is worth saying, however, that precolonial and colonial assimilation as a remembered process of thrust and counter-thrust figures prominently in the political imaginary of postcolonial assimilation; for its Tswana advocates as cultural nationalists, such assimilation is essential for new nation-building, but for non-Tswana opponents, it is the old strategy of expansive dominance, along with co-optation, now backed by the postcolonial state.

But which communities are tribes for state purposes? How are they to be represented? Or recognized? What rights of citizenship, such as rights over land, should they control, and why? All these are persistently contested issues in the ongoing local and national engagement with the heritage from the colonial state. Hence the new debate about ethnic minorities continues

to be closely tied up with the enduring political struggles over the terms on which tribes are integrated into the state.¹³

ONE NATION, THE TSWANA NATION: ASSIMILATION

This new debate challenges a broad working consensus, established at Independence, for political, economic, and cultural purposes. I call this the “One-Nation Consensus.” For the sake of national unity, so it was once widely agreed, sacrifices had to be made. Economically, tribal interests in land and minerals needed to be transferred to the state and managed for the national good. Politically essential also was the minimizing of other tribal advantages, such as hereditary privileges and judicial, executive, and legislative powers for chiefs and headmen (Semolekae and Lekorwe 1998). In terms of cultural difference, the One-Nation Consensus was assimilationist, favoring homogeneity, fostered through one official and one recognized language, English and Tswana, respectively. Building one state was building one nation—the Tswana nation.

The One-Nation Consensus—“We are all Tswana”—was backed by the assimilationist policy of the ruling party. *Tswanification*, or *Tswanalization*, to use the local terms for this majoritarian project of cultural nationalism, left virtually no space in the public sphere for the country’s many non-Tswana cultures, unless recast in a Tswana image.

Lest I be misunderstood, I must stress that, from the very start after Independence, the Consensus, like “Tswanification,” was not an accomplishment wholeheartedly accepted by all—indeed, it was not free of opposition, and it was immediately perceived by some non-Tswana to be carrying forward the old tribal pressures for assimilation under Tswana dominance. At its most extreme, the tendency was fundamentally against pluralism. Particularly in the inner circles of government, ethnic and other interest groups, such as unions, tended to be regarded with suspicion and blame for self-seeking; it was as if their pressures could be dismissed as motivated by greed and, more likely than not, to be at the expense of the public good (Holm and Molutsi 1989; Selolwane, 1998, 2000).

Underlying this working consensus were one-nation arguments about citizenship. Most important, one-nation advocates held that the making of a nation-state required the more or less gradual fading away of the tribe, at least as a corporatist political community mediating between the individual and the state. The Bechuanaland Protectorate as a colonial state had been federal; it granted tribal citizenship to individuals and group-specific rights to subject communities, on an unequal basis. Instead, the nation-state would be a centralized, liberal democracy, partly on a Westminster model, and it would extend basic rights equally to all citizens.¹⁴

There could hardly have been a better, more exemplary, though para-

doxical advocate for the One-Nation Consensus than Botswana's first president, Sir Seretse Khama. On the one hand, President Khama commanded great personal authority, having the popular appeal of the legitimate heir to the Chiefship of the biggest tribe. On the other hand, as one who renounced the Chiefship, who used his remarkable political skills to co-opt and subordinate chiefs while being very careful not to favor his own tribe and tribal capital, President Khama had an even broader appeal for people from former subject communities, such as Kalanga. Given his proven commitment to multiracialism, in his own marriage, and in his open reliance on trusted expatriates and naturalized citizens, among other things, his appeal also extended very strongly to the settler minorities. By Tswana and non-Tswana alike, he was seen to be above and beyond the tribe in his efforts at one-nation building—a true Father of the Nation.¹⁵

President Khama established a broad working consensus that was tied to gradualism, compromise, and much co-opting of potential enemies. A measure of the actual pace through decades of gradualism, during and after his presidency, is shown by the fact that it was only in 1993 that national legislation, opening tribal land to all citizens, eliminated tribal citizenship as a legal basis for exclusive land rights. Fully open access is yet to be realized, in actual practice. Virtually across the whole country, but especially around the capital, easily the most unpopular instruments of the local state are the land boards, implementing the extension of land rights. Such implementation, at the very heart of conflicts between the national and the local state, continues to be a matter of highly contentious local negotiation.¹⁶

From the start, the working consensus allowed a significant measure of tolerance for opposition, notably from some chiefs, against actually making the needed sacrifices. Having a consensus did not require total agreement or elimination of dissent. Nor did it require a sudden rupture, breaking with the past, as in a total end to chiefship. Hence, at Independence, the ruling party introduced a constitution that enshrined a qualified somewhat contradictory version of the working consensus. The constitution contained clauses, for example, in sections 77, 78, and 79, that fixed continuity in tribal citizenship, such as for land rights, but, even more, that reaffirmed the constitutional inequality of subject communities. Still upheld in the constitution was the colonial state's distinction between principal tribes, the eight with paramount chiefs as *ex officio* members of the House of Chiefs, and lesser or minority tribes, whose rulers as sub-chiefs could be elected members (Semolekae and Lekorwe 1998, 195; Maundeni 1998, 383, 395 n. 11).

In brief, the terms under which tribes were integrated into the postcolonial state discriminated between them. Attacking that as vestigial discrimination, no longer acceptable, given the present development of liberal democracy, is part of the ongoing struggle to revise the terms of tribal integration; it is also a contribution to the ethnic minority debate.

FOUR POLITICIZED PROCESSES: MINORITIZATION,
REINTEGRATION, REGIONALIZATION, AND INDIGENIZATION

In order to locate our analyses of the minority debate, difference, and tribal citizenship within a framework of more general argument, I find it useful to conceptualize certain changes abstractly. To begin, I want to distinguish between two highly politicized processes, minoritization and reintegration. Reintegration, I suggest, is the political process that decides how the tribe is to be newly placed within the state and on what corporate terms.¹⁷ The second process, minoritization, creates minorities actively differentiating themselves from a majority and each other and yet, in some ways, also transcending their differences. I take care in my arguments to highlight the transcendence of difference and not only its accentuation, the areas of cooperation, inclusion, coalition building, and trust, and not merely competition, exclusion, and conflict that excessively dominate so much of the literature on ethnicity and minoritization.

Writing insightfully of such transcendence of difference between 1988 and 1992 in Botswana's major trading town in the north, Francistown, Wim van Binsbergen observes,

Multiple and situational ethnic and linguistic identity, code switching, the mixture of songs and texts from Kalanga, Ndebele, Tswana (and even Shona and English) in the course of one religious event, and the accommodation of potential ethnic opposition within an encompassing idiom of religious transcendence of disunity are the catchwords to describe the local religious situation. (1994, 158)

Van Binsbergen goes on to draw a bleak contrast between this situation and friction in other contexts of everyday life, "where there are ubiquitous, petty confrontations on language and ethnic issues, in relationships between neighbours and between friends, on the work floor, in access to the informal sector of the economy, in amorous matters, in drinking and nightlife, and in the conceptualization of social relationships in terms of sorcery" (1994, 160). His discussion raises the question of the tension between transcendence and friction, which informs minoritization as a dynamic, transformative process.

The third process, regionalization, is likely to increase in importance in the future, but it is somewhat beyond the scope of my present interest. In postcolonial Botswana, so far, regionalization, unlike the other two processes, involves no appeal to historic moral community, no claims to ties extending back over generations and even to precolonial times. Instead, regionalization appeals to current expediencies or fresh interests, political and economic. It is postcolonial, recently distinctive, and not only recognized popularly to be new but labeled new in the media stories about the emerging division or polarization. Thus, for roughly the past decade in Botswana, there have been press reports about the opposition between Northerners and

Southerners, and the forming within the ruling party of competing factions, the Northern versus the Southern. It would be a mistake, in my view, to see such regionalization as a sign of fragmentation, dissolving some former unity (cf. Friedman 1997). On the contrary, regionalization is a distinctively post-colonial process creative of national unity, cutting across prior ethnic and tribal divisions and sometimes given a new cultural gloss, as it were in reflection of the emergence of fresh identities.

In reality, each of these processes, minoritization, reintegration, and regionalization, impacts powerfully on the other—so much so that in everyday life they sometimes seem to be the same thing. This is not to say that they are consistent or easily in mutual support. Instead, their contradictions subvert or threaten the temporary resolutions in their politics. Winning gains in minoritization can turn out to be losing advantages in reintegration, and conversely.

In part, minoritization is carried forward by the politics of recognition (Taylor 1992; Werbner 2002a; also see chapter 4, below). Culture becomes the object of struggles expressed in appeals to public respect and dignity. These struggles, if expressed in terms of rights, are also about actual opportunities for participation in citizenship and public life. Minorities struggle in such politics to claim respect for themselves, for their languages, their histories, their ways of life, on an equal basis with the majority. They oppose cultural and linguistic dominance, which the majority has come to regard as natural or usual but which they find is a disadvantage or that it so stigmatizes them that they are effectively denied the equal rights of citizens. Contemporary citizenship demands, they assert as a matter of dignity, that minority languages, formerly much silenced, now be publicly heard, taught at parents' request in schools, and fostered with state funding. No longer acceptable is the appearance of homogeneity through the effacement of cultural difference from the public sphere.

Minoritization is a process of learning, I suggest. Certain incidents serve as revelatory or epiphanal moments (Fernandez 1982; Solway 2002), at least in retrospect. People draw lessons from them, often rehearsed in popular, widespread stories, about favoritism and discrimination, unjust inclusion and exclusion, special opportunities for some and not others, oppression, victimization, and suffering. Sometimes it is the majority who tell the stories as complaints against the minority for taking unfair advantage, usually covertly; at other times it is the aggrieved minority, complaining of open discrimination by the majority. Of course, the stories, as retold, become significant re-workings of the events.

There is also what I call unfinished moral narratives (Werbner 1995, 1996). Kept alive in such narratives is collective suffering as remembered wrongs by one people, ethnic group, or tribe against another, for example, from the colonial past, the old traces of collective or communal violence, such as by Ngwato tribal forces against Birwa and Kalanga, as in the Nswazwi

case (see chapter 3). Minoritization draws on unfinished narratives to turn the present encounter, however fresh or new, into yet another instance of the past oppression and injustice. It is not a matter merely of heroic storytelling but of minority making in powerful sentiment through the sharing of a grievous experience that is passionately felt, understood intimately, and rehearsed with considerable moral force.

Postcolonial minoritization is a largely nonviolent process, in Botswana as in most of postcolonial Africa, at least so far. Up till now, while riots express so-called youth violence (Burke 1998; Durham 1999; Gulbrandsen 2002), public violence is not ethnic violence, though, of course, the presence of ethnic violence among Botswana's neighbors is well known, often commented on, and sometimes taken as an ominous warning of what could happen even in Botswana. It is the specter of ethnic violence, like that of "the takeover" by an ethnic minority, that haunts the public imagination. The threat was publicly voiced by President Masire, particularly late in his presidency and eventually before the recent Presidential Commission on Discrimination in the Constitution (which I discuss below), when he spoke of the danger of letting the Tiger loose. What needs to be stressed, however, is that while ethnic tension exists and is sometimes expressed in public, it does not reach open conflict, beyond occasional incidents of individual abuse, perhaps defamation, or mere name-calling.

In Botswana, minoritization now gains its greatest impetus, I suggest, largely but not exclusively, from urban and peri-urban life. It has to be understood as developing most dynamically in the context of the very recent influx of more than half the country's population into the southern part of the country. There, in the capital city and its vicinity, people have distributed themselves without creating ethnic enclaves or segregated neighborhoods. Yet, while joining the rapid growth of the city, most people there are still attached to rural homes, and many are actually living as strangers incorporated in the peri-urban villages near the city. They value their original rural homes highly and usually visit them, more or less regularly. Thus minoritization is a translocal process, one that transpires across both rural and urban areas, and also draws on the reworking in the present of past tribal differences.

Ethnic homogeneity is, admittedly, a part of Botswana's wider reputation for being an exceptional country in Africa. But, as Isaac Schapera long ago pointed out, Tswana tribes have been ethnically diverse from precolonial times (1952; see also Gulbrandsen 1993). Their ethnic composition has been the product of considerable migration from distant places. What has virtually been a hallmark of Tswana tribal development is the capacity to incorporate strangers as tribal citizens while allowing for ethnic difference, redefined within certain terms of rank and unequal subjection.¹⁸ Moreover, international labor migration, in itself advancing awareness of ethnic diversity, has a considerable history in much of the country (Schapera 1947). What

is a fresh development, on an unprecedented scale and at an ever accelerating pace, is the centering of polyethnicity, the encounters of people having many different ethnic origins, in one part of the country. The contested heartland for this emerging polyethnicity is the capital and villages located in its peri-urban vicinity, which is now so competitively desirable and thus pressingly short of land.

Besides reintegration, minoritization, and regionalization, the fourth political process in our discussion is indigenization. Reflecting on the indigenous rights movement more widely, even beyond Africa, toward the close of the United Nations Decade for Indigenous Peoples (1995–2004), Dorothy Hodgson observes,

Increasing numbers of historically marginalized groups are “becoming” indigenous by joining transnational networks and alliances that promote indigenous mobilization, and demanding recognition and rights from their respective nation-states and the international community. These rights include protection of and control over their property and possessions (such as territories, resources, material culture, genetic material, and sacred sites), practices (cultural performances, arts, literature) and knowledge (cultural, linguistic, environmental, and medical). (2002, 1037)

San of Botswana have gained world attention for their struggles for such rights, by becoming active in the indigenous rights movement, and the recent papers by Robert Hitchcock (2002) and Edwin Wilmsen (2002) illuminate how the indigenization of San has become a process testing, perhaps most severely, the very limits of social justice and democracy in Botswana.

REACHING A POSTCOLONIAL WATERSHED

Within these processes, the minorities debate in Botswana is now reaching a postcolonial watershed. Opposed sides have mobilized over a controversial Draft White Paper, tabled in Parliament in one form and then partially withdrawn by its very sponsors. This follows the Presidential Commission of Inquiry, established on 28 July 2000 under Patrick Balopi, a former minister of Local Government and Lands, and called to review the Constitution’s tribal sections (77, 78, 79) “so as to uphold the nondiscriminatory position of the Constitution on tribal matters” (Republic of Botswana 2000a; and, for the Report, see Republic of Botswana 2000b). These sections entrenched, under the constitution, the colonial inequality between ruling and subject communities, between principal tribes, the eight with paramount chiefs as *ex officio* members of the House of Chiefs, and lesser or minority tribes, whose rulers as sub-chiefs could be elected members.

In its many hearings, from early August 2000 until 27 October 2000, in major villages and towns across the country, the Balopi Commission turned into an extraordinary popular forum for a very wide public. Elites, intellec-

tuals, and other citizens from the capital rushed back to their home villages to testify and influence the Commission's deliberations. The deluge of oral and written submissions, richly reported in the media, including virtually live radio broadcasts, in turn produced a vast outpouring of opinion in articles, letters, and counter-letters in the press. The opinion dominant at hearings seemed to swing from one direction to another, as the Commission made its way from the south and the big capital villages of principal tribes having privileged *ex officio* representation in the House of Chiefs to the north and the west, the heartland of minorities without privileged representation.

Controversial on an unrivaled scale, the Balopi Commission's very legality was repeatedly challenged, in the House of Chiefs and before the Commission itself, by majoritarian opponents of radical reform. There was also a repeated struggle over the limits of the Commission's brief, whether it should extend to the repeal of the House of Chiefs, the introduction of an elected, more representative alternative, and other concerns affecting the reintegration of tribes within the Republic. In the upshot, narrow limits were upheld, though at the time another possibility seemed realistic to many from the minorities. The commissioner who publicly served as a watchdog, constantly rehearsing the narrowest interpretation of the Commission's terms, was promoted to being the president's controversial spin doctor and legal counsel in the President's Office, not long after the end of the Commission. If a reward for recent public service, it was a promotion not welcomed by many from the minorities, who read it as an ominous sign of presidential support for a move against their interests.

Even at the very end of the hearings there were moments of high drama, presenting some of the country's founders and senior statesmen on opposite sides, such as what occurred on one remarkable day at the capital. In the morning one version of the country's constitutional history was given by the first head of the civil service, eventually a long-serving foreign minister and ambassador, who urged reform to suit the new times. The alternative version in defense of the status quo, given in the afternoon, was advocated by former president Masire, who raised the specter of ethnic violence, the Tiger about to be Unleashed, as if it were the real danger in the debate about rights.

Above all, the Balopi Commission intensified the political learning of minorities about one another. It evoked much passion about the heritage of discrimination, inequality, and subjection from the colonial and even pre-colonial past. It became the quite unintended catalyst for the discovery of bases for new coalitions, and coalition politics drew minorities together in new alliances based on the recognition both of difference—cultural associations spoke for their distinctness—and of wider unity—the same associations also spoke for the interests minorities were now seen to share as a whole.

Also elicited was something of a backlash (Werbner 2002a, 123–27; and see chapter 4 below). The more some people, mainly from the minorities,

called for “unity in diversity,” the more their opponents, most prominently the militant majoritarians, appealed for “equality of opportunity.” The minorities’ appeal, under the slogan of “unity in diversity,” has been to uphold the cultural rights of minorities. Using the counter-slogan, “equality of opportunity,” militant majoritarians argued against what is perceived as the excessive “takeover” in jobs, business, and the civil service by one minority, the Kalanga. Above all, the Balopi Commission opened a space in the public sphere for long silenced voices, for dissent and resentment, which had been simmering increasingly for decades.

But the Balopi Commission’s report, though faithfully recording much of the testimony, satisfied few. It was mocked for its omissions and evasions, especially because it refused to say whether the constitution actually was discriminatory, or how its recommendations put an end to constitutional discrimination or guaranteed that former subject and ruling communities would have equal rights. If something of a compromise, it fell short of certain majoritarian expectations, on the one side, and, on the other, was said by minorities to have been “hijacked” by their opponents.

So long delayed was the government’s response that it, too, became the subject of much political rumor, satirical newspaper cartoons, and accusations that the government was dithering. Eventually the Draft White Paper came closer to minority expectations, but it offered a somewhat ambiguous formula for constitutional reform, again perhaps driven by pressures for compromise. This continued to secure, in effect, much of the old pattern of representation, while apparently introducing a basis for election and ending the discriminatory ex officio membership of the House of Chiefs (to be renamed House of Dikgosi, for the sake of greater dignity, free of unwelcome colonial connotations). There was no radical reintegration of tribes; rather, it was more a shift in idiom to avoid old appearances, especially in now disdained colonial language.¹⁹

Clearly rejected, however, were a good number of the Balopi Commission’s more expensive recommendations for the House. The Draft White Paper dismissed the proposals for a substantial parliamentary secretariat, for the extension of chiefly powers to check ministers, and for the proliferation of chiefly chambers under the House. No longer was there something for everyone, as the Balopi Commission’s compromises seemed to promise, perhaps in the hope of winning acceptance even from the paramount chiefs themselves. Not surprisingly both the Chairman and the Deputy Chairman of the House of Chiefs spoke strongly in the House against the Draft White Paper. The Deputy Chairman had unusually harsh words for President Mogae and Attorney General Skelemani, a Kalanga whom he accused of bias for his own people and other minorities. With a quip also against the Balopi Commission, mocked as the “Commission on Minority Rights,” the Deputy Chair accused the government of “protecting minority tribes at the expense of the majority” (*Botswana Gazette*, 27 March 2002).²⁰

“President Mogae Backtracks” was the *Botswana Gazette* headline over the story of the government’s response to such majoritarian pressure—an immediate retreat from key recommendations in the controversial Draft White Paper (Mogapi 2002).²¹ In a weekend address to his party’s Ruling Council, the President handed the job of revision, making new recommendations, to a newly appointed panel of senior party officials, including most prominently the Party Chairman, a leading backbencher in Parliament, who had resigned from the Cabinet. At a rather hostile meeting at the tribal headquarters of one of the largest of the southern majority tribes, the President “revealed that the caucus of the ruling BDP [Botswana Democratic Party] [had] resolved that paramount chiefs should retain their *ex-officio* status in the House of Chiefs and should not be elected” (Tutwane 2002a).

Eventually Parliament received a Revised White Paper for further debate. In an intervention, remarkable for its length and departure from the norm by which the attorney general only speaks in Parliament to clarify a legal uncertainty, Attorney General Skelemani declared his concern as a member from the North East (Tutwane 2002b).²² However, in response to the attack on his integrity by the Deputy Chair of the House of Chiefs, he insisted that as a professional public servant he had no “vested interests” for bias in minority rights issues. It was in the national interest that he spoke, first for acceptance of a premise of historic equality. He argued that there was no point in efforts to stigmatize ethnic groups as former refugees or immigrants, “This Botswana is for us all” (*ibid.*). The government was bound to do something about discrimination in the constitution, but in stages, and, according to a newspaper report:

He said whilst the revised White Paper was no panacea to ethnic complaints of prejudice, it was a good effort. He imagined that in future, the ethnic issue would be debated again and a better answer would be found. He was supportive of the scenario whereby the paramount chiefs would go to the House of Chiefs, together with designated members. However he said as a Republic, Botswana had the authority and is at liberty to examine her laws and administrative framework and overhaul whatever she wanted. It was for that reason that it was possible to get rid of the House of Chiefs and replace it with something different. (*Ibid.*)

With this and wider support, the Revised White Paper was accepted by Parliament, despite expressed misgivings. For majoritarians from “the principal tribes,” the policy promised *ex officio* status for paramount chiefs, who would not have to be elected to the House; for minority groups, the promise was future legislation yet to be detailed to end discrimination under the constitution and existing laws. But parliamentary acceptance did not actually mean consent within a national consensus, and, to seek that, President Mogae himself went on a cross-country tour, first to the main tribes, where the criticism he met was the most strident, and then to the rest, for a greater

measure of praise and reassuring support “to the hilt in his quest to bring tribal parity,” as he found among the Ngwato’s former subject community of Tswapong in the Central District (Nkala 2002). Among Tswapong, even a former candidate for an opposition party gave Mogae his enthusiastic backing, while expressing his view of a pragmatic deal—that people “were prepared to concede ground,” despite the fact that the reforms “do not compare favourably with what they had bargained for” (ibid.).

Achieving parliamentary acceptance and wider consent has been a process full of tacking back and forth and indecision. It is an open question whether this indecision reflects a growing weakness in the President’s own position tied to his lack of a power base of his own, irresolvable differences in the Cabinet, a gradually emerging realignment within new coalitions, or simply continued uncertainty about the balance of power within the country regarding the issues themselves. For the moment, at least, there appeared to be a shift of the weight in decision making from the usual decisive Cabinet consultation, after which Parliament routinely debates and rubber-stamps the draft or makes revisions that are minor and only very rarely radical. It has also brought forth a further counter-reaction: the next phase in coalition politics for unity among the minorities, whose cultural associations immediately mobilized well over one hundred supporters for a protest rally in Gaborone’s City Hall—“We spoke with one voice,” the coordinator of the Kamanakao Association told me.²³

“Things will never be the same,” many people said, after the Balopi Commission. The One-Nation Consensus is dominant no longer, as the very process of consultation proved. Never before have demands for more diverse representation, for recognition of cultural rights, and for an end to the vestiges of tribal discrimination been so vocal, or so rich in arguments having such a host of sources from local memories of tribal domination to continental charters of human rights. Never before has there been such a public surge in minoritization as a process creating minorities actively differentiating themselves from a majority and one another. No final resolution of the underlying issues can be expected even after the Revised White Paper is implemented as government policy, but whatever the further compromises may be, perhaps even strategic delays, the momentum is such that a turning point has come, marked by a recognized shift from one postcolonial working consensus with the possibility of moving to another.

3

The Politics of Recognition and “Pressure Groups”

Citizenship is being put to a new test in Botswana, as it is in a growing number of democracies around the world at the beginning of the millennium. The test comes in the politics of recognition.¹ In these democracies there is a liberal idea so little questioned that it is readily taken to be the core, if not the be all and end all, of citizenship. It is the idea that citizenship means that every citizen has rights as an individual, equal before the law, the same rights for all. Yet citizenship means more than that in these and perhaps most other democracies; some provision holds for the group rights of citizens.² Both the extent and direction of that provision, however, have recently been contested. Who should have which group rights and under what circumstances? Underlying this question, of course, are others about the reshaping of liberal democracy, about the integration of nation and state, and about the effective remaking of the nation-state in a variety of forms—all pressing questions of citizenship and nationality in the new millennium.

The politics of recognition puts on the national agenda new claims, demanding respect for the identity, the self-worth, and the public dignity of minority groups or indigenous peoples, while challenging established cultural dominance in public life. Further, the politics of recognition also commonly brings pressure for a shift in the kind of rights the state protects as a matter of priority. Given a past commitment by the state to protecting, above

all, the rights of individuals, what becomes controversial is the claim for certain rights of collectivities, primarily minority groups or indigenous peoples.³

Moving in a new direction, concerned citizens demand a pluralist turn in democracy. "Unity in diversity" becomes a popular slogan, and how people talk of "difference" positions them on one side or another in the debate about pluralism.⁴ On the political agenda are claims that the state must recognize some or all of the following as the collective rights of minorities and indigenous peoples: that they must have a full share of public space for the expression of their cultural heritage; that their languages should be taught in schools and accepted for use in public places; that their ways of marking their group identities and differences from others must be respected; that they should be as much entitled as any other citizens to define themselves for themselves; and that they must not be treated as necessarily deriving who and what they are, as if it were a gift to be granted or taken away by majorities or others in command of the state.

The assertive minorities and indigenous peoples claim it is second-class citizenship when they are required to assimilate on others' terms, even when those terms are imposed as coming from "the national culture." What others call "national culture," they regard as simply other people's culture. In public forums they become assertive, express pride in their own culture, and object to having the culture of others used to marginalize theirs. They resist being included in the state on terms that make another culture original and authentic but theirs derivative, and thus inferior. In no fundamental way, they insist as citizens promised equality under the rule of law, must they be more subjected culturally than other citizens. Among their group rights are cultural rights. If anyone belongs to their country, they do, culturally no less than in other respects. Assertions of belonging are as much a part of the politics of recognition as are claims for cultural rights.

Such politics of recognition is, by and large, a peaceful politics. Its hallmark is negotiation. There are moments of direct protest and confrontation, of course, but these are temporary, nonviolent, and contained within the understood limits usually acceptable in a democracy. This is not to deny that, in some of the same democracies where minorities advance the politics of recognition, race riots also break out. The politics of recognition and race riots are very different phenomena, however, and one does not lead directly to the other. Nor does the emphasis on peaceful change in the politics of recognition minimize the importance of talk of political violence.

On the contrary, the point is that it is *talk* and not actual political violence. As open public speech, sometimes deploying the rhetoric of threatening disaster, citing the example of other countries, such as those overcome by ethnic cleansing or even genocide, the talk urges the ongoing negotiation forward, with a good measure of passion. After all, while the politics of recognition is overwhelmingly peaceful, it is also passionate for it mobilizes deeply felt sentiments about collective dignity, identity, and identification

that many experience as the true source of their very being. Admittedly such talk does become inflammatory at times, and it may spill over into incitement to racial or ethnic hatred. This is one of the risks in the politics of recognition, but it does not determine the dominant process of such politics, namely, peaceful negotiation.

In the politics of recognition much depends on positioning. Some assertive citizens are indigenous peoples who make their demands from the margins, or they may be members of other disadvantaged minorities, with their hands far from the effective levers of political or economic power in government, business, army, or professional life. Their efforts in the politics of recognition, like their very claims, are shaped by their engagement in basic struggles over disadvantage. By contrast, other minorities may be led by powerful and ethnically conscious elites. It is because they enjoy their advantages only as individuals and yet identify with their ethnic groups that they are all the more conscious of being disenfranchised by the denial of their collective cultural rights. This is not to credit such elites with being the sole inventors of minority claims and rights. However much they shine in the foreground, elites rarely escape being creatures of their backgrounds—they are often moved or motivated by the public complaints and more private mutterings of fellow members of their minority group. Sometimes coalitions are formed between very differently positioned minorities who join in alliance politics, but this need not imply a united front, for often minorities are divided against themselves, even about their basic stances on public recognition.

The politics of recognition invites reactions and counter-reactions, most importantly from those whose culture is well established in the public domain. Finding the very assertiveness of minorities to be an unwelcome disturbance of a taken-for-granted world of cultural understanding—the do's and don'ts that make people fit quietly in public life, sometimes called the national consensus—majoritarians take up their own campaigns for recognition, in the name of their particular cultural heritage and often in defense of what they hold dear in the national order of things. They sometimes then use some of the minority rights language, for opposite purposes. But along with their seemingly innocent cultural demands, an apparent counterpart, as it were, to the minorities' demands for cultural rights, often comes a reactionary backlash, which is repressive and not at all innocent.

The reactionary backlash aims to stop a perceived drain on state benefits, jobs, or resources. The underlying attitude, sometimes whispered beyond the minorities' hearing but eventually broadcast in the public sphere, is often put as a call for equity. The accusation is that collectively assertive minorities either have too much advantage already or are not getting the same as everybody else because they fail to conform to some shared standard, whether it fits their needs or not. Perhaps it is high time, majoritarians sometimes suggest, for the state to put the nation first, and by that they mean their

own collectivity, its distinctive needs and interests—economic, political, and social as well cultural and linguistic. “Recover our own past, and you recover the soul of the nation,” majoritarians admonish, by which they actually mean to save their own souls at the expense of others whose past ought to be muted in public.

So far much of this argument has been presented, to open the discussion, as if the politics of recognition occurs by itself, as it were apart from a politics of representation, of who represents and speaks for whom, and, in particular, how far minorities are entitled to be represented by themselves. In reality, of course, recognition and representation go hand in hand; claims and struggles over one carry forward those of the other; and both affect and are affected, in turn, by the most familiar politics of all, the redistributive politics of who gets what benefits and resources from whom, and, perhaps most important in the democracies we have been discussing, from which agencies of the state.

For minorities in Botswana, a broad view is useful in order to make plain what the extremes are in their postcolonial politics of recognition, and to show how the extremes relate to minority positioning and privilege. At one end, where the minority is relatively well advantaged, and this is the Kalanga case, members primarily campaign for cultural rights. Their campaign, being more about ethnic group formation, has *relatively* little to do with the tribe building that took place in the colonial or early postcolonial periods, although it can be seen as contributing to “super-tribe building,” a process I discuss in chapter 4. I stress *relatively* because even at this extreme there is some interest and concern about group rights that are a legacy from colonial tribe building.⁵

At the other extreme of minority campaigning, the minority group, being more poorly positioned, mixes the tribal a great deal more with the cultural in its campaign for state-recognized group rights. Much effort is put into struggles for gains in group rights that others made through tribe building during the colonial and early postcolonial periods, gains such as a recognized tribal territory of their own, a hierarchy of tribal administration, and a paramount chief with a place in the national House of Chiefs. It is felt that other groups continue to benefit from having made such gains in the past, and, demanding an end to discrimination, members of such a minority seek to secure equality in tribal group rights. At the same time they extend these demands to claims for cultural rights, such as the right to have their language taught in schools.

These are not the only extremes, of course. There is also the option of withdrawal or active avoidance. The minority group keeps a very low profile, is minimally involved in the politics of recognition, makes no claims for group rights—cultural, tribal, or territorial—and appears more than content not to have a paramount chief. It is an option for relatively recent immigrants, such as Herero, some of whom consider that they belong to a diaspora liv-

ing in temporary exile from a neighboring country, and many of whom, living in distant communities, deny any overall unity or any need for acting as a single ethnic group. Writing of Herero in the railway town of Mahalapye, Deborah Durham observes, “Some, for whom the civic individual is a very strong model, dismiss or are uneasy with all of the ‘silly cultural stuff’ of Otjiserandu [a burial and commemorative society]; to them, being Herero is simply a matter of participating in the funerals, weddings, and family troubles of their home community” (2003, 174). I note that Herero, having hardly any national elites, at least in the upper echelons of government, the civil service, or the professions, are very poorly positioned at the capital.

POSITIONING, ETHNIC CAMPAIGNS, AND THE NEO-CONSERVATIVE BACKLASH

Having won very advantageous positioning in national institutions and government, perhaps the best positioning of all the minorities, Kalanga national elites generate virtually no pressure for group rights that are tribal, such as state recognition of the unity of the whole group through the establishment of a paramount chiefship or through the granting of other tribal entitlements, such as territory. Leading Kalanga are more than content with the end of chiefly control over territory. They welcome the fact that, even more radically, the most recent Tribal Territories Amendment Act has, in one critical respect if not all, put an official end to tribal territory: citizens, irrespective of tribe, now have the right to claim and hold land from any land board in the country.

Some leading Kalanga now salt their arguments about cultural rights with an appeal to a difference in political culture between Tswana and themselves. They insist that they have never had or wanted paramount chiefs of their own. Indeed, they mock paramount chiefs as colonial creations in subjection to the British crown, and they draw the contrast to their own independent kings, the Mambo, who ruled over the great precolonial empires both in the country and also reaching well beyond it across the region. Not surprisingly they go so far as to deny that they are a tribe at all. Instead, they prefer to speak of themselves, in English, as an “ethnic group,” and make much of their inclusiveness, incorporating many different peoples of diverse origins.

In their highly controversial and much publicized submission to the Balopi Commission, Kalanga elites at the capital urged the ending of the House of Chiefs and, along with it, the constitutional basis for much tribal legislation. Their alternative was a House of Delegates, a second house of Parliament elected on a nonparty but broadly representative basis. At the same time, they also argued by appeal to their own ancient history. This traced their national belonging back to the region’s precolonial kingdoms and empires prior to the arrival of Tswana in the country. It was a counter-assertion, opposing claims some Tswana make that the country is truly theirs, that Tswana

are the hosts and Kalanga the immigrant strangers. Against that, and in a context of super-tribal opposition, Kalanga notables claimed nationality by making a counter-assertion of unquestionable belonging.

Immediately after the Kalanga notables’ submission, an elite counter-group from the capital, calling themselves “concerned Batswana,” made their own submission to the Presidential Commission. The Tswana counter-group, in reaction to the Kalanga notables, were like an opposed mirror image; some of the Kalanga notables saw in the concerned others a Tswana counterpart, perceived to be a bit less successful or eminent and perhaps more envious, more disgruntled with their own achievement—that is, like the Kalanga themselves, a coterie of very senior civil servants (mainly “retired”), professionals, academics, journalists, corporate executives, and other business people, all of whom are well known to their opposites on the other side, and many present or past close colleagues. As in their counter-membership, so in their counter-arguments: these “concerned” elites denied the existence of tribal discrimination in the Constitution, defended the House of Chiefs, asked for maintenance of the status quo through gradual change, through adaptation not reform, and made other neo-conservative appeals for saving a specifically Tswana heritage for the national culture.

It was these same counter-elites who later went ahead to form a neo-conservative association, Pitso ya Batswana (The Forum of the Tswana), or Pitso for short. In Pitso’s constitution, placing themselves apparently within the mainstream of Botswana’s thriving civic culture, the counter-elites drew grandly on the language of liberal democracy. Using all the choice words of millennial liberalism in Botswana, they claimed to speak on behalf of principles of equality for all Batswana, nationhood, the rule of law, transparency in government, and human rights (Alpheons Moroke 2001a). As neo-conservatives, however, they went on to mandate their organization to protect indigenous institutions, to preserve indigenous knowledge and traditional medicine, and to foster the modern value of Bogosi or Chiefship in harmony with Tswana customs. Having an understood view of nepotism and tribalism as favoritism for an ethnic minority, unnamed but implicitly the Kalanga, they claimed the authority to monitor the balance of development in different regions of the country (*Mmegi Monitor* 2001).

As the rise of such neo-conservatism shows, the Kalanga counter-assertion of national belonging provoked a majoritarian backlash. There is, of course, nothing surprising about that, given the way such things so often happen elsewhere. What specifically enraged some Tswana was the idea of being labeled settlers or more recent immigrants in their own country, a country named, above all, after them, Botswana—the Place of Tswana. It made one journalist so furious, by his own account, that at some personal cost he took up a bitter campaign of muckraking. It was intended to expose Kalanga tribalism, nepotism, and disproportionate job holding in business and the civil service, especially the judiciary and the attorney general’s chambers, both

the Chief Justice and the Attorney General being high-profile Kalanga. Part of his reaction, also, was to found Pitso ya Batswana, the neo-conservative front organization for Tswana unity, which was eventually registered with the Registrar of Societies at the Ministry of Home Affairs in mid-August 2001 (*Mmegi Monitor* 2001, 2).

Another founding member, formerly head of the Directorate of Public Service Management, has denied that Pitso ya Batswana is “an ethnic association,” although one main aim is “promoting Setswana language” (Alpheons Moroke 2001a, 6). The grounds given for the denial was that Pitso ya Batswana was meant to be open to all Batswana, however selective its initial membership was. In its press release, according to the version in the *Mmegi Monitor* (2001), the organization promised, among other things, “to encourage networking among Batswana” and “to enhance citizen ownership of national policies.”

Pitso ya Batswana is widely seen as a Tswana counter-group to the Kalanga cultural association, the Society for the Promotion of Ikalanga Language, popularly known as SPIL. SPIL grew out of student activism, and it is now the more broadly based successor to earlier student societies, some founded at boarding schools, where Kalanga identity was being crystallized in minority/majority encounters, before the University of Botswana was established. All these societies fostered Kalanga identity, language, and culture, while asserting the importance of education for future development. Something of the erratic flow of student enthusiasm still characterizes SPIL as an association: it has very real ups and downs, depending on the volatile commitments of leading, sometimes charismatic personalities and perhaps a handful or so of willing enthusiasts of the moment; and it lacks a permanent secretariat. In important respects it is currently not very strong, neither in fund-raising from wealthy Kalanga businessmen nor in mobilizing its membership, even for its annual dinner which it has not been able to hold every year, for lack of organizational force.

The majoritarian perception is, of course, quite the contrary. There is a notorious suspicion that SPIL is an effective agency with its networks and tenterhooks everywhere that matters; that it is able to plan a political “takeover” on the national scene; that it conspires successfully to keep jobs for Kalanga through discrimination against others, on a tribalistic basis; and, above all, that it is the executive arm of Kalanga achievement outstandingly at the capital but more widely in the civil service, business, the professions, and especially in education. In fact, where SPIL has actually mattered most was expressed at its 2001 annual dinner, when President Festus Mogae graciously praised the Society: “I commend SPIL for taking the initiative to promote some aspects of Bakalanga culture through taking cultural activities such as music and dance festivals, publication of a newsletter, production of books and research in the Ikalanga language” (Mogae 2001, 3).

“Batswana regroup against ‘looming threat,’” ran the *Botswana Guardian*

headline in its story about the rise of the neo-conservative front as a reactionary force. The implication was that, despite the denials, the perceived threat to the harmony of the nation was minority assertiveness by Kalanga and others (Moroke 2001b); the regrouping was by those who felt themselves to be a threatened ethnic majority. Described as having a “verbose” and “ambitious” constitution of twenty pages (ibid.), Pitso ya Batswana is known as a “pressure group,” to use the choice label now current in the country’s media (Motlaloso 2001, 2). Of that and other “pressure groups,” more is said later when I discuss the cultural association of a more disadvantaged minority.

Here, for the sake of clarity, I comment on Pitso ya Batswana and its spokesman just enough for my argument at this stage. Enough, that is, to show the ethnic thrust of an emerging neo-conservative front and its significance not only in the politics of recognition and representation but also in the politics of virtually any matters of public policy. So broad is the remit of Pitso ya Batswana that it is hard to see what in government or public life is beyond its registered interest.

The contacts, organizational experience, and past reputation of Pitso ya Batswana’s spokesman are considerable. He is a good friend and long-term follower of the founding father of one of the earliest, most effective, and highly esteemed nongovernmental organizations in Botswana. His guru’s halo, won in good and long service to the country, somewhat enhances his credibility. Following his guru’s shining example, he is especially well poised to form an NGO able to bid for a share of the foreign donor funds for good NGO causes. How credible Pitso ya Batswana’s applications may be is already questionable, I am told, given its spokesman’s controversial reputation for stirring up “tribalism” and alleged defamation, now the subject of a lawsuit. In addition to his other NGO experience, Pitso ya Batswana’s spokesman is himself a former editor of the national newspaper *Mmegi* and has led a media trust. He has a reputation for having been a brilliant, crusading journalist. He is thus very well placed to plant newspaper stories, particularly in *Mmegi* and its sister newspaper, the *Mmegi Monitor*. Such stories appear weighted objectively by comments in the name of his front organization, as if reflecting the independent opinion of an authoritative body of some stature. *Almost* hidden are who and what the front really speaks for, and why.

A recent example of this artful use of the press release is in *Mmegi*, 14–20 September 2001, under the heading “Referendum Sparks Controversy” (Motlaloso 2001). In Botswana, under the constitution as it stood, judges retired at age sixty-five years, rather than at seventy-five, as in many other countries, and the government was seeking a mandate for a constitutional amendment allowing judges to retire at age seventy. There is a shortage of experienced judges and magistrates in Botswana. Most of the judges and magistrates are young, and virtually the only one in the judiciary now within reasonable sight of retirement is the present Chief Justice, who is about to turn sixty. This Chief Justice is one of the Kalanga elites who had already been attacked

injudiciously by the Pitso ya Batswana spokesman in his own campaign as a muckraking journalist. In the pronouncement on the referendum, as a matter of policy within Pitso ya Batswana's purview, however, its spokesman was careful, at first, to cast his continued ethnic attack within the phrases and values of liberal democracy, such as transparency. According to the report in *Mmegi*, which did not appear in any other newspaper:

For its part, Pitso ya Batswana—a newly founded pressure group—views the exercise as a “smokescreen to promote the apparent lack of democracy and transparency in the nomination, appointment and promotion of judicial officers at both the Magistrate and High Court level.” (Motaloso 2001)

The image reveals perhaps more than intended, for it fits Pitso ya Batswana itself, in its smokescreen for promoting a hidden agenda. The reactionary thrust remains transparent, nevertheless.

Wild and defamatory as the Pitso ya Batswana spokesman's earlier ethnic accusations were, they attracted a great deal of attention in the media. Gradually the heated yet largely ponderous diatribes on both sides were moderated in the media by a very significant stream of opinions calling, above all, for ethnic tolerance. The tide, at least in public, began to turn against what many people said was too divisive, too contrary to the complex ties of kinship, marriage, and historic community between ethnic groups,⁶ none of whom had ever wanted separation, isolation, or anything at all like Apartheid.

But, following the Balopi Commission, a decisive moment was yet to come. The government's White Paper was still to be presented; the parliamentary debate on ethnic discrimination and group rights was yet to be held. It was in this context of an unsettled outcome that Pitso ya Batswana seized the judicial referendum as an occasion for mobilizing support on an anti-minority platform. A cobra about to strike, for yes, and a check for no, mark the ballot cartoon in a national newspaper ad issued by Pitso ya Batswana in its appeal for voters to vote no in the forthcoming national referendum. The message is that the most powerful ethnic minority is the cobra on the ready. The ad asks,

Do you want to perpetuate the exclusive interests of a particular ethnic group of Batswana who currently dominate the Judiciary and Administration of Justice at the expense of all others? Do you want complete domination of the country by persons from the North East to the disadvantage of persons from all the other eleven areas? (Pitso ya Batswana 2001)

Kalanga are not named, but the reference to the North East leaves nothing to guesswork, as is pointed out in the very next issue of the *Botswana Guardian*:

If you vote “Yes” in the coming national referendum on the judiciary you would have done a good job of perpetuating Kalanga dominance. Though they do not say it in so many words, that is the message that Pitso

THE POLITICS OF RECOGNITION AND “PRESSURE GROUPS”

Ya Batswana (PYB), a newly formed group, is sending out to the nation. (Let-sididi 2001c)

Pitso ya Batswana is pushing ahead with its increasingly explicit demands to stop minority assertiveness, perhaps heartened by its first rally, held on 15 September in the Botswana National Productivity Centre, and having raised sufficient funds not only for hiring a lawyer but for its series of inflammatory newspaper ads. It remains to be seen how effective it will be and how far it will delay or even turn the rising tide, which, in my view, is toward ending constitutional discrimination and extending recognition for the cultural rights of minorities.

THE PUBLIC QUESTIONING OF CULTURAL “PRESSURE GROUPS”

This leads me to the broader questions of the role of cultural associations in the politics of recognition and their significance as “pressure groups.” Are they pushing the past limits of acceptable politics in Botswana, or are they well within the limits of liberal democracy but simply pushing in a new direction ahead of a reluctant, slow-moving government and ruling party? These questions are not merely mine; they are also problems that are now coming openly into current debate about the politics of culture. I want to approach this here by considering how the official stance of the government is reflected by the President himself in addressing SPIL as a cultural association and, beyond SPIL, the nation as a whole. I note that the President gave his speech prior to Pitso ya Batswana’s full appearance on the scene, although so prophetic are some cautionary parts of his speech that they might be taken as anticipating the emergence of the neo-conservative front, virtually a “parapolitical organization” in the guise of a cultural association.

That this presidential speech, unlike most, was broadcast without cuts on television, with repeated excerpts on the radio news, is significant. It was treated as a key address to the entire nation, not merely to one ethnic group, and that is a measure of the importance that the President himself clearly attaches to its message against cultural pressure groups and for national culture, “irrespective of ethnicity.” “A friendly warning to SPIL against tribalism” was a typical comment from a Motswana television watcher, in this case one actually very well disposed toward cultural rights for minorities, including Kalanga. But Kalanga themselves were more divided in their appreciation, as I explain later.

In speaking to SPIL, President Mogae noted, with some pleasure, the steady increase in NGOs “organising cultural events pertaining to their own culture,” and he gave this long but not exhaustive list:

Maitisong, Kuru Development Trust, Ovabanderu Association, Kamanakao Dance Festival, Tjelenje Cultural Festival, Mbungu wa Kathimana Dance Festival, Barwa Kgodumo Ya Leselesele. (Mogae 2001, 7)

Although SPIL itself was actually not on the list, except in the guise of its Tjelenje Cultural Festival, this and the rest of the first part of the President's speech posed no problem for his immediate audience—the speech was so welcoming, full of praise and encouragement. Looking around me at the time, I had the sense that until then the President carried his immediate audience warmly; they were very much with him. Then, as if having dealt with one side or one constituency, the President seemed to turn to another, to what critics of minority cultural assertiveness might say went well beyond his immediate audience at the SPIL dinner.

Getting to the punch, the President sounded his note of caution. He treated very seriously popular suspicions that ethnic groups are now using cultural events as occasions to separate themselves from others in order to mobilize for political purposes:⁷

I must however state that the activities of such organizations must build confidence in the minds of people by demonstrating that their activities are contributing to nation building and the enrichment of national culture. It is important that public perceptions that some of these associations are parapolitical with a hidden political agenda and masquerading as cultural organizations should be taken seriously and dispelled. (Mogae 2001)

Having shifted the heavy burden of proof to the cultural associations—it was for them to convince the suspicious public that they really are what they claim and, on the surface, appear to be—the President appealed to them to keep politics out of culture:

In a free and open society such as Botswana, there are many and different issues which are pursued, some cultural, others political, some economic, others social etc. In addressing these issues, it is essential to avoid a confusion of roles. It is neither appropriate nor advisable for sports to be involved in politics, nor political parties to play the role of social clubs, or cultural groups to usurp the functions of political organizations. (Mogae 2001, 8)

No doubt the President had in mind other countries where democracy suffers from such mixing, since it is, of course, widespread, especially in Africa, but perhaps it was an inappropriate moment to point the finger in specific directions. Instead, he brought his speech to a final high note by reminding everyone of how “we can hope to combine our efforts to make Botswana a product of great beauty and pass it as a cultural treasure to the next generation” (Mogae 2001, 9).

Around my table at the SPIL dinner, elsewhere in the hall, and later beyond it, I found Kalanga divided in their opinions. Recognizing both the praise and the warning in the speech, some drew my attention to the President's need to be seen as balanced, particularly because of his own background and his marriage to a Kalanga (on the president's ethnic background, see chapter 4 below). Most important, they said, was that he came to the din-

ner and thus helped their fund-raising; by speaking at the dinner, the President recognized SPIL and wished it success, which is what mattered most. Others, in good humor, took a friendly poke at the President’s remarks by rehearsing the quip, elaborated in Kalanga during the “Vote of Thanks” after the speech, that the best part of the speech was that it could be given here and there and almost anywhere. Still others, however, were more defensive, critical and even angry, as if they had been outfoxed. They blamed SPIL leaders for incompetence, for not having adequately briefed the President about the actual role of SPIL,⁸ and for letting their one main forum be captured for an attack on themselves. If SPIL were ever to be an effective “pressure group,” clearly its day was yet to come.

MARGINAL POSITIONING: THE CULTURAL AND THE TRIBAL

This leads me back to the contrast between Kalanga and other minorities. The elite-led assertiveness of the other less well-positioned minorities makes the campaign for group rights into a campaign that is both cultural and tribal. Not surprisingly this evokes a different response, at first, from majoritarians or neo-conservatives, at least on the national scene. There they do not immediately perceive such minority assertiveness by the poorly positioned to be threatening or infuriating, at least while it remains apparently isolated. That is before it is seen to be part of a new alliance politics, unifying minorities that are well positioned and more marginal.

Perhaps the most illuminating case is the Yei campaign advanced by the Kamanakao Association. I am stressing the importance of “elite-led assertiveness” in this and other minority campaigns, but the point needs to be immediately qualified. Compared to Kalanga, Yei are less well positioned, having relatively few national elites at the capital, their most prominent member being Lydia Nyati-Ramohobo, the current Dean of the Faculty of Education at the University of Botswana (Nyati-Ramahobo 2002b). The Yei cultural association she helped to found, known, after the Yei chief, as the Kamanakao Association, is at once similar to but also significantly unlike the present leading Kalanga cultural association, SPIL. Both associations have academic roots in the University of Botswana. But the Kamanakao Association is more organized as a local, home organization, shaped more by local elites and their tribal followers, and perhaps even more dedicated to a postcolonial struggle to put right colonial and early postcolonial wrongs, although these efforts figure in all the minority campaigns.

For the sake of strength and consent in its home base, the Kamanakao Association seeks to consult its members away from the capital in their tribal home.⁹ Association policies and strategies are subject to negotiation, during discussion in meetings regularly held in the Yei area of the North West District. In accord with that pressure from local interest, one major part of their campaign is the demand for a tribal administration and a tribal territory of

their own, no longer under the overrule of alien chiefs, the Tswana-speaking Tawana. Yei members of the Kamanakao Association want their own paramount chief to be recognized by the state, namely, Shikati Calvin Kamanakao I,¹⁰ the chief they have already installed in the face of government attempts to block that effort and sustain the tribal status quo. On the basis of majority rule, they insist, they who are many, and not Batawana who are few, should rule, at least among themselves. No less important, and perhaps even more self-motivating, is their appeal on the basis of social justice. Their history, as they see it, has been a long struggle against discrimination, suffering, and domination under Tawana.

Of the campaigns by the more disadvantaged minorities, it is the Kamanakao Association's campaign that has already had the greatest impact nationally. The Association's long battle in the High Court has been waged in the full glare of media publicity. Starting from the argument that the famous tribal sections of the constitution unlawfully limit citizens' rights, the Kamanakao Association has sought to have them declared null and void. From that follows their arguments for state recognition of their own culture and language, and for emancipation from the domination under their present tribal overlords.

Having collective memories of suffering and domination is something that Yei share with the other minorities, including the Kalanga, of course. But what has been distinctive is the bringing of these collective memories into the public sphere as part of a claim for justice in court, and thus state recognition. Counsel for the state did try to deny these collective memories a hearing in the High Court and, beyond that, to deny that the High Court could rule on the constitutionality of a part of the constitution itself. However, the Chief Justice, supported by his fellow judges, ruled in favor of the hearing and asserted the High Court's full jurisdiction, basically on the grounds that to rule otherwise was to deny citizens their right to seek redress against the state (Letsididi 2001a). This initial ruling in itself was widely taken by members of different minorities to confirm their confidence in the rule of law in Botswana.¹¹

The turning point beyond that came with the High Court decision. Kamanakao Association members emerged from the High Court dancing in sheer joy, women ululating, men leaping high. They were celebrating a signal victory, if not a total triumph, in their High Court case. In a strongly worded judgment the Chief Justice struck down a key section of the chiefship law: it was discriminatory, denying citizens their constitutional rights. Hence he ordered legislation to end the discrimination. Against the Kamanakao arguments, however, he made it clear that there are limits to judicial review. While the Court can rule on a statute, such as the chiefship law, the Court cannot declare part of the Constitution unconstitutional; it cannot rank sections as more basic than others or use certain provisions, that is, for basic human rights, to make others, the controversial sections 77, 78, and 79, null and

void. It was up to Parliament, not the Court, to legislate and amend the Constitution. The representatives of the electorate were better placed than the Court to decide from time to time on introducing new values into the Constitution. But, having avoided a danger in judicial review, the Chief Justice did not leave it at that. Instead, he pronounced broadly on the immediate public interest in constitutional reform: that there were indeed pressing issues, not to be ignored; and that there was an urgent requirement for the government to deal with the issues lest the general good of the country suffer. It was a crucial moment in the debate about group rights and discrimination, the onus being forcefully put on the government and Parliament to take immediate action to end tribal discrimination and secure citizens' rights to be treated equally under the law.¹²

The Kamanakao case is a landmark in the making of citizenship through judicial review of group rights, and it may well be that this case will set a precedent for bringing other minority claims over discrimination to be heard in the High Court. What is certain is that through this case and the wider debate around it, and the Presidential Commission on Discrimination in the Constitution, a threshold has been crossed. Assimilationist nationalism is on the retreat.

CONCLUSION

“Multicultural societies and communities that stand for the freedom and equality of all people,” Amy Gutman reminds us, “rest upon mutual respect for reasonable intellectual, political and cultural differences” (Gutman 1992a, 24). My argument addresses the politicized process through which such mutual respect for difference is negotiated. There is, of course, a bias, notoriously well established among social scientists, against elites, as if they were the curse of liberal democracy. Against that I argue that minority elites in Botswana have been a driving force in that politics of recognition that expands the public sphere. The better positioned such minority elites have come to be, the more confident and thus assertive they have become in the “making of the public sphere as a contested sphere of rights and citizenship, a critical sphere of argument over public equity for individuals and collectivities” (Werbner 1998b, 99). It is the minority elites, above all, including leading feminists in their number, who have made the greater room for difference, for voicing what was muted or indeed tabooed in public, and for making open to inspection what was put beyond the pale of “national consensus.” Not that they have had it all their own way, or that they have accomplished a shift in public consciousness without provoking a backlash of a tense, potentially damaging kind. Emancipation always comes with risk, however, and at a cost.

One such risk is in the very move toward a greater role for judicial review. Charles Taylor, following Michael Sandel (1984), writes of the spread of the

conception of “the procedural republic” under the influence of liberal thinkers in the United States—it is a conception “which has a very strong hold on the political agenda in the United States, and which has helped to place increasing emphasis on judicial review on the basis of constitutional texts at the expense of the ordinary political process of building majorities with a view to legislative action” (1994, 58). So far, in Botswana, the move has not been significantly at that expense.

One reason at least in the judicial review of minority group rights is that the move, though high in profile, actually came at a moment when that ordinary process of building majorities had very gradually, and with much dragging of feet, reached the point for legislative action. After that signal event, namely, placing minority group rights on the national agenda through the 1988 parliamentary motion by a city-based Kalanga MP (Member of Parliament) from the opposition party, the ruling party itself, for various reasons, has had to rebuild its majority; in doing so, it has come to champion what was originally disparaged as merely an opposition ploy to bring down the ruling party. The ruling party now presents itself as being as much a champion of minority rights as any other party. Support for amending the constitution to end the basis for tribal discrimination is now widespread.

My own reading is that the prevailing direction of change is for and not against the interests in pluralism. Multiculturalism, in one form or another, is now firmly on the public agenda as is the wide, though not universal, acceptance that new measures have to be introduced for state recognition of the equal worth of citizens according to their actual diversity, not an officially imposed uniformity. Even the spokesman for the neo-conservative front concedes that state support should be given for the use and teaching of minority languages, first of all in primary schools.¹³ There are still arguments about first- and second-class citizens, who is one or the other and why, but I take these arguments not to be a sign of liberal democracy in decline or one seriously undermined but a hallmark of the thriving public sphere which gives democracy in Botswana its best chance of healthy survival.

4

Cosmopolitan Ethnicity, Entrepreneurship, and the Nation

COSMOPOLITAN ETHNICITY

In Botswana, as in much of Africa, cosmopolitan ethnicity has a characteristic tension. Cosmopolitan ethnicity is urban yet rural, at once inward- and outward-looking; it builds interethnic alliances from intra-ethnic ones; and it constructs difference while transcending it. Being a cosmopolitan does not mean turning one's back on the countryside, abandoning rural allies, or rejecting ethnic bonds.¹ Although that may sound paradoxical, put abstractly, it keeps in focus a dynamic of transcendence interacting with difference and it also allows for interethnic partnerships. Understanding the postcolonial force of cosmopolitan ethnicity calls for theoretical interest not merely in ethnic differentiation or opposition or in conflict and competition but also in interethnic cooperation and mutuality. Hence I discuss the postcolonial development of cosmopolitans' interethnic partnerships, and the importance of trust within an ethnic group for the powerful extension of trust beyond it.

The broader process within which such cosmopolitan ethnicity arises in Botswana is minoritization. By *minoritization*, I mean the national process of making minorities who, in terms of consciousness, identification, and labeling, are actively differentiated from a majority and from one another and

yet, in some ways, also transcend their differences. In chapters 2 and 3 I discussed minoritization as one national process somewhat in tension with others, including regionalization, reintegration, and indigenization, but here I focus my argument more narrowly.

My immediate interest is in documenting elite cosmopolitanism in the context of minority and majority relations, and I show how these are expressed in terms of belonging as super-tribalism, opposing “us” and “them” and yet mirroring “them” in “us.” I argue that these relations are permeable and are as much moral as they are political; hence I question the approach to ethnicity that cuts away their interrelation, as in the distinction between “moral ethnicity” and “political tribalism” (Lonsdale 1994; Berman 1998; and see below). On that basis I contextualize cosmopolitan ethnicity, relate it to elite entrepreneurship, and disclose the significance of both for postcolonial studies of political and moral economy in Africa and more generally.

OPTIONS FOR MINORITY IDENTITY

In the case of Kalanga there are varied options for membership or identity. One is public self-identification; another is passing as Tswana. Some Kalanga in Botswana consciously seek to be part of the majority by concealing any traces of Kalanga identity. It is also not unusual for Kalanga parents to give their children Tswana names for fear of discrimination in jobs and in the award of places in higher education. This, despite a very widespread counter-rumor, perhaps first arising close to Independence and rehearsed in Parliament by an accusing MP in the late 1970s, that under the direction of a Kalanga Director, Ministry of Education officials discriminated in favor of Kalanga by earmarking application forms with the secret Kalanga sign of a peanut. Thus by their favorite food would they be known. With a touch of ironic humor, wondering why only Kalanga could draw peanuts, the official responsible for bursaries, herself originally from Lesotho, told me that at the time she hardly knew which names were Kalanga and that her Minister was outraged by the accusation. I have been taken aback by how widely and strongly this ethnic slander is believed, even among university academics.

Still other options exist for those completely assimilated in Tswana language, culture, and tribal affiliation. Some only discover from others' labeling that they are in some sense Kalanga, through an unknown father or remote ancestry or even the classification of a tribal category or ward to which they belong. They are, as it were, “outed” by others, by Tswana or by Kalanga, who may even taunt them for hiding their identity or for foolishly falling into “the wrong camp” by not knowing where they really belong. Kalanga identity is most acutely politicized, and it readily becomes a publicized reality, when jobs, promotions, and elections are at stake, including election to the highest office in the land. Thus comes the best recent example: a tribal

ward's classification was used for the public outing of the Kalanga identity of well-known Tswana speakers, such as President Festus Mogae himself² who very recently has been subject to public disparagement as a "Shona" with origins in Zimbabwe (an apology was also made publicly), the Shona and Kalanga being lumped together as one "immigrant" category (*Botswana Gazette*, 24 April 2002).

Another option—the one I want to consider most closely—brings together shared occupation and ethnicity. It is the option realized by a circle drawn from Botswana's first generation of top civil servants (see chapter 1, above). Notables of this circle of leading members of the state and commercial elites are among the most prominent of the self-identifying Kalanga in the capital. They all know one another well, and most are, or have been, more or less close friends for decades. I want to qualify the phrase "self-identifying Kalanga." This does not mean that these notables define themselves exclusively or essentially by reference to membership in a single ethnic or moral community, by a mother tongue, or by a tribal culture—in brief, by self-contained Kalanganess. The very phrase is misleading, at least for the notables and their practice of bringing together ethnic self-identification with a cosmopolitan lifestyle—the merger of belonging and inclusion.

COSMOPOLITAN ETHNICITY, REVELATORY MOMENTS, AND STABLE PARTNERSHIPS

The point was driven home to me by Attorney General Skelemani. He expresses his Kalanganess by, among other things, having kept an ancestral shrine by his late father's old home in the countryside and serving as a senior kinsman to his close relatives by blowing away wrath on their behalf. Elsewhere I give an account of a sacrifice he made during his father's installation as a patriarch in his home village (Werbner 1989, chap. 3; and see chapter 7 below on his role as a "small boy" in the ritual). In the capital he has a well-earned reputation among other Kalanga elites for his ritual and other upright service to his home people and his home community. But, as an elite cosmopolitan, he is also a very active Rotarian, who *very* much enjoys that organization's inclusive sociality, proudly wears the Rotary Club badge, and strongly supports its broad causes, irrespective of ethnic difference. Discussing this in the presence of his non-Kalanga wife (who herself learned to speak Kalanga for his parents' sake) and his largely Gaborone-raised daughters, Attorney General Skelemani repeatedly drew the conclusion, "I see no conflict between these things."

It might be argued, however, that the tension in such cosmopolitan ethnicity is actually an expression of irresolvable contradictions, realized in one conflict and dilemma after another. With that in mind, we might consider the series of movements founded by Kalanga students, starting with the Bakalanga Students Association (BSA) in 1945 and culminating in the pres-



Figure 2. The author with Richard Mannathoko, wearing VIP rosettes, at the installation of a village headman in the North East District.

Courtesy of Pnina Werbner.

ent Society for the Propagation of the Ikalanga Language (SPIL).³ Immediately before the birth of the original Kalanga student movement, its founders had recently experienced a revelatory moment of minoritization.⁴ From that revelation they took lessons which, in their later lives, continued powerfully to move and motivate them, and their children after them, following their unwillingness to let the moment's unfinished narrative be forgotten.⁵

This revelatory moment came in 1945, when the founders of the student movement saw a widely respected Kalanga ruler, John Nswazwi (Mswazi, in the colonial records), and his followers suffering from imprisonment with hard labor in the Gaborone jail. Having struggled for release from Ngwato tribal overrule for decades, Nswazwi and his followers were being punished by the colonial government, after an unsuccessful High Court appeal against a sentence handed down by the Ngwato tribal court for disobedience to Chief Tshekedi (see Ramsay 1987, 76–80). The revelatory moment, intensified by later grievances against Ngwato overrule, took on a lasting significance as

a matter of conscience; it was a crisis moment for raising consciousness in the resulting colonial and postcolonial campaigns for equality and an end to tribal subjection. In immediate response, the original Bakalanga Student Association aimed, according to one of its founders, Richard Mannathoko, “to unite the Kalanga, promote the writing of the Kalanga language, encourage the Kalanga to be educated by persuading the parents to send their children to school and to find scholarships for poor Kalanga children” (Mannathoko 1978, 23).

Writing in 1978 in her remarkable University of Botswana undergraduate dissertation, his daughter, Changu Mannathoko,⁶ reports: “The Kalanga elite [students] were highly conscious of their ethnicity and wanted the Kalanga to enjoy the same privileges as those that were available to Tswana ethnic groups” (ibid.). But the movement and its successors were not tribalistic; nor were its accomplishments in conflict with cosmopolitan ethnicity.

There is an apparent paradox that links ethnic self-assertion and the transcendence of ethnic difference. The ethnic self-assertion in this student movement and others contributed to the creation of Kalanga as a super-tribe of people who, while coming from numerous different chiefdoms, find a collective identity in their claims for respect and equality. But without abandoning their support for their own ethnic movement and its successors, its founders went on to take leading roles in interethnic associations, becoming radical spokesmen for the Botswana Civil Service Association, and eventually postcolonial founders of the Botswana Confederation of Commerce, Industry, and Manpower (BOCCIM). Hence, as Changu Mannathoko also points out, the ethnically assertive students contributed further to “the emergence of a Kalanga elite whose loyalties transcended ethnic boundaries” (1978, 19).

SUPER-TRIBES, INCLUSIVENESS, AND BELONGING

As an ethnic minority, Kalanga, like Tswana as an ethnic majority, are what some Africanists would call a “super-tribe.” If, under colonial rule, the “tribe” became the political community associated with a territory of its own, the super-tribe, having neither political community nor territory, emerged as the broader category of culturally related people, widely dispersed in tribes and diasporas, both rural and urban. Kalanga and Tswana are now so defining themselves in relation to each other in Botswana that they exemplify an interactive form of super-tribalism that is becoming increasingly important in the postcolonial state.⁷ It is the mutually constitutive super-tribalism of a pair, “us” and “them,” same and other, and I call it mirrored super-tribalism, because each super-tribe reflects the other in relation to whom it imagines itself to be. Metaphorically speaking, both *Kalanga* and *Tswana* are umbrella terms, opening out, more or less, according to the climate, as it were, rain or shine. Or, to unpack the metaphor, I would say that such umbrella terms

refer to expansive social categories, each constructed by users—and along with the subjects I include myself and other academics as users—to identify people who are diverse in their origins and cultures, recognize tribes among themselves, speak various dialects, incorporate strangers, and distinguish themselves by many other labels.

In this usage of mirrored super-tribalism, and in my view of its increasing salience in the postcolonial state, I want to underscore ethnic inclusion and interpenetration. What is important for mirrored super-tribalism is much tolerated diversity and incorporation of strangers, because that, rather than intolerant exclusiveness, is often foregrounded by the people themselves, whether they are academic intellectuals or not.⁸ In no simple sense are the mirrored super-tribes discrete; they actually overlap in various ways, perhaps most importantly in the origins of included members as former strangers, and intermarriage between them is considerable. Indeed, some members of a super-tribe recognize that fact and take pride in identifying with the super-tribe, while they delight in deconstructing it as an expansive social category by displaying their expert knowledge of origins, of who originally comes from where. Accompanying such an ethnic expert, as I have done, walking around Botswana's southern city of Gaborone, is almost too satisfying a treat for an anthropologist with a taxonomic appetite. I was quite overwhelmed by the virtuoso detective work through which such an ethnic expert greets people and then traces stranger origins from their totems, descent praise names, and genealogies. For such an ethnic expert, the perceived divide between Kalanga as northerners and Tswana as southerners dissolves into intersecting streams of immigrants flowing across a vast region. Each super-tribe includes elements, people with similar origins, found in the other.

What has to be conceptualized in the analysis of mirrored super-tribalism is something dynamically composite. It would be a mistake, however, to see it as simply another example of ethnic groups in nesting relations, allowing fission and fusion after the classic model of the segmentary system. Instead, mirrored super-tribes, such as Kalanga and Tswana, exemplify what John Lonsdale calls "permeable ethnicities" (1994, 137). "Scrambled eggs" is President Mogae's sound bite for that concept in his assimilationist appeal for the unity of the nation in one blended culture beyond ethnic difference. While overly homogenized, his slogan nevertheless fits a widespread perception of origins, creating the permeable composition of super-tribalism.

I want to stress that in Botswana permeable ethnicities are contemporary realities of the postcolony, not precolonial bygones. Having Kenya in mind, primarily, Lonsdale puts forward the Janus-faced construction of ethnicity/tribalism, facing morally in the direction of the in-group and, in external relations, politically, but in no more than an amoral and instrumental aspect (1994, 131–50).⁹ In his version of moral ethnicity, civic virtue, honorable reputation, trust, and accountability are in-group relations exclusively. By contrast, political tribalism covers the external relations, amounting to po-

litical entrepreneurship, played for the best deal in shifting bargains with outsiders for public, mainly state resources. Lonsdale's distinction between moral ethnicity and political tribalism bears on my argument, because, in carefully tracing a shift in Africanist approaches to moral aspects of ethnicity, Lonsdale was the first to link these to wider discussions of citizenship, the politics of recognition, and multiculturalism (1994, 141). Lonsdale's distinction holds, in my view, only in the absence of permeable ethnicities. Hence Lonsdale himself finds permeable ethnicities in pre-colonial times but not after the colonial period that invented more impermeable, "hard" ethnicities, apparently obviating the precolonial alternative. Against that, in postcolonial Botswana, the discourse of precolonial origins is creative of moral interethnicity, cutting across the opposition between the mirrored super-tribes. Permeable ethnicities constitute moral relations in postcolonial super-tribalism. Here postcolonial super-tribalism cannot be reduced to unprincipled factional competition, or the political as no more than the instrumental.

For both Kalanga and Tswana, their ethnicity, like that of similar divisions throughout much of postcolonial and indeed colonial Africa, is international, in both cases reaching at least across the borders of South Africa and Zimbabwe. Open to reconstruction in response to wider movements within the southern African region, their ethnicity is variable in its inclusiveness, again like the ethnicity of borderlands elsewhere in Africa.¹⁰ Although its full extent is beyond my present scope, a brief example illustrates an increase in international inclusion: approaches from a former South African Bantustan in the Transkei are currently being made, at least in new international ethnic rhetoric, to open the umbrella term to include, as Kalanga, certain people of that former Bantustan.

By locating Kalanga historically in the wider region, such rhetoric makes a powerful appeal; it is an assertion of their belonging within a great historic community, dating from the precolonial times of the ancient empire of Mambo. On the Botswana side, Kalanga are responding to a tension over autochthony, which is widely present in the growth of certain cities in Africa (Geschiere and Gugler 1998; Geschiere and Nyamnjoh 2000, 423–53). The city is not a neutral place where all are equally strangers or immigrants but an arena where some citizens can assert themselves, politically and morally, as the hosts. The politicized question becomes: Who came first and in some sense truly belongs not merely in the city but in the country as a whole? And who is new?

The would-be hosts sometimes make their denial of others' belonging through appeals to a legendary past, as if invented stories of succor and refuge for others' ancestors in precolonial times, for example, fabrications about Kalanga being given refuge by Ngwato, justified inequality, second-class citizenship, or dubious belonging for their postcolonial descendants.¹¹ Another form of the denial of belonging identifies Botswana Kalanga with their eth-

nic fellows in Zimbabwe, as if despite their actual citizenship Botswana Kalanga were themselves, underneath it all, Zimbabweans. Kalanga come from their northern homes to the capital and its vicinity in the south, and sometimes find themselves the objects of direct verbal abuse—"Go back where you came from"—or indirect disparagement as *batswa kwa*, "those from far away" or aliens. In a reaction against such rejection, some Kalanga sympathize with the talk of indigenous belonging in their own ancient empires, which is the new international ethnic rhetoric.

At the climax of the hearings in the Balopi Commission, the recent presidential commission on constitutional discrimination (see chapter 2 above; and Solway 2002), some four hundred Kalanga held a cultural festival, led by cosmopolitan elites and university academics in cooperation with chiefs and local elders. It was the first in what has become an annual and very popular series, held at the precolonial Domboshaba Ruins of one of their stone-walled kingdoms near ancient copper and gold mines in the North East District.¹² At least since the 1980s textbooks have familiarized the country's schoolchildren with the regional importance of these kingdoms in trade extending across the Indian Ocean, originally dated to the twelfth and thirteenth centuries (Tlou and Campbell 1984, 48–52) and now traced back to origins in A.D. 850 (Tlou and Campbell 1997, 64–65). More recently the National Museum's popular introduction to Botswana's prehistory has described and illustrated some of the more than one hundred stone-walled ruins in the North East, including Domboshaba itself (Denbow and Denbow n.d., 45). A tour around Domboshaba, guided by a Kalanga university lecturer, was a featured event at the cultural festival. Countering the folk wisdom among the majority that Kalanga are new to the country, they memorialized their own autochthony and proved its authenticity at a historic landmark. This counter-assertion celebrated their belonging to the country prior to the arrival of Tswana as the relative newcomers.¹³ It also celebrated their regional importance through the presence of Zimbabwean Kalanga, from the counterpart to Botswana's Kalanga cultural association, who made speeches and distributed their Zimbabwean literature at the festival.

Yet the ethnic assertiveness of Botswana Kalanga, while international and regional, is national, above all. They want to leave no doubt about their loyalty to Botswana and the very high value they place on Botswana citizenship.¹⁴ Secession is not an option for them; they belong to the nation, and they are determined to be fully included within the nation.¹⁵ They have gone past a period when "Kalanga oral-historical traditions, folklore and proverbs were largely left to foreign researchers and had no market in Botswana" (van Binsbergen 1994, 157).¹⁶ But in creating this market by commodifying Kalanga culture distinctively in Botswana, in part through cooperation with the non-ethnic Botswana Society, Botswana Kalanga pursue a language and literature policy that is national, not transnational. Its national aim, already advanced with substantial elite and popular investment, is the creation of written stan-

dard Kalanga, with its own orthography and its own literature for Botswana. This policy is developing the Botswana Kalanga language, based on the Lilima dialect, as it is distinctively spoken in this country, rather than in Zimbabwe or elsewhere.¹⁷ As van Binsbergen insightfully points out, it is part of an

attempt at manifest localization or Botswana-ization: to claim and define a place for Botswana Kalanga within the national space of Botswana, with as little reference as possible to a Zimbabwe which, in Botswana eyes, is poor, conflict-ridden, criminal, violent, non-Tswana, in short subject to negative stereotypes (1994, 167).

The worst-case situations, calling for refuge in crisis, sadly familiar in many other African borderlands, have also compelled Botswana Kalanga to protect the international aspect of their ethnicity. From colonial times, Kalanga recall the flight of Nswazwi's followers from the Ngwato to Zimbabwe¹⁸ and, more recently, the influx into Botswana of Kalanga refugees from the pre-Independence guerrilla war and its aftermath of state terror in Zimbabwe's Matabeleland (Werbner 1991). In this recent crisis, however, I found, as van Binsbergen did, that the first allegiance of the Botswana Kalanga communities "was to the Botswana state and not to an international Kalanga ethnic identity" (van Binsbergen 1994, 167). Kalanga ethnic assertiveness, being oriented toward Botswana, does not diminish the importance of the nation but, rather, enhances it through the demand for a share in Botswana's public space for Kalanga culture and its historic contribution to the country (Werbner 2002b, 117-35).

Along with the social similarity in ethnic expansiveness and national focus, perhaps the most important moral resemblance of Kalanga and Tswana in Botswana is often understood as a continuity of each with its past or traditional public culture. A central aspect of Tswana and Kalanga life is the living tradition of public argument in which both engage in their own popular assemblies, the *kgolla* and *lubashe*, respectively, as emphasized both in the literature on them and by Tswana and Kalanga themselves. Even more, there is a framing of ethnic debate within many historically shared assumptions about public order, civic virtue, constitutionality, and the rule of law. I stress these social and moral resemblances between Tswana and Kalanga so that we may better understand how the difference between Tswana and Kalanga is imagined, and with what implications for their opposition or cooperation.

THE ETHNIC MINORITY AS SIGNIFICANT OTHER AND "THE TAKEOVER"

Of all the ethnic minorities, Kalanga are the largest, most prominent, politically and economically most influential, and culturally perhaps most assertive. They are often able and high achievers, and proud, if not boastful,

of their accomplishments. From the times of the early missionaries, prominent Kalanga, who rightly recognized the link between education and social mobility, were advocates of education and rallied support for schools, which in the North East District continue to have among the highest results in national tests. The last of the North East's colonial district commissioners, Philip Steenkamp, remarked, in a 1994 interview: "Many senior and very capable civil servants are from the Kalanage [*sic*] community because that community heavily agitated for and invested in schools during the colonial era" (Samatar 1999, 99 n. 39). Kalanga themselves often say, sometimes in ironic banter with Tswana, that in the North East they were too short of land, even for plowing, and so went to school, but Tswana, having lots of land, were too busy herding their fathers' cattle to go to school. As van Binsbergen puts it, "The Kalanga's reliance on agriculture rather than animal husbandry made their children more easily available for schooling than, for instance, the Tswana, whose school attendance had to be balanced against the need to herd cattle" (1994, 154–55). Why there have been such differences in educational accomplishment is controversial and has been the subject of public debate at the University of Botswana. Having gained an educational head start, providing a good proportion of the country's first cadre of university graduates, Kalanga have continued to be strongly represented in the university, among both staff and students, and in the professions, the civil service, and the media.

Not surprisingly Kalanga, of all the ethnic minorities, are in many ways the most significant Other for the Tswana majority. Under President Khama, according to a former permanent secretary of the Office of the President, the accusation that Kalanga dominate the civil service "became a grist for some Tswana politicians" and so urgent a political matter that President Khama "had to strongly intervene in order to bring this speculation to an end. The Tswana faction was led by the late Peter Mmusi [who became a prominent figure in the Leno Affair, which I describe below, and who eventually was forced to resign, after a later scandal, as vice president and minister of Finance and Development Planning under President Masire]" (interview with Philip Steenkamp, 15 August 1994; Samatar 1999, 99 n. 39).

It was the submission to the Balopi Commission by Kalanga elites at the capital, leading professionals, academics, and business people, that provoked the most vitriolic exchanges in the press (Werbner 2002b, 123–27; and chapter 2 above). Radical as the elite Kalanga submission was—and it called for scrapping the Constitution's three contentious sections and replacing the House of Chiefs with a House of Delegates—it was not the goad for their opponents. A widely shared view, among non-Kalanga and Kalanga alike, was that the ire was aroused as much, if not more, by their very identity, their being Kalanga, as by their demands for radical reform for the sake of equality and an end to discrimination. Most irritating for at least some among the Tswana majority was that it was the greedy Other, who were already enjoy-

ing more than a fair share of opportunities, who were the ones calling for equality. In addition, as if rubbing salt in the open wound, the Kalanga, in submitting their claim of belonging in the country before the Tswana majority arrived, were rewriting history.

At the very start of President Masire's first decade, a Tswana MP pronounced nepotism and ethnic favoritism to be the reasons why Kalanga hold so many jobs. The MP proposed that "this Honourable House deplores discrimination practices in Botswana based on race, tribe, ethnic or political affiliation and urges Government to take measures to discourage these practices" (Sesinyi 1980, 2). In the ensuing debate a leading Kalanga MP, who later became an assistant minister, responded, "We sacrificed our language for the sake of national unity. Now you come to Parliament and you say Bakalanga are depriving other Batswana of jobs. You are demanding too much" (ibid.). The MP was so moved that he openly wept, as Kalanga always stressed when repeating the story. The episode, they felt, exposed both a Tswana denial of Kalanga merit and a Tswana desire to block their success by imposing quotas. Besides the strength of public passion, the story also reveals that, by 1980 at least, arguments for universal rights and against discrimination were already being used to check minority advancement as opposed to protecting minorities: in majority and minority usage, a shared moral argument against discrimination, the same human rights talk, but with opposite meanings and conflicting intentions.

Only Kalanga have been repeatedly the target of "the takeover" and "the hidden agenda"—the popular imagining of an ethnic conspiracy consciously directed by the few against the many (Maundeni 1998, 128).¹⁹ The idea of "the takeover" and "the hidden agenda" is an expression of fear that majority dominance is insecure; that the actual numbers of minority and majority are now a matter of speculation (Perhaps they are really more than we are?); and that an enemy within is about to resort to violence, seize power, and impose cultural or linguistic otherness. Or, in an alternative version, the more insidious means of "the takeover" is not violence but, instead, is deliberate cunning in self-serving discrimination and clientelism favoring one's own people—in a word much bandied about during the Balopi Commission exchanges, it is *nepotism*.

Rumors about "the takeover" have been rife in Gaborone, since its founding as the national capital, and they have spread across the country. In the media a takeover story first appeared shortly before the first post-Independence election in 1969.²⁰ The tale set a notorious example for later ethnic defamation before elections and in other moments of political confrontation or crisis. Under the headline, "Guns under the Bed," wild allegations of a plotted coup d'état by Kalanga in top government posts were reported in the *Bulawayo Chronicle*, then a main source of news and gossip in the absence of a local newspaper in Botswana.

Within the government, I was told by one of the targets of the rumor, Pres-

ident Khama himself took direct action on being presented with an obviously fabricated CID (Criminal Investigation Department) report; unlike the fabricators, the President knew that some of the defamed Kalanga had been with him for Easter at his home in Serowe at the very time of the alleged coup meeting at the capital. The President traced the rumor to expatriate police officers, and sacked them. I found support for this version in the public staff lists for the police, showing an abrupt end in 1969 to the senior officers' careers, and the rapidly accelerated promotion of Batswana to replace them.

The President's reason for this promotion was kept secret, even among the police. The prominent Kalanga remained in their top posts, but as a matter of policy, within the working consensus and perhaps in line with President Khama's attitude of being publicly disdainful of personal rumor, no government statement was released clearing them of defamation. Instead, the "Guns under the Bed" tale took on a life of its own. It became widely known, and widely believed to be true, or at least, in the notion of conspiracy, to contain a germ of truth around which further stories about these and other leading Kalanga were propagated. What is significant, reflecting a very different era for ethnicity than the present, is that the alleged plot was simply ignored officially, for public purposes, though not informally within the government, not, so to speak, "within the system." It is a subject that a high-ranking and long-serving insider "within the system" willingly agreed to discuss with me, but only on the basis of anonymity. According to this Tswana insider, of the Kalanga in these top posts, the one regarded as a potential head of the civil service never attained his potential in the civil service nor did he become a minister, in part because the accusation of being a tribalist plotter gave him a reputation that stuck.

"FOOTLOOSE" ENTREPRENEURSHIP

For the sake of understanding the overall prominence of Kalanga, we need to recognize the unstable, perhaps footloose nature of their special positioning that put some Kalanga in the vanguard of the emerging commercial elite. In the 1980s, from the ranks of the most senior civil servants, came top businessmen and eventually businesswomen. Leading the way in this enterprising transfer, and thus gaining a valuable head start, were Kalanga, who felt not only pulled by their perception of the coming diamond-led boom but also pushed by their sense of a glass ceiling in the civil service, of being blocked from full advancement by majoritarian discrimination. Members of this enterprising minority saw others from the majority safely cocooned within "the system," but not themselves.²¹ In the classically discontented style of minorities "of uneasy feet," to follow Thorstein Veblen's characterization (1950 [1919]), they went further afield, took command of fresh opportunities, and went on to the next phase of competition and cooperation. Com-

menting on this push from the top of the civil service and pull to the top of the commercial elite, one of the first Kalanga to make the move recalled the Kalanga proverb, *Chakulamba, chakuamula*—what rejects you relieves you—or, in his translation, “What refused could be a blessing.”

PARTNERSHIP, INTERETHNICITY, AND ENTREPRENEURSHIP

Skill in the transforming of interethnic relationships through partnerships, another feature of cosmopolitan ethnicity, has been of great importance for rapid economic and social advancement by inner-circle minority elites. That has not only been through stable, mutually supportive marriages, with career women—and none of the inner circle is divorced—but through interethnic partnerships which, with a touch of irony, they also talk of as “marriage.” “The marriage is working,” concluded one former civil servant after reviewing his extremely successful partnership with a settler citizen, said to be one of the two richest Indians in the country.

This former civil servant and his Indian partner have a basic division of labor. He is the operations manager in charge of marketing and buying. His Indian partner takes charge of financial matters. His wife comes from South Africa, where his own father was long a labor migrant, and he has his own viable network of relatives in the Kalanga diaspora there—all of which helps in the great deal of business travel which he does within Botswana, including a weekly flight to Francistown in the north, and also regular trips to Durban, Capetown, Johannesburg, and elsewhere in South Africa.

Worlds within worlds have been built up by the partners in very amicable cooperation—Trade World, Business World, Royal Wholesalers, an empire of wholesale chains, supermarkets, a fencing factory, and Blue Chip Investments, a company mainly for their major property holdings. On the cover of *Business Focus*, Botswana’s prime business magazine, for February 2000, appears the notable’s photograph, with the caption “World Group makes an indelible mark in Botswana,” accompanied by a full-length feature story.

The partners started in the mid-1980s with an innovative wholesaling idea. It was for a “one-stop shop” on a vast site in Gaborone, now covering household goods, motor vehicle parts, and building materials, all housed under one roof. Across the country they now employ more than one thousand people. The partnership includes the largest building materials supplier in the north of the country, where both partners come from and keep a major company base. As an interethnic accomplishment, the partnership was path-breaking, one of the first of its kind, and making it successful has been a triumph over social and cultural, no less than business, hurdles.

At the beginning, the notable recalls, “Others tried to scare me off by saying, ‘He will leave you barefoot. These people are well-known crooks.’ I answered them, ‘I am not working with Indians. I am working with Munir Khan (pseudonym). I have come to know enough of him to know he’s ok.’” This

knowledge and trust was accomplished through the close links in his personal network and within his inner social circle, including one of the most influential corporate executives in the country, himself a Tswana.

Understandably cautious at first, the then civil servant took some time to decide. With characteristic care, he turned for advice as many a Kalanga might, almost on first cultural principles. He turned to the relative whom Kalanga always hope to trust, his *nzekulu*, his father's own sister's son. His *nzekulu* was, and is, not only one of his very closest friends, but was the right man to approach, because he was so well placed to give reliable advice. Being one of the foremost commercial lawyers in the main northern city of Francistown, the Indian partner's home base, his *nzekulu* gave him his approval on the basis of inside knowledge.

COSMOPOLITAN ETHNICITY, ENTREPRENEURSHIP, AND DYNAMIC TRUST

Economic ethnicity, like political and cultural ethnicity, is a complex phenomenon, of course; and I must spell out more details to sustain my analysis of its cosmopolitan expression. First, why did the partner have to be an Indian in the mid-1980s? Big business was then very much in the hands of settlers and expatriates. To get into big business was to get into business with them, or so it seemed to this notable. The trouble was that in big business none of the Afrikaner, or what is called Old English settlers, accepted Africans as full partners, and that is still virtually true today, although some of these settler citizens have African shareholders in their companies. Indians were and are more open; in turn, the other of the two richest Indians became the partner of one of this notable's best Kalanga friends.²²

The notables' Indian partners started from opposite ends of the country and based their major growth in different sectors, one that of wholesale supplies and the other the motor trade with exclusive import franchises, such as for Toyota and Mercedes. Hence their partnerships, although independent, have developed from each other and are differentiated in ways that are complementary rather than competitive or adversarial.

The links between the two Kalanga partners themselves are extremely close, from years of one being the civil service deputy of the other, of handing on foreign service and local posts to each other in turn, of having lived nearby in great amity. In business they tend to concentrate more on one company's board than another, dividing the labor between them, as it were. Thus one is a director of Barclays and Stockbrokers Botswana and the other of the Standard Bank and Botswana Power Corporation. In addition, they have jointly planned and invested in a number of projects, from the manufacture of PVC pipes (a somewhat unsuccessful venture) to catering for airlines at Sir Seretse Khama Airport, very busy at that time because of sanctions against apartheid in South Africa.

I want to stress how important their experience at the highest levels of the foreign service has been for their sensitivity to prospects in global markets and international trade, and thus for the long-term success of their partnership with each other and with their Indian partners. In his interview with *Business Focus*, the featured notable explains their decision to invest in South Africa, reversing the usual direction:

Looking at the horizon we could see that South Africa was soon going to be free and traffic would be reduced at SSK [Sir Seretse Khama] airport. In 1993 we made a strategic decision to establish our business at Jan Smuts Airport in Johannesburg, S.A. To our surprise we were very much welcomed by the authorities in South Africa. Despite the Apartheid system we were recognised as investors. (February 2000, 8–9)

Business Focus concluded that the notable and his partners “are probably the first Botswana investors in S.A. and probably amongst the first African investors there” (ibid.).

This case reveals the positive dynamic between intra-ethnic and inter-ethnic trust: one is not advanced at the expense of the other, or to the exclusion of the other, as is sometimes assumed. The trust the Kalanga had for one another was the wellspring enabling them to extend trust to others, who were potentially trustworthy, beyond their own ethnic group. In other words, for these elites, the beneficial and supportive strength of their intra-ethnic relations was crucial for advancing the same potential in interethnic relations and thus for advancing their ethnicity as a cosmopolitan accomplishment. Of course, all these partnerships thrive within a broader context, immediately sustained in the public sphere by a stable, financially creditworthy state.²³ Taking that as a given, my analysis addresses the problem of selective dynamics in economic ethnicity and entrepreneurship through the extension of partnerships in certain directions and not others.

The second question is this: Why did such elite interethnicity start to take off when it did, in the mid-1980s? An obvious part of the answer is positive attraction on both sides. On the side of the top civil servants, which the notables had been, the pull was toward vast new opportunities beyond government. The pull on the other side was the greatly enhanced value that current and former insiders at the top of the civil service had for outsiders, such as Indian settlers as naturalized citizens. For example, contracts for vast numbers of Toyota and Mercedes vehicles had to be negotiated with the government and also with Debswana, the partly government-owned diamond-mining company. It was not a matter of corruption, and no one has suggested that, but contacts and access to information networks were clearly important and highly valuable. It was the time when Botswana’s greatest construction boom was about to peak, backed by a massive injection of state funds from diamond and financial revenues. Some elites, including some inner-circle Kalanga notables, were especially well placed to antici-

pate that boom on the basis of top-level insider information from the main ministries involved.

The use of insider information is, of course, a matter about which moral and legal judgment varies.²⁴ To bring it close to my present home, in England, it is fairly recently that legal standards made such use a crime for company directors under the Companies Act of 1980, Sections 68–73 (Conduct of Company Directors). No such crime applied to the practices I am discussing.

Instead, at the beginning of the 1980s and reflecting a change from the late president Khama to the then new president Masire, restrictions were lifted on civil servants' options for business. Prior to May 1984 the Public Service Act and the state's General Orders barred public officials from participating in profit-making businesses other than commercial arable and livestock farming.²⁵ The end of this insulating bar came following recommendations made in 1982 by the Presidential Commission on Economic Opportunity (Samatar 1999, 99 n. 38). Top civil servants, in particular, were then explicitly given great encouragement to become investors and shareholders, though not company directors. It was part of a deliberate policy of economic development planning intended to shift the salariat's main focus of capital accumulation and investment from having been primarily in livestock to being more in other commercial and, perhaps most important, corporate enterprise. At least from the 1980s on, Botswana's legal provisions have reserved some real estate developments, such as particular skyscrapers and inner-city malls, for citizens and their companies. There was great concern in the 1980s within the ruling party and more widely among elites to secure a major share of the new wealth for citizens rather than letting it be siphoned off largely by expatriate investors and foreign, mainly South African, companies. But which citizens were to be preferred? And how would others perceive the preference?

These are not merely questions about rent from state-made opportunities in that "politics of the belly," which has become so familiar in the literature on the competition for spoils in many parts of Africa (Bayart 1993; Bayart, Ellis, and Hibou 1999). The questions take us to the heart of the structuring and restructuring of dominance within Botswana, from one postcolonial period to another.

MINORITIZATION, JOBS, AND THE CIVIL SERVICE/BUSINESS DIVIDE

The case of the Leno Affair that follows documents a pluralist turning-point while showing how minority elites have seized opportunities for advancement in a time of transition from one phase of the postcolonial state to another. Seen in retrospect, the Leno Affair, coming on the threshold of Botswana's great boom, was a make-or-break moment in at least four respects: first, in terms of political morality, for the interlocking of business, high

finance, and the state; second, in the public sphere, for the rise of a free press fighting for the public's right to know and be openly critical about conflicting private and public interests; third, for the founding of dynasties on the basis of vast real estate investment and capital accumulation; and fourth, for a new phase in debate about minorities and political ethnicity.

In my account I report the critical role of the press in some detail in order to make it plain that the accountability of the Ministry is not simply a matter of its own technocratic wisdom but the result of intense public debate, arising from controversial exposure in the press. I also follow the Affair through the political specifics of its course in different, at times opposed ministries and in the rough and tumble of parliamentary debate, since these details disclose how political morality is brought to bear in the process of minoritization. Finally, I comment on the aftermath of the Affair in the expansion of elite minority enterprise, producing for minority elites not only great wealth in rent but also network density through a whole series of companies with interlocking directorates.

The immediate trigger for the Leno Affair was the reduced insulation of the civil service from investment opportunities in business and high finance under President Masire's economic liberalization policy. At the heart of planning, and thus intelligence, for developments in the anticipated boom were the Office of the President and the Ministry of Finance. There it was widely perceived among top Kalanga civil servants that a shift took place toward ethnic exclusivity. Under President Khama, in line with his co-optive strategies for the working One-Nation Consensus,²⁶ these Kalanga elites felt that, with the possible exception of head of the civil service, there was hardly a position to which a Kalanga could not aspire. Indeed, their actual inclusion was so marked that, according to a leading social scientist, himself from the Central District, "People in Serowe were saying, 'Why is Seretse surrounding himself with so many Kalanga?'" But under President Masire, senior Kalanga civil servants felt that the Office of the President had become unmistakably off-limits, and the Ministry of Finance virtually so. Among the Ministry's senior civil servants, the one Kalanga held his post because of his unquestionable abilities, his widely recognized experience, and the evident respect the President himself had for him, and so outstanding was this Kalanga that he was perceived to be the exception that proves the rule—he is presently the Minister of Finance under President Mogae.

In accord with such perceived majoritarian exclusivity, rumors began to spread about the growth at the capital of a secretive brotherhood for Tswana known as Lefatshe Larona, Our Country, as if to say, in an assertion of autochthony, "The Land Belongs to Us not Them." As Kalanga saw it, the brotherhood advanced majoritarian claims and interests for Tswana and against Kalanga. In tandem with this majoritarian thrust, and linked to it, were attempts to win a certain insider's preference, if not a monopoly, in competition for the citizens' share of the planned real estate developments for sky-

scrapers in the government enclave in Gaborone, and thus to win vast new wealth. It was a key moment for majority/minority relations during the mid-1980s construction boom.

At the risk of overloading my account, I need to add that in the immediate aftermath of this moment, and directly linked to it, came a fresh polarization, distinctively postcolonial and cutting across prior ethnic and tribal divisions. It was an emerging distinction of regionalization²⁷ by which people saw themselves and others not only in ethnic terms but also as Northerners or Southerners. The basis was not some appeal to primordial ties or past moral communities. It was more a matter of expediency, explicitly recognized as such, bringing together allies with shared local or regional origins, for the sake of fresh political and economic interests.

With other Northerners, Kalanga elites shared the perception that the Southerners, under President Masire's lead, were overly concentrated in top posts and were also enjoying other advantages from the state. Press stories during the leadership struggles, culminating in the end of Masire's presidency, further popularized the idea that the new factions forming within the ruling party were built from competing blocs, the Northern versus the Southern.

In the competition for the citizens' share of the new real estate boom, a head start was gained by a company called Leno Real Estate whose directors and main shareholders were southern Tswana, like the President; and, further, because these directors and shareholders were mainly from the Ministry of Finance, the Office of the President, and the Ministry of Works, they had the advantage of insider information. The Leno Affair, as it came to be known, began when a remarkable lawyer from another ministry, a citizen, not an expatriate nor one of the cadre of Finance technocrats, became a whistle-blower for the civil service. Her information led the *Daily Gazette* to raise questions about the propriety of top civil servants, cabinet ministers, even the President himself. A prominent Chief agreed to demand an explanation in the House of Chiefs from the responsible Minister of Lands and Local Government. Arguments followed in a great stream of letters and newspaper columns, including a blast against "bourgeois economic nationalism" from the University of Botswana's Student Representative Council (1986 [22 March], 5). They argued over the facts and over the rights and wrongs of the Affair, which involved Leno along with another company, Land Holding Botswana. A former Registrar of Companies published a lengthy opinion attacking the legality of the Leno land deal in terms of the Companies Act (Kalaben 1986, 17).

Remarking on the people behind the companies and a likely conflict of interest, Bojosi Otlhogile, an academic lawyer and the future Dean of Social Sciences, now Vice Chancellor at the University of Botswana, commented in a newspaper article, "Leno: The Deafening Silence":

Thirty honourable men and women. The list of their names reads like a "who's who in the Botswana Government and Private Sector." It was an al-



Figure 3. “None of my friends told me about it.”
 Courtesy of Mmegi, 22 March 1986.

manac of the rich and the powerful, top civil servants, politicians and cabinet ministers, and of course a company by the name of G. M. Five. (Otlhogile 1986)

G. M. Five stands for Grace Masire and her five daughters, the investment company of President and Mrs. Masire. By the end of the Affair the President appeared to withdraw under pressure and, along with others, was satirized in cartoons for denying any interest in Leno.

Formed by Tswana, mainly southerners, Leno included reputed members of the Lefatshe Larona brotherhood, and it was exclusive, against Kalanga—or so it appeared to be at the time. A contemporary editorial in the Serowe-based *Mmegi wa Dikgang*—The Reporter reflects on “a supposed behind-the-scenes development which has for some time been the subject of private speculation and rumours” (*Mmegi wa Dikgang*, 15 February 1986). I quote this editorial at some length because it highlights the growth of political rumor about ethnic conspiracy, this time about insiders forming a secretive Tswana ethnic elite at the core of the government:

To put it bluntly, the suggestion is that for some time now a sort of Tswana “Brotherhood” has been in the making and that its influence is being felt

in various ways as it begins to emerge. There are said to have been private and not-so-private meetings involving a hard core of people who have tried to rope in others. The rumours are that it is open only to “pure” Batswana and excludes ethnic minorities and people of more recent immigrant communities. Its objectives seem to be to provide for mutual assistance in promoting the economic and social interests of insiders.

Speculation has it that the group includes politicians and civil servants, especially those at senior levels and that the hard core members are actively trying to widen the circle by roping in—not always successfully—what it considers potential candidates. It is being put about that a number of people are being groomed for key positions in the civil service and in business and financial institutions. (Ibid.)

Although the reason and plans for Leno were not public at first, these eventually came to be known to leading Kalanga. Within Leno, a public quarrel over control broke out, splitting the company, and one faction struck against the other by deliberately placing their suit in the hands of a Kalanga, a commercial lawyer with a well-deserved reputation for winning tough negotiations. Two major opportunities for citizen investment were in the offing, this Kalanga lawyer and others of his circle realized. As he later explained to me, he saw no reason why Leno should monopolize both opportunities. To give excluded investors a share, he helped in the forming of Land Holding, which, if started later, was actually registered before its rival Leno. Land Holding began with mainly Kalanga directors and shareholders, who were current or former top civil servants. Not as exclusive as Leno, Land Holding included some Tswana also, even from Leno, and at least one naturalized citizen. The founding of Land Holding outraged some members of Leno, who saw it as a Kalanga attack, encroaching on their expected monopoly.

The state itself, of course, was not monolithic. That one set of ministries had come to be seen as virtually dominated by Tswana did not make that true of all ministries. Perhaps most important, Kalanga remained prominent in the Ministry of Local Government and Lands, where the real estate applications had to be processed. It was in this Ministry that delays in the processing of applications reduced the advantage in Leno’s head start, giving an alternative company time to organize its bid.

This provoked a counter-attack from Leno supporters. It came in an attempt to create a scandal around Land Holding, which was to use its plot for a joint venture with Barclays Bank for its skyscraper headquarters, Barclays House. In a parliamentary debate on estimates for the Ministry, a southern MP and supporter of Leno implied that the delays were an ethnically motivated tactic meant to favor Kalanga by the Ministry’s Kalanga Deputy Permanent Secretary, himself a shareholder in Land Holding. The southern MP laid the basis for allegations that Land Holding’s directors and shareholders were involved in a conflict of interest, because the same people sat on



Figure 4. Ka Fa Tlase.
 Courtesy of Mmegi, 1 February 1986.

the boards of directors of both Land Holding and Barclays. In response, Land Holding's attorney released documents with the financial details, "Barclays Bank pension fund is to provide Land Holdings [*sic*] with P 6-million in loans for working capital and stock equipment and contribute a further P [Pula] 2-million equity" (Tsiako 1986b).

Newspaper reports took up the companies' commercial competition as an ethnicized cause célèbre, pitting Kalanga against Tswana. Against the conflict of interest charge, as a double director, Gobe Matenge, a retired Kalanga civil servant, who took a lead in mobilizing his own network of friends for the company, made a principled appeal (see chapter 8 below). Gobe defended his long record of distinguished public service and implicitly threatened a libel suit: "I am free from corruption. If there was a suggestion from anybody that I was involved in corrupt practices I protest that such allegations undermine my personal integrity as an outstanding public servant" (Tsiako 1986b). The bank itself claimed neutrality. "We do not want to be involved in political or ethnic quarrels," said the Managing Director (*ibid.*). The Deputy Permanent Secretary was cleared of accusations of being involved in the allocating of land to Land Holding, and nothing came of the charges of corruption in a conflict of interest (Tsiako 1986b).

A series of boom real estate companies followed. These were built by elite

Kalanga around the same friendship network primarily growing from the civil service, but immediately extended beyond that in the next company, Thusanyo, Mutual Aid. For Thusanyo, the leading Kalanga elites were called on by a rich Indian businessman who, taking the initiative, helped them to mobilize Afrikaner and Tswana businessmen, and also to reach for trust and investment beyond the capital to shareholders based in the Central District towns of Mahalapye and Serowe. The objective was an even bigger development than the first venture. The site for a planned mall, later known as the BBS Mall, was this real estate company's intended prize, but it lost this to a company heavily financed by an Afrikaner citizen. Thusanyo eventually had to settle for buying the site of another building, important itself but of lesser value. I give these details to highlight the success in interethnic commercial growth, contrary to the simple stereotype of ethnic exclusivity in business, as well as to show the obvious, that the elite competition was real and intense: sometimes it went against the leading Kalanga elites, who then had to settle for second best; sometimes it turned in their favor.

CONCLUSION

My analysis foregrounds the minority that has become, in many respects, the most significant Other for the majority. Among elites of this minority, I argue, cosmopolitan ethnicity is a favored option, the realization of which creates pressures for a shift in the postcolonial state from being assimilationist, backed by the One-Nation Consensus, to being pluralist. While majoritarians continue to campaign for assimilation in the form of "Tswana-ization," this minority's elites invest in, to use van Binsbergen's term, "Botswana-ization" (1944, 167), in localization culminating in hyphenated citizenship and nationality with a rightful place for cultural difference in public space. Such pressures evoke counter-pressures, leaving the legitimacy of difference in the public sphere very much in question.²⁸

For the general interest in ethnicity, elites, and postcolonial studies, I want to make two final points. First, my theoretical approach to ethnicity redirects interest to the generation of trust, to interethnic cooperation and mutuality, and it reduces the excessive focus on differentiation or opposition, conflict and competition, which overwhelms so much of the literature. My argument is that in Botswana, in contrast to many postcolonial states in Africa, citizens continue to find their way beyond that vicious circle of what Bruce Berman calls "uncivil nationalism,"

in which internal processes of moral ethnicity, groping towards defining communities of cultural identity and social responsibility, contrast with an external realm of competitive political tribalism defined by purely materialistic and opportunistic relationships to the state through the control of patronage. (1998, 339)

What Berman finds missing in other African postcolonies is very much on the wax in Botswana, namely,

the development of a trans-ethnic public arena grounded in universalistic norms and the essential relations of social trust . . . that are the foundation of the day to day transactions of both capitalism and the nation-state. (Ibid.)

Citizens' confidence in such a "trans-ethnic public arena" and their determination to expand it in response to minority claims underwrite the politics of recognition in postcolonial Botswana.²⁹

My second point leads me back to issues of leadership that Samatar's argument raises (1999). This point recognizes the importance Botswana has for postcolonial studies, given its exceptional transformation from a minimalist colonial state to a strong, highly stable, much bureaucratized, and financially secure postcolonial state. At its best, Samatar's study opens a revealing window into the building of public institutions, most importantly the most powerful ministry and parastatals, as an accomplishment of political leadership and technocratic management in a postcolonial state that began in poverty, without an entrepreneurial class of its own citizens and with an economy dominated by a hostile neighbor. My interest in cosmopolitan ethnicity and minoritization brings economic and political entrepreneurship more into focus, but it still leaves largely opaque just what the dynamics of institution building in commercial companies or corporate enterprises are and how such dynamics impact on other transformations in civic and state institutions. Samatar is clearly correct that, relatively, the strength lies with the state in public institution building, now as throughout the earlier postcolonial period. The coming period promises a test of strengths, however, that future studies of Botswana's changing political and moral economy will have to address. At the heart of the matter, in my view, is the buildup of interethnic trust, partnerships and alliances, as an outstanding accomplishment in political and economic entrepreneurship by minority elites. For Botswana, as *The African Miracle*, the capable African state and not the state in collapse, there is a whole field of postcolonial research on elite entrepreneurship and interethnicity yet to be explored comparatively in depth.

5 Official Blundering and the Discredited Commission

THE PROBLEMATIC OF “BLUNDERING” AND PAST SUCCESS

The story of Botswana’s state of emergency in 1999 after an election blunder, told briefly in chapter 1, might seem to call into question the view, underlying much of this book, of Botswana and its state-building elites. Further, President Mogae, more recently, has had to suffer the political embarrassment of having his front-page picture—in which he stands, confidently poised, with his 2001 referendum ballot in hand—next to the bold red headline “**Referendum Fiasco**” (*Mmegi Monitor*, 6–12 November 2001). If Botswana has a capable state and a relatively open society, how is it that the newspaper headline of September 1999, “**Mogae Blunders**” turns out to foreshadow a whole series of blame headlines, over several years, exposing presidential and other governmental “blunders”? Or, rather, if the muckraking itself supports my view of a relatively open society—and it has been accompanied by a successful defense of freedom of the press, including the right of the press to be critical of the government’s performance—how does the “blundering” fit the existence of a capable state in Botswana? Why so much talk of “blundering,” and what does it all mean for the study of nation- and state-building elites and civic virtue in Botswana?

These questions are not merely academic. A political version has clearly

bothered President Mogae himself. After the 1999 electoral state of emergency, presidential embarrassments followed one after another, including the postponed referendum in November 2001. This referendum, too, appeared to be bungled by “blundering.”¹ The referendum was about amendments to the Constitution and had to be called for a mandate to restructure the country’s courts and judiciary. The original phrasing in the Constitution was awkward; technical considerations in the law meant that the rephrasing, if not as cumbersome, would still seem to have little interest or significance for most people. Moreover, the referendum had to be postponed at the last minute, apparently because of “blunders.” Despite a countrywide campaign for mobilization, including tours by ministers, less than 5 percent of the total valid voters turned out (Tutwane 2001b, 3). In some polling stations, like the one in my home village in the Tswapong Hills, more polling staff passed through than voters. For the press, at least, President Mogae became virtually the opposite of America’s Ronald Reagan. Unlike the Teflon president, everything seemed to stick to President Mogae.

Yet, on President’s Day in July 2001, the *Botswana Guardian* ran a laudatory account of the President’s life under the headline **“Mogae’s Success Story Mirrors That of Botswana”** (13 July 2001). The grounds for that opinion, placing Festus Mogae in the front rank of the country’s state-building elites well before he became President, are substantial. For this reason they need to be documented in detail here. Doing so provides a better perspective on the appearance in Mogae’s administration of “blundering.” It also provides a significant basis for my discussion of the testing of good governance and political morality in a major constitutional crisis. The events around this crisis I call the Khumalo Affair, after the retired South African High Court Justice Joshua Mdabula Khumalo, who headed a one-man presidential commission of inquiry, which met in November 2001; it is the Khumalo Affair that this chapter documents, mainly to shed light on the negotiation in and through a major constitutional crisis. This account advances my discussion of the role in state building of Kalanga elites and, among them, most prominently in this chapter, Attorney General Phandu Tombola Skelemani.

First the success story: President Mogae came to political office already widely recognized to be a consummate technocrat. As a politician, however, he was regarded by some to be still a novice: at least, that is, compared to “Party Strongmen,” the leading ministers with long service both in the cabinet and in the ruling party. A member of the first postcolonial cadre of university graduates, and with a reputation among them for being one of the ablest, Mogae was perhaps the very first to receive his degree in economics from Oxford University.² It is legendary that he likes to lecture his ministers in cabinet, somewhat after the manner of an Oxford don. This lecturing manner has been noticeable not only in some of his parliamentary interventions but also in his speeches. For example, in 1999, I heard him speak on the occasion of opening a road in the countryside and found the experience to be



Figure 5. Attorney General Phandu Tombola Skelemani, 2001.
Photo courtesy of Mmegi.

somewhat apolitical; that is, it was quite unlike the usual speech that a democratic head of state would deliver on cutting a ribbon and basking in popular support for a job well done. Most prominent in the speech, at least as it appeared to my wife and me, was the technocrat's passion for successfully projecting numbers, thousands and millions recited in almost hypnotic detail, as an index of increasing progress and a sign of the good life that could be lived in this capable state.

Mogae took the lead, from the early 1970s under the accelerated localization policy, in replacing expatriates and some naturalized citizens in their senior-level posts. Successful in one position after another, he rose, like a star in his own right, to the top of the Ministry of Finance and Development Planning. While in these posts he also held numerous important directorships in key parastatals and government-controlled corporations, including De Beers Botswana, Botswana RST, and the Botswana Development Corporation, of which he became Chairman. One of the first to make Botswana's presence felt in the highest decision-making echelons of transnational bureaucracy, Mogae served in Washington, D.C., as Alternate Executive and Executive Director of the International Monetary Fund for Anglophone Africa from 1976 to 1980, and as a member of the Joint Development Committee of the World Bank and International Monetary Fund from 1989 to 1990. On his return from Washington in 1980 he became Governor of the Bank of Botswana for a year, and then, from 1982 to 1989, he was the Permanent Secretary to the President, the Secretary to the Cabinet, and the Supervisor of Elections (*Botswana Guardian*, 13 July 2001).

Which citizen of his time could have known the bureaucracy better? Or influenced it more, from within? At the very least, within the country's managerial and state-building inner circle, Mogae was an insider among insiders and clearly was outstanding.

Mogae's move from the top of the civil service to the Cabinet came late in his career, and without prior experience as a politician. Only in 1994 did he actually contest a parliamentary seat in a general election, and then for a very safe seat, the Palapye Constituency in the ruling party's stronghold of the Central District. It was primarily by appointment, confirmed in Parliament, that he became the Minister of Finance and Development Planning in 1989 and then vice president in 1992. Still virtually a stranger to the rough-and-tumble of party politics, he succeeded to become Botswana's third president in 1998 without having to seek a popular vote, until the general election of 1999.³

POLITICAL STRATEGY, HIGH OFFICE, AND POSITIONING

That said, however, one could still argue that immediately on becoming President, Mogae showed an astute grasp of politics as strategy in positioning people in high public office. This suggestion is best considered, first, in

the light of politics at the end of his predecessor's administration and, second, in terms of his choice of vice president. To some extent, the end of President Masire's administration was hastened by ministers' factional struggles, linked to battles over corruption and anticorruption reforms (Maundeni 1998, 386). Much sensationalized in the press for being bitterly personal and divisive, and for weakening the ruling party, the intensified factionalism looked at the time as if it would be decisive for future succession in the state, no less than in the party. The academic guesswork, like the popular reckoning, was about which of the leading contenders would win the highest offices. It was not whether they would effectively knock each other out of the race and open the way for a regime outsider or another kind of insider, the right-hand man from the decision-making echelon of the civil service rather than the Party Strongman.

For those, including his predecessor, who groomed Mogae and co-opted him to be Vice President and then President, he had the promise of providing a way out of the divisiveness and the recriminations over corruption. He was the Mr. Clean who would reunite the ruling party, in that he was apparently neutral, neither the leading contender nor the supporter of any faction: after all, he was not a politician. Moreover, once having become Vice President and the Minister of Finance and Development Planning, he won popular admiration for being strong in the public interest—he protected the public purse against politicians, including the President himself, Cabinet Ministers, and Senior Parliamentarians, when he required that their huge loans from the National Development Bank, the arrears amounting to about 15 million pula (Molomo 1998, 208), be repaid and not written off.⁴

Given that strength, the strategic move Mogae made on becoming President was a bold and, at that time, largely unexpected choice for his Vice President, namely, Lt. Gen. Ian Khama, the unmarried son of the country's first president. On the one hand, this choice of the Young Man, as he is known in contrast to the much older Party Strongmen, was arguably reinvigorating. It would add or rather renew for the regime and party an aura of charisma which Mogae, as a managerial technocrat, rather lacked but which Khama was felt to have received powerfully from his father and the army. On the other hand, it sustained the break with the old factions, and it was anticorruption. Khama, too, belonged to no faction; nor was he one of the "vultures" feeding off the state, as Khama later satirized his fellow parliamentarians, to their unforgiving irritation and much popular amusement.

There were costs for this strategic choice, of course. One was that it introduced a protégé, even less experienced in politics than Mogae himself, whose political mistakes could be attributed to Mogae's account. Another was that to persuade Khama to give up being an army officer, a life-long ideal, it became known that Mogae had to make at least two concessions. The first was Khama's continued privilege of piloting army helicopters, a benefit he subsequently enjoyed and was sternly advised to abandon by Botswana's Om-

budsman; and, second, his allowance of a sabbatical year off from active office. Both became highly controversial, fiercely debated in Parliament and in the press: in the word of his critics, they were “blunders.”

“BLUNDERS” AND THE INEXPERIENCED SPIN DOCTOR

In retrospect, it is much harder to see anything strategic in President Mogaë’s choice for another appointment in September 2001. Perhaps responding to public pressure about his “blunders,” the president created a new post for a “general purposes adviser,” or spin doctor, whose broad responsibility was to counsel the president on all domestic issues, including political, administrative, constitutional, and legal matters. A measure of his importance is that, as the “in-house lawyer” to the president and the Office of the President, the adviser was to be the administration’s highest-paid official apart from the permanent secretary to the president and the chief justice (*Mmegi*, 16–22 November 2001). One may well guess that the appointment was intended to enhance the capacity of the President’s Office so as to avoid legal pitfalls, political “blunders,” and media embarrassments. But for that enhanced capacity, there obviously had to be informed coordination and a good working relationship between the adviser and the attorney general. After all, the appointment could not be allowed to compromise the constitutionally mandated independence and autonomy of the attorney general and his chambers—or to reduce their capacity to fulfill their own duties to serve the head of state. In other words, the weight had to lie with the attorney general and his chambers, putting their capacity first and the “in-house” capacity second.

It is puzzling why, in this situation, the president chose attorney Sydney Pilane for the post. If well known as a ruling party activist, who had also made a name for himself as a determined watchdog on the Balopi Commission (see chapters 2 and 3, above), Pilane was administratively inexperienced and uninformed about usual government practice, perhaps most importantly in such matters as elections and referenda. Pilane had spent some years in legal practice in South Africa and Botswana, but he had no senior administrative experience.

For reasons that have never been made public, the Attorney General was neither consulted about this appointment of a lawyer nor ever shown his job description or contract. The Attorney General was left in doubt, he later testified to the Khumalo Commission, “whether we are to work closely on legal matters” (Tutwane 2001d). Given that area of ambiguity, the “in-house lawyer” and his boss, the Permanent Secretary to the President, became the ones who “worked together closely on legal matters”; they did so behind the Attorney General’s back and preempting the advice it was his duty to give to the President as his constitutionally designated lawyer. This view I document more fully in due course, and I indicate also press and popular suspi-

cions, never proven, that there was a conspiracy against the Attorney General, as if the “in-house” lawyer was meant to be a tool for use against the Attorney General, turning him into a “fall guy” and perhaps even forcing him to resign.

ELECTORAL “BLUNDERING” AND THE COMMISSION OF INQUIRY

At risk in the much publicized electoral and referendum “blundering” was the President’s own credibility and political image as well as the reputation of his government for efficient governance. Among other things, his expected reelection for a further term might actually have begun to be in jeopardy. Hence from the start, the problem for the President was political and public.

Clearing up the mess was not simply an administrative matter. It could not be done by making some improvement in the bureaucracy and, in the diplomatic style of inner-circle government, reprimanding a responsible senior official, either quietly for the sake of keeping him safely in his post or, for the sake of more open discipline, allowing a leak, perhaps a direct statement to the press. If an administrative side of the matter had to be dealt with, then also to be managed was the public distancing of the President and his political reputation from the mistakes.

That had to be accomplished through public deliberation in such a way that no reasonable doubt would remain about who, at the highest levels of government responsibility, actually was to blame. Thus it would not be considered scapegoating, nor would it be. The President himself would have to be seen as just, and emerge firm and authoritative. Only an open, fair, and independent inquiry, making the workings of government at the highest levels visible, would fully restore public confidence, absolve the President, and be seen to uphold a democratic tradition of accountability and transparency. In response to this situation, the President appointed a one-man Commission of Inquiry under the retired South African justice Joshua Mdabula Khumalo, an outsider,⁵ and it met early in November 2001.

LAWFUL REFERENDUM, DISASTROUS COMMISSION

Perhaps the most central point in dispute, in legal terms, and apart from the technicalities of the problematic questions put to the ballot, was whether the Attorney General had taken due care for a timely and lawful referendum. If not, then he was to blame not only for its postponement but perhaps even for the poor turnout. Had he “blundered” by not publishing the Referendum Writ in the official *Gazette* and then under pressure had to undo his bungling by postponing the referendum? On this point I would argue

that the answer is simple. The *Botswana Guardian* expressed it convincingly after the Attorney General testified to the Khumalo Commission:

Perhaps there is no man better placed to give insight into organisation of referenda than Skelemani himself, who joined the Attorney General's Chambers in 1973, and has witnessed all the referenda held in Botswana—from the 1987 referendum when he was deputy attorney general, to the 1997 referendum when he was attorney general.⁶ (Moroke 2001f)

The Attorney General, and with him the Secretary of the Independent Electoral Commission, followed the same procedure for the 2001 referendum as he had for others in the past: wide announcement in the media and elsewhere but no official publication in the *Gazette*, and none was needed.⁷

The Khumalo Commission, as it came to be known, proved to be a disaster. It was wrong-footed from day one. Special Adviser Sidney Pilane, the President's own spin doctor, in opposition to both the public sense of fair play and the general opinion of other lawyers on natural justice, took on the post of Commission Secretary.⁸ Thus the Special Adviser, as a lawyer, was seen to be playing unacceptably conflicting roles—impartial recorder, interested party, witness, cross-examiner, and, on behalf of the President, the eventual recipient, at the President's Office, of his own Commission Report.

How could the Special Adviser be, justly, more than judge and jury, as it were, in his own cause? Critics accused him of acting as if he were not the Secretary but the Commissioner, making the inquiry by leading the evidence. At the very start of the hearing, the Special Adviser had to resign as Commission Secretary under mounting public pressure. Later, in Attorney General Skelemani's application to the High Court, the charge was that the Commission Secretary's conflict of roles "was irreconcilable and incompatible with an impartial inquiry" (Nkala, 1–7 March 2002).

The rumor began to circulate, nevertheless, that the Special Adviser had somehow stitched up the findings in advance, a rumor which the Commission's final report, though officially not written by the Special Adviser, did little to dispel, since it neither reported nor evaluated the evidence, issues, and arguments raised on the Attorney General's side.⁹ Instead, without regard for actual practice in past referenda, "ordinary common sense" was given as the ground for one highly controversial finding after another.¹⁰

Some said that the Report could almost have been written at the end of the Special Adviser's own testimony on day one. Invariably, by contrast, presidential commission reports reach their conclusions through deliberate reasoning, on balance, after they present and assess the complete range of submitted testimony and argument. The Khumalo Commission's report ignored or misrepresented the whole lengthy consultative process preparing for the referendum. In basic respects, therefore, the Khumalo Commission turned out to be a break from good public practice, long established in Botswana,

by which the presidential inquiry is a respected forum for considered deliberation. Even beyond that, Skelemani argued in his application to the High Court, “The findings of the First Respondent [Justice Mdabula Khumalo] against me were so at variance with the evidence given before him that the elementary tenets of natural justice relating to a fair hearing were in fact not met” (Nkala 2001).

Eventually, before being authoritatively discredited in a High Court order, the dubious Khumalo Commission brought the country to the edge of a constitutional crisis. It pinned blame on the Attorney General and the Secretary of the Independent Electoral Commission, but it did so unsoundly, leaving no consensus about the fairness of its procedure, findings, and final report. It pitted the President and the President’s Office against the Attorney General and the Attorney General’s Chambers in what threatened to be a damaging High Court battle between them.

Matters of personal reputation and financial considerations were at stake. The President used his power over the purse to refuse to authorize payment of the Attorney General’s legal costs before the Commission. Like the President, the Attorney General was a highly regarded professional; he had risen within the civil service, from State Counsel to Principal State Counsel to Deputy Attorney General, and then was promoted by President Masire, in 1992, to Attorney General (Nkala 2002d). He considered he had a “legitimate expectation that his legal costs before the Commission would be met by the Government or the Attorney General’s Chambers,” “given the standard practice in which Government officials whose conduct in their official capacities is being impugned” (Nkala 2002d; citing Skelemani’s application to the High Court). Where the President dismissed his claim for costs as being his personal loss, he retaliated by suing not only the government and others officially but also President Mogae in his personal capacity. One attack on a private purse was repeatedly countered by the other—it was a stand-off, for Mogae and Skelemani were confronting each other both as high officers of state and as citizens.

In question beyond such matters, and central for the constitutional relations between the President’s Office and the Attorney General’s Chambers, were other substantial issues of principle and political morality. Was there a conflict of interest? Given that the Attorney General, by law, must be the respondent in any suit against a serving government official, could someone, while still Attorney General, sue the government, and thus officially sue himself?¹¹ Was he entitled to a fair and impartial hearing, like any other official? And whose standards applied?

Here, in academic terms and for the aroused popular curiosity about principles of constitutional law in Botswana, the truth is surprising, and seemingly disappointing. Some, if not all, of these questions were never answered fully. But what is even more important for the capable state and the open society is not the resolution in one principled answer or another. Rather, it

is the sustaining of the very process for successfully negotiating an answer acceptable, by mutual agreement, as being in the public interest and on terms that are fair and reasonable to all the parties—and that, I show in due course, is what the parties did recognize in their agreed settlement that was made an Order of the High Court (Skelemani et. al. 2002).

It is worth saying that if the Attorney General had been more malleable and perhaps less seasoned as a public servant, there might not have been much of a battle—he could have resigned, as some demanded. But if the President has a legendary reputation for liking to lecture, no less legendary is the Attorney General’s reputation for frank speech and bold independence. “I made no bones about it” is a familiar phrase of his. Asked about resigning, he said, “If anybody thinks they have turned the heat on me and they hope to see me on the run, they better be concentrating on other things, because they are just wasting their time. I will not step down” (Nkala 2002d).¹²

Asked further about giving advice to the Office of the President over a matter involving the Attorney General’s Chambers as well as himself—such as this case in which he was suing Justice Khumalo, the President, the President’s Special Adviser, even the Attorney General in his official capacity, as well as others—Skelemani replied: “It is our constitutional mandate to do so and we will do it even if the case concerns the AG’s [Chambers] and me. But what my advice would be will not be dictated by anybody under the sun, including [the] Office of the President. If that happens, my oath would be meaningless” (ibid.).

In an affidavit to the High Court, responding on behalf of the President’s Office to Skelemani’s suit, Selepeng countered:

Skelemani draws no distinction between his right of access to court as a citizen and the extent to which he may exercise that right whilst occupying a senior position in the public service. He argues for a right which is unqualified in any circumstances, and which he may exercise regardless of the extent to which it *compromises* the performance of his official functions, and regardless of the extent to which those who are entitled to the benefit of such functions will be prejudiced. He fails to recognise that the assumption of public office entails certain *compromises*. (Nkala 2002a; my emphasis)

I emphasize *compromises* to highlight its ambiguity. In court, that term had a force that was perhaps narrowly legal. For a wider political purpose, however, it was morally charged so as to discredit the Honourable Attorney General. The affidavit used *compromises* in morally opposite senses, the bad appearing to drive out the good. First came the bad sense of compromising others’ rights by failing to perform one’s duties, and, in doing so, compromising one’s own moral integrity. It is a bad compromise, and one would no more want such a compromise than the honorable would want an Attorney General without honor; thus the appropriate cry in Parliament was, “Resign, resign.” Against that is the good compromise: being right and just, making

a fair balance between different interests for the sake of the higher common good.

The second sense strikes a chord with what I take to be one of the deep assumptions about the ethics of power in Botswana as a working democracy. I also presume that the Attorney General, like the President's Office, would claim to hold this assumption: the art of compromise, in the second and good sense, is at the heart of democratic government for without it there can be no negotiation of power and tyranny dominates.¹³ Good compromise makes good government.

Selepeng's reasoning about compromise and conflict of interest, directed immediately at persuading the court, also had a much wider target in public opinion. Selepeng relied on the shared political culture that informed public support for an accepted political process of negotiated power. In that context, he struck hard at Skelemani's Achilles' heel—he was uncompromising. Skelemani was known to be the independent Attorney General who, for the sake of his integrity as he saw it, stood up to his boss, one president after another, first Masire and now Mogae. But the politicized question was whether Skelemani had this virtue to a fault.

The strategy in Selepeng's affidavit was to cast Skelemani as badly compromised by being uncompromising. Although this strategy did not win the day in court, it did leave its mark in public, and was later used by Skelemani's opponents from the Pitso pressure group to further attack his moral reputation for being upright and a man of civic virtue, as I show later. Here I simply want to address one point. It was the Attorney General himself who proved to have the strength to resolve the dispute: he eventually initiated a good compromise, acceptable, above all, to the President. What is significant is that it was a good enough compromise, on the one side, to satisfy Skelemani's claims for compensation and for having his name cleared and, on the other, to uphold respect for the presidency while lifting from the President himself the substantial threat to his private purse.

COMMISSION REPRESENTATIONS, PRESSURE GROUP "TRIBALISM"

In presenting my account of the Khumalo Affair, I am aware of the problem of a burden of legal niceties. It can become overwhelming, given the inevitable richness in hearings held with teams of high-powered lawyers before a Justice concerned with writs and referenda, as well as with "common sense" and "natural justice." Nevertheless, I trace the representations in and of the Khumalo Commission in some detail. My reason is that the Commission hearings—one of which I attended, and all of which I discussed with interested citizens and other observers—placed substantial deliberation itself on the record for a public, sometimes large audience and, beyond that, for a wide newspaper readership.

This substantial deliberation amounted to a wealth of argument about ethical and moral conduct in government. Out of “backroom negotiations” in the Government Enclave, “blunders” were made visible. But also made visible, and amounting to a civic education in itself, were a host of rules and understandings. These were about good governance, about the making of law in the Attorney General’s Chambers, about its internal division of labor, about the lawyer-client relation between it and other branches of government, about care for consultation in steps all the way up to the cabinet, and about checks and balances on authority. I am not arguing, of course, that all this reached everyone equally, but I did find that a good number of citizens, both in and outside the elite, followed this civic education avidly, and they took delight in showing me their mastery of its legal and moral niceties. In brief, the perceived agenda was not for politics without ethics but for ethics in politics. It was concerned with the public interest and the common good.

The media gave very full reports, often splashed boldly across the front pages. Among the headlines the Commission elicited were, “Skelemani Takes the Fall?” “Government Enclave Mischief,” “Conspiracy Theory Emerges at Commission”—and I give these headlines and, later, others to convey that, along with much acute and careful reporting, there was a zest for scandalous exposure in the media representations (*Botswana Guardian* 2001b, 2001c; *Mmegi* 2001c).

If anyone may be said to have begun the campaign over “blunders” in the referendum on the judiciary, the lawyers for Pitso ya Batswana deserve that credit. With their pressure group, united by ethnic suspicion against Kalanga, they worked tirelessly from May 2001 to seed public opinion with suspicion and create the impression of a political mess. Eventually the lawyers were the ones who began the Khumalo Affair itself by threatening to go to court to stop the referendum.

The lawyers were carrying forward the vitriolic campaign of Pitso ya Batswana to discredit publicly the judiciary and the Attorney General’s Chambers for being “tribalistic.” Indeed, so vitriolic was the campaign that it led to 2001 being dubbed in the press, “The year of the snake,” in recognition of the pressure group’s inflammatory newspaper advertisements, showing a ready-to-strike cobra and a hangman’s noose (*Botswana Guardian* 2001d).¹⁴ The defamatory libel in the campaign, against which the Attorney General filed suit, was that he favored the Kalanga minority with jobs, in discrimination against the majority of Batswana.

Interviewed about this talk of “tribalism,” immediately after the Khumalo Commission Report appeared, the Attorney General explained,

I do not personally participate in the recruitment nor promotion of staff in this department. It is the internal AG [Attorney General’s Chambers] board, DPSM [Department of Public Service Management] and even Office of the President for senior offices. Ironically, the first officer that I fired from

CITIZENS NEGOTIATING POWER

this department was a fellow Kalanga from my home village [Mapoka]. The allegations are preposterous. (*Nkala* 2002d)

Equally unacceptable to the Attorney General was the resort to “tribalism” as an ultimate explanation for everything. As the *Mmegi Monitor* journalist put it with characteristic punch:

Trying to get the Attorney General to admit that the source of the present bickering could be tribalistic is like forcing a confession from a priest. The man is simply not given to any reductionism theories of tribalism and believes the media only peddles these. (*Ibid.*)

Nevertheless, recognizing that he is a prime target for defamation, he also wanted it to be well known that he is proud of his own cultural association, which he insists is not “tribalistic”:

It is true that I am not just a member of the Society for the Promotion of Ikalanga Language (SPIL), I am its founding member. I participated in the drafting of its constitution and which by the way is well crafted to ensure that nobody uses it for any ulterior motive. When we formed it, I told former President Sir Ketumile Masire about it. (*Ibid.*)

In the face of the Attorney General’s stance, Pitso ya Batswana and their lawyers, despite their vitriol, at first got nowhere with their threat. The Attorney General was steadfast in his considered view that the lawyers had no grounds for their objection; that the referendum did not require publication of a writ in the *Government Gazette*, and hence none had been published; that there were no deficiencies in the statement of the referendum questions; that, in a preparatory year, the questions had been “thoroughly thrashed” by the Attorney General’s Chambers, the Independent Electoral Commission, the Office of the President, Parliament, and even the Minister of Presidential Affairs and Public Administration—in brief, “he was satisfied with them” (*Tutwane* 2001d). However, control over the referendum slipped from the Attorney General’s hands, when the Office of the President took the extraordinary step of appointing its “in-house lawyer,” Sydney Pilane, and without consulting the Attorney General.

THE “IN-HOUSE” LAWYER AND THE OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT

Very shortly after Pilane’s appointment and roughly on the weekend of September 15 and 16, 2001, this “in-house lawyer” reached his own view of the proposed referendum, again without consulting the Attorney General. A combative though usually seemingly genial attorney who did not mind mistakenly being called advocate, Pilane was overly confident in his own expertise. After all, he had no prior experience of handling the ambiguities of election legislation or the referendum process, unlike the responsible and

thoroughly seasoned advisers in the Attorney General's Chambers. Nevertheless, he intervened to take matters into his own hands.

Politically Pilane's intervention was insensitive and, to say the least, foolish. He took no care to avoid exacerbating the vitriolic campaign of the Pitso ya Batswana pressure group, which was casting a specter of "tribalism" over the referendum—to vote yes was made out to be a vote for Kalanga domination of the judiciary. It was well known that, since May 2001, Pitso ya Batswana and its lawyers had been attacking the legality of the referendum and threatening to sue (Moroke 2001e; Tutwane 2001a). But, as if naïve about that, Pilane suddenly made a discovery of his own, somehow, and thus found himself in agreement with the Pitso lawyers: there were legal flaws, and the referendum had to be changed and postponed. Still unchecked by the usual process of seeking more expert opinion, he contacted his boss, Permanent Secretary Molosiwa Selepeng, warning him that the referendum could be effectively challenged in court.

And this is what happened, according to Selepeng's initial testimony before the Khumalo Commission:

I then advised the Special Advisor to articulate, in writing, his analysis of the problem, together with a suggested solution, so that these could be presented to His Excellency the President. I also advised the Special Advisor to make feelers to the Attorney General to get his views on the proposal to postpone the Referendum. (Moroke 2001a)

Later this account proved contentious under cross-examination. It led to one of the Commission's moments of high drama in a heated exchange between Selepeng and Peter Hodes, the South African advocate who was the Attorney General's commandingly impressive Senior Counsel:

The advocate demanded persistently that Selepeng give a full account of what Pilane told him about his (Pilane's) concerns about the referendum. The PSP [Permanent Secretary to the President] insisted it was not much, as he advised Pilane to detail his case in writing. This annoyed Hodes.

Selepeng: "Don't try to put me in a straight jacket. I know better what took place. You are just coming from somewhere."

Hodes: Your memory seems to be getting better with my questions.

In accord with the Permanent Secretary's instructions, the Special Adviser phoned the Attorney General, announcing his discovery of a failure to comply with the Referendum Law. The Attorney General gave him short shrift, and so testified to the Commission, "My reaction was, 'How could that possibly be the situation?' I said, 'No, no, no, Mr. Pilane'" (Moroke 2001g). The consultative process had been too wide for such a last-minute discovery.

It is a moot point whether Pilane's memo of September 20 to the Permanent Secretary was ever copied to the Attorney General. First the Permanent Secretary claimed that it was (Moroke 2001a), but later the Attor-

ney General denied that claim (Tutwane 2001e). But Pilane and Selepeng did meet with the President that day and “discussed deficiencies in the referendum questions and the non-publication of the writ in the *Government Gazette*” (Tutwane 2001d). Hence what is clear is that the “in-house” legal advice, prejudging the issues through special pleading, reached the ear of the President before he heard directly from his rightful legal counsel.

PRESIDENTIAL MEETING, ATTORNEY GENERAL’S “CALL”

By the time the Attorney General was brought into a presidential meeting, joining the others on September 25, Pilane seemed to have reached an agreement with Selepeng on postponement, and apparently had drafted a new writ, together with a new text and revised questions for the referendum. Thus he was able to wrap it all up that very night; all that was needed was the formality of getting the Attorney General to see reason in the presence of the President. “How the Law Man Was Bypassed” ran one headline for this part of the story (*Botswana Guardian* 2001g). Another headline filled the front page with a question and its answer:

Backstabbing at OP? THOUGH *Attorney-General Phandu Skelemani or his counsel Peter Hodes did not expressly say it to the Khumalo Commission the thread running through his testimony was that the big shots in the Office of the President (OP) deliberately conspired against him. (Mmegi 2002b)*

Given the circumstances, and having been put on the spot at the presidential meeting, the Attorney General had to make what he termed “a call.” Although he stuck by his own and his Chambers’ reading of the law,

he had a change of heart because in the event that the court ruled against his conviction, the outcome would be catastrophic. When Justice Khumalo asked him why he did not stick to his conviction of objecting to the postponement Skelemani said he could not take such a risk. (Moroke 2001g)

The Attorney General agreed to postpone the referendum, and “in the spirit of unity and progress”—resolving the dispute amicably without an impasse in relations with the President and the President’s Office—he “found nothing wrong with Pilane altering” the referendum questions in a way that made no difference in substance (Tutwane 2001d).

THE DRAMATIC REVERSAL OF PUBLIC OPINION

Here a word needs to be said about the actual progress of the Commission hearings themselves in order to illuminate the representations more clearly. There was something of a radical sea change from the beginning, when Pilane led the testimonies from the Office of the President, to the end, when the Attorney General and his team dramatically turned public opin-

ion in his favor. Along with the members of the press who were sitting next to me, I found that the atmosphere became electric, and I was virtually on the edge of my seat, as each bit of the earlier construction of events was rolled back. Now rather than just a fragment of a letter read out of context, the complete letter was read, shedding an entirely different light.¹⁵ A damning press release and an apology issued from the President's Office in the Attorney General's name, and under his signature, turned out not to have been his at all; indeed, it was inaccurate and he flatly denied having authorized it, contrary to the initial testimony of the Permanent Secretary to the President.¹⁶

The report in *Mmegi* captures this sense of shocking revelation:

Perhaps sensing a more brazen war at the commission [the] Attorney General did not want to leave anything to chance. He came in the company of one attorney and two advocates. The stage was obviously set for a legal showdown.

Even before the AG [Attorney General] took the witness stand before the Commission on Tuesday his senior counsel Hodes had already sent signals that skeletons would be rattled from the cupboards of the Government Enclave.

From the moment the AG took the oath on Tuesday, his rotund voice subdued the spacious conference room at the Gaborone Sun [a major hotel] and his eyes popped out with the exuberance of an injured lion. Immediately after he started talking about his role in the bungled referendum and the nitty-gritty of the whole process, it became clear to everybody in the audience that there was no peace at Government Enclave. (Tutwane 2001e)

My own impression was that Justice Khumalo found the aggressiveness of the cross-examination distressing. The earlier presentations by the President's Office had allowed him a more Olympian and even-handed role, enabling him to appear as "a man of magnanimous calm" (Tutwane 2001d). An elderly Justice, he seemed to have suffered from the heightened tensions of the case, and had to be hospitalized briefly not long after submitting his report. At the hearing he conveyed that it made him sick when advocate Hodes closed in on attorney Pilane, whom the Justice evidently held in high esteem as his former Secretary. Hodes was discrediting Pilane on a number of grounds: for not having told the Justice that he was no longer an advocate;¹⁷ for having uncertain drafting skills; and for claiming to be impartial yet being an interested party, even a friend of the Pitso attorney Lerumo Mogobe, who had started the ball rolling over "flaws" in the referendum. Justice Khumalo, irritated from the outset, shouted in his first outburst against the advocate, "Where is this leading us? Wait until I finish. Don't talk when I am talking" (Tutwane 2001e).

Later the Justice appeared to have his own surprise up his sleeve. Before the Attorney General's appearance at the hearing, it was expected that all

documents would be disclosed to the Attorney General's legal team, as a matter of due process. However, one document the Justice produced had apparently been received too late for disclosure, and it seemed to contradict the Attorney General's defense against the damning press release. Thus another dramatic pause left the Attorney General's credibility hanging in the balance, until his lawyers inspected the document. After directing the Justice to number the item properly, as was done with the other documents, the lawyers established that the document was simply a copy from the Pitso ya Batswana lawyers of the press release letter, which had already been examined and declared dubious. The Justice was visibly discomfited.

Finally, clearly wary of any further confusion of that kind, the Attorney General's advocate returned to the subject at the very moment that the Justice seemed ready to wrap up the hearing. The advocate, urged by his attorney, made a point of insisting that no further documents be inserted without their knowledge, and that all the evidence had to be open for their comment on the record. In retrospect, because Justice Khumalo took no account of the cross-examination and the weight of the whole day's evidence, his handling of this part of the hearing would appear to be all the more unsafe.

LEGAL GUERRILLAS: THE PRESSURE GROUP "AMBUSH" IN THE HIGH COURT

If intended at least in part for the sake of peace, the Attorney General's concession, making his "call" on the spot for the President, did not remove the last hurdle in the way of the referendum. Of this last obstacle, the Khumalo Commission took no note at all. I recount the story of this last hurdle here, because it is important regarding the attempts to seize the moral high ground, to manage the public impression of "blundering," and to leave political opponents, even the government itself, in disarray. After the Attorney General agreed to the postponement, the immediate prospect of the referendum gave the Pitso ya Batswana lawyers their chance to stage an *ambush* at the last moment, and I use the term *ambush* advisedly (see below). At last, on the very eve of the referendum, the Pitso ya Batswana lawyers did take the government to the High Court, and they lost their case with costs.

In passing judgment at the High Court, Justice Horn made a point of condemning Pitso ya Batswana's strategy:

Justice Horn observed that *Pitso ya Batswana* had ample time to prepare their case well ahead of the referendum date, but chose to wait until the eve of the referendum so as to deliberately deny government and the Independent Electoral Commission opportunity to prepare. He observed the strategy was meant to cause embarrassment to the government and not to seek relief as they said.

Justice Horn said despite advice from Attorney General, Mr. Phandu

OFFICIAL BLUNDERING AND THE DISCREDITED COMMISSION

Skelemani, to seek judicial arbitration as early as possible, so as to cause minimal disruption to the referendum *Pitso ya Batswana* “deliberately delayed launching their case so as to create last minute panic, confusion and uncertainty.”

The judge rejected *Pitso ya Batswana*’s argument saying they had always wanted to use its litigation option, but carefully and deliberately chose last minutes so as to cause confusion. He said theirs was *a shoot out without fair rules of the game* as they from the beginning sought to ambush the government and the Independent Electoral Commission . . . “Their action is crafted to create the greatest embarrassment and severe prejudice to the government.” (*Mogapi* 2001; my emphasis)¹⁸

In this moment of the Khumalo Affair a public line was drawn between “blundering”—in this case Pitso’s claim to have been delayed by awkward circumstances—and “ambush”—the deliberate manipulation for the sake of maximum and disabling confusion, that is, the strategy of legal guerrillas. Judged to have crossed that line, *Pitso ya Batswana* lost its case. The judgment exposed its hidden agenda and condemned it. Going further, the justice threw down the gauntlet: let *Pitso ya Batswana* come to court after the referendum, when both parties would have time to prepare their case. If *Pitso ya Batswana* then succeeded, the justice conveyed, the results of the referendum would be nullified. *Pitso ya Batswana* made no further challenge in court, however, and did not take up the justice’s challenge for them “to put up a fair and honourable fight” (*ibid.*).

It might be said, and with good reason, that the judgment was as much political as it was legal and normative. The arguments that had been raised required an answer, for the sake of justice, to a question that was moral yet unmistakably political. Was *Pitso ya Batswana* acting in good faith for the public interest? Was it approaching the court for relief from a wrong by the state or merely trying to use the court to get its way in politics? The court’s answer: *Pitso ya Batswana*’s strategy was in bad faith. Hence the court protected itself against being used abusively, in politics by another means. At the same time, however, by upholding the right of access to court, it extended the opportunity for reasoned deliberation in the future, the “fair and honourable fight.” Later I say more about the disruptively crafty role of the *Pitso ya Batswana* lawyers, after I complete my account of the Khumalo litigation.

THE AGREED SETTLEMENT

Seeking redress after the Khumalo Commission report, Skelemani applied to the High Court to set aside two matters: first the proceedings, report, findings, and decisions of the Khumalo Commission; and, second, “a decision by the President that Skelemani personally, and not the government, had to pay for the considerable costs of his legal representation before the Khumalo Commission” (Skelemani et al. 2002). Skelemani, who sought redress in his

personal capacity “as a human being and a citizen,” faulted both the inquiry for being unfair, partial, and contrary to natural justice, and the report for ignoring the evidence (Nkala 2002f). The constitutional crisis was resolved out of court through much quiet, behind-the-scenes negotiation by independent, mutually respected intermediaries over more than nine months and, finally, through more dramatic bargaining between the legal teams, even at the eleventh hour, late into the night before the scheduled hearing (Nkala 2002b). “Skelemani Opts for Out-of-Court Settlement” ran the front-page headline in *Mmegi*, breaking the news of the last-minute negotiations (ibid.). Taken as a whole, the negotiations would seem to resonate with what a senior academic said to me, after his years of experience as a University of Botswana dean, “In our Tswana conflict resolution, as in San boiling away of anger, there are many ways of wearing you out.”

Outstanding issues inevitably remained, however. From the start, the press personalized the issues. It focused public opinion primarily on the question of victory, as if the looming constitutional crisis were, above all, an adversarial contest in which naming the winner and the winner’s score counted the most, at least in the headlines. In the upshot the score was Skelemani, 300,000; Mogae, 0: “Mogae Emerges Badly from Skelemani Deal,” “Skelemani Smiles at Last,” “OP [Office of the President] to Foot Skelemani’s Bill” (and, below, his picture with a jubilant smile) (Tutwane 2001f; Nkala 2002c; *Midweek Sun* 2002a).

The terms of the Agreement of Settlement, which was made an order of the High Court available to the public, recorded,

- a) the public interest requires an immediate settlement of the dispute between the Hon. Skelemani, His Excellency the President and the Government, and on terms which are fair and reasonable to all the parties.
- b) His Excellency the President has been advised by his legal team that certain aspects of the Khumalo Commission were flawed and that, in a material respect, the Affidavit of Reasons filed by the former Commissioner, the Hon. Mr. Justice Khumalo, in the Review Application undermines his earlier Report, thereby giving credence to the Hon. Skelemani’s complaint against the soundness of the reasoning of the Commissioner in making findings against him
- c) consequently, His Excellency the President will not act on the finding of the Commission;
- d) because of this, the Government will contribute **P300,000** solely towards the considerable costs incurred by Mr. Skelemani in his review application to the High Court. (Skelemani et al. 2002)

This Agreement was a compromise to the extent that an effort was made to save face on the President’s behalf and challenge neither the authority of his Office nor his decision-making capacity. Neither party was required to make any admission in regard to the question of Skelemani’s costs relating to the Khumalo Commission itself. Moreover, Skelemani unconditionally

withdrew his application to the High Court to review the Khumalo Commission and to set aside the President's decision. The Commission was clearly unsound; the President would not act on its finding.

If the compromise cut away some constitutional tangles, it was also easily seen through. As expressed on the front page of the *Midweek Sun* (2002a, 1), "All legal jargon said and decoded' government will have to pay costs for Phandu Skelemani's legal representation at the Khumalo Commission." And the Khumalo Commission was "discredited" (3). As for the "in-house lawyer," informed political gossip had it that he had advised against the settlement, lost the President's trust, and was excluded from the legal team that advised the President that, as the Agreement so delicately put it, "certain aspects of the Khumalo Commission were flawed" (*ibid.*).

POLITICAL REACTIONS

The legal settlement, while ending the constitutional crisis, did not and could not bring to a close the politics in and around the Khumalo Affair. Not surprisingly, one immediate outcome was the angry cry by the opposition Botswana Congress Party for the President to resign after "the unending trail of mistakes by the president" (*Mirror* 2002). Another quick response, hardly surprising in also being part of a longer, sustained campaign, came from the Pitso ya Batswana lawyers on behalf of their clients' pressure group. Under a newspaper letter headlined "Mogae Scored a Quiet Victory," Pitso ya Batswana's lawyers tried to seize the moral high ground; they claimed to speak for "many ordinary Batswana" and not "the elite of this country," and put a reverse spin on the settlement. The lawyers asserted,

that it was impolitic, even a betrayal of trust for the Attorney General to sue his boss, the President, over an administrative misunderstanding. That the nation could have been spared the costs, and spectacle, of an all-stakes high litigation when probably confidential backroom negotiations could have produced the same end result as the out of court settlement. And when, for long term strategic reasons, a private resolution of the dispute would have enhanced a more stable, trustworthy and productive relationship between the President and his principal legal aide.

By approaching the Presidency for an out of court settlement, the Attorney General realised the weakness of his case. By undertaking not to punish the Attorney General on the basis of the Khumalo Commission report, the President acted consistently and magnanimously on his earlier promise that all he intended to do once the Attorney General was faulted by the report, was to reprimand his constitutionally designated lawyer. Because the Khumalo Commission report still stands, despite the vast misinformation campaign of some commentators, and the Attorney General has withdrawn his challenge to it, the out of court settlement is more one sided in favour of the Presidency than the private English press makes out. (Mothobi, Mogobe, Radipati 2002)

The reversal in this second opinion from the lawyers for Pitso ya Batswana is revealing of “blundering” as a politically artful process, in several respects. I consider these at some length, not because the pressure group is much of a force in itself but precisely because it excels in pronouncements. In the first place, they show that “blundering” can be glossed as a “quiet victory.” Even more, those who subvert and, as it were, provide the banana peel for slipping, can turn around and moralize about how the fall should have been avoided. The lawyers were themselves the ones who tipped the balance against the referendum being on course by their threat of litigation. It was apparently credible at one moment that they could get an adverse judgment in court against the referendum, even though when they did go to court they suffered a humiliating defeat for acting in bad faith.

There is another side to their reversal. It is their shift to finding it a fault to threaten litigation or seek relief in court, when they themselves have already thundered against a “travesty of justice.” After Pilane was forced to resign as Secretary of the Commission, the leader of the lawyers, Michael Mthobi, commented judiciously and in a fine display of the lawyer’s craft in appearing reasonable:

it might be reasonably inferred that [the former secretary] . . . overstepped the boundaries delineated by the law: “If so, that would lead to the inescapable conclusion that the proceedings hitherto are tainted with illegality and are, in consequence, impeachable and, therefore, would constitute travesty of justice.” (Moroke 2001e)¹⁹

In terms of “blundering,” what is special about the role of the lawyers and their pressure group is their negative consistency. If they are not totally disruptive, then they are at least avidly primed for the ambush, like legal guerillas, while claiming to champion justice and uphold the law. And this takes me to the rhetoric of the Pitso ya Batswana lawyers’ letter and its ideas about “backroom negotiations,” “the vast misinformation campaign,” and “a more stable, trustworthy, and productive relationship.”

That rhetoric is inescapably mixed, from front room to back room. At one extreme, from the front room sounds the thundering talk of principles. In the lawyers’ constitutionalism, the appeal is to hierarchy, above all, the principle that

however senior in rank, public officers cannot act as they please. . . . The political supervisors of the public service, i.e., the Cabinet, still retains the right and power to call in question the decisions of all public officers and, where appropriate, overturn them. Just as no public officer is above the law, so is no public officer above his or her political supervisor. (Ibid.)

Using this authoritative language of principle clothes the lawyers themselves in authority; they are authorized to pronounce on matters of state, as their laying down of the law proves. They are also the right ones, their idiom of

rectitude asserts, to teach a lesson to “the executive team, including the Attorney General” about “civility and humility in the higher echelons of the public service” (ibid.). It is a discourse over “blundering” and, by counter-argument, public virtue as its opposite, and for Pitso ya Batswana lawyers to talk of the “right and power” is to seize the high moral ground as their own. They stand above it all and speak for “the ordinary Batswana” for whom the “case still leaves a bitter taste in the mouth.”

Reaching the back room at another extreme, the rhetoric of the Pitso ya Batswana lawyers is pragmatic. Within a political culture of negotiated compromise, it appeals to what every one knows: backroom deals have to be made, and it is “impolitic, even a betrayal of trust,” to go for a public confrontation with the boss “over an administrative matter.” Better to be a team player and do what the boss wants. Doing otherwise has meant a lot of costly bother that “the nation could have been spared.” And, in this, *nation* is a loaded word, for there is a hint, too, that Batswana should not be fooled by what the press says, for, after all, it is an “English” press. It is a populist message: civil servants run things too much by themselves; they ought to know who is boss, namely, the politicians as the elected masters. In this pragmatic rhetoric, the Pitso ya Batswana lawyers appropriate the role of spokesman both for the nation of Batswana and for common sense. What they seem to signal, perhaps more than anything else, is that they are sticking to their cause: since they themselves are not among the losers, they are ready for the next battle.

As for the charges of “tribalism” which Pitso ya Batswana introduced into the Khumalo Affair, and which the newspapers much publicized, they were dismissed by the Attorney General—they had nothing to do with his differences with the President’s Office. But what can be said more cogently about the bearing that the Attorney General’s identity as a Kalanga had on the Khumalo Affair? Or to put the question more broadly: what is the significance of minority identity with regard to prominence in legal affairs generally? After all, Kalanga predominate among the country’s outstanding lawyers, and they pursue careers not only in private practice but also in public service, which is less well paid, and in the judiciary and the administration of law. It cannot be easy to persist in that, and Skelemeni himself has told how the terms of service were so poor that he nearly gave up the Attorney General’s Chambers in the middle of his career (Nkala 2002d).

The broad question is one that I find easier to raise than to answer. I suggest, however, that a good answer has to take more account of minority perceptions and motivation that is civic, ethical, and professional, and not merely interested in personal profit. True, knowing their worth, some Kalanga lawyers do get very rich, and set an ostentatious example others try to follow. But there is another important minority perception, which was first put to me by the Kalanga post-civil servant Richard Mannathoko, himself a British-trained lawyer and one of the earliest in the country’s first cadre of graduates.

Mannathoko notices that facing stigma and inequality often makes minorities great supporters of universal rights. Minorities turn to law as a profession, he suggests, because the experience of discrimination by a majority gives them a passion for justice, and even more the determination to know how to get it. The perception is that, by being a lawyer, one is armed most strongly to see that the promise of equal rights and fair play is fulfilled on the best terms. My own impression is that such minority concerns for legal and ethical universals do significantly motivate a good number of leading Kalanga lawyers, and that it is in this respect that the Attorney General, so remarkably uncompromising and yet the initiator of compromise, exemplifies a minority disposition toward the law.

Finally, if the last word has not been said in the politics of the Khumalo Affair, it is still possible to draw a few conclusions, however provisional. The very process of making the murky “back room”—the intrigues behind the scenes—visible was itself constitutive of the public impression of “blundering.” Ironically it became blundering about “blundering.” But, by the end, even the charges of “tribalism” and suspicion about Kalanga minority elites became, momentarily, somewhat muted. There was also a counter-assertion of public and professional standards and in defense of publicly reasoned deliberation. On balance, if there was a victory in the Khumalo Affair, other than between personalities, it was for that counter-assertion. Still a force in public life is the wider moral concern in political culture, tied to the assumption that there is a common good, and, for the sake of that, one ought to consciously balance interests and check the pursuit of self-interest. Hence as inconclusive for constitutional relations as the Khumalo Affair was, in some ways it stands, nevertheless, as a test, even an ordeal, which has been well and safely passed. Through good compromise and with teams of intermediaries, Botswana’s leaders, representing countervailing authorities in the state, negotiated themselves out of an impasse.

6

Land, Clients, and Tribal Bureaucrats

THE POSTCOLONIAL MINEFIELD, “BETWIXT AND BETWEEN”

The public administration of tribal land has been the great minefield for tribal citizenship in Botswana. The watchwords for the government have been pragmatic and gradual reform, backed by consent, when it has been a matter of changing tribal land tenure, and thus effecting the postcolonial reintegration of the tribe itself. Policies have often been justified on grounds of avoiding the risk of greater rural insecurity, dispossession of the poor, and landlessness on a large scale.¹ Yet acute conflicts have arisen and not been easily settled through negotiation by consent owing to a multitude of opposed and intractable interests, from planned zoning and the hierarchical regulation of land use, to individual entrepreneurship and the extension of formal or informal markets in land, to government-controlled local development and centralization, and, perhaps most strikingly in this democracy, to due process and reasonable redress of disputes. Repeatedly the local state and the national state have either been at odds over tribal land issues, perhaps most dramatically over the peri-urban tribal land near Gaborone, or, in response to new modes of tenure and imposed regulation, they have both met popular opposition, often motivated by fierce local resentment.

Throughout the country, however, no state agencies have been more con-

troversial and less loved than the Land Boards. There are now twelve Land Boards and thirty-eight Subordinate Land Boards. Originally their jurisdiction was over the "tribal areas," corresponding to the nine tribal reserves of the colonial era. They were established for the administration of tribal land, soon after Independence, and modeled on Kenyan-cum-British prototypes. According to Clement Ng'ong'ola, a distinguished academic lawyer at the University of Botswana, "The problems which stand out as most intractable concern the efficiency of the boards, and the prevention of the recurrence of 'lawlessness' in tribal land dealings" (Ng'ong'ola 1993, 166).²

The government introduced the Land Boards largely because of a dominant and widely shared view that the nation has a postcolonial interest in tribal land. Leading politicians, senior civil servants, and prominent entrepreneurs wanted the public control and administration of land to be reorganized as an essential part of political development from the many tribes of the colonial Protectorate to the one democratic nation under an elected government. According to this dominant view, the so-called customary rights of individual tribesmen were not problematic; indeed, these rights had to be safeguarded. But there had to be an end to certain powers of paramount tribal rulers or, as denounced by the ruling party's 1969 election manifesto, "the arbitrary decisions of the Chiefs" (Masire 1969, 14).³ The need was for a different kind of administrative agency, which new Tribal Land Boards, introduced in 1968 under the Tribal Land Act, were intended to be. The 1969 manifesto spelled out the dominant view further, while arguing that there was "no intention of excluding traditional authority" since chiefs would take part in the new Tribal Land Boards along with "the people's elected representatives":

Reactionary and opportunist elements have falsely claimed that this legislation [the Tribal Land Act] is intended to force the small man off his land. Nothing could be further from the truth. On the contrary all tribesmen who make good use of their land for the purpose for which it was granted to them will be safer under this new legislation than they were under the old. They will no longer be subjected to the whims of a chief whose decisions on land matters may be affected by all kinds of considerations which have nothing to do with the interests of the farmer or the nation. (Masire 1969, 14)

The ruling party was pledged "to formulate progressive and enlightened policies of land utilisation" (Masire 1969, 15), and it is important to appreciate the stress on reformist aims, because these took priority in the recognition of citizens' rights, at least by the Board where Kalanga are most numerous, the Tati Land Board in the North East District:

Not only will the Tribal Land Act put people's rights to their land on a proper democratic basis, but progressive farmers will be greatly assisted in their efforts to increase productivity. Furthermore . . . the farmers' brigades

[cooperatives of young farmers] will be . . . unhindered by outmoded restrictions. (Masire, 1969, 14)

Land Boards have been typically “betwixt and between” as well as at the most sensitive areas of conflict over legal pluralism built on colonial foundations. They have been not quite part of the courts yet given to judging disputes, not quite part of the executive yet authorized to administer government policies, not quite part of the legislature yet given, or arrogating to themselves, a legislative function. They have reached beyond the usual ranks of government bureaucracy for some or all of their members, in order to mobilize support and services from a wider public. But the very fact of recruitment has set Land Board members apart, and by their participation these tribal bureaucrats have become what may be called quasi-bureaucrats, somewhat detached from the rest of the public and yet not quite the same as, or at one with, the regular bureaucrats, including those who also come to serve the Land Boards. Whose side these quasi-bureaucrats are on has not been certain or straightforward. It has remained in doubt, a matter of misunderstanding, even deliberate distortion; and it has been as much a nagging concern for the quasi-bureaucrats themselves as it has been for the clients whose cases they have processed or the other government officials whose actions they have reviewed and regulated.

I put these broad remarks, by way of introduction, in terms of quasi-bureaucrats and clients in general. Yet quasi-bureaucrats have obviously not been all alike, or undivided among themselves, but have been recruited in different ways, both by appointment and by election. They have been chosen to represent (or at least appear to represent) different interests; these may be opposed factions or political parties within the local government, or competing communities or alternative elites as well as the public at large. If some Board members, such as local politicians and the party faithful, have been chosen for the stated reason that they stood for change, reform, “development,” others, such as tribal chiefs and prominent elders, have been selected for seemingly contrary reasons—that is, “traditional authority” was supposed to be represented also. In response to popular complaints about the early Land Boards, the government tried to make them more independent of the council and the chief by eliminating their representatives (Mathuba 1991, 4).⁴ Currently Board members are chosen in two ways, through direct election and through ministerial nomination; two ministries, Agriculture and Commerce and Industry, each have an *ex officio* member on the main Land Board of every district (Kalabamu 2000).

For citizens as Board clients, the typically “betwixt and between” nature of quasi-bureaucracy has been highly problematic. They have often perceived Board actions to be arbitrary, to wind through unreasonably long delays between Land Boards and the Subordinate Boards, to be contrary to prior understandings of the rule of law, and to diverge from expectations of public

order that is regular and predictable. They have heard quasi-bureaucrats using culturally familiar vocabularies for the rights and wrongs in a land case and yet meaning something quite contrary to anything culturally obvious or generally accepted in the past. The familiar and unfamiliar have been so juxtaposed, at least from the perspective of clients, that the result has often seemed nonsensical. They become subject to *clientization*, a process in which a regular turnover of clients becomes such a high priority in itself that it displaces other goals such as the protection of citizens' "customary" rights. For some clients, enduring clientization at the hands of the quasi-bureaucracy has been an experience of the absurd.⁵ In resistance, clients have often resorted to evasive tactics, arranging their own land transactions in disregard of the Board or ignoring Land Board decisions where the Board has been too weak or unable to enforce them.

It is not as if there have been two value systems, the "bureaucratic" in opposition to the "tribal," but a juxtaposition that at times has not quite made sense, from the clients' perspectives. Partly this has occurred because the juxtaposition has depended on considerations of what has been pragmatic and expedient, seen from the perspective of the quasi-bureaucrats. Rather than usually being a matter of balance in negotiation between clients and quasi-bureaucrats, power has tended to lie more with the quasi-bureaucrats, up to the point of appeal to the High Court. The quasi-bureaucrats have worked by rule of thumb; and they have had to make up the rules and procedures that they needed, somewhat ad hoc, as they went along, allocating land in the name of a government policy, as they interpreted it, and then trying disputes arising from their own decisions. This has led to complaints that "they should not be judges in their own cause," a situation the government favored resolving through the transfer of land disputes to Customary Courts and the establishment of land tribunals (Mathuba 1991, 9). Land Boards continued to hear appeals against their own decisions until 1995, however, when a superior land tribunal was established under a qualified lawyer, in part to speed up the appeal process. Until then, appeals to the Land Boards and later to the Minister had taken up to five years (Kalabamu 2000, 312). Over time, the quasi-bureaucrats have also been increasingly subject to influence from technocrats as Board members have received training from a Land Board training unit (Mathuba 1991, 8) and have been supported by more services from expert teams of professional bureaucrats in the everyday management of land; but the influence of technocrats, too, has varied in its importance and has not always been decisive. Moreover, what has varied much less has been the actually heavy and continuing reliance on chiefs and their headmen in the allocation of land, despite their official displacement from land administration.⁶ To reduce that emphasis, however, Subordinate Land Boards do now make tours from village to village to allocate plots, the Subordinate Land Board acting as a committee witnessing the allocation.

Legally all tribal land has not been authorized for sale on the open market, but, informally, fees and payments continue to change hands for land transfers between individuals. Most commonly, such paid transactions are for the peri-urban tribal land, which is openly advertised for sale in newspapers and by estate agents (Kalabamu 2000, 317).⁷ Over peri-urban tribal land, ministers have fallen from grace, at least temporarily, for their part in major scandals where the tribal land was being turned through dubious transactions into real estate for commercial use (see Republic of Botswana 1992). The informal market and “squatting” on peri-urban tribal land has been a public concern for Botswana’s second president, leading to a presidential commission (Republic of Botswana 1992),⁸ and, most recently, for his successor. In what became a personal confrontation at a meeting near the capital, the current President defended the Land Board and admonished citizens accused of being “squatters,” threatening them with the full force of the law. He supported the controversial use of bulldozers to level their officially unauthorized peri-urban houses, and later, on 21 August 2000, issued a decree to authorize demolitions (Tutwane 2002a, 2).

Against that, the High Court and the Appeal Court have ruled against Land Boards and upheld the rights of such citizens, as “illegal buyers” or “squatters,” even by recently declaring illegal instances of peri-urban bulldozing and, even more critically, the President’s decree itself (Morula 2001, 10; Tutwane 2002a, 2, 10). Moreover, in an argument accepted by both the High Court and the Appeal Court but contrary to received opinion in Land Boards, the Attorney General submitted,

as *amicus curiae*, that conceptions of customary land as property which cannot be “privately owned” or sold must now be discarded. In his opinion residential and arable land under the evolving customs of the particular area could be held in a personal and private capacity and could now be sold, and the only difference between “customary ownership” and “common law ownership” of land was that the former did not require registration whereas the latter did. (Ng’ong’ola 1993, 193)

The Appeal Court judgment, in response, by a former Chief Justice, went so far as to confirm that already in 1970, at the start of the Land Boards, tribal land had been held in a personal and private capacity in certain tribal areas, including peri-urban ones (Ng’ong’ola 1993, 194).⁹ More recently, in a case against the Land Board of another southern district near the capital, the Kgatleng Land Board in Mochudi, the present Chief Justice stopped the Land Board from evicting citizens accused of squatting (Morula 2001, 10). The defendants claimed that their land was an inheritance from their grandmother who held it long before the establishment of Land Boards; hence they did not need permission for their plots from the Land Board. In response, the Chief Justice upheld the principle that rightful heirs “would not require the permission or authorization of the Land Board to take transfer

of rights in the plots concerned and to occupy them” (ibid.). It is still a moot point, however, how far recent legislation, the Tribal Land (Amendment) Act of 1993, has strengthened the powers of the Land Boards. Ng’ong’ola argues that now, under the 1993 Act, there are “no exceptions to the Administrative jurisdiction of the Land Board over all land matters in their respective tribal areas,” but he also recognizes that there are still legal problems concerning the right of title of Land Boards (1998, 15).

TRIBAL CITIZENS AND THE NEGOTIATION OF LAND RIGHTS IN THE NORTH EAST DISTRICT

If all the country’s districts had been alike, under colonial rule, each formerly occupied by a single tribe without great shortages of land, and each dominated by a powerful paramount chief ruling from a great, centralized capital, some of the unexpected local consequences of the early postcolonial policies for tribal land might have been avoided. But the country is not uniform, and all districts are not made in the image of the largest and most influential among them, despite the dominance of this image in the policy making for early postcolonial legislation such as the Tribal Land Act.¹⁰ In the North East District, before the establishment of its Land Board, the Tati Land Board, strong hierarchical and centralized control of Tribal Reserve Land was absent; local autonomy was asserted, instead. Adjustments in land tenure had to be made under conditions of increasing scarcity of land, but such adjustments were largely a matter of negotiation between neighbors; land suits in courts were very rare. Settlements were more fragmented and variable than elsewhere. In some parts of the District, homesteads and hamlets were thickly clustered, in other parts, scattered; and virtually everywhere, with few exceptions, there was a constant, if gradual, shift in their sites and relative concentration.

The necessity to move is, and has been, the basic constraint on mixed agriculture in this District. The soils are mainly shallow and short term in fertility. In the past no one could expect to keep the same plot in continuous cultivation from generation to generation and, after times of intermittent cultivation over a period as long as twenty-five years, a stage of fallow that long or longer was essential to restore the fertility of the soil. But the constraint toward movement has not arisen as a result of herding problems of the kind that come with an increasing accumulation of large-scale cattle herds or with the far-reaching reliance on livestock found among pastoralists. Some of the people in the District were rich in cattle and were becoming more so, but they either divided the herds they owned within the District, and let others manage these separately, or they herded in large numbers outside the District. Furthermore, although the gross number of cattle has risen with the increase in the human population, my impression is that the ratio of cattle to people was low and has remained so: herds of management continued

to be relatively small domestic herds, well under fifty head of cattle, with extremely few exceptions.¹¹ There has not been an unregulated expansion of herds or a tendency toward increasingly larger herds of management, as is sometimes said to occur among some cattle keepers in Botswana.

I emphasize this point about the preference for domestic herding because members of the early Tati Land Board said that their long-term policy, introduced for zoning and centralization, was intended to make more pasture available. Moreover, separate from arable land, the grazing was to be preserved against the pressure for more and more arable land. Indeed, some Board members hoped that the prevailing tendency could be reversed: stock keeping would be favored at the expense of cropping, and large-scale herding at the expense of domestic herding.

Before the Board's attempts to implement their new policy, the agricultural regime followed a bush-fallow system in which land was used alternately for grazing, cultivation, and home sites. The use of land remained relatively intense and concentrated, while the human and livestock population became increasingly dense, now perhaps the densest in Botswana. Vast tracts of land were not segregated into separate zones for pasture, arable, and residential land, and great areas were not kept in reserve, largely unused though ready for cultivation or grazing. It was usual to continue agricultural production throughout the year within the same area, except in the worst drought years, and a homestead's herds of cattle, goats, and sheep ordinarily ranged near it and near its fields, all within a radius of about three miles. Hence the agricultural regime was quite unlike that in many other parts of Botswana, where seasonal transhumance from one zone to another was a cultural dogma and, for some people at least, a usual practice.¹²

In this District, Kalanga built into their tribal laws of land tenure primary rights that facilitated and legalized essential movement. Three kinds of rights for movement are most salient, because these are the rights that were put most at risk by the Tati Land Board's rule making. First, and perhaps most critical, is the right to fallows. This was a right not subject to a definite time limit, and, in itself, the length of time land had been unused did not determine a person's right to it, whether as a past holder himself or as an heir. Nor did he have to seek permission from any public official or administrator of land, such as a chief or headman, before resuming cultivation. The right was, nevertheless, a qualified one in that it was subject to limitation by a premise of beneficial tenure.

This premise assumed that interests in production, in the beneficial use of land, ought to take precedence over interests in the security of tenure. Neighbors acted on the assumption that an owner should not be allowed an unrestricted security of tenure, irrespective of his use of the land, and it was considered immoral for someone to deprive every one else of benefit from the land while reserving it securely for the distant future. However, the premise was moral, not legal, and neighbors could not sue in court to insist on

beneficial tenure; rather, they had to resort to measures which they themselves considered to be harassment and encroachment. In a sense, the land covered by fallows and ruins represented a bank of assets that people could draw on and use selectively. It allowed them to put their neighbors under obligation by granting plots to those who fell into the categories of "new-comer," "immigrant," or "stranger." To be considered an "owner," "heir," or "person of over here" was held to be preferable, since it meant the prospect of having land without oneself being under such obligation. Thus, as seen by the people themselves, the management of shifts in status was as much a part of land tenure as the management of essential moves from place to place.

The second right that was important for movement was the right of frontage (*sholo*). The extension of a plot and other gradual micro-adjustments in land use had to be anticipated, and no one had the right to block another's expansion completely. The limits of frontage always had to be defined in relation to the nearest neighbors of the homestead or field. But it was recognized that the head of a homestead or the owner of a field currently in use took priority before all others, such as heirs to fallows. Whoever controlled the immediate frontage had to give his permission, or their permission if several owners' frontage was impinged, before others might cultivate or build or cut and clear the land. Therefore, one way that people insured access to land during its regeneration was to clear within the new growth, build a homestead, and thus directly command their own fallows and that of others. After a time, when the moment was right, the now established holder of frontage would add a small garden by his homestead and eventually extend it to a large field.

Other transactions over land were based on the third right or bundle of rights of transfer, inheritance, and lending. Again, no permission for these transactions had to be sought from any public official or administrator of land, although a headman could intervene to stop any transaction that was, in effect, a sale, however disguised (see Werbner 1975, 110). There were, nevertheless, limitations: not everyone could be a party to these transactions. The laws of land tenure recognized a fundamental association between rights in basic resources and status, in terms of both political domicile and residence. A person had to have current or *past* domicile in a political community, such as a headman's ward, in order to be entitled to claim arable land in it.

Landholding was not boxed in administratively, however. It was not effectively restricted to one's own ward or any other tribal unit of administration. Rather, the effective unit of land use was the locality, a named expanse of land near or surrounding a landmark. The locality overlapped administrative divisions and was not a bounded territory under a single headman. Given past domicile, a person might work land in different wards but never in several localities. According to residence, that is, the site of a person's homestead, one achieved status in a locality. Similarly, according to personal

performance of neighborliness, one joined a set of neighbors who had moral claims, along with legal and economic interests, which were not those of a political or administrative unit. Only when land was virgin land could a headman make a direct grant of it. But virtually no Tribal Reserve land in this densely populated District was virgin land, free of encumbrance by rights and titles to ownership. Hence the distribution and allocation of land was primarily controlled through negotiated adjustments of rights and claims between neighbors in a locality, rather than by a headman's administration.

THE MAKING OF A "CHIEF," THE LAND BOARD, AND CENTRALIZATION

Nevertheless, attempts at centralization and hierarchical regulation were made, even before the Land Board. One Sub-Chief, Ramokate, regarded himself as a Tswana villager in the midst of the non-centralized Kalanga settlements and attempted to centralize them, toward the end of the Protectorate and shortly before the period of self-government. He met resistance, however, especially from influential civil servants living near his capital, most prominently Gobe Matenge (see chapters 7 and 8 below). No Sub-Chief could legally order them to vacate land, they argued successfully. That was the power of a Chief or his equivalent, namely, the District Commissioner acting as the African Authority in the Tribal Reserve. But, in their case, the District Commissioner as the African Authority would have been wrong to exercise this power in order to force them to settle in a centralized village. That would be contrary to the accepted custom and practice of Kalanga and thus would infringe on their "customary rights." In a somewhat Solomonic decision, the District Commissioner Philip Steenkamp, a future head of the civil service, allowed them to stay, without making it clear whether or not the Sub-Chief had been conclusively defeated. Moreover, the power to zone arable land apart from residential areas was left dubious, as this was a possible infringement on Kalanga "customary rights."

Crucial for the District was that it had no Chief. Instead, it had a number of Sub-Chiefs, nearly all Kalanga. Jealously independent of one another, they were, in some respects, more like other districts' subordinate headmen, whom the government appointed as Sub-Chiefs by proclamation in an official gazette. It is no paradox to say that national legislation, so clearly intended to trim away the powers of Chiefs, provided the quite unexpected opportunity in this District for virtually creating a Chief, at least temporarily, where none had existed. In the eyes of many people, in the early 1970s, one Tswana-speaking Sub-Chief, Ramokate, as the first Chairman of the Tati Land Board, appeared to have been raised above the other, mainly Kalanga, Sub-Chiefs; Ramokate seemed to have greater powers over land throughout the whole of the District than each Sub-Chief had over his own small part. At first, however, there was little actual change, because until 1972, when

Subordinate Land Boards were ended in the District, most of the work of the Land Board was effectively done within each small part by its Sub-Chief acting as head of the Subordinate Land Board. In some parts, moreover, unless people themselves took the initiative and asked for the Board's approval of a grant or appealed in a dispute, they were left, without interference, to regulate landholding through negotiations with their neighbors.

The Board mounted a more effective attack on the autonomy of these parts of the District when it took more direct control without intervening in Subordinate Land Boards, and with its own clerk and administrative staff under an elected District Councillor as Chairman. However, achieving total control of landholding throughout the District long remained well beyond the Board's quite limited staff and organization. Instead a compromise was necessary, and the one adopted by the early Board exaggerated the variation in landholding across the District. In effect, *laissez-faire* prevailed in some localities or even in whole sections of a Sub-Chief's territory. In others the Board enforced its control, as strictly as possible, through punitive fines and the allocation of land grants only in accord with the "village map" or the ad hoc and rather rough-and-ready local plans the Board made as it went along from place to place. Thus, in this District, the Tribal Land Act of 1968 did not provide a basis for "increasing popular control" (Masire 1969, 14) over land, which was already largely a matter of negotiation between neighbors. Instead, the Act established a state-backed agency that local elites, including some Sub-Chiefs or their close relatives, could use for greater centralization and hierarchical regulation of movement and land tenure, and for the potential expansion of cattle keeping at the expense of mixed agriculture, with its greater emphasis on cropping.

THE IDEOLOGY OF DEVELOPMENT MERIT, CULTURAL IMPERIALISM, AND TSWANAIZATION

But what provided the rationale and justification, so essential in this democracy, for such political and economic encroachment along with hierarchical regulation? It may well have suited some established traders and some Sub-Chiefs as members of the Board to support centralization and zoning in order to make their settlements more permanent, to keep growth continuing around their commercial centers and capitals. Moreover, the need to protect grazing may well have seemed most important to men rich in cattle, as some leading Board members were. But a publicly acceptable construction had to be put on such interests, and it had to appeal to moral understandings of what was right and for the common good of the whole District, not any Kalanga or Tswana tribal division in it. That construction was provided by the ideology of development merit, according to which it was vital to achieve merit in the eyes of the central government by striving for an ideal, the big village with its improved grazing.

By this concept of the ideology of development merit I clearly do not mean to suggest an illusion or a deception, as if people were being hoodwinked by a false promise of prosperity. Rather, the moral appeal went beyond the mere promise of economic prosperity, which was to come in future development projects as a reward from the central government: somehow, bigger was right and better in itself, as it were, axiomatically. Although it can be expressed thus straightforwardly, the ideology of development merit had a somewhat equivocal significance. It meant different things to different people in this District, and it was dubious, rather than neutral, in its significance for conflicts that the people themselves perceive in terms of the gross cultural or ethnic differences between them. Many of the Kalanga majority in the District have regarded big villages as something alien, belonging to the Tswana, and associated with what, already in the 1970s and well before the minorities debate from the late 1980s on, Kalanga felt to be cultural imperialism, whereby the Tswana ways of the country's majority were to be imposed on them as a minority in the country. They saw the "Tswanaization" of Kalanga as being at work in centralization, and they opposed it as another move in an old campaign to dominate them by undermining their Kalanga way of life. However, for some Board members, Kalanga as well as Tswana, the ideology of development merit bridged the cultural opposition through a common ideal, with a rationale and justification that was not tribalistic.

The District Council's Minutes (C55/72) of 20 September 1972 illustrate how Board members described the ideology of development merit. The spokesman was Ramokate, who was at once a Sub-Chief, the Land Board's first chairman, and a councillor:

Opening the debate on village grouping Councillor Sub-Chief K. P. Ramokate told Council that the need to have such a discussion on the question of village grouping, i.e. [centralization] has long been felt. He indicated that the Tati Land Board and the recent Development Conference have discussed the topic as a matter of policy; the two could not make any firm decision but felt that this very important issue could be placed before the Council.

Outlining the reasons, he logically indicated that village grouping was conducive to progress, the balanced development of the entire District, while the scatteredness of villages was an ideal condition for frustration and the retardation of all the development which is contemplated.

Later, when similar arguments were made by the Sub-Chief's successor as Board Chairman, and by the District Commissioner, the *Botswana Daily News* reported the debate under the headline "Earn Grants by Living Together":

Village grouping as a prerequisite to rural development was one of the major issues discussed by the North East District Council at its recent meeting in Francistown. A number of Councillors, among them G. E. N. Manathoko [the chairman of the Tati Land Board and a prominent trader,

ranch owner, and powerful advocate of the policy] said that the scheme had been delayed because the local headmen did not favour it. After a heated debate the feeling of all the councillors was that people should be told of the benefits such a scheme could bring to the District as a whole. Council Secretary Daniel Kwele told the Council that unless people regrouped, the District would remain for many years to come one of the least developed. He said a number of developments in the area were hampered by the fact that residents of the area refused to stay together. The District Commissioner, B. G. Sesinyi, who also spoke on the need for regrouping, told the Council that some major villages had been awarded thousands of Rand this year for development projects by the central government. According to the District Commissioner, the Tati District has not because it has no major villages. He said it was entirely up to the villagers themselves to build permanent major villages if they wanted developments. The idea was unanimously accepted by the Council. (Shamukani 1974, 1)

Uniquely in Botswana, the District had not had any big villages in modern times. The town of Francistown, the major commercial center, both geographically and administratively at the heart of the District, was an enclave; it formed a separate district. In effect, the District oddly resembled the nation before Independence, its administrative capital being outside its own territory. Admittedly it had also been free of certain costs borne by other districts for their capitals, while considerable funds for the development of Francistown as a major center came from the central government. But the competition to obtain scarce resources from the central government for the development of the infrastructure was perceived strategically by those who controlled or dominated this District's Council. Both a capital and a set of big villages were essential. Having big villages gave other districts the edge in the competition for resources, because the central government, in practice, gave priority to the needs of big villages, at least according to the perception that was decisive for the Council's long-term policy and for the Land Board's rule making. Furthermore, like other district councils, this one had spent most of its funds from the central government on education, water, and health services. But it came to be somewhat of a ruling dogma in the Council that the cost of providing these to so-called scattered settlements of people was prohibitive, and that savings could only be made, somehow, by concentrating people at central points. It was not acknowledged, or perhaps was not apparent then, that big villages cost the central government more per capita than the small or dispersed settlements. Moreover, the chronic shortage of grazing was believed to be increasingly worse, and it was argued that somehow there would be more grazing land if all the people under a single headman lived together in a centralized village and ploughed in a single area "instead of scattering all over the countryside."¹³

Thus, ironically, the Council came to adopt, against bitter opposition within and outside it, a policy considered elsewhere in Botswana, especially

in the politically influential Central District, to be most closely associated with “the arbitrary decisions” and “oppressive powers” of paramount chiefs, zoning, and the concentration of settlement, or “Village Grouping,” as it was called.¹⁴ In the long term the central government did deliver much of the promised infrastructure. This included a big village capital, which was electrified, provided with a major water supply, and, by 2001, given a large, well-equipped hospital linked to the rest of the District by a longer tarred road than the whole country had at Independence. The capital is centrally sited at Masunga, the home of Gwafila Mannathoko, the first elected chairman of the Tati Land Board who was not a chief, and his younger brother Richard Mannathoko, sometime permanent secretary in the Ministry of Lands and Local Government, both influential advocates of this big village development.¹⁵

In an early foreshadowing of the minorities debate from the late 1980s on, the public debate about the District policy in the 1970s was eventually carried to Parliament in angry arguments between members of the ruling party, who defended the District policy, and members of the opposition, who attacked it. Party politics did not become, and indeed were not allowed to become, a major factor in the Board’s decision making, however. The Board member elected from the opposition on the Council did advance the objections of people in his home area to centralization and tried to modify the policy, at least to stop the relocation of his neighbors to a Sub-Chief’s capital. Nevertheless, this Board member took part in what became a process of clientization, as I show later, and, in the Board’s unauthorized and undesigned rule making, he did not reject the basis for the Board’s activity.

The early Board claimed to act under the authority of the Tribal Land Act of 1968 (later amended, in 1993, by the Tribal Land (Amendment) Act). This vested tribal land in the Land Boards, under Section 10, as follows:

- (1) All the right and title of the Chief and tribe to land in each tribal area . . . shall vest in the Land Board . . . in trust for the benefit and advantage of the tribesmen of that area and for the purpose of promoting the economic and social development of all the peoples of Botswana.

The 1968 Act went on to transfer to the Land Board “all the powers vested in a Chief under customary law in relation to land” (National Assembly 1968, 8), and it established “Grounds Justifying Cancellation of Customary Rights” to a particular grant of land. The clause (Section 15, d) that dealt with falls, so crucial for our discussion and for the Board’s activity, allowed for the cancellation of a grant on the grounds, “in the case of agricultural land, that for a period of 5 consecutive years the land has not been cultivated and that there is *no sufficient excuse for this*” (National Assembly 1968, 9; my emphasis). I stress the phrase “no sufficient excuse” because it indicates the care taken in the law to qualify this five-year rule.

An obvious “sufficient excuse” would be that the land had to be rested

for as long as twenty-five years, a usual fallow period, because of impoverishment of the soil. To have restricted land tenure to continuous land use, with no more than five-year breaks, would have meant putting a legal end to the established agricultural regime, and clearly that was not the intent of the Act. Nevertheless, the Tati Land Board turned the qualified five-year rule into an absolute rule: the Board recognized no grounds at all as sufficient; it took account merely of how long the land was uncultivated. This change was from a qualified rule in national law to an absolute rule in the local law of one district, the North East District, and the change was made as part of the broader transformation toward the Board's virtually unqualified and absolute ownership of the land in its District.

I do not know the full range of variation across the country, but to put the Board's innovation in perspective, as a change specific to this District, I must add that, to my knowledge, several other Land Boards elsewhere did not make this change. In 1993, however, the Land Board in the Kweneng District unsuccessfully tried to evict a landholder from land he was given from a plot that another man had inherited from his father. The High Court ruled in favor of the heir: the land was his in perpetuity, and as the rightful owner he was entitled to hand it on (Kalabamu 2000, 317). One basis for the ruling was Section 10 of the Tribal Land Act, which provided that, "Nothing in this [Section] shall have the effect of vesting in a Land Board any land or right to water held by any person in his personal and private capacity" (cited in *ibid.*, 316). The High Court judgment supported the view of the Attorney General and other lawyers that, under the Tribal Land Act, land allocated before the existence of Land Boards was "held by individuals and their heirs in the private and individual capacity . . . in perpetuity and [they] can do anything they like with it without interference from the Land Board" (Government of Botswana 1992, 91; cited in Kalabamu 2000). After Section 10 was deleted by later legislation in the Tribal Land (Amendment) Act of 1993, the Tati Land Board tried to resume its practice of acting as if it were the absolute owner of the District's tribal land. Again on appeal, this time to the newly established Land Tribunal under a professional lawyer, the Board lost an important case in 1998, but mainly on the grounds of inadequate evidence (Kalabamu 2000).

CLIENTIZATION AND POLITICIZED TRIALS IN A TRIBAL LAND BOARD

The Tati Land Board, when newly established, held trials marked by the systematic misrecognition of cultural understandings. Yet clients and Board members alike had a shared expectation of continuity, rather than innovation or radical change, in basic rights and moral claims over land. Everybody accepted that they had to argue their cases in land disputes using familiar terms and commonsense notions from their culturally known repertoire. Key

words in the everyday vocabulary for land, such as field (*ndha*), fallow (*gula*), country or bush (*shango*), boundary (*ngathu*), and ruins (*dongo*), were also key words in the Board's usage. Instead of introducing a totally alien idiom, the Board used these words with meanings that, for the clients, were not merely strange but arbitrary, even senseless. Furthermore, whereas Board members argued as if their rules were publicly known and accepted, the rules were hardly what the clients expected, and certainly not what they would have consented to, if given the choice. At the trials, clients argued for rightful landholding by inheritance, loan, or use of frontage. The very arguments they put forward in defense of their innocence were turned into confessions: in the Board's reasoning, and eventually in its records, "Self-Allocation—Admission of Guilt." The appearance of common culture, the fact that clients and Board members called on the same stock of commonsense notions, was problematic.

Initially, in the course of allocating land, teams of at least two Board members toured the District, one team to a convenient geographical division. Each request for a grant of land, for domestic, agricultural, trading, or public purposes, was put in writing, with the consent of the local headman, and usually after an inspection of the site, a team decided on the request. At the same time, a more or less rough survey of current land use was made, with an eye to possible offences against the Board's rules. Later the Board met as a whole at the District Council Chamber, originally in its town headquarters, outside the District, in order to confirm the approval or refusal of grants, to prosecute offenders, and to make plans for future land use in consultation with technical experts in the civil service.

Legally the Board's hearings had to be public, according to the Tribal Land Act of 1968, which established this and other Tribal Land Boards throughout the country. Contrary to national law, however, the Board's hearings were closed. Moreover, the hearings were not public in ways that are familiar to the Board's clients from their past and present experience of their own moots and courts. Unlike these, the Board kept defendants apart during each one's trials: they were not allowed to hear others' cases or take part in them, influencing the argument or learning from it, unless they were witnesses. Any debates among the Board members themselves immediately before a decision was reached were also not open to the clients. As members of the public, they had to wait outside in a long queue, having come at their own expense,¹⁶ sometimes half-a-day's journey from their homes; and they complained about the seemingly endless delays, sometimes waiting for the Board from early morning until the end of the working day.

The Board subjected citizens to the process of clientization. When this process prevails, the decision-making procedures an agency adopts are for the sake of speed and efficiency, "to keep the queue of clients moving at a proper pace" (Handelman and Leyton 1978, 9). Given the pressing need to cut down the line, which troubled the Board members, they followed an in-

quisitorial procedure and their decisions were usually summary and authoritarian. They were determined to avoid the time-consuming arguments and delays common in adversarial actions. Again, the clients were familiar with quite the opposite of what the Board practice was; they were familiar with negotiations and court hearings that did not put a premium on speed. They started from their understanding of an adversarial system in trials and a system of bargaining and negotiation between somewhat like, if not equal, parties. In either case, it was a system in which consent, if not always consensus, was sought, or assumed. By contrast, as Board clients, they found that much of what they took for granted turned out to be wholly inappropriate, and, from their perspective, quite arbitrarily so, when they interpreted the everyday vocabulary and sometimes familiar rules used in inquisitorial, summary decision making. The misrecognition was twofold, involving both the particular rules and the very process of decision making.

The Board was elevated physically as well as symbolically: its platform in the Council Chamber was raised above its clients, who sat below it. Moreover, the Board presented itself as merely putting into effect law or policy made elsewhere by the central government, and Board members also insisted that they must all abide by their collective decisions.¹⁷ In some parts of Botswana the Tribal Land Boards have served, among other functions, as appeal bodies. Individuals have regularly turned to them when seeking a remedy against public authorities or other individuals who infringed on their rights to land. By contrast, the Tati Land Board came to use its trials primarily for more politicized purposes, to enforce the North East District's development policies such as centralization, land zoning, and the establishment of big villages. Whole communities did petition the Board for relief from administrative decisions that applied these policies, but apart from licenses for commercial sites, appeals by individuals to secure their individual rights remained so rare that they were considered to be virtually absent. Individuals usually were brought before the Board as defendants, and accused of an offence such as allocating land to themselves without the Board's authorization.

Seen from an official perspective, according to the full-time, paid civil servant who acted as the Board's Administrative Secretary in the early 1970s, "The Board is a non-political body, it does not represent any group, and members of the Board do not stand for any constituency like members of [the District] Council." Among the Board's officials, including the Administrative Secretary, were people of diverse ethnic origins from virtually all of the District's Sub-Chiefdoms. However, the Board drew its half-dozen members from the very same elites that competed to win and wield power through the other agencies of local government, namely, the District Council and the tribal courts under chieftains or Sub-Chiefs. Elected by the Council from its members were the Board's chairman (from the ruling party, since 1974) and one Board member (from the opposition party, since 1974); from the Sub-

Chiefs, one member was elected and a second appointed by ministerial nomination (usually on the advice of the District Commissioner as the civil servant responsible for the District); and, in addition, two others were appointed by ministerial nomination, one associated with a tribal court as a Sub-Chief's very close relative, and the second, the kind of local notable usually elected to the Council. Admittedly the Board had unstable and ill-defined relations with these other local government agencies: at first regarded as little more than a committee of the Council, the Board gradually asserted itself as an autonomous tribunal and planning body, "betwixt and between" the tribal courts and the Council and involving both in its affairs. Nevertheless, those who dominated the Council continued to dominate the Board.¹⁸ As a consequence, the Board must be understood as a local politician's tribunal, rather than as an agency whose members came from the public at large and primarily mediated on its behalf.

THE MISRECOGNITION IN LAND CASES

To illustrate the Board's trials I cite from my own transcription of two cases, heard mainly in Kalanga but with some comments in Tswana by one member of the Board. These cases were drastically reconstructed in the Board's records, to make quite different sense, largely by the omission of key grounds for defense and innocence. The cases are from one of the areas where the Board exacted the most fines for "Self-Allocation." For various reasons, in this area and some others like it, the Board tried its best to centralize settlement and enforce a much tighter control than elsewhere on fallows, inheritance, and other transactions. Hence moves and changes in landholding ignored elsewhere were investigated here and were penalized by the Board. In effect, the Board made strict rules for this area and some others in contrast to those where it allowed the situation to remain beyond its control, with *laissez-faire* continuing among neighbors.

The Case of the Widow's Fallows

On 5 December 1977 Mrs. X, an elderly widow, pleaded in her own defense before the Board that "I budged a bit [*tseduka*], moving closer to my stockpen, and I moved to an old fallow [*gula*]." The Chairman then told her: "When you move, you must request permission. If you ask, you will not be refused, if it is where you already are." Mrs. X replied: "Yes, I did it without asking anyone. I didn't ask the headman. But I went out only a little. I didn't go out into the country [*shango*]." The District Commissioner, who happened to be present though he was not a member of the Board, took up the cross-examination: "Were you within your own boundary [*ngathu*]?" Mrs. X answered: "Yes, I was in my own boundary." "Who made the boundary?" the District Commissioner asked. Mrs. X got flustered: "No one made the bound-

ary. Who could make it, when it is mine and I was in it so long?" The District Commissioner continued: "Were there not chiefs who put you in it? Is it your field or just country [*shango*]?" Mrs. X then repeated herself, about merely budging a bit by her pen. The Administrative Secretary immediately accused her of going beyond the "village boundary," and she replied: "I didn't know I had to ask, when I was in my own place." The Administrative Secretary argued: "If it is of old, it is not yours. A field means where you have been using it not more than five years ago. Now is it not so that you moved toward the wire [at the international boundary between Botswana and Zimbabwe]?" Here there was some discussion among the members of the Board about precisely where her fallows and old sites were. (In fact, these were extensive because her late husband had cultivated widely, and locally she was known as "the owner of all that land" near her home.) Asked whether her old site (*dongo*, or ruin) was not at a place some distance from where she had moved, she denied it and stuck to her story that she had merely budged a bit by her stock-pen. The Chairman then told her to leave the Council Chamber, while the Board decided her case.

In the closed part of the hearing, one Board member tried to defend her: "She says she has just edged over, and her fault is not a great one." A chorus of voices drowned him out, however, insisting that the widow did it deliberately, for various reasons. In agreement with the majority, the Chairman decided: "She must pay seven pula (then about £4.50) and she should know that she must apply to us within five months." He had the widow brought in and told her: "The fine is seven pula. You gave yourself the land. You are now in the country (*shango*, i.e., open bush) and you must apply for it within five months." The widow did not accept the decision and muttered that she didn't know where to get the land from and that it was hers.

The Case of the Unrecorded Loan

The Chairman introduced this case in the following way: "This person claims he had asked for land from the owner. But the law says that if you ask for land from someone, you have to get a letter and a form from the headman, and send it to us. Now did you go to the headman?" Mr. X, the defendant, answered, "No. But why should I go to the Land Board when it is not that the land has been out of use for more than five years?" Somewhat angrily the Chairman insisted: "That law of five years is for your own field only. For other land you have to come to us." After Mr. X left the Council Chamber, the discussion was merely about the size of the fine, ten or seven pula, "because he took land not his." On his return, Mr. X was told to pay seven pula and to apply for the field. He asked, "But what if I have no money?" The Administrative Secretary answered: "If so, you can't plough it. It was not yours, but you ploughed it so you must pay now. You were caught stealing so you

must pay. If you do not do these things according to the law, the land is not yours and you are stealing.”

The main legal problem in these cases could be seen in two distinct ways, depending on whether one viewed the problem from the client's perspective or from the perspective of a Board member. From the client's viewpoint, the problem was to justify an action that, away from the Board, required no special justification culturally. In the first case the client attempted to solve this problem by denying it: she justified her action by referring to the fact and concept of ownership, which her neighbors would have accepted at a moot or a court, before the Board was established. By contrast, the second client took the Board's jurisdiction into account explicitly and invoked, as his justification, a stated rule, which he claimed was the appropriate law and put his action beyond the Board's jurisdiction. But in neither case did the client invoke a Board rule as it was known and accepted by the Board. From the Board's perspective, the main legal problem was the sanction: how much to fine, if at all. There was an overriding presumption of guilt, not merely for purposes of cross-examination in order to establish facts or test witnesses, as in a moot or tribal court,¹⁹ but because the clients were already categorized in the eyes of Board members and labeled as “culprits.” The aim of the interrogation was to establish, to the Board's satisfaction, whether the offence was a deliberate flouting of the law, as it appeared in the cases in point, and thus called for a heavy fine, or whether the client's admissions amounted to extenuating circumstances, enough for a smaller fine or merely a warning to stop some use of a site.

As these cases show, the Board's activity was based on a simple yet dubious premise that, in succession to tribal rulers, the Land Board became the owner of the land, in an absolute sense: individual tribesmen had rights merely to use the land of their community. It followed, as the Board put it, “that land ownership was not inheritable” (Tati Land Board 1977a) and that no other transactions, such as loans, could be made “legally,” unless the Board gave its prior consent. In December 1977 the Board's Administrative Secretary informed me, and the records seemed to show, that the Board had done little or nothing about inheritance and loans; disputes were rare, and, in any event, the Board's consent was a matter of formality. Indeed the Administrative Secretary, like quite a few other civil servants, including some very senior ones in the central government, tried to convince me that customary land rights continued to be upheld by this and other Tribal Land Boards. As they saw it, insofar as there had been changes, these were primarily matters of administration and for improved land use. The Administrative Secretary suggested that an increase in what he called “self-allocation” of land was a new trouble, a result of the weakening of the powers of headmen since Independence. I must add immediately, to avoid a possible misunderstanding, that the senior civil servants had no illusions, of course, about

what they considered the Land Boards' inefficiency, and perhaps corruption, to be. Commissions of Inquiry and various reports had made such aspects all too apparent. But even the Board's records pointed to widespread popular resentment against what the public considered to be the Board's arbitrary decisions, in addition to the charge of inefficiency. "Government was making unaccountable laws to frustrate the people," was a characteristic complaint the Board itself recorded (Tati Land Board 1975). Similarly, in the queue waiting outside for the Board trials, I overheard this, among other such complaints: "When you have not transgressed the law, you are at fault here; and whatever you have done you are at fault. They say what the government means, but we are the government!" (Tati Land Board 1977b).

CONCLUSION

The postcolonial development of Land Boards as transplanted quasi-bureaucratic agencies has come with many of the predicaments, dilemmas, and contradictions that keep such agencies busy in Western countries. The power struggles, the encroachment on citizens' rights, the problems of indeterminacy, apparent arbitrariness, "inefficiency," and uncertainty, all call to mind Western parallels, or rather prototypes.²⁰ But unlike their Western prototypes, the postcolonial transplants have had to displace non-Western alternatives, the tribal courts, which reached their earlier phases of development under colonial rule. Tribal citizens with court experience have tried to make sense of the new form of administration by reference to the old. Moreover, the displacement has actually been partial, and old and new have developed further in complex relations with each other, since tribal authorities have continued to have some roles in land administration. Hence the Land Boards, as postcolonial transplants, have come to be politicized and problematic in ways of their own.

People whose prior cultural ideals are quite dissimilar do not surprise us when they receive an imported ideology or a transplanted agency in different ways. But the prevailing ideology of the Tati Land Board in the early postcolonial period was taken to mean different things, even by people having the same culture, according to whether it was seen as the continuation of an old campaign of cultural imperialism. Clients and Board members tended to disagree about this ideology, and they argued somewhat past each other at trials. They were members of the same communities, and they did share a close knowledge of the fine adjustments neighbors have to make under the local agricultural regime. But the Board members were initially drawn from an inner circle that staffed the other agencies of local government, that is, the District Council and the tribal courts. In accordance with that, and their perception of the special interests of their District relative to the national government, Board members reinterpreted their local knowledge in the light of an ideology of development merit. This is the ideology that max-

imized the value of central, hierarchical planning at the expense of decentralized micro-adjustment between neighbors. The ideology of development merit had, of course, a moral force to it, and thus the Board members condemned the clients for ruining themselves and the countryside by their offences against the Board's rules.

The recoding of law at the Board was, at least, a dual process, which trapped both Board members and their clients. Because Board members sometimes acted inadvertently, their decisions cannot be treated as if part of a deliberate, Machiavellian conspiracy against the clients. On the contrary, their decision making involved establishing certain rules that were at once ill designed and unauthorized. The Board members themselves did not recognize that in their rules and decisions they subverted the new laws of the nation no less than the pre-Land Board laws of the District's Sub-Chiefdoms. They trapped themselves in misrecognition; and they did so somewhat unwittingly, in my view, because the illusion allowed them to resolve, or at least manage, an underlying dilemma. On the one hand, the national legislation that established the Board made it responsible for protecting "customary rights," an artificial and paradoxical category in itself, and the legislation hedged its directives with qualifications that upheld the constitutional rights of citizens. On the other hand, the Board took on the tasks of a development agency, with reformist objectives that were in accord with the ideology of development merit. Thus the dilemma: the more the Board pursued its reformist objectives, the less it was able to meet its responsibility to protect "customary" or citizens' rights. Misrecognition freed the Board to move ahead with its reformist objectives and yet act with the justification that it was a lawful agency of the state and thus entitled to obedience, even moral consent, from its clients.

On the whole, it was as an individual that the client faced the Tati Land Board, and without a champion or supporters who could be mobilized to redirect the cross-examination as in a tribal court or moot.²¹ For this, as well as other reasons, the Board's members were under little pressure to build a consensus between themselves and their clients. One might think that the arguments bear a resemblance to the kinds of disagreements between individual adversaries about rules or the interpretation of facts that are well known in the literature on Botswana's tribal courts and moots.²² By contrast to that, however, the clients often insisted on showing that for them the trial was an arbitrary ordeal, whereas the Board members were equally assertive in maintaining that their decision making was reasoned and lawful. Hence the interpretation of facts or the invocation of rules and legal concepts in a Board trial regularly involved a confrontation about the authority and legitimacy of the tribunal itself, and the judicial process was politicized in such a way that it usually was not in tribal courts and moots.

The Board so reinvented the law that it disenfranchised citizens or, at least, it put at risk certain primary rights of tribal citizenship, once associated with

status in a locality and political community or tribe and now labeled “customary rights” in national legislation. It would be wrong, however, to explain away this predicament as merely a product of some ambiguity or carelessness in the national law, and thus a matter of words and legal draftsmanship primarily. The predicament depended on, and contributed to, political and economic relations that were much more intractable than the quite pointedly stated directive of the legislation. On the one hand, there was this District’s special placement *vis-à-vis* other districts and the central government, which the people themselves perceived partly in terms of inequalities owing to ethnic and cultural differences. On the other hand, there were the growing disparities that resulted from increased differentiation and stratification within the District. Together, these political and economic relations favored the reinvention of law within the District through the Board, and they were in turn brought to a further stage by the systematic misrecognition of cultural understandings in the Board’s decision making.

More recently efforts have been made to make Board members more sensitive to clients’ interests and, as the District Commissioner of the North East District put it, “to exercise caution and prudence when allocating land to people” (Chamo 2000, 10). At one of the seminars that have become a regular Board activity, he warned members that “land was a delicate and sensitive issue that required sound and proper management, and that Land Board members should be mature, responsible and honest brokers. . . . He cautioned them against conniving, as members, for purposes of self-enrichment, adding that they should put the people’s needs before self-interest” (*ibid.*).

Finally, I want to highlight the wider theoretical interest in Land Boards, because they are both proving grounds for change in the relations between the national and the local state and are also contested citizenship forums for revaluing resources, perhaps most importantly, land, once a good with little or no exchange value but potentially becoming a commodity for sale on an open market. While creating a transplanted quasi-bureaucracy, such agencies harness local citizens together with professional technocrats and work on the balance of power between them. Their innovations in legal pluralism, whether deliberate or not, may go beyond matters of legal procedure and substantive law. The very experience of what trials mean may be transformed: the experience of the absurd may take over from a sense of the rule of law. Even beyond that, with Land Boards the reintegration of the tribe in the postcolonial state turns into a series of ordeals for citizens, who have been faced with *ad hoc* decisions by quasi-judges and who have had to be very agile, even “lawless,” in order to grope their way through the formidable uncertainties of a quasi-bureaucracy. What my argument extends for the wider comparative study of legal pluralism, development, and the postcolonial state is a process of highly problematic subjection in the conjuncture between national and tribal citizenship.

Part 2.

THE RISE OF PUBLIC MAN

Elders

7

Bringing Back the Dead

Of the Kalanga notables at the capital who are grandfathers, some actively participate in elderhood shrine ritual, bringing back the dead at home in their rural communities. None have passed through the final stages of elderhood and become patriarchs themselves, however. Patriarchy usually comes to a senior elder at a very advanced age. "So and so has returned," Kalanga say at the height of the installation ritual, when they call out a special name, said to be for the patriarch's father or grandfather whom he becomes, by succession, in name and position. Becoming his predecessor, the patriarch ceases to be himself. He is said "to die" during the ritual—"We kill him, but we do not really kill him," I was told by Kalanga interpreting rites in which, as if dead, the elder is covered by a hide of a sacrificial beast.¹ Throughout the installation the elder is not in charge; he does not orchestrate or initiate the proceedings; and he appears overwhelmed as the passive subject undergoing a rite of passage. Patriarchy comes to him as a calling, not a choice of his own. Indeed, he may not even be present at the series of divinations through which his relatives come to acknowledge a burden troubling their own consciences. They acknowledge, and in turn let the elder know, that the long dead are afflicting them and the elder himself, because the long dead, neglected and forgotten, are demanding to be brought home, given their due recognition, and served with sacrifices. The dead, once an

“owner of the place” is spoken of and treated as “a guest.” The burden of the past in the present compels his return, once again an authority among the living, but dangerous, demanding, and somewhat intractable, being a forgotten memory. In this chapter I problematize the authority of elderhood and patriarchy as memorialized by Kalanga in rural rituals, which some urban elites prominently sustain.

ELDERHOOD AS THEORETICAL PHOENIX

Following the end of colonial rule across Africa, elderhood lost much of its interest for political anthropology. The wind of change dried to a mere trickle a whole mainstream concerned with ethics in politics. New moments of hope, then despair, in the postcolony marginalized the ethnography of obligation, responsibility, trust, and, of course, piety—all the political virtues contested and thus more or less realized around elders, their distinctive objects and places. The culmination in elderhood of ageing as a moral and political accomplishment in the public sphere—the people’s own sensibility that with age ought to come the maturity of judgment to deal with public affairs—was disregarded.²

Oddly enough, however, what political anthropology lost resurfaced elsewhere, in the 1980s and early 1990s. The difference was in the guise, at least for elderhood and patriarchy. Stripped away were the virtues. Feminist studies led the critique and made a *bête noire* of patriarchy. Patriarchy emerged as the unacceptable face of elderhood. The negative turn was productive in social histories exposing the domination of men over women, especially in patriarchal collusion with colonial rule. It also gave rise, however, to unexamined dismissals of patriarchal authority as somehow undemocratic and, even worse, authoritarian. The arguments stimulated no further ethnographic analysis of local perceptions of authority and maturation, no better understanding of the material means by which elderhood is realized, apart from studies of ageing,³ and no greater regard for the faces of elderhood publicly acceptable to the people themselves. Even the growth of postcolonial studies by political scientists addressing power struggles between generations produced almost no contributions to understanding the political force of the ethics associated with elders. The tide of interest turned toward the power seeking of youth, especially as protagonists of protest, resistance, and disaffection with the status quo.

The same postcolonial decline in political anthropology came to witchcraft studies, leaving, until the early 1990s, almost a total disregard for the remarkable continuities along with changes in practice. Now a whole decade of debate about the moral and political economy of witchcraft has produced a new wealth of studies. Addressing questions of moral imagination, consciousness, and personal knowledge,⁴ the new witchcraft studies reveal the

importance of witchcraft in and for modernity and arbitrary power,⁵ war and violence,⁶ postcolonial state formation,⁷ and economic transformation.⁸

Following witchcraft, the time has come for elderhood, for a resurgence of interest in its places and objects, its public authority and moral passion, its values and representations of duration through the changing passage of time from generation to generation. Perhaps most compelling, as a spur to fresh analysis, is the need to understand the public sphere in its postcolonial complexity, full of past legacies being surprisingly reworked in the emergent realities of the present. Elders often claim to be the keepers of the best of these legacies, sometimes the very ones they themselves opposed in their youth, and their claims become a force in the making of a very different future, given the presence of new uncertainties and tensions in the public sphere. In some parts of Africa the very existence of any public sphere at all is in danger, in the face of regionally endemic civil war or under pressure from disastrous economic policies imposed under structural adjustment by international monetary agencies. Tension with the public sphere dominated by the state often takes unpredictable forms. Even beyond that, in much of postcolonial Africa, there are multiple arenas and alternative public spheres, which come to be problematic for the people themselves (Werbner 1996). Much social skill has to be brought to bear to manage the changing predicaments of such pluralism and boundary crossing in everyday life. This challenge is for elders, above all, and it calls for a fresh problematizing of elderhood in the new political anthropology of public life in the postcolony.⁹

It may well be that the political anthropology of elderhood declined in tandem with the decline of the theoretical fascination, so salient in colonial studies, with *analytically* bounded systems. Here I mean no rehearsal of the misleading cliché that colonial anthropology was about the closed local world as an ideal island for the isolated individual's fieldwork, closed, as it were, in nature and culture: The Tribe.¹⁰ Hence I stress *analytically* to convey that the theoretical fascination was with the "as-if," the boundedness for purposes of analysis. Following disenchantment in that and, most strikingly for the end of an era of social anthropology after Evans-Pritchard's *The Nuer* (1941), a postcolonial move away from the study of descent groups as bounded systems, it became easy, almost in the way of guilt by association, to judge elderhood and patriarchy as if they, too, were theoretically passé. But, again, this dismissal is itself past its shelf mark, because the same phenomena now have to be reproblematised theoretically in their importance for what might be called an unbounded system, that is, an open network of relations, such as a postcolonial diaspora typically so rich in the straddling of town and country. Admittedly the shift is less an empirical matter than a refocusing of theoretical interest—after all, the importance of elderhood for open networks and non-boundaries was there in the colonial era, too. And also in the colonial era, around the sentimentally evocative things and places of elderhood,

especially those for recovering origins or revealing the force of powers beyond human understanding, people were often mobilized from great distances across local communities.

Saying that calls for reflection, looking backward the better to look forward—and, I am tempted to say, while we begin to bring back the dead. In response, I want to consider briefly the work of Meyer Fortes, the anthropologist who gave us the richest ethnography of colonial patriarchy and elderhood, while at the same time being one of the foremost exponents of bounded systems analysis. Fortes's classic study of Tallensi of the Gold Coast (now Ghana) is in two books, *The Dynamics of Clanship* (1945) and *The Web of Kinship* (1949), the first volume being more the bounded analysis than the second, yet each significantly engages with the unbounded. I want to stress Fortes's attention to flows across boundaries, because it has come to be a matter of conventional wisdom to dismiss Fortes and other colonial anthropologists for structural functionalist myopia—as if they somehow had such a narrow view of the local that they put the translocal out of sight.

The Dynamics of Clanship starts on corporate relations by recognizing the absence of simple territoriality. Taleland is a conceptual fiction, an as-if, for purposes of analysis. Rather than being a bounded entity, it is merely an extension of ties across overlapping regions or, in Fortes's term, *socio-geographic zones*, none of which is a precisely defined territory. Building on such corporate relations in zones, Fortes's later treatment in *The Web of Kinship* foregrounds the interpersonal network much more. His analysis discloses the expected stages through which a man passes in his everyday participation in the public sphere—the movement through the stages being what I call a public life course. From one stage to the next, a man engages with different things and accesses different spaces. Objects of ritual are the tangible souvenirs that trace a man's public life course across Taleland.

Among Tallensi, a man's public life course is hazardous. Ever sensitive to his moral conduct, it is at the mercy of powers beyond human understanding or control. The significance of a man's public life course is proven, above all, in responsibility for ritual and shrines. As Fortes put it in his brilliant study of ethics and subjectivity, *Oedipus and Job in West African Religion*, shrine keeping presents

a ritual record of a man's life-history. It begins with his emergence from infancy on the threshold of adult jural status, and grows step by step as his involvement in responsible social relations expands through marriage, fatherhood, economic independence, family headship and lineage eldership. (1959, 19)

It is virtually the definitive mark of a man as an elder of some distinction that he is driven by the demands of his fate to bring back the remote dead as external ancestors, not of his descent group but given a home in his house (Fortes 1949, 324–328). This home is a shrine concocted according to a se-

cret recipe, primarily of bits of substance from a parent shrine and its soil at the place where the external ancestors originate (Werbner 1989, 228). Brought from a distance as a portable shrine, it is worn by a traveler, somewhat like a passport, to secure his safe passage to and from the parent shrine. It places him in direct contact with his origins and provides him with the means of mediating his powerful attachments beyond his own community. At home, being persecuted as an innocent victim, the elder himself displays the virtue of one who turns hate into love. His exemplary quality ought to be the endurance of elderhood; his forbearance sets him apart from others. He cares for his persecutors, meets their demands for giving in his selfless sacrifice, and, through the things and places of elderhood, he reveals his capacity to contend tolerantly with the very margins of his known social universe.

In becoming an elder, a distinguished man must go beyond familiar limits. He has to follow that series of life-giving connections between communities, represented by the passage of women in marriage between the communities. Following webs of affinity and alliance, he has to retrace the women's ever more remote links through relatives of relatives outside his own descent group. He has to get such relatives of relatives, and affines of affines, in turn, to escort him from one community to the next in his spiritual quest back to forgotten maternal origins. He does not have to be taught, as anthropologists do, that "agnation by a kind of paradox is through women," but he has to resolve the paradox in practice. He has to reach to the limits of living memory, and beyond. He has to be seen to have a powerful sense of conscience, above all in his regard for what comes to him from women. All of that is as much a social burden as a personal liberation, for it is shared affliction, suffering, misery, and dejection—the grief of those an elder cares for along with himself—that drives him in his spiritual quest, objectifying reality beyond his familiar limits. Here the person who looms large in the public imagination, as the man of authority, is not the African Big Man, not the political entrepreneur of "the politics of the belly," but the "domesticated man" (La Fontaine 1981; Nyamnjoh 2002a): the elder par excellence.

Here we can understand how the end of his spiritual quest, faithfully bringing back the remote dead from beyond known boundaries, makes a man the distinguished elder he becomes. An elder needs to have access, and then public recognition of his access, to the means of recovering forgotten knowledge of vital importance for the survival of people in his care. That publicly recognized means, and the very object of his remote spiritual quest, is a divining shrine. One can hardly be an elder without having a divining shrine, and it has to be brought from remote maternal kin. The divining shrine is the proof of a man's revitalized and powerful contact with those sources of his own and his dependents' being which, in the very nature of human existence, must come from outside his own community. Not the closed com-

munity, but the open community is the primary concern of elderhood, and it is here enshrined to mark, realize, and manage a phase of public accomplishment in ageing on the way to distinguished maturity.

Every elder's recovery of the past in the demands of the present is an achievement that brings together social memory, recognized consciousness of obligation, and spiritual renewal. It is accomplished as the elder actually opens and extends networks beyond his lineage. He must do this while manifesting the moral capacity of great maturity and tolerance.

Yet few elders use their own divining shrines, though virtually all have them. Only a minority actually become diviners. The few distinguish themselves from the many by taking on the responsibility of enabling others to understand what is otherwise incomprehensible in their lives, the demands of, in Fortes's words, "power which is absolute, autocratic and unpredictable because it transcends the human controls of moral and jurial sanctions" (1959, 23).

Distinction in elderhood calls for transcendental knowledge, understanding, and, ultimately, fulfillment of obligation beyond the frontiers of one's own community. Hence Fortes discloses how a man's public life course, culminating in elderhood, is expected to realize the public ethics of endurance in amity while giving the public service that affirms, through ritual and ritual objects, the unboundedness of network relations.

Although I cannot rehearse the argument here, I want to mention, as an aside, that in another discussion, "The Sacred Crossing of West African Strangers," I try to build even further on Fortes's insights (Werbner 1989, chap. 6). There I stress the historical importance of central place shrines in west Africa for the management of non-boundaries: for at least a century such shrines "provided a warrant for safe crossing and thus channeled the flow of trade between potentially hostile and quite disparate centralised and non-centralised communities" (1989, 228). I also show how, by importing shrines and rituals from exotic places such as from Taleland in northern Ghana to distant places in southern Ghana, members of southern host societies on cocoa farms under colonialism were able to build personal security networks—they acquired particularistic bonds with alien strangers in their midst, without marrying them, or granting them citizenship rights such as land rights (1989, 231). My argument extends to postcolonial transformations in the predicaments of strangers and in the importance of personal security cults.¹¹

KALANGA ELDERS, STRADDLING, AND THE BURDEN OF CARE

"Stones are away to drink," runs a saying used in divination for a Kalanga elder's shrine, "They will come back rolling." The divination saying conveys something intractable. It is out of sight, apparently at ease, no longer

a concern, yet actually you cannot get shot of it and, after a lull, it bursts powerfully upon you, out of your control.¹² “Chickens coming home to roost,” we might say, when we bend the thought to new generations, not the old.

For Kalanga, there is a paradox, or perhaps a cultural dilemma about intractable power and its significance for social memory. It is a dilemma that Kalanga, to some extent, create for themselves in negotiating distance from the dead while not intending to abandon them forever. The living first remove the body of the dead from their homesteads, actually breaking holes in hut walls and fences or making a symbolic equivalent in modern structures, to take the body out of an exit of no return by a side of no entry for the living, and then the living bury the bodies in the bush where their graves, in the past covered only by unmarked stones, remain virtually untended and beyond further ritual, although now there are cemeteries where Christians place tombstones a year after death and sometimes bring flowers. The dead, left undisturbed in their rightful graves, are meant to leave the living undisturbed. However, having found a way to forget the dead, the living eventually become concerned to remember them, when feeling weighed down by affliction and by the intractables of social life.

In response, the memory work in patriarchal ritual is translocal, and thus has a special importance for elites and other urban villagers whose concerns and commitments straddle town and country. People mobilized for the memory work on a major occasion come in considerable numbers across great distances; they form a wider home public that is inclusive in the presence of marked social differences in, among other things, wealth, education, occupation, urban residence, and lifestyle. There are, of course, many purposes in and for such an occasion, and some people seem to come for the feast or convivial fun and little else. But most striking is that the occasion calls for a public that meets for the main ostensible purpose of remembrance and care. Service is given, and the giving of service is the occasion’s great public message; it is a message of great value for urban elites asserting an organic bond with their homes in the countryside and also demonstrating to their fellows in the city the force of their ethnic identification.

Erection of a shrine for a patriarch is proof of concerned, responsible cooperation between relatives, for there is a highly specific division of ritual labor requiring certain kin and affines to carry out appropriate tasks—the elder does nothing himself; he must rely on others and, for important purposes, not only his own children. However, it is expected that unless he himself is very rich—and usually in his declining years, great wealth or any large herd in the family is no longer his—one or more of his sons, especially any notable among them, provides the cattle for sacrifice, while various relatives give other needed drink, food, and provisions to feast the guests.

Elites and other urban villagers arrive in hundreds, especially when a father or close kinsman of a leading member of the national civil service or other notable is the main ritual subject. It is remarkable that, on such an occasion at home, a notable—married, well into middle age, at the head of an important ministry, the rich father of a large family of his own, and an extremely powerful member of the national elite—becomes what Kalanga call “a small boy.” The notable, himself a junior elder, ostentatiously gives service. He amiably runs errands for the more senior elders, displays deference to them, and dresses modestly and informally like his local peers, putting away his fine suits and the dignified power dressing of the capital. In every outward sign, he publicly presents an unqualified acceptance of being junior to the elders. Indeed, if he is the firstborn or oldest surviving son, at an important moment of transition during the ritual, he identifies himself with a herdboys in his service toward authority, by straddling a goat between his legs while presenting it, before the doorway of his father’s house, as a dedicated offering for the newly returned dead. Goat, herdboys/elite and ancestor have all come home together, at least for a moment of shared piety. The euphoria felt by everyone present is unmistakable in this climax in the elite assertion of belonging during the making of a patriarch.

All this is not to say that throughout such an occasion euphoria is buoyant, or that opposition, even open conflict, is absent between generations or between elites and their congeners. Quite the contrary is true, and getting through the ritual as a great public occasion is something of an ordeal, full of agonistic moments. This is true, in part, because a healthy distrust of unchecked power, implicit in much of the installation, becomes explicitly, even aggressively, asserted by various senior relatives, such as kin linked through a father’s sister, and not patrikin. Such senior relatives are given to being punctilious at any sacrifice, and most particularly so at an installation. They are explicit in claiming their rightful entitlements and their prerogatives in authority over the progress of the ritual. They assert their responsibility by being finicky about being consulted and about giving their permission for essential rites to be performed in turn during the ritual. Without necessarily appearing to quarrel, they do question and argue legalistically over the fulfillment of the fine details of ritual procedure, sometimes interrupting a rite in order to lay down the law to other conveners and members of the congregation.

What the senior relatives make clear is that they are caring, and, for that very reason, the ritual cannot go ahead without their specific consent, which they will only give when the deference due them is appropriately given. It is taken for granted that important as the form of the ritual is for its success, and getting it right is recognized to be vital for assuaging the wrath of the dead, it is even more important to carry out the rites properly with the consent and cooperation of a representative range of senior kin, and not merely patrikin. Patriarchal authority is checked power; it is conditional, qualified,

negotiated, and, above all, not authoritarian (see also Selolwane 2000:96). In the next two chapters, in my account of urban elite elderhood, I return to the renewed qualification of power and authority in postcolonial contexts.

THE SHRINE REALIZING ENDURANCE

Patriarchal shrines are rare. They are only ever given to a very small minority of elders. Establishing a shrine asserts distinction, makes public a highly charged proof of esteem, and indicates recognition of outstanding value and dignity, not merely for the patriarch himself. The exceptional prominence is for a whole body of relatives who prove that, unlike most others, they have managed to provide a central place of their own where they are able to fulfill the responsibility of caring publicly for the dead. The accomplishment is actually an ephemeral one, although it is represented as if it were enduring from generation to generation. With the death of the patriarch comes neglect for his shrine, and, in practice, it is not passed on from father to son, although one urban notable, himself the senior son, built a fence around his father's shrine to keep it in service, for his own blowing away of wrath for his kin, after his late father's homestead was abandoned. If represented as an office to be handed on, patriarchy is in reality a personal commission, specific to each patriarch.

The patriarch's sacrificial shrine, built and dedicated during the installation ritual, is prominently placed beside his house in the most public space at the front of his home. There, for the welfare of his kin, he is expected to cool the wrath of the dead by blowing water in assuagement of a distressing interior condition of his own. It may be a wrong grieving his heart, perhaps without his even knowing it until he is told, because it is actually a burden weighing on the conscience of others, which they have inflicted on him in divination. Offerings and sacrifices are also made at the shrine, both on personal, ad hoc occasions of affliction and during collective, annual rituals for prosperous sowing and harvesting.

The shrine itself is simple. It consists of stones placed next to an evergreen plant set in a floor of dung-smearred earth and covered by a sacrificial platform, sometimes thatched or bearing the head and horns of a sacrificial beast. The hard, lasting center of the shrine consists of usually two or three black stones, each representing a father, grandfather, or father's sister. The stones should arrive almost as if by themselves, virtually untouched by human hands. Wife-receivers have to roll the stones with their bare feet from a river. Fetching the stones in this way is a menial duty fit for those who can never themselves make offerings at the shrine on their own behalf. This service is one that wife-receivers owe in accordance with their lasting debt for a wife and thus their inferiority to their wife-givers. The very making of the shrine depends on the successful management of affinity and the capacity to go beyond the boundaries of one's own group. For the people themselves, it is an

image of overpowering momentum in social life, coming from beyond the margins to the very center.

A wife of the elder's home, usually the most senior wife, as it is her honor and privilege, makes the ground around the stones into a hard, relatively lasting and renewable floor. She prepares the ground, before any sacrifice is made at the shrine, by smearing the earth richly with dung from the elder's cattle pen, the dung being a solemn manifestation of enduring increase and prosperity. The third lasting element, placed next to the stones in the earth, is an evergreen plant or cactus that endures heat without wilting or dying.

Over these elements of the shrine, the wife-receivers erect a platform of four hardwood posts, deliberately chosen as most resistant to being eaten by ants and termites. The posts support a hardwood shelf to provide shade and cooling. The meat of sacrifice rests on the shelf dripping blood to cool the stones, and sometimes also left on the shelf is thatch for shade or the hide and skull of a past sacrificial victim. In brief, with each of the elements comes a visible, physical manifestation of the occult and a spiritual transformation toward cooling endurance through the assuagement of wrath.

Nothing of the mortal remains of the dead, which must be left undisturbed in their graves, is brought to the shrine. The shrine is not a reburial but a re-creation of the dead in alternative representative materials. It is a central place of memory and commemoration constituted by the displacement of objects from the wild, beyond the space where people dwell. It contains no soil from elsewhere, no bits that could, like a Tale shrine, attach it to other central places or serve as a portable passport for passage across hostile spaces. Each of the shrine's elements is a concrete realization of the quintessential capacity of endurance that the patriarch embodies, and each element is a means for working on that endurance for the sake of assuagement, cooling the wrath of the dead.

RECENTERING AND ALTERNATIVE PUBLICS

In major occasions for such ritual of patriarchy, the countryside asserts a strong pull over the town, over the elites and other urban villagers who have to return home for pious service. Such rural-urban dynamics are distinctive of Kalanga, though these dynamics are linked to processes more widespread in Botswana. In the countryside Kalanga live mainly in dispersed homesteads, but now they also live in more concentrated villages but without localized corporate lineages. They are continually turning networks of kin into extended kin groups by recentring them on public occasions, such as at shrines. Such extended kin groups sustain their own figures of authority, forums for moots, and central places for feasting and sacred exchange, and also hold various public occasions for mobilization of linked people (Werbner 1989, chaps. 2, 3).

Kalanga bring to postcolonial transformations rich cultural capacities and organizational resources for the creation of sacred centrality at home. From colonial times, and over a century of transnational labor migration, they learned how to project themselves from home to strange or distant places while sustaining trust, obligation, and personal commitment in their social relations. The lessons of sustaining a viable migrant and ethnic diaspora have been passed on from the long era of transnational migration to the present time of urban village life and national migration.

A good number of the best houses in the countryside are specially built for absent elites or their elderly mothers, for whom they show particular care. When they acquire vast commercially owned ranches and great herds of cattle—and elites now have a strong tendency to find better alternatives for major investment, such as city real estate and stocks and shares—they usually have them in the vicinity of their home district. Their home public and their home interests are at once distinct and yet intricately linked to others away from home and in town. In accord with their historic momentum in diasporic accomplishment, many contemporary elites deliberately invest a great deal of time, effort, and material resources in straddling town and country—they foster organic relationships with their original home communities (Werbner 1993). Hence elites, like other urban villagers, make the most of memorable public occasions upholding sacred centrality at home through moments of pious service in support of patriarchal authority.

CONCLUSION

This point leads me to the broader implications of my argument for postcolonial analysis and the religiosity of objects, place, and boundaries. Postcolonial analysis needs to disclose what is the active significance of the African past in the present, and it must do so by foregrounding the objects and places for the most enduring memory work. From that past have come innumerable rites for public commemoration of the passage from generation to generation of personal authority among kin and neighbors. Where a distinctly local public sphere is sustained, it often derives in no small measure from the continuing efforts by kin and neighbors to engage publicly, and through commemorative ritual, with the felt burden of personal knowledge. In such memory work kin and neighbors selectively forget and remember personal knowledge largely without direct regard for the nation-state, its agents and their authority.

The dead weigh heavily in that felt burden, in the postcolonial present perhaps no less than in the colonial past, as shown by the compelling importance commemorative rites for the dead still have in so many parts of postcolonial Africa. Bringing back the dead and then getting rid of them, memorializing them, meeting their demands, often through fixing shrines and sacrifices associated with ageing, seniority, and elderhood, all these

commemorative accomplishments arise widely across Africa, now as in the *longue durée* of the past, to dominate a distinctly local public sphere.

I stress the importance of the felt burden in such memory work, because so much of the commemoration is perceived to be a matter of passion, in the sense Godfrey Lienhardt used for certain Dinka memories of experience (1961, 150).¹³ Passionate commemoration is not felt to be the product of a human agent who, as an active subject, exercises imagination to recall something to mind. Rather, it is the unburdening of an object afflicted from without by the overpowering subjects, primarily the dead, who are the sources causing commemoration.

But given this widely assumed conception of objective memory underlying personal commemorative rites, what is their local public sphere like, and how do personal commemorative rites shape it? It is usually an uncaptured public sphere, one quite distinct from and sometimes powerfully opposed to that of state memorialism.

There is little or no space in this local public sphere for the social formation as imagined community, created with nationalism. Instead, the publics involved are highly specific in their social relations, and they have to prove, by their participation in commemorative rites, who everyone is, where and in which places they do or do not belong, and what their relative standing is, according to locally informed personal knowledge. This is not say that such publics are closed or that we can only study them with concepts of boundedness, rather than non-boundedness. Instead, the stress is on specificity and its realization in public occasions. Social investment or at least sharing of wealth takes place, on different scales, often through the consumption of sacrificial animals or other offerings. Such commemoration is highly indexical, and it tends to put on the agenda of the local public sphere not merely the registering of claims and entitlements but their specific authorization. As a consequence, if typically full of appeals to amity and piety, honoring the felt burden from the past, personal commemorative rites are often agonistic. Undergoing them is something of an ordeal.

Finally, to return to my starting point, I want to emphasize that, given our current interest in the management of non-boundedness, the time is ripe for a resurgence of interest in the making of authority and respect around elderhood, its objects and places. The reassertions and re-presentations of patriarchal authority, involving different generations, open out alternative public spheres. Having in mind diverse postcolonial contexts, including those under neo-gerontocratic regimes such as that of Banda in Malawi (Englund 1996b; van Dijk 1998), we need to think again about how elders, with all the eminent distinction of patriarchs, mediate between the living and the dead, invoke ancestral wrath, center sacred places for kin and neighbors, and take on responsibility for the welfare of their kin, indeed, for the very bodies and innermost being of their kin. We need to ask afresh how such elders are now counterposed in their authority by their juniors' everyday power and claims

to having more modern or more current knowledge of the world that impinges on them all. We also need to appreciate the reworking of patriarchy by elders, who themselves were once “modern youth,” who have been or are still jet-setting elites, as leading politicians, civil servants, entrepreneurs, and academics. For rarely are elders any longer simply taken for granted as figures of authority, or totally unaware of fresh challenges in intergenerational struggles. There is no shortage of studies showing assertive youth in their struggles for more command of their own space in the public sphere.¹⁴ But we have to put that in perspective by the appreciation of countermovements toward objects, places, and boundaries, not merely by the elders and patriarchs themselves but also by their juniors.

8

Public Officer, Public Officer Emeritus

Of all Gaborone’s senior Kalanga elders, perhaps the most influential radical is Gobe Willie Matenge. A sketch of his life by Arthur Stanley with help from some of Gobe’s friends was privately published to honor him in 1996 on his seventieth birthday (Stanley 1996). Smiling benignly on the cover is Gobe, a strong figure, stocky and very dapper in a smart checked sports-jacket, formal white dress shirt, bright striped tie, and with a white handkerchief neatly folded in his breast pocket. The title, *Notes Towards a Portrait of Gobe Matenge: Public Officer 1947–1981, Public Officer Emeritus 1981* [hereafter, *Notes*], captures his favorite self-image. Now a company director, investor, substantial shareholder, and, above all, a post–civil servant, Gobe is the public officer emeritus: a forceful spokesman in the public sphere for efficient service, a work ethic, professional standards, and the civic virtues in public life.

LOOKING BACKWARD, SPEAKING FORWARD

Notes, a brief yet perceptive sketch, follows Gobe’s public life course chronologically, from his birth “on 28 February 1926 in the Matenge Ward, of which his grandfather was Headman, in Makaleng Village, about 55 kms northwest of Francistown” (Stanley 1996, 1) to his elderhood in the nineties,

his Honorary Life Membership in the Botswana Society and his recent speeches on controversial issues to the Society's Kalanga Symposium, to the Association of Training and Development Officers' Symposium on the Management of Training, and a presentation to the Salaries Review Commission (Stanley 1996, 13). The very careful progression of this chronicle frees me in this chapter and the next to unfold my understanding of Gobe's public life course more thematically in ways that often start at the end before going back to the beginning.¹ For example, I shortly cite his public addresses in elderhood, before I say much, in the next chapter, about his formative experiences in the public service. In part this *Tristram Shandy*-like approach, *reflexive unfolding*, is a matter of my own taste in storytelling, of course. But it is also a tactic of argument for the sake of retrospection, of having the sense of looking backward on experiences, issues, and encounters, complexly related, from a later perspective by a subject who has already lived a very full life, being, among other things, a husband to the same wife for more than fifty years² and the father of six children³ as well as having many grandchildren.⁴

There is a further reason for this approach, which stems from the integrity of Gobe's character. If sometimes changing his perspective from one life stage to another, on certain issues and in certain attitudes Gobe remains remarkably consistent throughout much of his adult life. Indeed, his personal integrity itself is something he values highly—so much so that if it is challenged, he has always been ready to take off his kid gloves and, if need be, fight aggressively and, in his phrase, “without diplomatic wrapping” (Stanley 1996, 8).⁵ For Gobe, this also means taking pride in empathizing with workers' feelings, in not having lost his concern for their interests when he joined management, with responsibility for labor in Home Affairs:

*“When I became Permanent Secretary, I had to represent government's view, but that did not mean I did not have my own view, my personal views. My grounding at the bottom level helped me a great deal to understand the feelings of people in lower grades. When they spoke out, I appreciated the points they were raising, and when it was possible to assist them, I assisted them. Where I realized they were going astray, I gave them some guidance. I was firm, if they went wrong; I was sympathetic, if they went right.”*⁶

When I asked Gobe, during one of our long taped interviews, how he would compare the early District Commissioner and Assistant Commissioners he served under, he reflected skeptically on retrospection, on his own perspective, now and then. Seeing things now from the viewpoint of a high level in the civil service made it difficult for him to comprehend how he actually saw things when he was at the bottom level: *“There is no way that I can compare myself now with what I was at that time. But it's reasonable for me to compare myself now with what I was when I was an executive officer or permanent secretary.”* Even more, he was convinced that someone at the bottom level could hardly know what the differences were between those at the top. *“At that [bot-*

tom] level, you can't expect a clerk to have an understanding of the complexities of the job done by two seniors at different levels, and to be able to distinguish who is better than the other."

Notes illuminates this recognized shift even further by commenting on Gobe's changing perspectives from being a civil service insider to becoming a big businessman and high-flying entrepreneur:

His experiences outside Government Service gave him new perspectives on the Government bureaucratic system. "I do not disagree with the system, it is good. What upsets me is the way many public officers use it." Free from the Civil Service, Gobe was now even freer to speak his mind, and he did just that. He criticized the way the system was used by some public officers for their own ends. With national development well under way, he felt that the government system needed continual monitoring and overhaul, but this did not seem to happen. As always, he feels strongly about people's rights to express their views. Only through constructive criticism can change take place is his belief. Today, he believes that changes are taking place, and is pleased to feel that he may have had some influence in this respect, as one of the first retired officers to speak out. (Stanley 1996, 9)

IN ORDER, IN GOOD TIME

For Gobe, my biographical research with him was a continuation of a personal project of his own: to place in the public domain an account of his life and views. *Notes* was written because Gobe himself had asked that an earlier, brief profile be brought up to date, his reason being "that when he died, he didn't want his family to have trouble compiling a funeral eulogy" (Stanley 1996, 1).⁷ "This is typical of Gobe: everything must be put in order in good time,"⁸ comments Alec Campbell, a good friend who, while Director of the National Museum and Art Gallery, worked closely with Gobe as Chairman of the Botswana Society (*ibid.*).⁹ Campbell also accompanied Gobe when he became a member of the Commonwealth Observer Group formed by the Commonwealth Secretary-General to observe the Uganda general election of 1980 (Stanley 1996, 7).

Being careful about one's public appearance is essential for a public officer, in Gobe's view. When he was Deputy Chief Immigration Officer and later Permanent Secretary in the Ministry of Home Affairs, he was "*very particular about dress*" and "*would get angry, if a Customs Officer was not carefully dressed. When a Customs Officer, you have to welcome visitors, and you need to show respect, and even more something extra. The shabbily dressed person is not good for the country, or for the Ministry.*" At home, Gobe was very relaxed and informal about dress and often, when I arrived in the early morning, or before he had dressed for the day, he would chat casually in his pajamas throughout our interview; he would also, without embarrassment, receive other friends or casual visitors who arrived at that time. His much loved garden, green lawn, trees, and

flowers were always kept immaculately trim: as with the public officer, so with the public man.¹⁰

After treatment in Geneva, during the nineties, Gobe retained 10 percent of his eyesight. That he was partially sighted was not obvious to a stranger, however, and it did not keep him from a very active life, continually moving about the city, so much so that it was rare to find him at home in the evening, unless one made an appointment in advance.¹¹ He walked briskly with a very upright bearing, without a cane, and, when accompanying him to a place he had not already mapped out in his mind, one learned to alert him quietly of the hazards, steps, and turns, which he then negotiated with apparent ease. For me, at first, Gaborone in the nineties was something of a maze. I relied on Gobe to navigate, not only on our trips together, but sometimes, when lost, I would call from my cell phone for directions and landmarks, which he gave, usually with a chuckle, and sometimes step by step, but always staying on the phone until he was sure I had found my way. His phenomenal memory reached to so many telephone numbers that my standing joke with him was that he beat “the National Switchboard Operator,” when I bothered him, repeatedly, for friends’ numbers.

Before our initial long interview on his life, Gobe characteristically advised me to be prepared by first reading *Notes*: “Read it, then isolate what is important. Then you can crystallize things in your mind, and know what sort of questions you want to ask me.” Gobe wanted to be sure we had a plan, to know how much time we needed for our discussion. He expected to be at home, but people would call to consult him and would want to see him. He had learned about scheduling and being decisive for each day’s work, he explained further, under the British colonial officers and, most important, from Bechuanaland’s Government Secretary, later virtually the last Resident Commissioner, Peter Fawcus, “one of the colonialists who came to be our liberators.”

PUBLIC RECORD, PERSONAL PROFILE

During our first interview about his life, Gobe often interrupted himself and reflected, taking deliberate care to be credible, like a witness who could stand up to cross-examination in the High Court where Gobe became an interpreter as a young man. His care for credibility was, in good measure, owing to the fact that he regarded our taped conversations as matters of public record. Gobe has a strong populist conviction about putting facts in the public domain; he has the true democrat’s respect for an informed public. *“People are not foolish. They are able to know the truth, if you tell them properly and give them the right information. But if you don’t, and you want people to say what you want, then they’ll say it.”* He gave me every encouragement and support “to get it right,” knowing that I was doing research and would quote and publish his words. For that reason he took pains, quite explicitly, to make me

aware when he was speculating on the basis of suspicion or from a personal perception of his own, and when speaking from knowledge of fact. Respecting his interest in accuracy, I sent him an earlier draft of this and the next chapter, which his cousin, Tjakabaka Matenge (see note 13), read to him, without delay; and I have corrected the numerous slips they both found, I acknowledge very gratefully. "Now we can finalize the draft," Gobe told me with great pleasure in a telephone conversation, using a choice phrase from his executive days for timely agreement on an essential matter of record. So important is the public record to Gobe that he fought hard, when Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Labour and Home Affairs, to get a specially built headquarters for the National Archives, where it could be adequately housed and staffed.¹²

We both took for granted much shared knowledge and mutual understanding as the basis for our conversations, which we began in August 1999 and resumed in depth over several years. Although we met in person for the first time some months earlier, in mid-1999, we did not start our conversations as strangers. We already knew a great deal about each other through mutual friends and his close kin¹³ and from my earlier research, from 1964 onward, when I based my fieldwork to the north of his home village but in the same chiefdom.¹⁴ In recognition of that, setting the context of our shared past, I began our interviews by asking Gobe to speak of his uncle Mpubuli, whom I knew to be an exemplary figure in Gobe's life, as in the lives of many other Kalanga of Gobe's generation.

THE EXEMPLARY UNCLE:
REFLECTIONS ON MPUBULI MATENGE

Mpubuli Matenge was a role model for Gobe, in many ways. A "younger father" of Gobe's and the father of his favorite cousins, Godfrey¹⁵ and Tjakabaka, he was frank and outspoken, and still very active in his eighties during the 1960s, when I knew him and while, for a brief time, Tjakabaka was my assistant. Mpubuli was one of the first Kalanga to read and write English well and one of the first among their many strong advocates of education.¹⁶ He read an early article of mine, which I gave him, and rightly commented, "Too many big words, you must learn to write more simply."

Mpubuli was an elder, highly respected for his service to the community. As a deacon of the London Missionary Society, he was a leading member of the first-generation Methodists whose postcolonial heirs, "the educated elite of anglicized Batswana" (Parsons, Henderson, Tlou 1995, 272), became President Khama's innermost circle in the President's Office. While also committed to public service, to being of use to his community, Gobe did not quite follow in Mpubuli's footsteps, or keep to his example, when it came to church-going and dedication to the London Missionary Society, or even to religion

at all. Having been educated at a Catholic boarding school, he became something of a secularist and was never a Catholic, but, like other post-civil servants in his immediate circle of friends, he remains tolerant of religion as something for others, not for himself. Churchgoing was compulsory in school; afterward, Gobe “*had no interest in it*” and it was “*never an issue*” for him. Gobe’s wife is a deacon in the United Congregational Church of Southern Africa (UCCSA, successor to the London Missionary Society), who regularly holds prayer meetings in their Gaborone home, and he makes appropriate donations for church support. Asked to come to church himself, he always defers politely, “*Yes, some day I will come,*” but he never does. As for witchcraft accusations, or explanations of suffering and misfortune, “*If something happens, I never think to blame someone for it.*” His own death, like that of anyone else, is “*natural*”; he is prepared for it and speaks calmly of its coming.

Respect for Mpubuli extended to his public-spirited deeds while serving as a storekeeper for J. Haskins and Sons, a Francistown-based settler firm that had a chain of stores just outside Gobe’s home area, the Tati Reserve. Any storekeeper at that time was effectively in charge of a community center, in which nearby people could take pride. But, even beyond that, the location of the Haskins’ stores was strategic.

Outside the Tati Reserve, Haskins’ stores escaped control by the Tati Company, which had a monopoly on trade within the Reserve. But close enough to it to draw Reserve customers, the stores competed with and, in effect, broke the Company’s monopoly. Being a storekeeper for such a strategic and big settler firm, which had its own ranches, meant that Mpubuli tided people over in bad years, and then in good years took payment in grain or cattle for fattening on the Haskins’ ranches, an extremely profitable enterprise in those days. He could extend credit, without risk to his position, because the people made it a matter of honor to repay their debts. Mpubuli was also able to help others in the London Missionary Society, such as the local evangelists who were among the few with regular paid employment in the countryside, but who had to make their investments in cattle unofficially, coping with the Mission rules for serving no business but the one Master. Working for J. Haskins and Sons made Mpubuli something of a gatekeeper¹⁷—indeed, one of the earliest and eventually the longest serving—for access to white settler patronage, such as employment in Francistown, particularly from Jimmie Haskins, the scion of his family, who spoke Kalanga and eventually became a Cabinet Minister (see below). Of further consequence not only for Mpubuli’s stature but also for his linking Gobe to politics and public affairs was the fact that one of the stores Mpubuli ran was at his agnates’ chiefdom, Nswazwi. There the Kalanga chief and his official overlord, the Ngwato Paramount Chief Tshekedi, came into conflict.¹⁸ From his close knowledge and relationship with the Nswazwi people, Mpubuli spoke out boldly on their be-

half, helped to provide refuge for them during their flight from Tshekedi, and rallied support for their cause through letters and personal contacts—all political acts that left a strong impression on the young Gobe.

“A *politician*,” Gobe calls his uncle, identifying with him proudly. For many of Gobe’s fellow citizens, the word *politician* conveys partisan intrigue in party politics; it is a somewhat dismissive label for a wheeler-dealer and usually not a term of praise and admiration for an elder whom one respects highly. But for Gobe, a politician is a courageous fighter against unjust subordination and for public causes greater than oneself: hence Gobe’s identification with an elder who “*could not believe he was subordinate to anybody, on earth, any person as a person*,” an elder who taught Gobe that if a chief was really wanted, then he should be a senior member of his own family, not a Tswana-speaking overlord.

I suggested to Gobe, at the start of our interviews, that we might talk of people who influenced his life, beginning with Mpubuli, because he was someone whom I, too, knew quite well. Gobe agreed, and I checked first on their kinship. In the following I give the text of our interview in full in order to document closely Gobe’s perception, his narrative style in representing the previous generation’s outstanding elder, and the continuity from one generation to the next in activism for the public good of the community.

Was he your *batatennini* [younger father] or *batatenkulu* [elder father]?

I don’t know how you put it in English, but Mpubuli is the youngest brother of my grandfather, meaning my father’s father. He was the youngest in the family. So at home we say batatennini [younger father].

Do you remember anything about him?

Mpubuli was a very useful man in the family. He was an interesting character, a chap who wanted to know so many things about the world, in particular about the Kalanga and his family, the Matenge family. He made useful contributions in that country where he lived, the North East, at that time called the Tati Reserve. He was one of the very few people who first went to school. Although he was not, in terms of today, highly educated, in those days he was counted among the people who were educated.

He was very observant and courageous. In his youth, he was the victim of the Matebele [in the nineteenth century, when Kalanga were living on the frontiers of the Ndebele kingdom]. I think he was captured at one stage. If you looked at his ears, you would see that they had holes, which were made by the Matebele.¹⁹ It was an identification that he was once a captive. You can see that in his early years as a young man, he got involved in politics.

Then as he went on he became so influential in the community that, even during the Nswazwi-Tshekedi Affair,²⁰ he gave not just moral support but, in a small way, financial support; and he also acted in other ways, too, by writing letters. He was counted among the few people who could read and write, and he used his knowledge to help those who needed his help. In a nutshell, that was Mpubuli.

Would you count him among the great influences in your life?

He certainly was. In my home, the reason why some of us, who had parents who could not read or write, know when we were born, is because Mpubuli kept a register, a birth and deaths register at home, his own. When each child was born, he recorded; when a person died, he recorded. It is a pity that we were foolish in the family and did not keep what he had written. When he died, everything was destroyed with him. We lost the opportunity.

He made it a point that he encouraged almost everybody, not only in the home but in the surrounding villages and elsewhere, to send their children to school. He loved education. He believed that without education a nation can't survive. Therefore, he encouraged everyone to go to school, let alone ourselves, each and every child of Matenge was encouraged to go to school. Anyone who didn't must have missed him. Those who were not able to pay, he popped out money from his own pocket, and paid for them. He was a wonderful man, Mpubuli.

Where did he get his money from?

Not that he was a rich man, but in his own right he was a man of substance, by our standards at that time. He also augmented his wealth by working for J. Haskins and Sons, and he was one of the very first people employed by J. Haskins and Sons as a storekeeper, the position he held until he became very old.

Where were the stores located?

I know that one was at Nswazwi, he must have worked there, and certainly he worked at Matangwane, and I know he spent a lot of time at Shashe Drift [all three in the Central District], which was very close to his home, and I am sure you saw the Shashe Drift store. That's where he worked for a very long time. Near his retiring age, he was working there.

What was so important about Shashe Drift, in terms of stores?

In so far as we, the Matenge people, are concerned, well, originally our home was at Kalakamati [the next village to the north of Gobe's own home, and in the Sub-Chiefdom's section where I was based for much of my rural Kalanga field-work]. Shashe Drift had been built very close to our home there, so, for our part, it was a treasure for us. We enjoyed being associated with a store. A store at that time was such an important thing for the community. It happened to be very close to our home, and we took pride in that.

Didn't that make problems for someone like Mpubuli? In some parts of Africa, storekeepers ran into trouble, when they had to sell in the midst of their relatives.

I think Mpubuli took great pleasure in being a storekeeper. And the reason was that he thought he was making a contribution to the community; helping the community

was part of his life, and to him it was a good thing to have a store and be a storekeeper in the area where he helped a lot of people.

So he was a great success in the store?

A great success! There was no question about that.

So it wasn't that having a store at home meant that he was going to have to get into debt and have trouble about payment?

No, no, no, I don't think so. You know, in those days people respected themselves. This question of going into debt was not an issue at that time. It is an issue today. Now people are worried about wealth. In those days, people didn't go into debt; although they had the facilities, they didn't use them very much. If you knew that you went to the store and were given credit, you didn't abuse the privilege. You knew that you had to honor that. This is the reason that they were pleased about helping other people, and they were not worried about being close to the store. No, not in those days. Nowadays, yes.

But how do you think he really managed the problem of trust?

He was a very kind man himself, in the first place. You know, if you went with Mpubuli—well, he was an incredible man—if you went with him on foot, and he used to like to walk around, to a place one kilometer away, you would probably spend the whole day on the way to your destination. He made a point to talk to each and every person he met on the way. Not only talking but finding out where that person comes from, and as soon as he had established a relationship, he would begin to trace it far back, and explain to the young poor person, how he is related to us, and go on and on and on. Then from there to the next person. He would never move, without talking to each and every person. You would have to drag him literally from a crowd, oh that man, a very kind man.²¹

And you had the impression that he had an incredible memory?

Oh, he had, no question about that. For instance, in the Tati case, I think he was summoned to appear, when they were trying to establish when Francistown was first established. I don't know the history myself, but I do know that they looked for him, and I think he made a contribution in a small way, because they knew that he is the person who can rely on his memory. He made notes but he relied on his memory and was almost accurate in many cases.

Did you often go around with him?

Not often, because he was at work, while some of us were still looking after cattle, and when I went to primary school he was also at work. But when he would have occasion to visit us at Makaleng, he would stay with us in our house, and we enjoyed chatting with him.

He encouraged young people really to participate in community development. He encouraged many people, as I said from the beginning, to go to school. He encouraged

many people to go to church—oh, there’s no question about that. He was a churchgoer, a deacon, and he believed that. We would not go, in his presence, to bed without prayers first. You had to pray for food, and after eating you had to pray before you go to bed. That was “Our Daily Bread.” Some of us didn’t like praying, and we tried to escape. But it was almost a punishment that you had to pray, and you were encouraged to go [to church]. He took delight in seeing people go to church. He did not care which church you belonged to, as long as you went to church.

So he didn’t mind your becoming a Catholic?

Well, I was never a Catholic, and I am not a Catholic. What happened is that I went to a Catholic school, and by virtue of being a student, of course, you are obliged to go to church. And that’s what I could do. But he [Mpubuli] didn’t mind people going to church.

I think I remember a story from his son Godfrey, and you can talk to him about it. I thought he said to me, when he was in Rhodesia, working at Tegwane, he joined the Catholic Church, and I think the old man was not quite impressed by that, at that time. I don’t know the details well, and when you meet him [Godfrey] you can talk to him about it. In later years he [Mpubuli] allowed anybody to go to any church. He was a staunch member of the L.M.S. [London Missionary Society], and he died an L.M.S. member. The reason I am saying this is that his eldest son, Jack Matenge, otherwise known as Joseph Matenge, who had stayed in South Africa for many years, when he came back, he said, “I belong to one of the spiritual churches.” And he [Mpubuli] said, “As long as you worship God, it doesn’t matter to me to which church you belong.” And he [Jack] was not the only one, I know that one of my cousins also was a member of one of the spiritual churches, and I would have thought that, if it was his [Mpubuli’s] early days, he would have objected. But as he became older, he didn’t worry about which church you belonged to.

What about his feeling about chiefs?

He was a politician at heart, I must say, and because he spoke his mind, he could not believe he was subordinate to anybody on earth, any person as a person. He respected the chiefs, provided they respected him, too. He spoke loudly against injustice. I think that is probably one of the reasons why he assisted Nswazwi against Bamangwato, led by Tshakedi. I think he realized there was injustice and that he ought to assist. I know that, as far as Ramokate, his chief, was concerned, he himself respected him, but at the same time he used to tell us that, in effect, Ramokate was not his chief, and that Ramokate came to be the Sub-Chief in that area, because when he first came, the government was looking for a tax collector, and Ramokate had the qualities of being able to collect tax.²² Therefore, he was made tax collector. He derived his position of Sub-Chief from the fact that he was an enlightened chap [knowledgeable of European ways]. Mpubuli himself said, “No, that does not mean that Ramokate is a chief in that Makaleng village.” Mpubuli claimed that the Matenge family arrived in that area long before Ramokate, and that, in effect, if you wanted a chief, then the chief should have been Matenge. This is what he used to say to me in those days.

Did that have any impact on you, on what you did?

Well, if someone is leading by example, and you watch what he is saying and teaching, oh yes, it had a serious impact on me. Mpubuli was my uncle, and I saw he was the right man to look after our village, after my grandfather. It was quite clear that he was leading by example and that we ought to follow his example.

At this point our conversation turned to a struggle between Sub-Chief Ramokate and members of the Matenge family, led by Gobe, over centralization and before returning to memories of Mpubuli, we were interrupted by visitors and had to end our conversation, never to return to the same thread. At our next session we continued to talk of people well known to us both, before turning to other subjects that Gobe was keen to consider. The generative approach in our conversations and the narrative method of biography in this present account are thus similar: *reflexive unfolding*, rather than linear life history.

PUBLIC INTEREST, ONGOING STRUGGLE

Gobe's shifting perspectives are best registered against the background of his continuing concern for certain public interests, of which two are most salient—the interest in cultural and linguistic diversity and the interest in localization and training—as I show from his recent speeches. The first reflects his being a self-identifying Kalanga, married to a Khurutse wife to whom he usually speaks Tswana, and having children with whom the parents each speak their own language or English, according to the situation.²³ Rather than effacing their cultural and linguistic differences, Gobe embraces them, but on a preferred basis of equality, and it is this equality which he strongly feels Botswana's founding democratic values promised in principle yet, in practice, failed to deliver, "contrary to what one would have imagined—that after political independence all the ethnic groups would have equal rights and equal opportunities to develop their own folk culture, norms and customs" (Stanley 1996, 22).

In his keynote address to the Kalanga Symposium in Francistown in 1989, jointly hosted by the local heritage Supa-Ngwao Museum, the Botswana Society, and the Kalanga Bible Translation Project, Gobe advocates nation building on the basis of diversity, of many equal cultures, not one dominant at the expense of others:

A diversity of cultural and linguistic entities within a nation can be the basis for a thriving, enriched and developing national culture. The fact that our nation, like nearly all others, is composed of many different cultural and linguistic origins, should be regarded with pride and as a source of our cultural strength, and certainly not as a factor for disunity. The suppression

of language and cultural freedom is often the cause of division within nations. Efforts by rulers and governments throughout the world to impose one language and one culture upon a diversity of peoples appear to result frequently in the ultimate disintegration of the very nationhood which they were trying to preserve. (Stanley 1996, 12)

Notes cites this speech and goes on to bring into relief Gobe's underlying passion: "These measured words tend to conceal the depth and intensity of feeling which Gobe brings to matters relating to the Ikalanga language and culture" (ibid.). This passion is one he shares with many other Kalanga of his generation. In earlier chapters I have already discussed revelatory moments and turning points in their long-term involvement in colonial and post-colonial campaigns for equality and an end to tribal subjection, some dating back to their boarding school days and their founding of a Kalanga Cultural Association at St. Joseph's college.²⁴ In this chapter and the next, taking much of that as background, I foreground other struggles and formative experiences in Gobe's public career.

As for the second of Gobe's continuing concerns—localization and training—this has dominated much of his politics, both as a serving public officer and a post-civil servant. He was one of four members of Protectorate Resident Commissioner Fawcus's Standing Committee on Recruitment, Training, and Localisation Policy, in October 1961 (Stanley 1996, 2).²⁵ He sees himself as one of a group of activists, founding members of the Bechuanaland Civil Servants' Association,²⁶ who "*struggled from the bottom.*" Led by executive officers, middle-level officials including Gobe, they put their early demands sharply in a submission to an end-of-Protectorate Commission in 1966 (see Appendix 2 of this chapter):

Our submission showed we were fighting for all grades from the bottom upwards. Pressure had to be brought to bear on government to make radical changes, not just changes, and we had to be vocal to see that this was brought about.

They criticized the Protectorate government for "blatant discrimination against the Africans in favor of the white man," for "failure to provide satisfactory and fair terms of service for local women," for lack of consultation on fair employment policy, and for a host of other failures in equal pay, training, and education (see Appendix 2 of this chapter). It was a considerable list, which now reads largely like a roll call of ancient battles, so long won that it is hard for today's young radicals to recognize their elite elders as having been in the forefront of the major workers' struggles of their times.²⁷

And yet, not resting on his laurels, still critical and radical, twenty-five years later, Gobe comes to speak to the Association of Training and Development Officers (ATDO), which he founded for professionals in the private sector, on "Major Successes and Failures in the Management of Training in Botswana":

I can talk about failures but have great difficulty in identifying successes. . . . I do not feel that we can lay the blame for this sad state of affairs purely on the shoulders of Government, because Government has been concerned with producing manpower for its own needs, and, in terms of numbers of people trained, training and localisation in Government must count as one of the few successes in management training. (Stanley 1996, 24)

Gobe pins the blame most squarely on the private sector and, to a lesser extent, on the parastatal, for not being willing to invest in people, so as “to develop employees to their full potential and to provide the appropriate training and career opportunities” (Stanley 1996, 25). He is dismissive of the usual excuse, “lack of information”:

Carrying out Training Needs Surveys in the private sector has become a growth industry in itself, and I sometimes wonder whether we don’t spend more time and more money on repeatedly identifying training needs than actually carrying out training. (Stanley 1996, 26)

Turning a critical eye on his own and his fellow activists’ old holy cow, he argues against “localisation”:

One of the biggest mistakes we have made over the past 25 years is seeing the end product of training as localisation. . . . The end product is a competent, motivated and, above all, productive labour force. . . . Localisation clouds the issue, and we are measuring the success of training by how many Black faces are replacing White faces. (Stanley 1996, 28)

After the manner of the author of numerous briefs to a Minister, he brings his argument together in a succinct list of points, newly styled in the form of bullet points, on the failures in management training over the past twenty-five years:

- a failure to accord training and manpower development the high priority it demands, and a lack of will to invest in human resources development, particularly in the professional and managerial areas.
- a failure to carry out training and development which addresses the real and practical manpower needs of the country.
- poor selection of trainees, institutions and courses leading to frustration among employees and employers alike as well as waste of millions of Pula.
- failing to view training as a means of increasing productivity and instead measuring success in terms of localisation statistics. (Stanley 1996, 29)

In conclusion, Gobe draws out the challenge for the Association members themselves:

While, as professionals, you need an Association to promote your profession and share technical knowledge and skills, you should also view ATDO as being more active at the political level, lobbying Government and employers with a view to influencing national training policies and priorities. (Stanley 1996, 30)

Many failures, but for Gobe the way forward still demands political activism, and hope. “Lobbying Government and employers”—the political means much more than party politics. Moreover, Gobe has always sustained his friendships across party lines, never allowing his interest in party politics and support for the opposition to contain his friendships and, of course, his personal influence, another aspect of politics he cultivates frankly. An outstanding example of this, mentioned in chapter 1 above, is his inclusion in what some regard as President Mogae’s Kitchen Cabinet, his inner circle of old friends, like Gobe, from the Notwane Club and the civil service. For Gobe, throughout his public life, his commitment has been and continues to be political pluralism, the making of diverse pressure groups, professional, civic, and cultural, as organized lobbies for public yet distinctive and differentiated interests.²⁸ The establishment, whether it is the ruling party, the government, or the board of directors, needs, in his view, to be subject to pressure for change from organized lobbies and civic associations. Dominance in the ruling party must not be the royal road to overall dominance in the public sphere; political stability, at that price, is too costly. Against that, Gobe, like a good number of other leading Kalanga in the capital, emerges as an alternative force, an agent for the expansion of the public sphere through opening it out to many organized lobbies.²⁹ In the next chapter, when I discuss Gobe’s role in these lobbies and, after his retirement, in opposition party politics, I come back to his being a maverick, fighting for change through vocal dissent and public counter-power, rather than through overreliance on the behind-the-scenes diplomacy so much favored in Botswana.

APPENDIX 1. CURRICULUM VITAE

*GOBE WILLIE MATENGE***Date of birth:**

28th February, 1926

Place of birth:

Makaleng, North East District, Botswana

Sex:

Male

Marital status:

Married

Education:

Primary school

Employment:1947–1950, Messenger in the District Commissioner’s Office,
Francistown1951–1953, Clerical Officer, also serving as Court Interpreter
in Francistown and at the High Court, Lobatse

THE RISE OF PUBLIC MAN

- 1954–1965, Executive Officer in various government departments in Mafeking, the then headquarters of the Bechuanaland Protectorate
- 1965–1971, Higher Executive Officer in the Ministries of Works and Communications and Education, and subsequently Deputy Chief Immigration Officer, Ministry of Home Affairs
- 1971–1973, Assistant Secretary, Ministry of Finance and Development Planning
- 1974, District Commissioner, Southern District, with major interest in the National Accelerated Rural Development Programme
- 1974–1976, Under Secretary in the Ministries of Works and Communications and Mineral Resources and Water Affairs
- 1976, Co-ordinator of Botswana's Tenth Anniversary of Independence Celebrations, for which awarded the Presidential Honour of Meritorious Service
- 1977–1981, Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Home Affairs
- 1980, Member of the observer group, on behalf of the Commonwealth Secretariat, for the Uganda general elections, and Author of the Minority Report on the elections
- 1981, retired after thirty-four years' service
- 1981 to present, Director in public and private companies
- 1981–1985, Administration Manager and Vice-Chairman, Wade Adams (Pty), a private construction company

Voluntary Service:

- Chairman, Bechuanaland Protectorate Civil Service Association
- Chairman, Botswana Civil Service Association
- Founder Member, Notwane Recreational Club
- 1984, Appointed by the Government of Botswana to reorganize the Botswana Football Association
- 1984–1999, Chairman, Botswana Society
- 1984–1985, Founder, Association of Training and Development Officers
- 1991, Member, Board of Trustees of the Mokolodi Wildlife Foundation and the Kalahari Management Services Trust
- 2001, Founder Member, Transparency International (Botswana Branch)

Hobbies:

- Informal discussions and convivial meetings with friends
- Music, reading and gardening
- Entrepreneurship and the stock market
- Now relaxed in his Gaborone residence, he enjoys the respect and confidence accorded him by the general public and his many friends who regard him as "Public Officer Emeritus."

APPENDIX 2. LOCALIZATION: COMPLAINTS
OF THE BECHUANALAND PROTECTORATE
CIVIL SERVICE ASSOCIATION, 1966

In the Bechuanaland Government's *Report on Localisation and Training* the following complaints were made by the Bechuanaland African Civil Service Association:

- a) Blatant discrimination against the Africans in favour of the white man, without regard to their respective academic and other qualifications, experience in or outside the department, maturity of outlook, relevant training, etc.
- b) the local man is simply not given a chance to prove his worth, being perpetually kept on a lowly job;
- c) posts which could be filled by Africans are left unfilled, or given expatriates and whites;
- d) when opportunities for further training occurs [*sic*], these are given to white or black expatriates, rather than to locals;
- e) Government has often failed to implement recommendations of Commissions, especially when they are favourable to the local person (Bechuanaland Government 1966, 23).

The Report continues:

They were exceptionally critical of the staff policies of the Veterinary Department (appointment of expatriates as Livestock Officers, Fence Foreman, Stock Inspectors) and the Medical Department (training arrangements, (or the absence of them) for nurses, medical aides, sanitary inspectors, laboratory assistants; non-promotion of locals to be Matrons, Nursing Sisters, etc) of the preponderance of expatriates on the Public Service Commission and in the Establishment Secretary's office; of the employment of expatriate officers' wives in particular as Personal Assistants or as part-time secretaries or typists, etc. the alleged failure of Government to develop education; failure to create and fill supernumerary posts with locals; failures to associate even professionally qualified locals with the formulation of Government Policy; the re-employment in the local Service of expatriate pensioners from other newly independent territories; failure of Government to implement its promises to the Association to localise certain posts; failure to provide satisfactory and fair terms of service for local women; failure of the Bechuanaland Training Centre to produce good artisans and technicians or even syllabuses for training such personnel; insufficient advertising by the Public Service Commission of vacant posts; discrimination in salary scales for post normally held by locals as against those held by expatriates (the Sykes Report allegedly upgraded most of the latter but downgraded most of the former), the derogatory suggestion at paragraph 141 of the Skinner Report that a graduate might be appointed as a clerk (1966, 45).

9

The Making of a Reasonable Radical

PERSONAL STRUGGLE, FORMATIVE EXPERIENCE

Alone among Gaborone's elite Kalanga elders, Gobe Matenge has no secondary schooling and no degree or qualification from higher education. Gobe went to primary school, up to Standard Five, in St. Joseph's College at Kgale near Gaborone, "a [Catholic] Mission [Boarding] School where English was a compulsory subject" (Stanley 1996, 1) and the main medium of instruction was Tswana. Even as a youth he spoke Tswana with hardly an accent, having grown up in a Kalanga-speaking ward but near his Tswana-speaking Sub-Chief's capital. Again, unlike the other elders who attended Kalanga medium primary schools, he had to teach himself to read and write his home language; he has always written to his mother and brothers in Kalanga. Too poor to complete his schooling, and, being the eldest son, having to help the others, as well as about to marry—he met his wife at their boarding school—he went to work for a brief period as a time clerk in Monarch Mine, a gold mine near his home North East District, until it shut down. The job required him to keep pay sheets and an accurate register of people working underground and on the surface. Ever since, he recalls, he has had a great interest in being accurate about figures for which he is responsible—he loves to add things up for himself, all the more if it is mental arithmetic.

Notes reflects Gobe's own view about the significance for his personal development of his move from his home village at Makaleng to work in Francistown, a journey of more than several hours, where he found his second job, in 1947, and started his career in the civil service: "The nature of Francistown itself brought him a more cosmopolitan and horizon-broadening environment" (Stanley 1996, 1). "What was cosmopolitan about Francistown?" I asked Gobe, somewhat querulously, and I explained I had in mind the dusty little railway town I first knew in the early 1960s, when it seemed to me to be a petty part of a world where whites and blacks were socially segregated, in practice, in their homes, bars, and hotels, full of racial inequality at work, and virtually a minor outpost of western Zimbabwe's main city, Bulawayo, commercially and socially, if not legally or administratively: The Grand Hotel, only in name.

Allowing for much of that, Gobe replied:

"Francistown is on the railway line, a town not a village, and had always been famous for having people from every walk of life, and from every neighboring country, from Nyasaland, South Africa, Northern Rhodesia, and Southern Rhodesia. It was dependent on Bulawayo, the same as we are now dependent on South Africa, and the whites from here would go there and then those from there would come here [to Francistown] to play cricket and golf. Bulawayo was more advanced than Francistown, and what happened in Bulawayo influenced what happened in Francistown, but we were in different countries. And yes, Francistown was segregated, and the whites had the farms. But even as a child I knew [Jimmie] Haskins [scion of one of the richest local trading and ranching families and later Minister of Commerce and Industry; see chapter 7], and then in government I knew him well; you couldn't not know him. He spoke Kalanga like you and me, and lived and identified as a Kalanga. He loved Kalanga. When he visited us in Mafeking [at the Secretariat at the end of the Protectorate], he used to bring us [Gobe and his cousin, Godfrey Matenge, a fellow civil servant] manongo [groundnuts], often sent by [my uncle] Mpubuli [see chapter 8], who worked in his shop. Haskins spoke for Kalanga in government, and he was a white Motswana Kalanga."

Not content with the idea of the white settler Haskins as exemplary of the cosmopolitan in Francistown, amiable and helpful as he was to me, when we chatted in Kalanga, I pressed on, "But did he ever take any Kalanga into partnership with him?"

"Never, but the majority of people he employed were Kalanga in Francistown, and in those days natives were not in business. They were included only as workers, not shareholders."

In making this point Gobe was aware that I already understood his own leading part in extending that inclusion from workers to company shareholders and directors (see chapter 4 above where I discuss the Leno Affair). But he was also making sure that I correctly understood his view, despite what he perceived to be my skepticism, that in Francistown, for all its racial inequality and segregation, a Kalanga like himself could still come to know

settlers and expatriates for themselves, irrespective of race, race being different from identity, and that a white settler could identify with Kalanga no less than I do. It may well be that some of the ease Gobe came to have in a wide circle of white naturalized citizens and expatriates, still so prominent in Botswana, springs from his experience in Francistown—as, no doubt, did his fight against racial discrimination in employment and his active, long-term campaign for localization, during his Chairmanship of the Bechuanaland Protectorate Civil Service Association and afterward.¹

“I identified with the Office,” Gobe said in reply to my question regarding how he felt about the District Administration in Francistown. *“If someone would tell me the District Commissioner is an unfair man, I would say, ‘No, perhaps you misunderstand, perhaps you don’t follow exactly what he was saying, perhaps you are too quick to judge on one incident only. You have to take a bit of time to understand him.’ I would defend him. But if he truly was a terrible chap, I would be in a position to know, and I would say, ‘Yes, I agree with you.’ If someone said, ‘This chap is a racist,’ I didn’t have to have gone to school to know that this chap I worked with and had known for some time was not a racist.”*

Gobe had to work his way up through the ranks, from his first government job in 1947, as a Messenger/Interpreter in the District Commissioner’s Office in Francistown, the headquarters of his home District, to his final post, based in the capital, as Permanent Secretary in the Ministry of Labour and Home Affairs, from 1977 to 1981. If there were others who also reached this top level without higher education, Gobe was certainly among the very last to do so.

Reflecting on his civil service career, Gobe says he owes a debt of gratitude above all to Alan Bent, his first District Commissioner. Gobe worked very closely with the District Commissioner as his court interpreter and then, after Gobe taught himself to type, as his head clerk. *“A brilliant, good man, strict but competent,”* Bent was the author of *Ten Thousand Men of Africa*, a history of Protectorate soldiers in the Second World War (1952). *“He wrote English well,”* so well that the young Gobe felt that he had an excellent model for his own writing and speech in Bent’s. The scholarly Bent was British, unlike the many South Africans in the Protectorate administration of the time, and was further distinguished from his peers, Gobe recalls, by having an M.A.

Recognizing the young Gobe’s accomplishments and evident potential, and against lengthy bureaucratic resistance, District Commissioner Bent fought to have him promoted from Messenger to the grade of Clerical Officer (his post from 1951 to 1953), without the required Junior Certificate. It was a promotion which meant that Gobe could serve as an interpreter not only in Francistown but also in the High Court in Lobatse, and from there progress to the Protectorate headquarters in Mafeking, as a Higher Executive Officer at the end of the Protectorate, from 1954 to 1965. Bent was thus the one who gave Gobe his first opportunity to rise in the civil service, despite his lack of formal qualification.²

With Bent and several of his successors, including A. W. Matthews, [?] Atkins, and John Millard, Gobe had the apprentice's prime chance, which he seized avidly, for self-education in actual practice, learning by doing while close enough to observe a great deal, front stage and back, public and confidential. There were many people in the District at that time who knew little or no English, and he was constantly in demand as the interpreter: "*I learned a great deal from their interviews. I would hear what they said, what the response was, how the matter was resolved, and in that process I gained much knowledge.*" He remembers having a strong work ethic, internalizing timely office values from early on—if he had typing to do, "*no one would have minded*" if he left the office at five, but he would continue to work until he finished, so that the next day he "*started with a new slate.*"

The force of administrative procedure and due process became evident to Gobe, watching District and Assistant Commissioners:

"In the majority of cases, they followed a fairly defined function, doing things the same way. If they went to court—and they were also magistrates—they followed the same procedure, whether it was an inquest or something else. Only when they were dealing with an issue and coming to a conclusion, then they could look at it differently and come to different conclusions."

Gobe's early experience taught him the truths of the position of "go-between" or gatekeeper, filtering things and people for the boss and building many contacts for himself. People who wanted to see the District Commissioner had to make an appointment through him; on the phone, too, he acted as a receptionist, contacting the District Commissioner to find out if he would be available. When he himself became the manager in charge, he made a great effort to avoid being office-bound, or secretary-bound. He kept his own door open. His secretaries were under strict orders to keep him accessible to the public; letters of complaint had to be brought to him directly and, if possible, answered on the same day, carefully giving reasons and grounds in response. His style of hands-on management took him to waiting, unannounced, in queues in different parts of the country, when he became Deputy Chief Immigration Officer from 1969 to 1971, in order to find out for himself how the public was being treated and what could be done for improvement:

He recalls how he would, if necessary, explain fully to an applicant why the laws he, Gobe, was required to administer could not give the applicant what he or she wanted—and then proceed, if the case justified it, to assist the applicant to formulate an appeal or to express the case in a better form. In any event, Gobe would seek to leave an applicant feeling that his or her case had, beyond doubt, been fully and fairly considered (Stanley 1996, 5).

Gobe's early experience as interpreter and head clerk left him with a lifelong interest in "rights, wrongs and legal niceties" (Stanley 1996, 1), and with the conviction, lifelong as well, that the civil service could be fair,

efficient, and serve the public—we sometimes disagreed about the ills of bureaucracy, because he was consistently more optimistic for a cure than I was. As an elder, having become partially sighted, he still followed High Court judgments with keen interest; he arranged to have copies of briefs and opinions sent and read to him, some of which he analyzed for me, very acutely. In his view, the best part came at the end, because the advocates had to sum up their arguments and put their positions most clearly. Though I knew him to be a close and very good listener, I was much impressed by how intensely he focused on the proceedings when we went together to hear a landmark High Court case.³ Afterward, together weighing it all, I had my detailed notes to fall back on, but he had the retentive, highly organized memory of a former High Court interpreter to bring to bear, more forcefully distilling the arguments.

The cut and thrust in the High Court also had an impact on Gobe's attitude toward authority.⁴ This, over a drink at his favorite Notwane Club (see chapter 1), he illustrated, with an anecdote from a case in which an advocate began to cite from the anthropologist I. Schapera, "I have it on the authority of I. Schapera that . . ."—at which point, though obviously learned enough to know that Schapera was the Protectorate's foremost expert on Customary Law, the judge interrupted, and challenged, "Schapera, who is Schapera? And what is his authority?" The point Gobe made, while enjoying the fun of teasing me about so distinguished an anthropologist,⁵ was that authority cannot be taken for granted, you have to establish it, if it is to stand up in a court of law: any authority, any expert, can be challenged.

This attitude, both critical and reasonable, was further enhanced, for Gobe, by the role he later came to play as an Executive Officer at the Protectorate Secretariat's Mafeking headquarters toward the end of the Protectorate. Each week, the national British newspapers were flown in to Mafeking. Along with an educated and experienced expatriate officer, Gobe sifted through them, found relevant items, and then prepared briefs and resumés for the Resident Commissioner Peter Fawcus. Gobe's task was not merely to collect clippings but also to act as something of an intelligence officer, weighing the issues and alerting the Resident Commissioner to matters of concern for the Protectorate.⁶ Fawcus encouraged Gobe to give frank opinions on the issues, saying that is what he needed to understand the country and be able to speak for it in London. Gobe found that he sometimes disagreed with his expatriate colleague, a friend with whom he remained on the very best of terms, and they would present their different opinions and versions of stories to the Resident Commissioner for his evaluation. In the end, Gobe came away impressed by reasoned fairness; before the Resident Commissioner, an expatriate's personality, education, and expertise did not automatically give him the edge.

Notes reflects Gobe's appreciation in this way:

Peter Fawcus's approach to work in general, and also his approach to the specific task of preparing Bechuanaland for Independence, made a great and perhaps formative impression on Gobe. Fawcus, it is said, was a man devoted to duty: ready to consider facts, issues and opinions on their merit, rather than personalities; intent on "Getting it right" for the embryonic Botswana; clear headed in coming to a decision and fair in its implementation. If that, probably, is true of Fawcus, so is it also, probably, of Gobe. (Stanley 1996, 1–2)

RISING CAREER, CONTROVERSIAL VIEWS

Despite being one of Fawcus's protégés—and they formed something of a circle among themselves (see below, on their Discussion Groups)—Gobe's rise in the postcolonial civil service was controversial, not a smooth, easy, or readily predictable climb from one step to the next up a bureaucratic career ladder. He himself was long aware of being regarded, with a watchful eye, for his activism. In 1953, while at the Mafeking Secretariat, he came upon a letter to the Government Secretary in which he was positively recommended by his old boss from Francistown, District Commissioner Atkinson: "*He [Gobe] has a bright future, but watch for his political views.*" Like many other Higher Executive Officers at the capital in the first five years of the postcolony, he did frequently shift his posts and ministries, serving from 1965 to 1968 in the Ministry of Works and Communications, in the Ministry of Labour and Social Services, and in the Department of Education, until he became Senior Immigration Officer and Deputy Head of Department from 1969 to 1971. But in the early 1970s, when still a middle-rank official, his career looked blocked, at least from the viewpoint of some in what came to be known as the Old Guard, the older generation of long-serving staff from the colonial administration of the Bechuanaland Protectorate. An Assistant Secretary in the Ministry of Finance and Development Planning, from 1971 to 1973, he was dubbed somewhat dismissively by "an experienced senior trainer": "not Permanent Secretary material" (Stanley 1996, 4).

However, later, on leaving the post, Gobe was praised in a formal letter for his "promotion of a sound consultative machinery within our Ministry" (letter of September 1973, cited in Stanley 1996, 5). Even later, in 1977, his former permanent secretary newly become Governor of the Bank of Botswana, Quill Hermans (himself a Fawcus protégé), "suggested to the Permanent Secretary to the President that Gobe's talents and experience would be very useful in the Bank of Botswana if a transfer could be arranged" (Stanley 1996, 7). After Gobe was not transferred, Hermans wrote to Gobe to express his regret, and took the opportunity to recognize Gobe's "sense of justice," which Stanley observes is "a facet of Gobe that comes up again and again when studying the record of his life and work" (ibid.).

During the early 1970s, when his career seemed uncertain, Gobe was in the eye of the storm. It was a time when the fast-rising stars were the country's first substantial cadre of university graduates. It was also a time when the rapidly expanding and increasingly localized salariat were beginning to flex their muscles in demands for better working conditions, leave, housing, and, above all, higher pay that was more commensurate with expatriate earnings. Some of these were still the same demands put by the Protectorate Association immediately before Independence (see chapter 8, Appendix 2). Having been the Chairman of that Association, Gobe was then the Chairman of its successor, the Botswana Civil Service Association (BCSA), "*the mouth-piece of the civil servants.*"⁷

Leading Pressure Groups

General Orders of the government bar civil servants from taking part in party politics. "*It does not mean you cannot be politically minded; you can hold your political views,*" Gobe remarked, explaining that he himself "*never aligned with the ruling party or sought favors from it or from anybody else, for that matter.*" In his farewell address as a civil servant at the National Assembly Lounge in 1981, Gobe expressed his conviction about the role of the responsible yet independent civil servant and the place of "rational arguments and well reasoned out advice" in good governance:

The Civil Service is responsible for conscientious implementation of official policy and decisions and must faithfully and loyally serve the Government of the day, but it should also be encouraged to express honest and sincerely held opinions. Civil Servants can be over-subservient to their political masters. If they are, they may fail to present the rational arguments and well reasoned out advice which are so important in the formulation of policy. (Stanley 1996, 16)

Under Gobe's leadership, the Botswana Civil Service Association was seen as apolitical, in party terms, viewed neither as the basis of a counter-movement to the ruling party nor in open support of it, despite the occasional suspicions that certain members had a "different agenda"—and their political views were, indeed, watched (as Gobe's old District Commissioner had advised).⁸ Nevertheless, like a good number of other prominent Association members, who later had very successful careers in the Public Service, Gobe was given to being blunt and vigorous in making a case for their needs and interests.

From a government point of view, there was a positive side even to this. According to a former minister, then in office, "If His Excellency [the President] needed to take the pulse of the Public Service on some matter, Gobe could be relied upon to give an accurate reading" (ibid.). Gobe himself recalls channeling Association submissions through the President's Permanent Secretary Archie Mogwe:

“He was understanding, in sympathy with us, and cooperated with us to the fullest extent possible, and, by “cooperated,” I mean he did not suppress our views, when he represented our views before government. He took them for what they were worth, and he supported us in many ways.”

However, one of the country’s most distinguished public servants told me that he himself at this time, as a young radical defending the Association’s right to lobby for their membership, had to—and did—stand up to heavy-handed threats against his own promotion and future career, if he did not shut up and stop arguing their case.

President Seretse Khama himself, no friend of unions,⁹ saw an imminent danger:

Seretse was concerned that the B.C.S.A. should not become “the fourth estate” of the realm, demanding rights and privileges over the people as a whole. Assertive bureaucrats were the most significant threat to the government’s policy of general wage restraint. (Parsons, Henderson, and Tlou 1995, 299; cited also in Stanley 1996, 4)¹⁰

The Association had to be cut down to size, and the dangers of management-level participation eliminated, according to the prevailing view in government. Hence, through a Personnel Directive of 1975, the government limited the grades of officers who could be members of the Association, which forced Gobe, among others at his level, to resign Association membership, if not to withdraw from influence completely.¹¹

The underlying issues went well beyond an immediate dispute over pay. Even more, there were political issues of pluralism and pressure groups, of the negotiation of disparate public interests, of more open criticism, and of lobbying from within the administration. All these related as well to an earlier retreat that Gobe and a group of fellow civil servants had to make: they were compelled to abandon their forum, the Discussion Group, at the President’s order, not long after Independence.

Before that order, from 1954 to 1965, while Gobe was an Executive Officer in the Protectorate headquarters at Mafeking, outside the country itself and in the midst of apartheid South Africa, he took a leading part in this Discussion Group:

A small group of around ten young public officers,^[12] both black and white . . . met about once each month in each other’s houses in the evening to discuss the problems of the Protectorate and to consider the needs of an independent Botswana. These meetings usually included invited guests, and played a useful role in breaking down racial barriers and social inhibitions, in addition to their main purpose of thinking for the future. As a group, they were outspoken in their discussions and frank in their criticism of much of what they saw.

[Resident Commissioner] Fawcus knew of the group and took a real interest in its deliberations. He would join the group when matters became

heated, or ask it to lunch at the Residency. His own strong convictions about non-racialism did much to guide Gobe in his own opinions. (Stanley 1996, 2)

“When we were in Mafeking, we knew that sooner or later this country would become independent, but we were conscious of the fact that this was the only country in the world which had its headquarters in a foreign country. In our case, that foreign country, South Africa, was known for its racist policies. The racist policies had a great influence also on the workers of the Bechuanaland Protectorate, because they were there. They understood what was going on in South Africa, but not in Botswana, because they were not on the spot. So there was a need to change the attitude while preparing for Independence. You couldn’t wait till then, you had to teach them now, and the way to do that was to have a forum where people could express their views freely. In the course of talking, you could then sift what was best from the bad. You could expose your views to the policy makers so that they could have a vision of knowing how Botswana should look like, as opposed to South Africa. So that’s why the Discussion Group was formed. It was meant to be critical, and I would begin it by saying, ‘Let us be frank.’”¹³

Peter Fawcus, the Resident Commissioner, was a man I respected very much, a man who was prepared to see that racial discrimination was eradicated. Because I had confidence in him, that he meant what he said, I became very aggressive. So as Organizing Secretary of the Discussion Group, I had the latitude to interview anybody, if we had reason to believe that there was racial discrimination, and then say it. Whenever there was a critical issue, and we knew Government would be upset about it, we invited Peter Fawcus, and he came, sat down, and heard us hammering on the government policy. He allowed them to defend it, and he participated. I used to invite Special Branch from South Africa.”

“What? No!”

“Oh, yes!”

[He was enjoying my astonishment, with a chuckle.]

“There was Markram [of the Special Branch], who was a feared chap in Mafeking. Everyone knew that if ever he got hold of you, you’d be in jail. We also had Joe Podbrey, editor of the Mafeking Mail, a named Communist in South Africa, and we would invite them both.”¹⁴ Fawcus would say, ‘Your discussions give me courage to go back and say, “This is what the citizens of this country want for themselves.”’ He knew that what we were saying were opinions that would be expressed by the silent majority in Botswana.”

Rotating from house to house in turn, the Discussion Group made a point of convivial, interracial drinking, white and black friends (men only) together after work, and publicly breaking the racial barriers on the consumption of alcohol (purchased by the whites, as it was not on sale to blacks). Some of those in the Discussion Group, especially Quill Hermans, Hugh Murray-Hudson, Alan Tilbury (naturalized citizens of Botswana), and Dick Makhwadi (a

Kalanga from Gobe's home village) remained Gobe's lifelong friends.¹⁵ On becoming permanent secretaries or heads of department in Gaborone, a good number, including Hermans, Hugh-Murray Hudson, Tilbury and Winstanley, had to leave the Group, but were replaced by Gaborone recruits, namely, Bias Mookodi,¹⁶ Bernard Sesinyi,¹⁷ M. Kgopo,¹⁸ and others.¹⁹ The balance also shifted from a majority of whites in Mafeking to a majority of blacks in Gaborone, but still men only. The original Discussion Group became the core of a supportive network of Fawcus's highly successful end-of-empire protégés. If somewhat like a band of former exiles, still faithful to the cause even on arriving in the promised land, independent Botswana, the end-of-empire protégés represented a racially, ethnically, and professionally integrated force within the bureaucracy, at the top or mostly on their way to it: they knew one another's strengths and weaknesses, often through open argument, and were bound to one another by considerable, long-term trust, while committed to high professional standards and civic ethics (see below on their successors, the Young Turks, in opposition to the Old Guard). In this way, and through the end-of-empire protégés, the formative, transitional period for the postcolony had, among other things, a lasting non-racial, populist, and even anti-authoritarian impact on good governance in Botswana.

However, transferred from Mafeking to the new capital in the making at Gaborone, the Discussion Group became less an effective forum for influencing policy than a sharp bone of contention, sticking in the gullet of the powers-that-came-to-be. If once an acceptable part of political consultation by a "colonial liberator," bent on handing over power to a non-racial democracy, it was seen to be worse than divisive by the nation-building founder of the new state, President Khama. Being a Balliol-trained lawyer and, by birth, no stranger to hierarchy, the President had a strong commitment to "clear and open constitutional and administrative procedures" (Parsons, Henderson, and Tlou 1995, 258) as prime, authoritative values in the making of a new bureaucracy for a stable society. Contrary to that, the Discussion Group provided a platform for serving civil servants to confront their political masters, the ministers, while making open, politically contentious critiques of them and government policy. It was at a time when, in the absence of an independent, muck-raking press, the only other outlet for critique or whistle-blowing was informal, bar-room gossip and behind the scenes rumor. Then, as now, the government had its handout, the *Botswana Daily News*, starved of finance and effectively kept from controversial reporting; public critique from within was not wanted.²⁰ The President put an end to the Discussion Group in mid-1968.

This is the story of the Group's end, as Gobe told it to me in August 1999:

"We criticized the Minister of Education, B. C. Thema.²¹ I don't know now what our criticism was, but it was on education. We didn't want to talk behind his back, so we invited the Minister, and said, 'Minister, come to our Discussion Group, and we will talk about this issue.' He was there, and heard us being critical, so he must have

reported to the President. But I think that Seretse did not take it in the same way that Peter Fawcus did. He was misled, apparently, by the Special Branch²² . . .”

Here Gobe made a significant pause, reflected, and made sure I was with him—

“ . . . and this is not a fact; it’s my opinion. I suspect that he thought, on the basis of the Discussion Group, we were a pressure group which was going to interfere with his administration, and probably give him a tough time or, if you like, to be extreme, perhaps with a different agenda [the Botswana establishment phrase for a subversive plot, aimed at the state or the ruling party]. Then he wrote me a letter saying, ‘You should leave the administration of this country to me and my party. Keep your hands off. I don’t need your Discussion Group to assist me.’

I was very foolish not to keep the letter. It was kept for me by a friend in the extended Discussion Group, Bernard Sesinyi. When this pamphlet [Notes] was being prepared, I wanted it to be an appendix, but he couldn’t find it. He thinks he probably destroyed it, but of course it must be in the Archives.”

But what was it that really worried the President?

“I think he sensed that the Discussion Group was so active, probably more active than his new Cabinet Boys—I suspect—and that it was quite likely that the Discussion Group might reach a phase where, in fact, they might control his government. I suspect this, and please I want to differentiate between facts and suspicion, opinion and perception. When I talk to you, I must be clear that I am not saying this as a fact. I suspect it but don’t know the facts, why he did it. But he stopped the Discussion Group, and therefore we stopped.”

After a moment’s reflection, and directing the interview himself before I had the chance to pose another question, Gobe pursued the point of the President telling him to mind his own business and putting him in his place, as a civil servant who ought to be obedient to his political masters. I quote his revealing story at length:

“Perhaps I had better say something which you might not have covered in your interview, in relation to the President. When I was working in the Immigration Department [at least a year after the end of the Discussion Group, sometime between 1969 and 1971], one afternoon I was standing with Jimmie Molefe, who was then Private Secretary to the President, and there passed Jacqueline, Seretse’s daughter. She was driving a government vehicle. Then I complained that she has no right to drive a government vehicle. If her father wants her to drive, he must buy a vehicle for her. I thought I was talking to a friend, I didn’t realize he would transmit the information.²³ Jimmie then told the President about my concerns.

On the next day, I was sitting in my office, when the telephone rang. My Permanent Secretary then was Major Alan Donald, and my Minister was Amos Dambe, Chris’s brother.²⁴

The telephone [message] from the Permanent Secretary was, ‘The Minister would

like to see you. Never mind what you are doing. You must come along and see him.' It didn't ring a bell to me. I didn't think of anything important that would make the Minister ask me to see him and leave the job. I drove to his office, in an easy way. But what struck me, as soon as I got into the PS's [Permanent Secretary's] office was that I found him with Mr. Sinombe, who was working for Information and Broadcasting. I thought probably they were chatting about something else, so I stood aside. But then he asked me to come in and take a chair. And as soon as I took the chair, Major Alan Donald said, 'Mr. Minister, Mr. Matenge has come.'

The Minister came in, and the Minister said to me, 'One, I have invited Major Alan Donald, because he is your Permanent Secretary. In addition, I have asked Mr. Sinombe [another Kalanga] to be present as an elderly person, so that both of them can be my witnesses, when I talk to you. I have been asked by the President to tell you, you must mind your business, and not concern yourself with state affairs. He does not expect that you should teach him how to run the affairs of this country. He says that he has heard that you have been critical about the use of state cars, because his daughter was seen driving a government vehicle. And that is all I have been asked to tell you in the presence of these witnesses here.'

Major Alan Donald then said, 'It would be discourteous, if you didn't acknowledge in writing to the President that you received this complaint and that you apologize.' [Gobe replied:] 'Before I apologize, I want to know exactly what the President said. It's not sufficient; I don't understand exactly what is worrying the President. You just say I have been critical about the use of state cars. But meaning what? I don't understand this.' Mr. Dambe said, 'No, I am telling you what I was told, and I can't expand.' I said, 'I can't offer an apology without knowing the full facts.' Major Alan Donald then offered as my Permanent Secretary to prepare a polite letter to the President, apologizing. I said, 'The situation is bad but I don't need anybody's English, and if I have to write the letter, I'll write it myself.' I began to show that I could not cooperate in that meeting, if the message was given to me in that way.

Of course, in my mind, I was wondering what could have happened. I couldn't recall this incident of seeing his daughter driving. I'd forgotten about it. What I could remember was that one evening I was sitting in the Permanent Secretary to the President's house—Archibald Mogwe was then Permanent Secretary to the President—and that I mentioned this to him, that really Jacqueline has no business to be driving a government vehicle, and I thought he shared this sentiment. Well, I thought he might be the chap who told the President.

Then Major Alan Donald said to me, 'Look you don't want to write a letter, go and think about it. Come back tomorrow and I'll help you.' He gave me an opportunity to find out, really, who could have told the President the story, because I didn't think that Mr. Mogwe could have told him, though I only thought of him. So I went to see Mr. Mogwe and related the story to him. He said, 'No, after we had that chat, I had a good mind of telling the President myself, but I have not had the opportunity of doing so. I suspect that the only person who is close to the President who could have told it might be his Private Secretary.' And then I said [with a sigh of agreement], 'Oh, yes.'

I went with Mogwe to see his [the President's] Private Secretary. I asked him about it, and it didn't take us long. He took a deep breath, and said to me, 'Yes, I told the President.' I was now beginning to settle down nicely, so I said, 'Just tell me exactly how you put it to him.' I told him that people were concerned about the use of a Cabinet car by your daughter, particularly because she has no license. He took me to task by saying, "Who was the last person you talked to?" And I could only remember that it was you, and that's how I mentioned that name.'" 'Private Secretary, make an appointment for me to see the President. And I will explain to him what happened. You must be ready, too.' I reminded him with a threat, 'If you don't tell him this morning, I will find a way of telling him.' He made an appointment to see Seretse.

The President said, 'No, the Private Secretary does not have to come in. Just come along and talk to me.' So I talked to him. I told him the story, exactly as I told you, and he said, 'I was misled. If that is what you said, I can't find anything unusual about it. Of course, I must buy a car for my daughter. A government car, she has no business to drive it. However, the way it was put to me, it's just by coincidence that it came to me at a time when I had been criticized by Philip Matante²⁵ for having authorized a mercy flight to collect the body of Mrs. Brink.²⁶ I thought you were going over the same thing, for political reasons. Now that you say this, well, you are quite right and there is nothing unusual about it.'

Gobe's memory of this episode, tracing nuances of authority, negotiation, and gossip, reflects the wariness about mixing politics and civil service administration. It illuminates the sensitivity in the early postcolony to certain divides, such as that between politics and administration, and between public and private use of state resources. It also shows that despite having a track record for being outspokenly critical, in some eyes almost to the point of insubordination, he could still get a fair hearing from the President and clear his own name; the chain of command was open to appeal and review. An ethos of accessibility prevailed in the early postcolony, according to the exemplary practice of the President himself.²⁷

OLD GUARD, YOUNG TURKS: THE CONSTITUTIONAL AND THE DEVELOPMENTAL TENDENCIES

To put these episodes further in perspective, I want to comment on the pull of opposite tendencies, which creates tension in Botswana as a postcolony and perhaps, at times, in Gobe himself. One tendency, the constitutional, was the insistence on hierarchical administrative procedure, command structure, and the received golden rules of the civil service; the other, the developmental, urged innovation, risk taking, more critical, egalitarian, and informal practice, and bending or renegotiating the rules. The constitutional tendency was initially represented by the Old Guard of former Protectorate officials who, at first, dominated the President's Office and most of the ministries in the very early years of the postcolony²⁸—I say "initially represented," because no one who has experienced the country's onerous delays of official-

dom, usually genial and polite but stultified in received rules and routine under an avalanche of paperwork, can deny that this postcolonial tendency is still taking on new life, if in new hands.

By contrast, exemplifying the developmental tendency, primarily in the Ministry of Finance, and later in the Ministry of Development Planning, were what might be called the Young Turks, including, mainly, young expatriates as graduate students. Brilliantly at their head was the Harvard-trained development economist Quill Hermans.²⁹ Like Hermans himself, a Fawcus protégé, the Young Turks represented something of a continuity with Fawcus's more liberal, populist tradition of open government. Old Guard, Young Turks—it is as if the end-of-empire British Lion spawned, for the new bureaucracy, not identical twins but a pair of mismatched cubs, one longer in the tooth than the other and at each other's throat over the territory.

The opposition between the Old Guard and the Young Turks came to a head, at least for the first pitched battle, reaching all the way to the top, even to skirmishes between the President and the Vice President, in the celebrated Landell-Mills Affair, from November to December 1966. Charges of insubordination were brought against Pierre Landell-Mills by the Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Finance, Alf Beeby, who was a member of the Old Guard and a “white Motswana” born in Gaborone.³⁰

The fat fell in the fire when Landell-Mills was overheard, probably leaning languidly against the doorpost of the minister's office, telling Masire about the need for decisive action to raise the economy's “absorptive capacity.” (Parsons, Henderson, and Tlou 1995, 257)³¹

Landell-Mills, a Young Turk, was sacked but was later reinstated through a successful appeal to a three-person Presidential Commission of Enquiry, with the backing of Vice President Masire,³² his Minister, in active cooperation with Lawrence Lekalake, then Secretary of the Botswana Civil Service Association (Parsons, Henderson, and Tlou 1995, 258).³³ This reinstatement benefited Botswana handsomely, when Landell-Mills proved to be a master negotiator who out-negotiated the South Africans on the revenue formula for the Southern African Customs Union in 1969 (*ibid.*, 275).³⁴ For the first time, this provided Botswana not with a fixed, out-of-date percentage of customs and excise but with a share of customs and excise to match actual imports and exports. Landell-Mills's effort contributed heavily to the first dramatic improvement in the country's finances, at the start of the 1970s, and it was again against opposition from the Old Guard. Used to accepting the South African will passively, they feared that, if upset, South Africa would create more difficulties for Botswana (*ibid.*; Samatar 1999, 86).

In the dispute of the Landell-Mills Affair, there was a matter of principle: either to stick to the established priority of bookkeeping and “budget penny-pinching,” that is, to stay within the limits Britain would bear as the main provider of funds for Botswana's running deficit, or to risk the new alter-

native, namely, more aggressive planning and the use of foreign capital aid for development (Samatar 1999, 86). But also in dispute, or at least clashing, were alternative postcolonial management styles, one accessible yet formal and hierarchical, after an established British colonial model, and the other more egalitarian, even casual, the latest in end-of-empire Britain itself, at least for trendy young academics:

Senior staff in the Office of the President and elsewhere wore safari suits, even short trousers with long socks, and drank colonial concoctions such as pink gin. They were altogether more chummy with Ruth and Seretse [Khama], people of their ilk and generation, than with staff in the Ministry of Development Planning. The latter wore the brightly coloured shirts and ties of late 1960s bright young things. (Parsons, Henderson, and Tlou 1995, 258)

There was even a version of Gobe's Discussion Group, though one within a single ministry, Development Planning, and with the full backing of the Minister, Vice President Masire, and its technocrat head, Quill Hermans:

According to Hermans, "One of the most valuable institutions Masire had in those early days was an informal discussion group held fortnightly in the home of the Hermans. All young planning officers from the ministry, who were initially all expatriates (later joined by a few Batswana) will meet in an evening. The vice president will come and sit on the floor. . . . One of these youngsters will lead the discussion (10–15 minutes) on a planning matter and an intensive discussion will then ensue. The vice president participated and there was a great deal of camaraderie. The seriousness of the vice president impressed and enormously encouraged the young planning officers." (Samatar 1999, 102 n. 79)

If at this level of government, apparently somewhat ephemeral for the days of the early postcolony, such open argument in the informal seminar, as in Gobe's and Hermans's Discussion Groups, did not disappear without a trace in Botswana's public sphere. In many viable public forums, this free speech still thrives today.

Under Gobe's leadership, the Botswana Civil Service Association was the strongest pressure group to challenge—unsuccessfully in the end—what became "a central tenet of Botswana's development strategy," the government's income policy for wage restraint "to attract investment and nurture economic growth" (Samatar 1999, 89). While still in the eye of the storm over that, Gobe met a further ordeal, in 1973, arising from the first sudden and somewhat unexpected surge in state revenues, in excess of the budget for the national development plan. If in one role, leading the pressure group, he did his best to undo the income policy, in others, within the administration, he came into conflict precisely because he took up the other challenge, to implement the government's priority to deliver the fruits of the policy to ru-

ral communities rather than to “bourgeois bureaucrats.” To an outsider that might seem a simple contradiction but, as situated practice for an insider, it was a matter of complex engagement and activism on different fronts in the emerging postcolony.

The gush of new revenues funded a whole range of rural projects, meant to be responsive to District Council plans, for modern infrastructure and social services under the Accelerated Rural Development Programme of 1973. Rich in promise and potential though the moment was, it was also a highly problematic time for relations between the local and national state, when “the range and complexity of the councils’ administrative and accounting functions grew rapidly” (Lekorwe 1998, 182). The challenge for Gobe was to spearhead this growth and development by leaving his post as Assistant Secretary in the Ministry of Finance and Development Planning and taking on the sensitive post of District Commissioner in the home district of his Minister, Vice President Masire.

Gobe was not long in his new post before he and Masire had a falling out. Suspicion and distrust clouded the personal relations between the civil servant and the politician, which became acrimonious in the loss of mutual respect, perhaps never to be fully restored. Standing on his authority as District Commissioner, Gobe demanded that the Vice President notify him before visiting the District. Insisting on his rights as a tribesman, the Vice President refused, “This is my home where I am a tribesman, where I relax.” Gobe is said to have replied, “If you are the Vice President, then you can’t also not be the Vice President, and a mere tribesman.” The post-civil servant who told me this part of their confrontation felt that the trouble lay in the fact that Gobe did not just talk about the situation but entered at length into a correspondence that was brought to the President’s attention. At first “you settle it among yourselves” was the President’s urging. Within a matter of months, however, Gobe was spiraled out of the District and promoted upward as Undersecretary, first in the Ministry of Works and Communications and then, from 1974 to 1976, in Mineral Resources and Water Affairs, but he still remained heavily involved in the Accelerated Rural Development Programme.

FROM HONORED IMPRESARIO TO PERMANENT SECRETARY

In the midst of this difficult period, perhaps quite fortuitously, there came a major turning point in Gobe’s career. Gobe seized the day and rose toward the peak of his success in the civil service. A government appointed Celebrations Committee for the ninth and tenth anniversaries of Independence became so bogged down that the Committee had to admit failure and appeal to the President for someone to take over on a full-time basis. Seconded to the Office of the President, Gobe did so:

THE RISE OF PUBLIC MAN

He set up a Unit which took on—at Gobe’s own insistence—a nationwide outlook, rather than confine itself to the Capital alone. The breadth—and daring—of his own view of the importance of the Tenth Anniversary Celebrations can be gauged by his asking for a budget of P5 million, but he made the P1,2 million that he got, go a very long way.

The Tenth Anniversary Celebrations were a huge success. One View of Gobe’s achievement in this regard was given in the Kutlwano [the government’s illustrated, monthly magazine] publication for April 1981:

“In a year, he slashed red tape and forced concerted action out of so many people that there was a gasp of relief when the 30th of September was over.” (Stanley 1996, 6; Kutlwano citation details not given)

Gobe’s achievement as an impresario won him immediate recognition and the award of the Presidential Medal for Meritorious Service, which President Khama bestowed on him at a grand party at the State House. This triumph placed Gobe very much in the public eye both at the capital and nationally, lifted him above the ranks of middle-level civil servants, and gave him the extra gloss he needed to shine forth as “Permanent Secretary material.” The establishment had needed—and been given—someone not from the silent majority, a person in no great hurry, but a mover and a shaker, the unorthodox man from the minorities, who twisted arms and cut corners: Gobe.

Having proved his stature beyond his peers, Gobe, in November 1977, received the promotion that capped his career, the post of Permanent Secretary in the Ministry of Labor and Home Affairs. *Notes* reports:

Gobe’s colleagues of that time make special mention of him for three things—his insistence that “my door is always open to anyone who wishes to see me”; his emphasis on *spending* money that had been duly allocated (“if it is finished, I will get you more”); and his own following of both those admonitions in pushing home the need for, and the construction of, the National Archives building—without Gobe, they say, that building would not exist. (Stanley 1996, 7)

SOCIAL CAPITAL, PERSONAL AND CORPORATE ENTERPRISE

In chapter 4 I discussed some of the forces, both the push from within the civil service and the pull from outside it, that put Gobe in the vanguard of a move by top Kalanga civil servants, at the beginning of President Masire’s administration, to the top of an emerging commercial elite.³⁵ Gobe’s new job, Administration Manager of a major construction company, Wade Adams, built not only on his managerial skills and government contacts but also on his extensive experience and knowledge of Gaborone from the time of its founding, when he allocated city land and housing in 1965. Immensely successful in his second career as in his first, he joined the company’s board and became Vice Chairman on his retirement as Manager.

Gobe could hardly have turned to his second career as Manager and Di-

rector at a more opportune moment nor for a more strategic company than Wade Adams, with its huge construction projects at the start of the 1980s building boom in Gaborone. Opportunity alone, of course, is not enough. It is a measure of Gobe's grasp of the way the world was changing around him and his ability to seize the day as a civil servant turned entrepreneur that Wade Adams became one stepping stone on his way to a good number of others, including, first, the board of Barclays Bank and later the chairmanship of Botswana Game Industries Limited, Botswana's first public company.³⁶ *Notes* reports, "With encouragement from his business friends, he entered the world of business by investing small savings in large enterprises. Later, he formed business partnerships with some friends" (Stanley 1996, 9).

True, and yet this cryptic report expresses more of Gobe's cultivated modesty, his avoidance of gross ostentation, than it discloses his recognized sense for innovative investment and entrepreneurship. Relative to the largeness of the enterprises, Gobe's savings were no doubt small, but the very investment itself was highly significant at a time when stock, for rich citizens, meant cattle and not company shares. To this day, Gobe has never had any cattle, and he has no faith in them as a means of capital accumulation.³⁷ The main reason he gives is that he found it too difficult to manage herds while based in Mafeking, far from his home village where he might have kept some cattle, a reason that did not hold, of course, for many other labor migrants at that time.

Here it is worth noting that, by the end of the 1980s, Gobe's departure from the familiar pattern of accumulation through livestock ownership came to be a new norm. This is shown by survey evidence from the University of Botswana Democracy Project, the long-term study by social scientists and historians coordinated by the American political scientist John Holm. From the Project the sociologist Patrick Molutsi reports:

The principal decision-making section of the bureaucracy appears to have rejected the cultural trap of investing in cattle and increasingly preferred to support more urban-oriented policies intended to protect, support and encourage local business outside agriculture and retailing. . . . Our survey found that 70% of permanent secretaries did not own cattle, or at least they did not perceive of cattle post [*sic*] their family owned as having any investment potential. Instead most of these civil servants held shares in private companies and parastatals such as Botswana Development Corporation (BDC), Sechaba Investment Trust and Sefalana and commercial banks. (1989, 111)

When Gobe took his seat on the board of Barclays Bank, his "small savings" were already an index of his long-term financial discipline, maintaining a pattern of capital accumulation unlike many of his peers in the salariat, and certainly ahead of his time. It meant, among other things, that when Barclays built its skyscraper headquarters in the government enclave in the

mid 1980s, even though Gobe kept his own savings in the Standard Bank, he had sufficient credibility for Barclays to trust him and his associates in the real estate company he took the lead in forming, Land Holding. Each of the investors bought his or her shares at 12,000 pula per shareholder, with loans provided by their own banks, including Standard Bank. As I mentioned in chapter 4, according to documents publicly released by Julian Nganunu, the company's attorney at the time, Barclays funded its own part of the development, that of building the skyscraper on the land leased from Land Holding, with 6 million pula in loans from the bank's pension fund and an additional 2 million pula in equity (Tsiako 1986a).

As for the business partnerships that Gobe formed with some friends, although in chapter 4 I sketched the outlines of his series of boom real estate companies, here I want to expand on that and also say more about Gobe's social capital in his network of friends. His social capital was immense and he used it wisely and astutely when mobilizing partnerships and forming companies. A description, also quoted in chapter 4 above, characterizing Leno, the rival company to Gobe's Land Holding, illuminates the competition Gobe encountered: "It was an almanac of the rich and the powerful, top civil servants, politicians and cabinet ministers, and of course a company by the name of G. M. Five [President and Mrs. Masire's company]" (Otlhogile 1986, 2). If that read like a "who's who in the Botswana Government and Private Sector" (*ibid.*), so did the lists for Gobe's companies, the difference being Gobe's selection of people from the links of his public career. Focused mainly on the people who were then in Gaborone, this occupational selection—and despite media stories (it was not primarily an ethnic selection; see chapter 4)—reflected the cumulative succession of friends Gobe made over the long period from his service in Mafeking, including protégés of Fawcus, leading members of the Civil Service Associations, very close and senior colleagues in his former ministries, and, among businessmen, one of the country's richest Indians, whom Gobe came to befriend while he was District Commissioner in Kanye.³⁸ The friends still in the civil service could be shareholders but not company directors, of course, and Gobe took on the director's roles on their behalf.

Not all Gobe's business ventures were successful: the most striking failures came when he tried to diversify from real estate and the distribution of goods, such as in Engen's petrol stations and his partnership for the Botswana franchise of Woolworth stores, to production, in a Francistown bakery and in a tile factory. At the financially disastrous tile factory, and ironically in light of his past struggles for workers against government wage restraint, Gobe recalls having to face the workers' disbelief. Unable to obtain better pay and faced with the threatened collapse of the factory, the workers protested that there had to be hidden profits; their proof was that when Gobe and his partner in this and many other ventures, Lawrence Lekalake, visited, they would



Figure 6. Gobe Willie Matenge (*right*) and Mbiganyi Charles Tibone, Chairman of Barclays Bank, arriving at an election rally in Gaborone.
Photo by the author.

arrive in Lekalake's new Mercedes. In the end, the partners had to sell the factory at a loss to a prominent Norwegian with greater technical expertise. The story is not unusual in Botswana, of course. Economic diversification, like "citizen empowerment," has become something of a Holy Grail in the country, envisioned in many government plans but still largely beyond actual reach.

Gobe, as a director, makes it a certainty that management and fellow board members recognize him as having a feel for detail and being well informed. Unable to read the company minutes and glossy brochures himself, now being partially sighted, he listens so closely as they are read that he is able to catch slips in form, ambiguities in wording, omissions, and misleading statements. He is quick to have matters of record put right, often by an immediate phone call to the Managing Director. For Gobe, doing his homework carefully before and after board meetings means gathering not only business gossip, the Notwane Club being a favorite listening post, but also firsthand knowledge from casual, unannounced visits, as when he was Deputy Chief Immigration Officer waiting in immigration lines.

Typically Gobe sees that his role as a director on the board of Barclays Bank calls for his open criticism of the bank. Top brass from the London headquarters, boasting of Barclays' localization policy in Kenya and Zim-

babwe, met with his sharp objection that the bank only localizes under pressure, openly brought to bear in both countries in forceful lobbying by the government. Though Barclays now has a Botswana citizen as Managing Director, for Gobe this appointment appears to be more a change in title than a full transfer to a local head, because the Financial Controller still reports directly to London. Celebrating this appointment was a welcome occasion to exert public pressure on the parent bank's British head, who no doubt had been hoping for a merely ceremonial moment during his visit in 2001. With full backing and encouragement from Gobe, the bank's local Chairman,³⁹ Mbiganyi Tibone, publicly objected at a press reception that the bank contributes to the country's economic imbalance, supporting white expatriates over local businessmen and failing to actively finance local enterprises. Gobe recalls with relish: The visiting British banker was visibly uneasy, taken aback by the outspokenness of the Chairman in criticizing his own bank.

MAVERICK AND GREY EMINENCE

This brings me to an aspect of Gobe that is somewhat underplayed in his portrait in *Notes*: his maverick engagement in party politics. According to *Notes*, "When presenting prizes at the Botswana Amateur Open Golf Championships in 1981, he made a rare but characteristic excursion into the political arena with his statement [on democracy and apartheid]" (Stanley 1996, 10). Thus he is portrayed, in *Notes*, as rather apolitical, somewhat like civil servants are supposed to be. While faithfully showing him to be an activist and outspoken critic in the public sphere, *Notes* minimizes his great interest in political opposition, and thus obscures the consistency of his stance regarding public power and authority. In my view, it is a consistency that is grounded in the longstanding cultural disposition among Kalanga, discussed in chapter 7, that constrains patriarchal authority as checked power. Gobe, like other post-civil servant elders in his Gaborone circle, continues to share, and indeed revitalize, this disposition in its postcolonial salience, as seen in their assertiveness in making the new public authority and power, like the patriarchal authority, conditional, qualified, negotiated, and, above all, not authoritarian.

Having this disposition and Gobe's own stance in mind, and drawn by the topic to be somewhat more provocative than usual, I pursued his idea of the balance of power tenaciously, almost to the edge of his great patience with me, in one of our most argumentative conversations. A week earlier he had explained that he had not joined a political party immediately on retiring but that gradually he expressed his sympathy for the Botswana National Front, the main opposition party. He found, on meeting its members, that they spoke the same critical language and attended rallies together. His sympathy for that party was not a matter of the parties differing significantly in philosophy or ideology.⁴⁰ Rather, he was determined to give the weaker party

the courage and knowledge to stand up to the stronger party and, by doing so, to make democracy a reality, *“not a bluff. As long as the opposition is weak, then democracy is O.K. for the ruling party. People who say Botswana is a “shining example of democracy” are deceived, because it has never been tested. They praise us because they compare us to other African countries which are hopeless.”*

Out of a desire to document both the conversation’s tenor and its substance, as well as the method of my fieldwork, I quote at some length from my recording. I began this part of the conversation by offering my opinion of Gobe as a radical: “In some ways you never ceased to be a radical.”

“No, and I will not cease to be a radical, even now.”

“And you are a supporter of a party of opposition [the Congress Party, a split from the Botswana National Front], of criticism.”

“Yes, I am.”

“It may be fair, if you will allow me to say so, that there is a kind of continuity in your position from the time when you left government and then joined the opposition, because you had the view that there had to be radical critique.”

“Yes, I am radical, and I continue to be radical. I like to see justice. If someone is practicing injustice, I will not support that. I will be against that. I would like to see progress in this country. I would like to see this country becoming a truly democratic country. And anything which is against that, I will be against.”

“But would you become a member of the ruling party?”

“I would not rule out the possibility that I would become a part of the ruling party. I don’t think it ever occurred to me that I would never be, so long as the ruling party understood what I stood for in life. If the ruling party means that you have to be subservient, well, I am not one of those people. But if the ruling party requires some people who are independent in thinking to say what they want to say, and takes that when formulating policies, then there is no reason why I can’t be a member of the ruling party.”

“Well, but the point is that you didn’t become a member of the ruling party, so that must mean that you judged that it would not accept independent people.”

“No, I really would not like to put it like that because it is not what was in my mind. But what is in my mind is I want to be fair and frank in my dealing with anybody. In answering your question, it is very difficult for me to say I made up my mind never to become a member of the ruling party. No, I didn’t.”

“But there was something about it that didn’t suit you, that didn’t fit you.”

“But no, I didn’t feel I should never be a member of the ruling party. I felt that for me to make a contribution in this country, I had to be myself. I could not pretend that I

agreed with some people, when I did not agree with them. I think that the majority of people in this country who have had occasion to be associated with me know that very well—that I would not be a party to an organization that would only accept the people who are subservient. I am not going to be, and I never was.”

“Let me push you a bit, so that I understand. Your sense, then, was that the ruling party *did* require people to be subservient.”

“No, that is not correct. I didn’t even worry about the ruling party. All I did was to be concerned about the contribution which must be made towards development of this country. Anybody who made good progress towards development of Botswana had my support. Therefore I would team up with that person. Anybody who did not seem to work for the welfare of this country and the people of this country, I would not support that person. But I never addressed the question of the ruling party or the opposition party as such [when deciding to support such a person]. It is by coincidence, I think, that I did not address this point.”

“But some of your friends went into the ruling party.”

“Oh, the majority of them, the majority of my friends joined the ruling party. And it is one of the things that made me feel that we can’t all join the ruling party in a country which claims to be democratic. You need to balance the scales of justice. There is no way of balancing the scales of justice unless you belong to another party. So two parties are there, one is ruling, the other the opposition. My conviction was that I would make a contribution if I helped the weaker party, which happens to be the opposition.”

“Were there issues, though, that divided you from the ruling party—meaningful issues?”

“No, I can’t think of them really. But it became clear that you have an organization of two parties, the ruling party and the opposition, and that obviously in this country the opposition is weak, because it is beginning to develop at this point in time, and that the ruling party has the advantage over the opposition party on many issues. It has access to government facilities, and advice. The opposition does not have access to that information from the civil service freely, and therefore you need to help it to stand up and be in a position where it can compete.”

“Yes, uhh, I see that, but I am still a little bit puzzled . . .”

O.K.

“ . . . because I keep thinking that they are dominated by some interests.”

“No, I must be frank with you. That is not the case. I did not think along those lines. It just so happened that I did not join the ruling party, for the reasons which I have advanced. They may not be justified, but that is my view, which I had, that this country must be democratic. If you want to be democratic, there must be competition, and we will compete. But there is no way of competing if you are bound by rules and pro-

cedures in a particular organization which will make doubly sure that you may have to sacrifice your principles because of collective responsibility.”

“Were there any principles that you thought were sacrificed at that time?”

“No, I can’t think of principles which would be sacrificed at that time. But I am thinking aloud, in case you find yourself in a situation where you can sacrifice your principles, I would not like to be in that situation. The point I am trying to make is that I would not like to be in a “democratic” society where there is only one player who has the exclusive right to be heard, and the other ones, the other players, can’t be heard, because there are so few people who support the other party. That’s why I talk about supporting the weaker party.”

“I understand what you are saying about belonging to an organization that would have no open criticism because you would be within the main party.”

“Precisely, you would be within the main party, and it would be surprised to find that you differ radically and yet you belong to it. You would feel constrained, if you belong to an organization where you can’t express your critical views.”

One way that Gobe preferred not to express his critical views, however, was in the rousing highly partisan speeches that are usually met with much shouting and heckling during the rough and tumble of political rallies (Lekorwe 1989, 221–22), so far removed from reasonableness.⁴¹ He felt that being the prominent person that he is was incompatible with traversing the country to make speeches—*“too taxing”* for a man who wanted *“to take it easy after retirement.”* His preference is for the party conference, a forum where members can have their say. It is at such times, and in direct contact with other members, that he exerts his public influence. Sitting beside him on the raised platform, in the front row, at his party’s rallies in Gaborone during the 1999 election, I noted that, as each speaker passed by him, returning to a seat, he expressed his thanks and praise on behalf of the party. In his party he has the stature of a senior statesman, or perhaps that of a grey eminence, and he is referred to as *Mogakolodi*, Adviser.

Behind the scenes, of course, there were also moments for his characteristic frankness, as I witnessed when the Congress Party leader gave us a lift home. Very supportive but sharp and to the point, Gobe did not mince his words of criticism. After all, among other things, even rallies have to be run with discipline and on time!

On another occasion Gobe revealed more of his role as a grey eminence. This occurred at a post-rally conversation at my house, where University of Botswana academics raised the question of the recent split of the Congress Party from the Botswana National Front. They had observed that, just at the first incidence of numerically significant parliamentary opposition arising from major and unprecedented gains at the last election, the split had already weakened the opposition—which later, as predicted, did lead to a dis-

astrous defeat in the elections. With evident respect and affection, though not without cut and thrust, the young academics challenged Gobe to defend the split. Part of their objection was that the three leading dissidents, including Gobe, had been impatient and had not gone through due process when they split the old party.

Completely at ease with the young academics, as if he was at the Top Table of the Notwane Club, the scene of many such conversations (see chapter 1), Gobe met their criticisms by tracing the maneuvers behind the scene of the split. It was the fault of leadership, Gobe insisted, that the old opposition party did not act as if it were ready to assume power. Without embarrassment, despite being partially sighted and elderly himself, Gobe said that he and others of the party's inner circle had concluded that fears of occupying the presidential office had motivated the elderly and disabled party leader Kenneth Koma: the fear that he would have to work extremely hard and face a young man, Festus Mogae, who would challenge him in the opposition, and the fear that he would be required to do a great deal of official reading. For Koma, it was all right to be leader of the opposition and start his workday at 2.00 P.M., as well as working short hours. Recognizing Koma's fears, Gobe had spent seven months trying, unsuccessfully, to persuade him to resign the party leadership. When the Executive Committee then tried to unseat Koma, he simply sacked them all, and defended this in court on the grounds that he had the right to do so as party president. The resulting showdown was a split: out of the thirty-two elected Members of Parliament, eleven supported the new Congress Party and two the old Botswana National Front. After the rout of the Congress Party in the subsequent election, Gobe characteristically took the lead in assuaging its leader, on the latter's resignation, by preparing an address for a vote of thanks for the leader's long service to the opposition. However, the thought that Gobe himself might then retire from politics never occurred to him: *"Ah, how can a human being retire from politics? No, you can't shut up."*

A radical elder, who recognizes the liberators among colonialists; an elite insider with a maverick outsider's "sense of justice"; a meticulous keeper of time, who makes himself available for a great stream of casual callers, on the phone and in person; an unorthodox innovator and even impresario, who *"accepts the system"* and sticks on matters of procedure; a careful planner who looks forward playfully to the moment, especially if it comes with good, spontaneous conversation, news, and gossip of the day, and his favorite whiskey—all these paradoxes are true of Gobe. So, too, are a good number more, including a well-deserved reputation for "forceful impartiality" (Stanley 1996, 11) and for political activism, particularly in his support of opposition parties and minority causes; and a reputation for being both fearlessly outspoken on public issues—he expresses disdain for "diplomatic wrapping which might obscure the truth" (Stanley 1996, 8)—and yet also gracious, and very diplomatic, in making others feel that he cares, thanking them wholeheart-

edly and recognizing their valued special goodness. My wife Pnina, an experienced fieldworker herself, tells me that Gobe impressed her as “a lovely man with a beguiling, childlike innocence, who could sweet-talk anyone,” “nothing pompous about him”; in the eyes of my son, Ben, he was “a wise man, who likes his alcohol”; for my daughter, Donna, he was simply “such a nice man.” *Notes* offers this opinion: “Gobe’s highly varied experiences and skills, and his by-no-means-simple personal characteristics cannot be summed up in any one easy phrase, but he can be said to be a fighting pioneer, with battle honours gained on many fronts” (Stanley 1996, 11). Or, as another Kalanga notable and close friend told me, “Gobe has had to struggle for what he got.”

Gobe has made himself an agent of change in the public sphere through open struggle. It may be an unfair caricature to say that Britain’s colonial legacy in Botswana, dividing a majority from the minority, is most strikingly the gulf between diplomatic Yes-Men and confrontational No-Men, but there can be no doubt about Gobe’s place among the No-Men. Even more clear is the long-term impact he has made. Gobe’s Discussion Group set him on the path of numerous later initiatives in which he took leading roles in the growth of public forums and other racially and ethnically integrated institutions concerned with good governance or critical of current public policy. Included, among others, are the Botswana Society, the Botswana Confederation of Commerce, Industry, and Manpower, the Association of Training and Development Officers, and Transparency International (the Botswana branch of the anticorruption organization). Even the sports club he helped found, the Notwane Club, has its Top Table, its informal space for public issues, for talk not only of sports but of politics as well. Although the original forum was for a group of public officers rather than private citizens, as in the bourgeois salon in the West (Habermas 1989; Holub 1991), it was similarly, like its successors, a force in expanding the public sphere through open, critical argument, and by bringing a pressure group to bear on government and other institutional decision making. Gobe’s biography exemplifies, above all, the rise in the postcolony of public man—at once critical and civil, radical and reasonable, and determined, consciously, to speak truth to power. In the epilogue I turn to the broad significance for post-colonial citizenship of the exemplary public life and the agency of Gobe and others in the ongoing struggle over political pluralism.

Epilogue

Postcolonial Wisdom, Beyond Afro-pessimism

The challenge for a comparative and critical analysis of public anthropology in Africa, which this book addresses, has taken us well beyond the old agenda of Afro-pessimism. A review, setting in relief the main steps in my argument, helps to highlight that exploration. I began by addressing a concept of postcolonial wisdom, and then related it to the actual practice of the elites who take the lead in state and nation building. Throughout the book my focus has been on Botswana's minority elites, who are Kalanga and whom I have come to know during rural and urban research from 1964, before Independence in 1966, to the present.

One aim in the first chapter was to document the ways in which care for the public good and the national interest are motivating concerns for minority elites who come from the senior decision-making echelon of the civil service. These minority elites exemplify the complex interlocking of government and big business, because they position themselves at the top of the commercial sector through substantial investment as shareholders and, after leaving the civil service and parastatals, as company managers and directors. Yet they also exemplify a countervailing force for good governance by forming part of what I call the "post-civil service." The post-civil service includes former civil servants who serve on various public bodies from tribunals to parastatals to Presidential Commissions of Enquiry.

EPILOGUE

My argument is that minority elites as post-civil servants are often an influence for more open democracy, greater public accountability, and more inclusive citizenship. This is because they bring pressures to bear from outside the bureaucracy—they are no longer officially apolitical or required to appear neutral—and yet, having been managerial insiders, they know, and are known to know, how to operate with the responsible ethos and ethics of decision-making civil servants. Indeed, given the opportunity as consultants and members of Presidential Commissions, minority elites as post-civil servants have been at the very forefront of the monitoring, critique, and revision of government policy and the exposure of corruption, leading on occasion even to the resignation of Cabinet Ministers. The argument is a corrective to the tendency in postcolonial studies to see the entrenched conservatism of currently serving senior bureaucrats on government committees and parastatals but to miss the post-civil servants and their impact for independent reform.¹ The rejection of the state is not the beginning and the end of postcolonial wisdom, the argument shows.

THE SHIFT IN PERSPECTIVE AND MINORITY ELITES

The second aim of chapter 1 was more personal and reflexive. It is no less important for my intended revision of the Africanist agenda, however. Like so many other Africanists, I myself have contributed to the crisis anthropology of Africa; I did so through my research in Zimbabwe on political violence, memory, and the reach of the postcolonial state (Werbner 1991, 1996, 1999b, 1998b). But when it came to Botswana, I found that I had to shift my perspective to be faithful to my long-term research experience in the country.

Studying the public sphere in Zimbabwe meant attending to tyranny (Werbner 1991) and to an excess of ritual and state theatrics in the post-colony (Werbner 1998a, 1998b; see also Mbembe 2001). That excess, I showed, inflated a vastly expensive cult of the heroic dead, which aimed to glorify the regime in elaborate state memorialism. The commemoration of the birth of the nation at the barrel of an anticolonial gun has been performed at a hierarchy of independence war shrines from the national to the local (Werbner 1998b). The spectacles and theatrics in Zimbabwe have become more elaborate, even frenzied, the more the legitimacy of the state and its own origin myth has become openly questioned, indeed fiercely contested in the face of brutal repression. In Botswana, by contrast, state theatrics are minimal: even the opening of Parliament is simple, though, as some citizens say, perhaps it is a bit too much on the Westminster model. It takes place in a Spartan building largely bereft of regalia or political symbolism; and every president, proud of a tradition of accessibility, normally moves about modestly and fearlessly, without a vast entourage, as a man of the people. There could hardly be a more striking image for this contrast than

each country's president on the road: Zimbabwe's president, Robert Mugabe, speeding past in a sleek, luxurious Mercedes-Benz, securely hidden and protected against any further assassination attempts by his huge motorcade with sirens screeching and traffic stalled for miles, and Botswana's president, Festus Mogae, traveling sedately, with little or no fanfare. in the old hand-me-down Bentley.²

Conscious of these postcolonial alternatives, I reflected in this first chapter on how I gained a measure of personal understanding, my own postcolonial wisdom, by coming to know, over several decades, an open circle of elite individuals from their colonial youth to their postcolonial elderhood; we matured as friends together. This long-term personal knowledge and experience of elite sociality, mainly among the Kalanga both in the capital and in the countryside, informs my analysis of the forum as a public process constitutive of citizenship in Botswana; that is, it provides the main vantage point from which I approach, throughout the book, a series of what I call "affairs." The affair, in my terms, proceeds through political debates, some of them reaching public forums, such as courts, tribunals, and Commissions of Inquiry, and coming to a climax in crystallizing moments of heightened political consciousness. My cases included the colonial Nswazwi Affair, the early postcolonial Landell-Mills and Discussion Group Affairs, the somewhat later Leno Affair, and the very recent Khumalo Affair. It is also on the same basis in elite sociality that, in chapters 8 and 9, I presented the biography of Gobe Willie Matenge, the most influential radical among the senior Kalanga elders and post-civil servants living in the capital.

Not that my Botswana research has been solely on elites or Kalanga, now regarded as one of Botswana's most important minorities: a major project in my continuing study of rural-urban dynamics in Botswana is based among Tswapong, members of another minority group, living in a small hinterland village, nearby towns, and the capital (Werbner 1977; 1989, chap. 1; 2001; 2004a). This project, extending my observations across class and ethnic divisions, complements my present analysis, although I have not attempted to say much about it in this book.

FOUR POLITICAL PROCESSES

For the sake of clarity in following complex public debates and their political significance for citizenship, my analysis in chapter 2 distinguished four basic processes: (1) *minoritization*, (2) *reintegration*, (3) *regionalization*, and (4) *indigenization*. Minorities are created or constructed publicly in the first process; they actively differentiate themselves from a majority and from one another, and yet, in various ways, they also transcend their differences. Reintegration, the second political process, decides the corporate terms on which the tribe and its members are placed within the state. The third process, regionalization, is the very opposite of a primordial appeal to a historic moral

community and precolonial origins or to other longstanding claims and ties. Instead, people are mobilized across prior ethnic and tribal divisions on a new regional basis of division, such as in the opposition between Northerners and Southerners and the temporary formation in the ruling party of competing factions, the Northern and the Southern. Finally, there is the political process of indigenization, by which a historically marginalized group, such as the San, becomes redefined as indigenous, for international no less than national purposes, and demands recognition and rights. Of these political processes, the first two, being most important for my interest in state and nation-building elites, were central to my argument throughout the first half of this book. However, in chapter 6, I shifted the emphasis from minoritization to reintegration by providing an account of the reinvention of tribal citizenship in conflicts over opposed and intractable interests in tribal land.

THE REVISED AFRICANIST AGENDA AND THE POLITICS OF RECOGNITION

Bringing forward the underlying issues for the revised Africanist agenda took me, in chapters 2 and 3, to the politics of recognition, to use Charles Taylor's phrase for new contests over citizenship in a good number of Western liberal democracies (Taylor 1992). In Botswana's politics of recognition, some assertive minorities, who have been drawn into struggles over identity and cultural rights, are confident enough of their place as citizens within the nation-state to rely on the public forum: they lobby and litigate for their interests without resort to political violence. It could be argued that such struggles, too, are yet another proof of a chaotic fracture in society and the dominance in postcolonial Africa of a very wide, almost global tendency for citizens to live *in* nation-states but to be "conditionally, partially and situationally citizens of nation-states" (Comaroff and Comaroff 2001, 634). Against that argument, Botswana's assertive activists from the minorities make their demands and claims *qua* citizens in and of the nation-state.³ What they seek as advocates of difference and diversity is not exclusive citizenship by right of birth; nor is it purely ethnic nationalism with its larger mentality closing in against the peril of strangers; rather, it is the rebirth and healthy growth of a more civic nationalism, albeit mixed with an ethnic element. Their demand is for first-class citizenship, in no way ambiguous, partial, or conditional, for more inclusive citizenship, providing both equal individual rights as well as equal group rights. It is a demand that is all the more important to minorities when they come from international borderlands, as Kalanga do, or belong to a transnational diaspora, as do Herero. The assertion and display of their identity as citizens of the preferred nation-state controls the dangerous ambiguities of their transcendence of the nation-state.

There is, of course, something distinctively postcolonial about the politics of recognition in Botswana, and it comes from the dynamics of dual citi-

izenship: national and also tribal. This postcolonial hybrid carries to the republic the mixed legacy from its colonial predecessor, the federal state, which, built under colonialism on precolonial foundations, gave its subjects unequal rights on the basis of membership in a tribe. The ambiguities of reconciling the halves of dual citizenship with each other and with civic nationalism are revealed in my account to be rich, and highly politicized, in a greatly intensified public debate about the homogeneity or heterogeneity of the nation. It is a politics that is producing a major shift in public consciousness but that actually moves forward less through occasions of confrontation—although there have been remarkable turning points, landmark and revelatory moments much rehearsed by the people themselves—than through gradual, sometimes fitful, negotiation of opposition and cooperation.

MINORITY PARADOXES AND ENTREPRENEURSHIP

The buildup of interethnic trust, partnerships, and alliances by minority elites is a remarkable accomplishment, in the face of majoritarian fears in Botswana of a “takeover” and “hidden agenda”—the popular imagining of an ethnic conspiracy consciously directed by the few against the many. The fourth chapter unfolded that interethnic accomplishment and the entrepreneurship of nationally prominent Kalanga originating from the north of Botswana and now the best-positioned minority elites at the capital in the south. My analysis resolved a linked set of apparent paradoxes. The first is that Kalanga elites merge *urban cosmopolitanism* with assertions of their ethnic identity, linguistic difference, distinct cultural heritage, and ties to their rural homes. The same Kalanga elites establish or lead not only their own cultural associations but also numerous civic associations and public interest groups that are interracial and interethnic in membership. The second paradox relates to the boundary-crossing legacies in the postcolonial present from the colonial and precolonial past: Kalanga elites, coming from the borderland of Botswana and Zimbabwe, orient their ethnicity toward the nation and yet reach beyond it internationally. That super-tribalism and nation building in Botswana march ahead together, like moral comrades-in-arms, is the third paradox.

TRANSFORMING THE CAPABLE STATE: THE VICISSITUDES OF NEGOTIATED POWER

More generally for postcolonial studies and the revised Africanist agenda, my argument related changes in ethnicity, interethnicity, and entrepreneurship to the transformation of Botswana, regarded as the capable African state. These changes were traced through the administrations of Botswana’s three presidents: first, during the heyday of an assimilationist yet highly co-optive policy and One-Nation Consensus under Botswana’s first president, Seretse

EPILOGUE

Khama; next, under Quett Ketumile Masire, the second president, the move to a less co-optive administration that appeared to foster the autonomy of the bureaucracy but also, under a liberalization policy, reduced the insulation between the civil service and the investment opportunities of business and high finance; and, finally, under the current president, Festus Mogae, the presently growing pressures for a shift toward greater pluralism in the postcolonial state. The analysis highlighted a make-or-break moment, the Leno Affair, on the threshold of Botswana's great diamond-led boom, when political struggles came to a head in a test of public morality and a free press, of coalition strength and majoritarian dominance, and of technocratic managerialism and political pluralism.

For the revised Africanist agenda, which I am proposing here, the further theoretical interest my discussion raised is in the vicissitudes of negotiated power. The need is to move away from the postcolonial fascination with the politics of violence in Africa in order to attend critically to the subtle art of public politics. It is characteristic of Botswana, when it works as a democracy, that political pressure so invites counter-pressure that power is often negotiated through the highly cultivated art of open-ended compromise. This political art produces pragmatic mutual accommodation and the promise of more equitable negotiation: if it is more your way today, then, arguably, it will be a bit more my way tomorrow, and even today there is something acceptable for the broad common good. Negotiated power in this postcolony is a balancing act, accomplished under pressure for equity and tolerant of uncertainty and open-endedness. In this regard two questions need to be addressed: What are the limits on negotiated power, and how are these limits being tested in Botswana, particularly in majoritarian reactions to increased minority assertiveness? If, as some argue in support of the new Africanist agenda, Africa is finding many roads to an Age of Democracy, then the navigation past Botswana's own pitfalls—given its overwhelmingly democratic record—is all the more important, *perhaps* setting the pace for continental path-finding. I say *perhaps* because a problematic area for negotiated power in Botswana, salient for majoritarian dominance, is precisely the one that influential theorists of Africa's Age of Democracy extol: the political importance of associational life and the impact of pressure or interest groups as positive forces for pluralism.

PRESSURE GROUPS, VISIBILITY, AND POLITICAL PLURALISM

Writing at the end of the eighties on the basis of major interdisciplinary research by the University of Botswana Democracy Project, the political scientist John Holm reports, "For the most part, however, interest groups in Botswana are hesitant to take their case to the public because they fear that such publicity would anger the government and thus only hurt their cause" (1989, 152). To which he adds this footnote: "In part this reasoning stems

from the fact that in the political culture of Botswana the belief is that organized interest groups are not supposed to participate in politics" (153 n. 20). This anti-politics belief is an established part of the postcolony's political culture, even for today, as I showed in chapter 3 in my discussion of a televised address to the nation, originally presented by President Mogae to the Kalanga cultural association.

The tide is turning, however, toward higher visibility and more open lobbying by politicized pressure groups, including very prominently women's nongovernmental organizations. The established anti-politics belief, if ever unchallenged, is now strikingly under attack. The assertiveness of minority groups and their cultural associations has elicited a backlash. One part of this reaction is the formation of a highly visible pressure group, Pitso ya Batswana (The Forum of the Tswana), based mainly among Tswana elites at the capital. As if it were a voice of millennial liberalism in Botswana, this pressure group proclaims as its own the principles of equality, the rule of law, shared nationhood, human rights, and transparency in government. As a neo-conservative front, however, it asserts the modern value of Tswana customs and institutions, above all Bogosi or Chiefship. Even more strident, as an ethnically majoritarian association, it targets minority success, particularly in the civil service and, most important, in the judiciary and the Attorney General's Chambers, which it labels nepotism and tribalism and against which it campaigns very publicly through, among other things, paid whole-page newspaper ads and litigation in the courts.

The jury is still out, so to speak, on this pressure group. While it has helped to fuel media stories, exposing the present government as blunder prone, it has failed in its efforts to turn the growing political pluralism toward majority tyranny. In chapter 5 I examined more of the neo-conservative front's impact, when I discussed "blundering," the political compromise within government and between its branches, and the settlement of a constitutional crisis out of court, "in the public interest." I showed how the High Court responded to that pressure group's legal strategy. It was exposed as a way to use the court for politics by other means: to "ambush" the government at the last moment. Harshly condemned by a High Court Justice for bad faith disruptive of good government, the strategy was defeated; the adverse decision was headlined "Humiliating" in the press. Nevertheless, the pressure group continues to spring back—it has already found another occasion for representing itself as a guardian of the nation, dedicated to unity in the public interest and, unlike its minority targets, the true keeper of political morality.

There is, of course, a risk at the other extreme, arising from minority and other pressure groups rushing to court for judicial review based on constitutional texts. The more that pressure groups turn to the courts for such judicial review, the more they may skirt the usual political process of building majorities to support legislative action.⁴ Against that, I argue that in Botswana—at least with regard to the ongoing struggles over minorities and group rights—

judicial review and the building or rebuilding of majorities are going ahead somewhat in tandem, and not with one far ahead of the other.

Pushing the argument a stage further in chapter 5, I addressed a different but related struggle. This one tested, or rather got to the brink of testing, the adequacy of the court for handling a conflict within the government itself, between opposed branches, the President's Office and the Attorney General's Chambers. The conflict escalated toward a constitutional crisis in what I call the Khumalo Affair. Much of the Khumalo Affair is about "blundering"—now a much used term of political art in Botswana, which I unpack—and the importance of that leads back to issues I raised virtually at the beginning of the book. There I reported the embarrassment of President Mogae at having, for administrative reasons, to call a state of emergency. Typical of Botswana as a postcolony, it was unlike any other state of emergency on the continent; it passed quickly, hardly noticed by most citizens; it was peaceful and without political prisoners or any show of force.

During the Khumalo Affair, however, what contributed to the escalation of a constitutional crisis was the smear campaign by the neo-conservative front, along with its further allegations of "blundering." The front's strategy of sowing dissension within the government was directed, in large measure, against the Attorney General, who, like senior members of his staff and a significant proportion of the leading lawyers and judges, is a Kalanga. Hence part of the context for the constitutional crisis was suspicion, drummed up deliberately, that "bickering" in the Government Enclave was charged by ethnic difference. The press, if rightly keen on muckraking against arrogance in power and campaigning for public accountability, has also been quick to sensationalize stories—the political plot, scandalously exposed, is a much loved genre; its stories are punctuated by the hidden stab in the dark or the blow below the belt struck during back-room manipulations—and I showed how the press representations, including scare headlines, covered the dramatics of the Khumalo Affair.

My account of the Khumalo Affair traced the crisis as it progressed in the disputes over a referendum and a Presidential Commission of Enquiry. I highlighted not only the moments of confrontation but also the move toward compromise—indeed, I considered how the adversaries variously perceived compromise, and I conceptualized compromise as it is used with opposite senses, good and bad, in arguments about political morality. This analysis enabled me to clarify why an agreed settlement was reached and yet the issues of principle, like the constitutional relations between the government branches, remained murky, or at least ambiguous enough to allow contradictory interpretations to be made. The way that the parties to the dispute successfully negotiated themselves out of an impasse, and indeed the very fact that they did so reveals the capability of the state and the political skills of its decision-making elites.

There was, of course, a great deal of political gossip, much of it not pub-

lishable for various reasons, about their negotiations, which necessarily went on largely behind the scenes. In the public domain there was, and still is, more of the escalation of crisis than the repeated mobilizing of highly respected intermediaries. Yet for all the murk and ambiguity, and although confidentiality was sustained despite the leaks, the public was ultimately left in no doubt about a truth of the political process itself, namely, that power is continually being negotiated rather than securely monopolized in the hands of any individual, even the President himself. In this political process, the authority of the highest office is upheld, but the President's own power is checked.

ETHICS, THE BALANCE OF POWER, AND CHECKED AUTHORITY

This recent test of the independence of the Attorney General and the credibility of a Presidential Commission has raised the problem of the balance of political power in Botswana. I came back to this in chapters 8 and 9 in my discussion of the handling of civil service disputes by politicians. My argument about the vicissitudes of negotiated power problematized the force of ethics in politics. It depends on the idea that citizens of the postcolony themselves assume a moral concern in political culture—that one ought to consciously balance interests and check the pursuit of self-interest for the sake of the public good. Of course, choices are not straightforward, the balance of power can tilt precariously, and people are well known for sometimes behaving greedily at the expense of the public good. It is a truth so much believed that *politics* is commonly a word for the pursuit of partisan advantage, though, as I showed in chapter 9, an elder can be called a politician, with respect and admiration, when he gains a reputation for fighting in public causes for the underdog. But an important question for the Africanist agenda is the legacy in political culture from the past, particularly from the respect for elderhood and the authority of patriarchy.

Afro-pessimism made us recognize that gender-blind studies of patriarchy had hidden the unacceptable face of elderhood. For the colonial period, a whole stream of feminist social histories exposed the domination of men over women, in which elders reinforced patriarchy by colluding with colonial rulers in the control of women, their bodies, their movement between town and country. But what was the acceptable face of elderhood, acceptable to the people themselves, including women? Of what importance is that now for postcolonial understandings of negotiated power and checked or qualified authority? And what bearing do these postcolonial understandings, in turn, have on the *public life course* of elders and, most important for my main subject, elite elders? Here by *public life course* I mean the recognized stages in a person's participation in the public sphere.

Answering these questions brought me to the second part of the book.

EPILOGUE

At the end of the first part, in chapter 6, I turned to the countryside and tribal land holding, which is important for Kalanga elites who, while living in the capital, straddle town and country in many ways. My analysis shifted also from the technocrats and managers in the civil service to the tribal bureaucrats of land boards who are elected quasi-functionaries, typically betwixt-and-between, somewhat set apart from the rest of the public yet not quite civil servants. I pursued this rural discussion in chapter 7 by recovering the theoretical interest so prominent in colonial ethnographies that document the way that political virtues are ritualized, contested, and more or less realized around elders. My argument freed us from the conventional wisdom which dismisses that colonial ethnography, along with the sympathetic understanding of patriarchy, as if it were obsessed exclusively with the closed community, above all, the tribe—the tribe being cast as the invented means of divide and rule—and the male elders, with their ethnographers, as the stooges and handmaidens of colonialism.

ELDERHOOD, PATRIARCHY, AND MEMORIALISM IN ALTERNATIVE PUBLIC SPHERES

Among the foremost colonial analysts of the closed system—which is, of course, not the same as the closed community—was Meyer Fortes. It is on Fortes's richly insightful study of open-endedness in Tallensi subjectivity and ethics, *Oedipus and Job in West African Religion* (1959), that I based my interpretation of the opening of colonial patriarchy out to the very margins of the people's known social universe. Among patrilineal Tallensi, no man can become an elder of distinction, a capable patriarch in contact with the sources of his own and his dependents' being, and thus one able to care for their survival, unless he understands and is seen to understand the force of a vital difference, working in his life as in every man's. This force is his dependence on women, the mothers and the mothers of his mothers, bonds of reproduction that endure even beyond living memory. This is the transcendental understanding he memorializes and mediates through a shrine he has to bring back home and install after a spiritual quest on a distant journey, requiring safe passage across many potentially hostile communities. In and through the shrine, he retraces his remote, long forgotten maternal origins; it represents the occult significance of his maternal origins for his own and his dependents' well-being. This shrine is the acme in a whole series of shrines that document a man's progress through a public life course and by which he and significant others come to terms with the intimate relation between the hazards of his existence and his moral conduct. Hence I argued that it is the open community, and not the closed community, that is the prime concern of such patriarchy in its subjective memorialism and in the ritual representation of an elder's public life course.

Building on this argument and other related contentions about colonial

patriarchy among the Tallensi, I followed the comparison to postcolonial patriarchy, its memorialism, and an elder's public life course among Kalanga. My account foregrounded the memory work and the pious service at a shrine when a great congregation of elites and other urban villagers comes from great distances, across town and country, for a ritual performance remembering the dead at the rural home of a Kalanga patriarch whose son, himself a junior elder, is a leading member of the national elite. It is a translocal congregation, and the ritual for the assuagement of the wrath of the dead provides an occasion for recentering ephemeral long-distance networks of kin around shrine objects of occult potency. In their felt qualities and material reality, these objects tangibly manifest the occult capacity for endurance which the patriarch himself embodies, and, at the same time, they also serve as a ritual means for acting effectively on that capacity for the sake of the well-being of all the kin and, most important, the afflicted in their midst.

My analysis took account not only of the moments of euphoria, especially at a climax of a ritually dedicated offering, but of the agonistic moments. These patriarchal occasions are full of assertiveness on the part of kin who, insisting on punctilious performance according to traditional procedure, compel acknowledgment of their prerogatives and responsibility. There is a division of ritual labor according to which kinswomen, no less than kinsmen, have to give their consent and play their parts, if the ritual is to be completed with due care, and thus with the desired beneficence of the dead. Through this agonistic process, patriarchal authority is enacted as checked power and a product of negotiation between a whole set of concerned relatives, men and women, kin and affines.

Such occasions have been a significant part of the cultural and social resources for sustaining long-distance trust, obligation, and personal commitment that Kalanga have mobilized during their very long colonial history of international labor migration. The postcolonial turn in Botswana to national labor migration has brought not an end to the importance of sustaining a viable migrant and ethnic diaspora but an intensification of pressures for straddling town and country by members of such a diaspora. Occasions upholding sacred centrality at home prove how strong the pull of the countryside over the town still is.

Reflecting on the very wide spread of similar commemorative rites in postcolonial Africa as a heritage from the colonial past, I argued for their present significance in the making of *alternative public spheres* that are not captured by concerns of state and nation, of commodities and the market. What the patriarchal rites commemorate is the felt burden of the past weighing heavily in the present. It has to do with special publics, with locally informed personal knowledge, and with social relations that are highly specific, within and between generations, but not necessarily with the closed or bounded community. Hence one part of the challenge raised for the new Africanist agenda is to take the rites and memorials of patriarchy seriously, once again, and to

EPILOGUE

problematize afresh the re-assertions and re-presentations of patriarchal authority in cultural forms that are felt to engage vitally with the very bodies and the moral being of patriarchs' special publics in the postcolony.

REFLEXIVE UNFOLDING AND THE BIOGRAPHY OF A PUBLIC MAN

Another part of the same challenge took me forward to the last major question of this section of the book, the one about the postcolonial understandings of negotiated power and checked authority, and the public life course culminating in elderhood. To answer that question, in chapters 8 and 9, I used a method of *reflexive unfolding*. This thematic approach to biography often starts at the end before going back to the beginning, for the sake of conveying retrospection. The move in my analysis, in this section, was thus from memory work and memorialism in an alternative public sphere to retrospection across the whole of a distinguished public life course.

With the great help and full consent of my main subject, Gobe Willie Matenge, an elite prosperous Kalanga elder now living in Gaborone, I looked backward on his very distinguished public life course. Part of my evidence for his reasonableness as a radical is in the dialogical texture of our conversations: hence my care to report, in texts I transcribed from tape recordings, much of the flow of the dialogue. My first step was in accord with the approach in my fieldwork, moving from conversation about people, places, and events familiar to us both to those well known to Gobe only. We started our in-depth life history interviews over several years by recalling his exemplary uncle Mpubuli Matenge, who was the father of my friend, Tjakabaka Matenge, sometime Ambassador and High Commissioner and, very briefly in the 1960s, my assistant. Accordingly, my account of Gobe's reflections in chapter 8, by opening with his exemplary uncle, gives a sense, from the beginning of his biography, of his place in a *tradition of reasonable radicals*.

By a tradition of reasonable radicals, I mean the actual transmission by example from one generation to another of a culturally valued disposition that is reasonable yet radical. It is a disposition in favor of promoting change deliberately and through reasoned, preferably informed, public debate.

For Gobe and his exemplary uncle Mpubuli, this tradition is realized at its best by giving service and gaining distinction in public life. Chapter 8 showed that Mpubuli, who became a colonial elder and storekeeper having once been a serf at the court of the Ndebele king Lobengula, was a role model in a number of ways for Gobe, the postcolonial elder and post-civil servant who began his career as a time clerk for a colonial mine. Among these exemplary ways are Mpubuli's fearless political activism, his vocal protest against injustice and oppression, especially that directed against his own people, his prominence in the most important interracial and interethnic association of his time (the London Missionary Society), his much respected

public service to the community, his entrepreneurship, his capacity to work with and gain the trust and admiration of Europeans, his untiring advocacy of education and training, his prodigious memory for people and details, and even his concern for keeping simple, clear, and accurate records.

As Gobe himself puts it, Mpubuli was “leading by example, and it had a serious impact on me.” Not in all ways, of course: like a number of his peers in the civil service, Gobe became something of a secularist, tolerant of religion for others but not a devout Christian or churchgoer himself. Illustrating Mpubuli’s impact and preparing the way for an account of formative experiences in Gobe’s career, I drew on his recent addresses to voluntary associations, some of which he founded, to convey his long-term concern for matters of public interest, such as minority rights, the value of cultural and linguistic diversity, and the importance of localization and training.

Spelling out these views led me to Gobe’s role as a maverick actively committed to *political pluralism*. By *political pluralism* I mean the expansion of diverse pressure groups—professional, civic, and cultural—as organized lobbies for public yet distinctive and differentiated interests. Gobe extends this commitment to a rejection of the unchallengeable dominance by one ruling party over its opposition; explicitly on principle, he gives his full support to strengthen the weaker party. About political pluralism, I said much more in chapter 9, building on my suggestions from chapters 4 and 5: the marked prominence of Kalanga, both in the making of diverse lobbies and pressure groups and in the legal profession and judiciary, is linked to their interests and positioning as a minority group. Foreshadowing that, my conclusion to chapter 8 considered Gobe’s own contribution to the expansion of the public sphere.

In chapter 9 I returned to Gobe’s personal struggles and formative experiences. It was in Francistown, about fifty-five kilometers from his home village, that he began to make his way from the very bottom of the civil service, being a clerk and then an interpreter to the District Commissioner, to the top decision-making echelon. My own view of the racially segregated Francistown I first knew in the 1960s was not flattering. For Gobe, however, the picture was not so simple, despite its dark side in colonial inequality, discrimination, and racism, and I showed how he brought me to understand the cosmopolitan and the international in Francistown, its nuances of white settler and native interaction, and its remarkable opportunities for an upwardly mobile youth to gain a worldly education while serving as the local gatekeeper or go-between for that trusted, authoritative, and highly independent arm of British colonial bureaucracy, the head man-on-the-spot.

Coming away with a lifelong interest in rights, wrongs, and legal niceties was one result, for Gobe. Another was a feel for a style of hands-on management and the art of open access, of how to avoid becoming the manager managed by underlings. Still another, much reinforced by his later experience in the High Court at Lobatse and his executive service as virtually an

EPILOGUE

Intelligence Officer for the Protectorate's Resident Commissioner, was a critical attitude toward authority. Views had to be weighed, no expert was beyond challenge, and the best decision was the one reached through reasoned, cogent argument. It was patriarchy as checked authority, in another guise; but, contrary to the stereotype in Afro-pessimism, it was not an appropriation, from some apparently monolithic colonial legacy, of paternalistic authoritarianism.

One might suspect that all this actually added up to an apolitical profile for the manager in the making, during his climb to the top. But Gobe did not, as it were, keep his head down on the desk. On the contrary, as he stressed in our conversations, he not only spoke out and became an activist, eventually Chairman of the Bechuanaland Protectorate Civil Service Association, but he also knew that his bosses' eyes were upon him for this, and that a boss's letter of recommendation, which he read at the Protectorate Secretariat, contained the phrase, "He [Gobe] has a bright future, but watch for his political views." Moreover, being on the losing side did not make Gobe give up his activism, as I showed in my account of two examples of lobbying and putting critical pressure on the administration. One was his uphill battle, as Chairman of the Botswana Civil Service, against the government's policy of wage restraint, and for fair and higher pay and better working conditions. The other was his effort to sustain in postcolonial Gaborone a small interracial and interethnic forum for an inner circle of mainly middle-level civil servants, known as the Discussion Group and first mobilized at the Protectorate's Mafeking Secretariat for open, frank, and critical debate on policy issues. The story of the Group's end at President Seretse Khama's order is revealing about political sensitivities in the early postcolony, especially the wariness of mixing politics and civil service administration; and I gave the story at some length as Gobe told it, up to his meeting with the President, who gave him a fair hearing before making his decision.

About the Discussion Group Affair, two points are worth reviewing here. The first is on the expansion of the public sphere, to which Gobe and other minority elites made leading contributions. The end of the Discussion Group did not put an end to their initiatives. Instead, they helped to found and lead a good number of public forums, and other racially and ethnically integrated institutions for good governance, civic interests, and the critique of public policy, and I discussed this in relation to Gobe's reformist conviction that government and bureaucracy constantly need monitoring if they are to change for the good. In brief, against the tendency toward government on the inner circle, Gobe and other minority elites back the tendency to strengthen the public forum as an open institution for informed debate.

My second point is on the balance of power between civil servants and politicians. The accusation, which is periodically rehearsed with some heat in Parliament and much debated for Botswana by political scientists, is the dominance of the civil servants and bureaucracy over the politicians when

it comes to matters of policy and “real” decision making. Gobe’s reflections on this early postcolonial affair and others cast doubt on the truth of that accusation, and also convey some of the moments and areas where determined politicians get their way, despite civil servants’ pressures.

Contextualizing the earlier postcolonial episodes brought me to an overview of opposite tendencies, the *constitutional* and the *developmental*, which I see creating conflict not only in Gobe himself but also even more generally in the administration of the country as a postcolony. I gave another early postcolonial example, the Landell-Mills Affair, to illustrate this, and then turned to trace these tendencies in their importance for the next phase of Gobe’s career, still in middle management. At that stage he took leading parts in the Accelerated Rural Development Programme, the first major attempt by government to spend a gush of new revenues on infrastructure for rural communities, and ran into a headlong clash with President Khama’s expected successor, the then vice president Masire. In the midst of these trying times for Gobe came an opportunity, largely by chance, which he so successfully made the most of that it became a major turning point in his career. The opportunity, to head a Unit in the Office of the President drawing the nation from the capital across the country into great patriotic celebrations of Independence, called for his skill in arm-twisting and getting things done on time and, on the occasion, his hitherto unrecognized talent as an impresario. Awarded the Presidential Medal for Meritorious Service, and thus standing out in distinction above his peers, he then rose rapidly to the civil service’s top echelon as a Permanent Secretary, serving roughly four years in the Ministry of Home Affairs, until shortly after the death of President Khama, when Gobe retired from the civil service.

At this point I took as background my earlier analysis in chapters 1 and 4 of politics and entrepreneurship. That analysis examined the interlocking of government and big business, and it disclosed the forces that created a vanguard composed of Kalanga minority men moving from the top of the civil service to the top of the newly emerging commercial elite at the start of President Masire’s administration. Given that background, I foregrounded the ways that Gobe positioned himself, his seizing of the opportunities of the capital’s remarkable building boom through the management of a huge construction company and through the formation of a whole portfolio of real estate companies, including the one that leased Barclays Bank the site for its skyscraper headquarters. In this company formation, I stressed the importance both of his mobilization of a substantial network of contacts from his civil service career and of his long-term financial discipline by which he had saved and invested in ways that, at the time, were radically innovative. Indeed, unlike so many of his peers, he never invested in cattle and was among the very first to adopt the alternative pattern of capital accumulation and shareholding which has now become virtually the dominant mode of investment among top-echelon decision makers in the civil service (see Mo-

EPILOGUE

lutsi 1989, 111). Even after retiring from management and thus ending his second career, Gobe has continued to be an innovative entrepreneur and influential company director, who takes pride in being the able board member who does his homework, actively monitors company affairs, and presses for effective localization in multinational corporations.

My account did not show Gobe as always having been successful, of course, either as a responsible civil servant or an innovative entrepreneur. Instead, I traced some of his failures not only in business but also in party politics as a grey eminence for an opposition party at one of its most untimely moments. It was when the party had suffered one of its most disastrous defeats very soon after substantial electoral success seemed to promise at last the unseating of the ruling party. Until that electoral promise is actually realized, Gobe argues, the full test of democracy in Botswana is yet to be passed. At the end of the chapter I offered an overview of what Gobe's biography exemplifies, namely, the rise of public man in the postcolony.

PUBLIC ANTHROPOLOGY AND THE FORUM

This leads me, in conclusion, back to this book's contribution to public anthropology. Public anthropology is more a moment in analysis than a field in itself. It can claim to be relatively new, however, although some of its problems of public policy, law, and moral and political economy plainly have a long genealogy in anthropology (Fox 1996); still other problems, those of state and nation building and of citizenship, are the rich old staples of allied fields from social history to political science and political philosophy. What marks the new moment in analysis is not simply the growth in anthropological studies focused on talk about rights and political morality, on identity politics and the politics of recognition, or on the remaking of subjectivity in encounters with the state or the market (Werbner 1995, 1996, 1998a, 2002a; Wilson 1997; Cowan, Dembour, and Wilson 2001; Durham 2002; Englund and Nyamnjoh 2004). Rather, it is the problematizing of the distinctively public register and impact that such political phenomena have. The question of their force in the expansion or subversion of the public sphere is central, as is the regard citizens themselves have for the public interest and the common good (Forman 1994; P. Werbner 2002). Admittedly some anthropologists might take this to mean being overly naïve about politics, as if the back room was wholly beyond limits—a complete *volte-face* for any anthropology with claims to being informed by intimate rapport in fieldwork. Against that view, public anthropology is clearly about the making of voice and agency in the public sphere, however and wherever that occurs—it is not contrary to much knowledgeable political opinion among citizens themselves that links the front room to the back room, nor is it overly determined by what appears in public or happens simply for public consumption.

Organizing ideas in the social sciences, once deeply rooted, do not die easily, even if, under attack, they seem to be losing their vigor. In the study of politics and publics, two such ideas, one economic (the market) and the other military (strategy and tactics), dominate analyses of political struggles. The present analytic move is toward another organizing idea, from discourse—the *forum*. But with this move comes not the end of use for the other ideas but their rebirth within the study of the forum.

The reason has to do with process. The forum, while obviously a location of voice and agency where arguments take place in public, is also a process of argumentation, and it is conducted through representations, sometimes both visual and verbal, that are more or less persuasive, aesthetically more or less pleasing, even playful and fun (P. Werbner 2002). The more contested that process is—and, even if it appears remote from controversial matters of public policy, it is never wholly uncontested—the more salient do strategy and tactics become for theory in public anthropology. As with the military organizing idea, so, too, with the economic notions of supply and demand, competition and cooperation, transaction and exchange, production and even consumption, all are variably important in the forum as process; the new moment in analysis thus illuminates the economics of public debates, in their cultural and social richness or their poverty of voice and agency. Given these organizing ideas, public anthropology foregrounds the problematics of negotiation, reasonableness, and the art of compromise in politics; but it also gives full weight to the radical, sometimes disruptive, force of confrontation in political struggles. Even further, public anthropology problematizes moral and political positioning within the forum, and, for leadership in particular, that means the ways that elites, by positioning themselves, influence the forum's debates, its contested arguments and knowledge, and its shifts in consciousness.

Necessarily public anthropology engages with issues of the day. There is a widespread sense that anthropology has gone through a long period of having little to say about such issues in America and Europe, that is, “at home”; hence the concern with strong domestic advocacy (Forman 1994; Fox 1996; Bennett 1996; Strathern 2000; Wright and Shore 2001). Anthropology can, and indeed has, come home—especially in America and Europe it has been repatriated and domesticated—but it cannot stay in that condition only: in a truly public anthropology, the expatriate voice must also be heard. Otherwise the engagement risks becoming parochial at home and starved of political critique abroad. Against that, many of the issues of the day that are at once locally specific and globally general demand a wider, comparative, and critical discipline. And therein lies the promise of a dialogue within public anthropology itself, reaching already very significantly to Botswana and now, it is hoped, reaching more broadly to postcolonial Africa.

NOTES

INTRODUCTION

1. Stedman draws the comparison for Botswana in a review of a remarkable collection of essays, critical yet reaching beyond Afro-pessimism, mainly from the University of Botswana Democracy Project; see Stedman 1993, reviewing Holm and Molutsi 1989.

2. I use the term *straddling* for the multiple engagements in such rural-urban dynamics, but I do not mean to convey by that any necessarily successful accomplishment, such as in a big man strategy for personal investment and the accumulation of wealth and supporters.

3. For the argument in a West African case, see Piot 1999.

1. POSTCOLONIAL WISDOM

1. There is a debate on Botswana's exceptionalism; for opposite sides, see the denials by Good (1992, 1993, 1994, 2002), and the affirmations by Lewis (1993), Morrison (1993), du Toit (1995, especially chaps. 1 and 2), Samatar (1999, esp. chap. 6: "Minding the Merits of the Miracle: The State and Collective Interest").

2. On representation in Botswana's newspapers, see Nyamnjoh 2002; on press exposés, see the Leno and Khumalo affairs, chapters 4 and 5 below.

3. See Grant and Egner 1989; and Sechele 1998.

4. See Lesetedi 2001; Letsididi 2001b; and chapter 3 below.

5. For recent press citations, see Taylor and Makhawa 2003.

6. Following common usage in Botswana, Batswana refers to citizens irrespective of ethnicity. I distinguish ethnic groups by name, that is, Kalanga, and use Tswana for ethnic Tswana. Quotations or names of associations follow the originals.

7. For the tradition of reasonable radicals, discussed below, Mrs. Phumaphi is an exemplary figure, representing continuity in the second postcolonial generation of minority elites. A technocrat before becoming a politician, she is an accountant by profession, formerly one of the most senior in the civil service. The daughter of a Kalanga father, Richard Mannathoko, sometime permanent secretary and diplomat, and a Tswana mother, Rosina Mannathoko, ex-mayor of Gaborone and a leading member of charitable organizations, Mrs. Phumaphi is married to the former head of the Bar Society, himself a Kalanga, Justice Persal Phumaphi. In August 2003 Mrs. Phumaphi resigned from Parliament and became the Assistant Director General of the World Health Organization.

8. See Molutsi 1998; and for the proceedings of a Botswana Society symposium, reflecting current debate, see Nteta, Hermans, and Jeskova 1997.

9. For a carefully detailed history of the scandals, relying primarily on newspaper sources, in itself a proof of the public knowledge, see Good 1994, 2002.

10. Samatar notes recent reports of increased corruption but rightly argues that the misappropriation of public resources is relatively small, openly debated, and the subject of much monitoring and control (1999, 194 n. 4). On the main scandals, as reported in the press and including a Minister of Finance and then Vice President, see Good 1994; and for a review by informed insiders, including a former governor of the Bank of Botswana and founding technocrat of the Ministry of Finance and Development Planning, see Briscoe and Hermans 2001.

11. On the growing trend to recruit cabinet ministers from the senior echelons of the civil service, see Charlton 1991, 273.

12. None of these notables sat on the Balopi Commission, the Presidential Commission I discuss in later chapters. This Commission was exceptionally large and diverse and, perhaps for that reason, appeared most dominated, at least in public, by a relatively young and outspoken lawyer, from a southern Tswana community, who later became the President's spin doctor (see chapters 3 and 5).

2. THE MINORITIES DEBATE

1. On this rhetoric, as used by university students linked through the Internet while in the United States, the United Kingdom, and elsewhere, see the *Botswana Gazette*, 25 October 2000; and, as used by such prominent lawyers as the Head of the Law Society, see Phumaphi 2000.

2. Adopted 19 December 1966, cited in Waldron 1995, 97; on the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and the Organization of African Unity Charter, see also Phumaphi 2000.

3. On the duty that the Charter gives to the state to protect cultural rights, see Schmidt 1996, 22–24.

4. The first was held in Arusha, Tanzania, in June 2002; and the second in Kidal, Mali, in January 2001.

5. On the pitfalls in this use of external pressure against the Botswana government, in the case of Kalahari peoples, see Hitchcock 2002; for an analysis of the conflict diamonds campaign, international NGO pressure, and Botswana's policy on Kalahari San resettlement, see Taylor and Makhawa 2003. Note that the article ignores the views of Botswana's own human rights organization, Ditshwanelo, on the approach to negotiations with the government over its relocation policy.

6. Prior to the conference participants were urged to read Taylor 1992 and Kymlicka 1995a, 1995b. On the relevance of their arguments for the conclusions drawn at the conference, see Werbner 2002a, 117–18; and chapter 5, below. The importance of Taylor's ideas for Africanists was first noted by John Lonsdale (1994, 141) in comments on Taylor's view of the moral problem of esteem and dignity in multicultural politics (Werbner 2004a). For a polemical critique of multiculturalism, see Barry 2000, and the rebuttals in "Review Symposium," *Ethnicities* 2, no. 2 (2002): 261–87, esp. Tully, 279–83; and Squires, 265–73; for a broad view of the current state of multiculturalist debate, see Saunders and Haljan 2003.

7. On language politics in Africa generally, see Bamgbose 2000 and Fardon and

Furniss 1994; and in Botswana, see Batibo 1997, 243–52; van Binsbergen 1994, 142–90; Nyati-Ramahobo 1997; Tsonope 1989; and Republic of Botswana 1993, 1994.

8. See the following in Mazonde, *Minorities in the Millennium*: Werbner 2002a; Batibo 2002; Chebanne 2002; and Hays 2002; see also Nyati-Ramahobo 2002a.

9. For an account of self-identification among Kgalagadi, see Solway 1994b.

10. It is important not to reduce these legacies of political culture and differentiation in past state systems merely to patron-client or “Big-Man/Small-Boy” relations the way that Bruce Berman (1998) does in his view of continuities in postcolonial Africa that are important for contemporary ethnicity and state building.

11. On pluralism, autochthony, and the postcolonial imaginary of ancient empires as a political legacy, see chapter 3.

12. On a failed attempt at creating among them a Tswana paramountcy for a Khurutse chief, see Werbner 1971. A Khurutse successor was the sub-chief who represented North East Kalanga in the House of Chiefs for the early postcolonial decades.

13. For a comparison with indigenous nations within multinational states, such as Canada and the United States, see Kymlicka 1995a, 1995b.

14. For qualifications, see Othogile 1998; and chapters 4 and 5, below.

15. On his successor, President Ketumile Masire, early in his administration, see below, and for much later perceptions of him, see Durham 1999.

16. For an early account of a land board, see Werbner 1981, and chapter 5, below.

17. For an outstanding analysis of reintegration, see Lydia Nyati-Ramahobo (2002a), who follows this process all the way to the High Court and through parliamentary debate. Beginning with the colonial background, Nyati-Ramahobo traces her own tribe’s postcolonial campaign for group rights, a campaign that she herself continues to lead as coordinator of the Kamanakao Association.

18. For a west African contrast, see Werbner 1989, chap. 7.

19. The Chieftainship Act was also to be amended, but the local government minister Margaret Nasha insisted in a newspaper interview that the change was part of long-term government policy, not a matter of a recent shift under pressure. The proposed amendment “‘was started a long time ago’ (Nasha) and was not in any way related to the High Court judgement [in the Kamanakao Association case, see Nyati-Ramahobo 2002 and Werbner 2002a, 133–34] nor the draft white paper” (“Government Amends Chieftainship Act,” *Botswana Guardian*, 15 March 2002).

20. The deputy chair went on to attack “the Cabinet and Parliament for being too sympathetic to the views of minority tribes, ‘because they are dominated by people from the north’ . . . and there is a conspiracy against the eight ex-officio tribes” (ibid.). Note the linkage of minoritization to regionalization, south versus north.

21. *Mmegi* editorialized, “The principal tribes view the changes proposed by the White Paper as a threat to their territorial and political power. It will be a sad day if the government concedes to current moves to put the White Paper’s recommendations on hold out of political expediency” (*Mmegi*, 27 April–3 May 2002).

22. The newspaper report noted, “He surprised many when he spoke in fluent uninterrupted Setswana,” the surprise and perhaps irony coming from the Attorney General’s fame for taking pride in his mother tongue, Kalanga, while disclaiming expertise in Setswana (Tutwane 2002c).

23. Lydia Nyati-Ramahobo, personal communication, 6 May 2002; see also Nyati-Ramahobo 2002a, for her account of minority coalition building.

3. THE POLITICS OF RECOGNITION AND “PRESSURE GROUPS”

1. The phrase comes from the philosopher Charles Taylor (1992). An influential discussion of his ideas is in Gutmann 1992b.

2. My arguments owe much to Will Kymlicka’s liberal theory of minority rights; see Kymlicka 1995b. For a critique based on a concern for the rights of naturalized immigrants and “citizens-in-becoming,” see Parekh 1997; see also chap. 2 n. 5, above.

3. Francis Nyamnjoh has drawn my attention to a case in which it is the majority waging the main struggle for cultural rights, seeking redress against a state controlled by a minority that has effectively disenfranchised the majority of their cultural rights. This raises further issues for the politics of recognition that are beyond my present limits.

4. There is a rich literature on pluralism and multiculturalism; for the views of major contributors to the debates in Europe, see the introduction and papers in Modood and Werbner 1997 and in P. Werbner and Modood 1996; and for a broadly comparative introduction, see Grillo 1998. On the issues of citizenship and difference, see Yuval-Davis and Werbner 1999.

5. This concern for tribal rights is marked in Kalanga protests against administration from the Ngwato tribal capital in Serowe and their pressures for autonomy in choosing their own chiefs in the Central District.

6. Kalanga take considerable pride in the fact that even the biggest tribe, the Ngwato, is now led by royals married to Kalanga; the acting Paramount Chief, his Deputy, and other close relatives all have Kalanga wives, as do many other Ngwato notables, including a former head of the district council. But Kalanga also point out that at least one of these Ngwato royals, having a Kalanga wife and himself a former member of the House of Chiefs, is prominent in Pitso ya Batswana. He was a member of a Pitso delegation that unsuccessfully sought an audience with President Mogaie in protest against the national referendum on the judiciary (Moroke 2001b).

7. I note that SPIL took the president’s warning seriously enough that it invited other cultural associations, such as the Kamanakao Association, the Karanga Heritage Foundation of South Africa, Lentswe la Batswaping (the Tswapong association), the Naro Bible Translation Project, and even Pitso ya Batswana, to take part in its annual Festival of History at the ancient Domboshaba Ruins at Vukwi, in the North East District, on 13 October 2001. These other associations were promised a part of the morning to deliver their presentations. The letter of invitation also announced: “Some of the events during the festival include presentations by various chiefs from different Kalanga areas of their peoples’ background, traditional performances and a statement on efforts to preserve and promote Ikalanga culture” (Ndaba 2001).

8. The *Sunday Tribune*, which the SPIL chairman edits, carried a notice about SPIL and its annual dinner, and I am told that this notice was used for the President’s brief.

9. The annual Kalanga festival at the ancient ruins of Domboshaba in the North East District has very recently become the one regular occasion for SPIL to mobilize major public support in the association’s rural heartland (see chapter 4 below).

10. Kamanakao I died while this book was in press.

11. As a growing force in political pluralism, the judiciary enforced a check on the government in another recent historic ruling, this time in support of freedom of the press and freedom of expression (Lesetedi 2001; Letsididi 2001b). On 17 September 2001 the High Court gave an interim ruling in favor of the *Sun* and *Guardian*

newspapers. In this case, Justice Lesetedi suspended a directive issued by President Mogae whereby, from late April 2001, all state, parastatal, and certain government-owned companies were instructed to cease advertising in the two newspapers. The directive had been a sign of the government's displeasure with their reporting.

Two immediately relevant points are worth stressing: first, the impact of the United States precedent for judicial review; and, second, the construction from the Kamanakao case. For the nub of his own reasoning, the justice found a persuasive authority in an American Court of Appeal judgment on the individual's constitutionally protected rights to freedom of speech (Lesetedi 2001, 23–24). The Justice also drew on the Kamanakao case for a precedent, actually in the government's favor; he protected the President from being named as a respondent in the case, because it had been shown to be against the Civil Procedure Act, which provides that actions by or against the government must cite the Attorney General. In addition, the Justice denied that discrimination could be claimed as one of the valid grounds for the decision against the government.

12. For a leading activist's insightful analysis of Kamanakao strategy following the case and in a setback in a subsequent case, see Nyati-Ramahobo 2002a.

13. In 1998, and in cooperation with the Kamanakao Association and SPIL, the University of Botswana adult education department launched a literacy program for minority languages, including Shiyei and Ikalanga. For a report of the "massive support" for the program, see Weeks 2003.

4. COSMOPOLITAN ETHNICITY, ENTREPRENEURSHIP, AND THE NATION

1. For a rare exception to this, see Ferguson 2000; on cosmopolitan elites' commitment to their rural homes and their "carving out of a personal sense of a dignified, meaningful existence" in Ghana, see Lentz 1994.

2. While vice president, Mogae minimized the importance of ethnic difference and was satirized by a newspaper columnist in *Mmegi* for having allegedly said that "all people who live in the Central District should consider themselves Bangwato, thus justifying Ngwato hegemony over tribes like Basarwa, Bakalanga, Babirwa, Batswapong and others" (Moeti 1998, 2).

3. For an account of state bureaucracy and the official registration of SPIL, see van Binsbergen 1993, 1994.

4. On the revelatory moment, see Fernandez 1985 and Solway 1994; on minoritization, see chapter 2 above.

5. For graveside oratory rehearsing the biography of a participant in this moment, see Malikongwa 1994; on the moment itself, see Malikongwa 1998.

6. Now a Lecturer in Education on secondment to UNICEF from the University of Botswana, Changu Mannathoko received her Ph.D. from the University of Birmingham; see chapter 1, note 3, above, on her sister Joy Phumaphi; another sister, Ita Mannathoko, is a leading economist for USAID in Gaborone.

7. Super-tribalism takes a politically violent form in quasi-nationalism, which I discuss for Zimbabwe in Werbner 1991, 158–61, 169, 173; 1995, 102–108.

8. For a Kalanga account, see Mannathoko 1978, 1991.

9. For a further development of Lonsdale's argument, see Berman 1998, 305–42; and my critique in Englund and Nyamnjoh 2003.

10. For an illuminating comparison of Kalanga borderland ethnicity with an enclaved situation, see van Binsbergen 1994, 143–88.

11. Such stories are so widespread that in an extraordinary parliamentary intervention (see chapter 2 above), the Attorney General, a Kalanga, made an unchallenged point of declaring these stories false to the actual history of Kalanga in the North East (Tutwane 2002c).

12. In my view, van Binsbergen is excessively pessimistic in his reading of “a strong element of artificiality and uprootedness in this [Kalanga] accommodation to Botswana political space . . . [which has] not, so far, led to the general cultural revitalization” (1994, 167).

13. *Sunday Tribune*, 15 October 2000, 14.

14. For a similar perception among Mahalapye Herero, see Durham 2003, 173–74.

15. Kalanga who move to Botswana from Zimbabwe usually adopt a Botswana practice for personal identity. They shift from using the totemic name as a surname to a patronymic, for example, Mr. Dube (Zebra) becomes Mr. Mabuyani (father’s name).

16. Van Binsbergen remarks on a relative lack of historical consciousness among Botswana Kalanga, but note that final-year honors dissertations in history, sociology, and comparative religion at the University of Botswana reflect a long-term interest in Kalanga traditions and oral history. Before Independence, some Kalanga students, who later became postcolonial elites, became interested in the cult of Mwali, took pride in their ancient history, and wrote in their school magazine about their legendary empire of Mambo.

17. For an example of such inclusion and national orientation, see Chebanne 2002. There is also a growing literature in Botswana Kalanga published by the Society for the Propagation of Ikalanga Language (SPIIL).

18. For biographical accounts by a celebrated Kalanga poet, see Malikongwa 1992, 1998.

19. On “the Kalanga hang-up” used as a justification for not meeting the claims of ethnic minorities, see also Saugestad 1998, 74.

20. For an early version, see Parsons, Henderson, and Tlou 1995, 277. Their version, on page 276, of another Kalanga “tribal problem,” involving President Khama and a Kalanga diplomat, is denied by the diplomat, whom they did not interview for his side of the story.

21. See below, on the North-South divide, the perception of favoritism toward southerners under President Masire, and the Leno Affair.

22. See below on the somewhat earlier events of the 1980s, the Leno Affair and its aftermath, in the course of which these and other notables founded a series of real estate companies in the competition for state-allocated and immensely valuable plots in the capital. This competition obviated the possibility of exclusive Tswana dominance over public culture, the state, and corporate enterprise. For Kalanga elites, Indians were also valuable as nondominant partners, at least in terms of public culture and the state, who helped to consolidate the gains made in the Leno Affair.

23. See also Solway 2002.

24. For such a judgment that was a cause célèbre during the 1980s, the Leno Affair, by an academic lawyer, later the Dean of Social Sciences and Vice Chancellor, see Othlogile 1986, 2. I discuss this affair later in this chapter.

25. See the Minister’s parliamentary statement, *The Guardian*, 25 April 1986, 15.

- 26. On the One-Nation Consensus and the assimilation policy in postcolonial Botswana, see chapter 2 above.
- 27. On the notion of regionalization as a political process, see chapter 2.
- 28. For the comparative context of the debate, see Modood and Werbner 1997.
- 29. On public trust, see also Solway 2002.

5. OFFICIAL BLUNDERING AND THE DISCREDITED COMMISSION

1. On the early campaigning of the Pitso ya Batswana pressure group against the referendum, see chapter 3 above.

2. On this cadre, see chapter 1 above.

3. In certain circumstances, the Constitution of Botswana permits a citizen to become President without having to seek a popular vote.

4. In arguing that elites in Africa, and in Botswana in particular, subvert democracy, Kenneth Good faults Mogae for speaking as if he belonged to a new breed of African leaders, for good governance and good economic management, but yet acting no different from the old autocratic breed. Good notes exposés in the *Botswana Guardian* for 21 August, and 4 and 11 September, and in *Mmegi* for 14, 21, and 29 August. Along with Chief Justice Julian Nganunu and others, Mogae was reported to be a shareholder in Motswedi, a “citizen empowerment consortium,” and in Owen Corning Pipe, Botswana, which “had successfully tendered to supply pipes to the large North South Water Carrier project” (Good 2002, 200 n. 89). Good insinuates but does not quite spell out a measure of suspicion about shady dealings by remarking that Mogae’s association with Motswedi was “questionable” and that “full and clear explanations were not forthcoming from the President” (ibid.). In fact, given the excessive costs of the project, the public questioning of the President on the matter was intense and considerable, including an open, challenging debate in Parliament, clearing the President. His shareholding in Corning Pipe Botswana was actually a loss-making enterprise.

5. Justice Khumalo was not a stranger to the country or its people, however. He had a long-standing interest in the country’s customary courts, about which he published a report in 1977 (Khumalo 1977). Among his former students were Michael Mthobi, the lawyer for Pitso ya Batswana, and Professor Bojosi Otlhogile, then Dean of Social Sciences and now Vice Chancellor at the University of Botswana and a Commissioner of the Independent Electoral Commission (Moroke 2001d). Others, practicing in South Africa, such as Sydney Pilane, may well have known him or appeared before him in court.

6. For a personal interview with the Attorney General, see Nkala 2002d.

7. The Senior Assistant Attorney General, Segametsi Segopolo, testified that the Independent Electoral Commission is the authority responsible for referenda and “for ensuring that all procedures relating to the legislation it administers, including publications of instruments made under that Act, are effected.” Contrary to the accusations that the Attorney General ought to have published the writ, she said, “It can in no way be argued that the Attorney General is responsible for the publication of the Writ of Referendum or a notice thereof whether in the Government Gazette or otherwise. He is not responsible for implementing the Electoral or the Referendum Act, nor, indeed save with very few exceptions, any Acts of Parliament. In case of the Referendum Act, the authority responsible for publication of the writ is the

secretary to the Independent Electoral Commission” (Moroke 2001f). Explicitly contradicting the President’s Special Adviser, Sydney Pilane, Segopolo went on to explain that the legislation only mandated publication of a notice of the writ, not the writ itself. For the opposed view of Pitso ya Batswana’s lawyers, see Moroke 2001b.

8. On Pilane’s role in the Balopi Commission, see chapter 3 above.

9. For the immediate objections to the report by the Attorney General’s lawyer, see Nkala 2001–2002.

10. For a resumé, see Nkala 2001.

11. All suits against the government and its officials have to be addressed to the Attorney General as respondent, in the first instance. To sue the President and others in government, Skelemani thus had to sue the Attorney General, that is, himself in his official capacity. The legal argument of the President’s Office was that there was a conflict of interest. Skelemani could not sue himself but had to resign, and, while out of office, sue the Attorney General. The case was, of course, unprecedented. In the upshot, for the Agreement of Settlement, a member of the Attorney General’s Chambers acted and signed for the Attorney General.

12. Born in 1945, he did not have to retire until 2005, at age sixty.

13. On the democratic art of compromise, see Bellamy 1999, 102–14.

14. On the campaign, see chapter 3 above.

15. In this, ethnic identity and home language came to the fore. The Permanent Secretary for Political Affairs in the President’s Office, Tuelonyana Oliphant, said that when she requested questions translated into Tswana, he responded that he “was handicapped by his poor command of Setswana” (Moroke 2001a). The implication was that he was not responsive to her concerns. Along with other correspondence, submitted at the hearing, the rest of the letter showed that, in fact, Skelemani himself was concerned about getting an intelligible translation of the legally technical English into Setswana. Having asked for a translation, he then pointed out that he found the questions in Setswana hard to follow. But somewhat self-deprecatingly, in a joke at his own expense, he noted that he was not the best judge because he “was handicapped by his poor command of Setswana.” Perhaps it was to prove otherwise, to the surprise of many, that he spoke in Setswana giving his recent long and moving speech at the end of the parliamentary debate on the post-Balopi Commission White Paper (see chapter 3 above). At Moeding College he passed the Cambridge-level exam in Setswana (Nkala 2002d).

16. A South African handwriting expert later confirmed that neither the press release nor the apology was in Skelemani’s handwriting. Pilane admitted to having drafted the original. Selepeng then conveyed that a secretary in his office made an administrative blunder by unwittingly releasing it to the press in a form that embarrassed the Attorney General. It was embarrassing because it appeared to contradict virtually all he had previously said publicly on the referendum.

17. Pilane seems to have qualified as an advocate not in Botswana but in South Africa where he practiced apparently under another name.

18. Moroke (2001) attributes the phrase in italics to Brian Spilg, the advocate for the government.

19. Serious as Mothobi’s judicious comments are, in context they are somewhat tinged by farce. On the same page, under a witty headline—“Skelemani Faces Khumalo’s Music”—appears a report of Commissioner Khumalo “caught trying his hand on [the] piano at Gaborone Sun Hotel. Khumalo can very easily pass for Duke Elling-

ton. He plays well and dons the charm of Harlem renaissance. He beamed with pride on Tuesday when attorney Michael Mthobi, representing Pitso ya Batswana, reminded him that he is his former student” (Moroke 2001d).

6. LAND, CLIENTS, AND TRIBAL BUREAUCRATS

1. For a critical review of struggles for land rights by indigenous peoples of the Kalahari who have not been recognized by the state as having their own tribal areas, see Hitchcock 2002 and Saugestad 1998.

2. See also Ng’ong’ola 1996, 1998.

3. For Masire’s reversed views as an ex-president championing chiefs and the House of Chiefs, see chapter 3 above.

4. On the changing composition of the boards, see Ng’ong’ola 1993, 150; and Kalabamu 2000, 313.

5. On the sociology of the absurd, see Douglas 1971, 1972; Lyman and Scott 1970.

6. See also Kalabamu 2000, 319.

7. Of a 1999 sample from Mogoditshane, a peri-urban settlement next to Gaborone, more than half “bought, self-allocated or otherwise informally acquired their residential plots” (Kalabamu 2000, 317).

8. For a succinct summary of this, see Ng’ong’ola 1993, 160–66.

9. In further agreement with the Attorney General, this judgment also came down heavily against a static view of “customary law”: “it continues to develop to meet the demands of modern society” (Ng’ong’ola 1993, 194).

10. On local diversity across the country, see Werbner 1993.

11. Veterinary statistics for 1977 indicate that roughly 1 percent of the herds of management were more than one hundred head of cattle and that such herds were grossly 10 percent of the total number of cattle. These statistics are more reliable than estimates of ownership, because they were compiled from the inoculation records of herds treated for anthrax and quarter-evil.

12. On the agricultural regime and land tenure of the North East, see Werbner 1971, 1975; on the contrast to other districts, see Werbner 1993 and Gulbrandsen 1994.

13. Such a change would actually have meant the opposite: a gross reduction in the intensity of land use. The more intensive use of land was made possible by numerous local micro-adjustments in grazing and arable land. Moreover, bits of land left between fields were browsed and grazed, and, after cultivation, the stover on fields was open to all stock.

14. For an account of small village resistance to “Village Grouping,” see Werbner 1977.

15. On Richard Mannathoko’s national roles, see chapters 1, 3, and 4, below.

16. The cost of additional round-trip journeys is one reason clients gave for not seeking retrials: the usual fare was four pula, roughly the average fine, which also made the expense of witnesses too great for many clients.

17. Occasionally a single member would make a grant in his home area, which the team would then have to accept as a *fait accompli*, although some team members objected rather bitterly that “it was illegal for any member to allocate land alone” (Minutes of 26 September 1975).

18. Although the District's voters often reelected a member of the opposition to the National Assembly, the national government, through ministerial powers of appointment, filled enough Council seats with members of the ruling party to ensure a majority, despite the popular vote for the opposition Councillors.

19. Cf. Gluckman 1955, 96.

20. See Handelman and Leyton 1978; Wraith and Hutcheson 1973; Bell 1969; Wade 1949, 1967; Allen 1956; and Hewart 1929.

21. In some cases the accused were several persons, a group, or a community, but the restriction of participation to the accused holds in these cases, too. I discovered two cases in which a lawyer wrote on a client's behalf to appeal against the refusal of a licence for a store site, but, as far as I could trace, no lawyer has defended a client at a hearing.

22. Cf. Roberts 1979, 149; Comaroff and Roberts 1977; and Griffiths 1997.

7. BRINGING BACK THE DEAD

1. On Kalanga sacrifice and for photographs of installation rites in the late 1980s, see Werbner 1989, chap. 3.

2. In Botswana, as elsewhere in Africa, the most rapidly growing literature about the old now focuses on ageing, disability, care, and public health issues of gerontology (see Guillette 1994; Bruun, Mugabe, and Coombes 1994; Mugabe 1994; Ingstad 1994; Ngome 1994; Tlou 1994; Livingston 2000; and Shaibu and Wallhagen 2002).

3. On money, respect, and elderhood ideals, see van der Geest 1997, 1998.

4. See Bond and Ciekawy 2001; and Werbner 2001.

5. See Comaroff and Comaroff 1993; Geschiere 1997; and Moore and Sanders 2001.

6. See Werbner 1991; and West 1997.

7. See Fisiy and Geschiere 1996.

8. See Englund 1996a.

9. For an illuminating ethnography in response, see Piot 1999.

10. For a critique, see Werbner 2003a.

11. On the most recent reinvention and commodification of the shrines, see Parish 2001.

12. On anti-memory in public memorialism, see Werbner 1998b, 73–74.

13. For an illuminating treatment in a postcolonial context, see Weiss 2000.

14. For a critical approach, see Durham 2002.

8. PUBLIC OFFICER, PUBLIC OFFICER EMERITUS

1. I rely also on Gobe's curriculum vitae, which I typed for him at his request (see Appendix 1 of this chapter).

2. Gobe's wife is a nurse by profession, but, like him, she is now retired.

3. At least one son followed in Gobe's footsteps in the civil service by becoming the Council Secretary at Ghanzi. A daughter married the cousin to the former commissioner of police.

4. One grandson is a student at Syracuse University in New York, and a granddaughter is studying law at the University of Botswana.

5. On challenges to his integrity, see below; see also chapter 4, for the Leno Affair.
6. Direct quotes from Gobe, transcribed from my tape recording or from notes written during the interviews, are italicized in this chapter. Indirect quotes from casual conversation, written up later, are not italicized.
7. There is a familiar genre of funeral eulogy among Kalanga that rehearses the life of the deceased. For an example, from the unveiling of tombstones, see Malikongwa 1994.
8. In 2001 Gobe dictated his detailed instructions for his funeral, and he had me make copies, safely deposited in envelopes and ready for his family to follow. Characteristically, he laughed uproariously when I joked with him about avoiding a leak to the press.
9. The Botswana Society is the country's civic multicultural association and host of numerous international seminars on public issues, such as democracy in Botswana. Note that the Botswana Society has always had a relatively heavy representation of expatriate supporters of its causes. In chapter 8 I discuss Gobe's role in this and other racially integrated forums and institutions; see also chapter 4 above.
10. This may also reflect Gobe's mother's influence. Even at 101 years of age, she insisted on keeping his four-bedroom house in their village home immaculate, ever ready for visitors. Originally built in 1969–70, replacing Gobe's marital mud hut from 1949–50, it stands gleaming white, substantial, pleasant, and comfortable with a good number of large windows for light and ventilation, but it is not overly ostentatious by current local standards. Gobe's brothers' houses, of the same standard, are next to his, and he takes great pride in the fact that they have all continued to live together, when home, in the same yard throughout their lives, this being but one obvious testament to Gobe's commitment to his village home, his origins, and his own people.
11. He also made frequent trips back to Francistown and his home village, and faithfully attended funerals there, for kin and friends, despite their increasing number in this time of AIDS.
12. See below also on Gobe's efforts to introduce public critique within the government and to improve the poor standard of journalism in the government media.
13. Among those close and dear to both of us is his "younger brother," in Kalanga kinship terms, Tjabakaka Matenge, sometime Director of Wildlife, Deputy Permanent Secretary (Commerce), Ambassador (China, Angola), and High Commissioner (Namibia). The youngest son of Mpubuli and born in his old age, Tjabakaka was my assistant for some weeks after secondary school and on holiday before entering university, in the late 1960s.
14. For my account of a 1960s dispute in which Gobe led resistance to Sub-Chief Ramokate's centralization plans for Gobe's home village, Makaleng, see chapter 6 above and Werbner 1971.
15. Godfrey Tjingababili Matenge became Clerk of the National Assembly.
16. *Notes* records that "it is to his mother, still living [she died at the age of 101 in 2000] that Gobe owes his first steps towards his long, vigorous, and distinguished career. It was she, Goitsemang Matenge (Nee Mokgopo), who firmly insisted that he attend Primary School" (Stanley 1996, 1).
17. On Gobe's own role as a gatekeeper for the District Commissioner, see chapter 9 below.

18. On the Nswazwi, see chapter 4 above.
19. Mpubuli told me that he had been taken to the court of the Ndebele king Lobengula, where his ears were marked to show that he was a *holi*, low-caste serf of the king.
20. On the Nswazwi-Tshekedi Affair, see chapter 4 above.
21. For my account of a Kalanga notable given to the same recognition of human kindness and origins and felt by Gobe to be, in this respect, more a latter-day Mpubuli, as an expert on ethnic origins, than Gobe himself, see chapter 4 above.
22. For an account of the rise among Kalanga of the Khurutse chiefs, serving the Tati Company first and then the Protectorate, see Werbner 1971.
23. On Kalanga self-identification and cosmopolitan ethnicity, see chapter 4 above.
24. See chapter 4 above on the revelatory moment in the 1945 Nswazwi Affair; chapter 6 on the end-of-Protectorate confrontation with his Khurutse Sub-Chief, Ramokate, over the Tswanalization of his home village, Makaleng; and chapters 2 and 3 on the struggles over minoritization.
25. Also included were Chief Establishment Officer C. J. Hall, Labor Commissioner H. Murray-Hudson, and Gaositwe Chiepe (the Educationist and future Cabinet Minister).
26. Among those he recalls, who rose within the civil service, are Richard Manathoko, B. Kgari, Thomas Monnakgotla, and Dick Makhwadi.
27. For a review of localization policy, the role of expatriates in the public service, and support for the argument that the government priority has continued to place economic expansion and development first, and localization second, see du Toit 1995, 58.
28. On the interests of Kalanga as a minority group in the making of diverse lobbies, see chapters 4 and 5 above.
29. All this resonates with ideas of “civil society,” but, at this point, I deliberately avoid the term in order not to overwhelm the analysis with the term’s current morass of ambiguities (see Comaroff and Comaroff 1999, 21–24).

9. THE MAKING OF A REASONABLE RADICAL

1. See chapter 8, Appendix 2, on the localization demands of the Association, shortly before Independence.
2. Bent, like Gobe, was in Mafeking during the transition at the end of the Protectorate, after which he retired to a farm in Zimbabwe. When he returned on a brief visit to Gaborone, Gobe had already become a permanent secretary and thus had the pleasure of receiving his old boss at the height of his own career in his commanding office in the ministry.
3. On the Kamanakao case, see chapter 3 above.
4. See chapter 7 above on patriarchy; see also below, on checked power.
5. Gaborone has its Schapera Way, perhaps the only street in Africa named after an anthropologist. It is also a measure of the affection and respect for Schapera in Botswana that the University of Botswana has an annual prize in his honor, awarded him an Honorary Ph.D., and recently held a symposium reviewing his contributions as the founder of the social sciences in Botswana. Anthropologists have usually been welcomed in Botswana, much to Schapera’s credit.

6. He remained an avid student of the media and, when partially sighted, had his son and friends, including me, read him the salient items in each newspaper. He listened to at least one daily news bulletin, and I am grateful to him for the many times he phoned to alert me to catch a news story or a radio program on public issues. I am but one of a number of friends for whom he provided such service, keeping us on our toes. More than one current Permanent Secretary or Minister know they can expect a phone call from Gobe when a news story breaks, especially if the facts are in doubt.

7. Gobe had been an Association activist from his early days as a Messenger in Francistown, when he was already part of delegations to major meetings and conferences.

8. On the notion of the “different agenda,” government paranoia, and CID spying, see note 24 below.

9. He was completely unsympathetic toward the miners’ strike at Selebi-Phikwe in 1975, describing the miners as some of the “few Batswana who are fortunate to find relatively well paid employment” (Parsons, Henderson, and Tlou 1995, 321).

10. After retirement, in a submission to the Salaries Review Commission in 1985, Gobe resumed his fight against this policy of wage restraint: “The time has come to pay the senior civil servants in managerial positions a salary more closely related to the market rate for managerial jobs in Botswana and neighbouring countries. This is necessary to attract suitable recruits, retain suitable serving officers, improve discipline, increase productivity and thus keep in step with the rapid and diverse developments in the country” (Stanley 1996, 13). Later, he became disenchanted with the outcome of better pay, and in 1992 he wrote, “Regrettably, this has not had the desired effect, and it is amazing to hear of the alarming increase in gross negligence and the failure of public officers to exercise financial control measures over public funds” (*ibid.*).

11. After the 1974 election, the Association lost Mogwe’s cooperative mediation of their cause with the President, when Mogwe became Minister of State for External Affairs and was replaced as the President’s Permanent Secretary by the less conciliatory Philip Steenkamp. “The anglicized son of Kenya Afrikaner farmers, he had earned a reputation as a tough-minded but politically progressive civil servant when District Commissioner in Francistown up until 1967 [see chapter 6 above]. His competence and drive as head of the civil service were not to make him popular, but he helped to nurture a bureaucracy that was, at least until 1980, unrivalled in southern Africa and the continent as a whole for integrity and efficiency” (Parsons, Henderson, and Tlou 1995, 272). See also notes 21 and 27.

12. Gobe now remembers Quill Hermans (later Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Development Planning, and Governor of the Bank of Botswana), Hugh Murray-Hudson (later Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Labour and Social Services), Bob Edwards, George Winstanley (later Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Agriculture), Dick Makhwadi (later Under-Secretary, Ministry of Lands and Local Government), Gideon Nkatsha, Thomas Monnakgotla, Alan Tilbury (later Attorney General) as members besides himself.

13. This Discussion Group, like the Secretariat itself at the time, was gendered, for males only, the only women in the Secretariat being typists from South Africa. Miss Gaositwe Chiepe, perhaps Botswana’s first university graduate, came after the Group was formed but did not join it. She became a highly influential Educationist, Cabinet Minister, and High Commissioner and remains a close and trusted friend of Gobe’s.

14. Both the editor and the Special Branch Officer were the only ones to take notes.

15. Chuckling at the idea that he and Murray-Hudson now regularly have to prove that they are still alive, Gobe told me that every three months the two friends go together, in Murray-Hudson's car, to the District Commissioner to certify their continued claim to their pensions.

16. In the 1970s Mookodi was Director of External Affairs in the Office of the President, and in 1981 he became Gobe's successor as Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Home Affairs.

17. Sesinyi became Town Clerk of Selibe-Phikwe and District Commissioner, Francistown (see chapter 6 above, on his role in centralization).

18. Kgopo became Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Health, Labour, and Home Affairs.

19. At no time did the Discussion Group become mainly Kalanga in membership; some leading Kalanga never joined it.

20. In the 1970s, when Philip Steenkamp was Permanent Secretary to the President and thus Head of the civil service, Gobe complained to him about the poor quality and lack of competence in the *Daily News*. Steenkamp replied dismissively: Why should he waste better educated people on the newspaper? Accustomed to an in-house press for official releases even after there were independent newspapers, he continued to call their journalists "release boys."

21. One of the leading generation of Tiger Kloof graduates in government, including the President, Thema had been the headmaster for a number of his Cabinet colleagues and was a revered elder, known as "teacher of the nation" (Parsons, Henderson, and Tlou 1995, 309). He may also have been something of a Tswana cultural nationalist, and was the Minister responsible for the decision to end the use of the Kalanga language in primary schools (for Gobe's passionate opposition to this decision, see Stanley 1996, 21). The Minister left under a cloud, when pressure increased: "Frustration with education grew to a head in both parliament and press during the latter part of 1974. The teachers' union called for a shake-up in the Ministry of Education," which resulted in the appointment of a new Minister after the 1974 election (Parsons, Henderson, and Tlou 1995, 315).

22. For an account of the involvement of the late 1960s Special Branch in "government paranoia" about subversive conspiracies and the so-called different agenda, see Parsons, Henderson, and Tlou 1995, 266–67; and on the 1969 "Guns under the Bed" affair defaming prominent Kalanga, see my account in chapter 4 above and in Parsons, Henderson, and Tlou 1995, 276–77.

23. See chapter 2 above on another Kalanga Permanent Secretary's perception of a difference between Kalanga and some Tswana in their handling of gossip relative to a Chief or head of state.

24. Amos Dambe, a former headmaster, one of the first regional organizers of the Democratic Party at the end of the Protectorate and later Ambassador to Washington, was himself a Kalanga; his brother, Chris, a leading notable and postcivil servant, was a close friend of Gobe's.

25. Matante was the leader of the opposition Botswana People's Party, which had the two seats in Gobe's "hometown, Francistown, and one seat in Mochudi" (Parson, Henderson, and Tlou 1995, 283).

26. About the President's daughter, Jacqueline, earlier "there had been wild ru-

mours, subsequently denied, of her marrying Derek Brink, an Afrikaner Motswana farmer and heir to Botswana's greatest fortune" (Parson, Henderson, and Tlou 1995, 296).

27. By 1977, and after Philip Steenkamp took over as a very strong Permanent Secretary to the President, such access became a matter of "deeper discontent in the Botswana Civil Servants' [*sic*, Service] Association and even on the B.D.P. [the ruling Botswana Democratic Party] benches in parliament." In response, the President gave a "strongly worded speech" against the idea that Botswana was, in his words, "dominated by one irresponsible Goliath [who] will not allow [ministers] access to me" (Parsons, Henderson, and Tlou 1995, 351).

28. See Parsons, Henderson, and Tlou 1995, 257–58.

29. See also Samatar 1999, 84.

30. Beeby made "himself unpopular with African civil servants" by preferring the company of white businessmen visiting from South Africa (Parsons, Henderson, and Tlou 1995, 258).

31. Beeby was eventually eased out with a golden handshake, and he took early retirement in Natal on the coast, away from land-locked Botswana (*ibid.*).

32. There was no love lost between Masire and Beeby, who may well have been obliquely targeting the Minister, too, for misconduct. Shortly before Independence, under the transitional self-government, the portfolio of Finance was removed from Beeby, formerly the colonial Financial Secretary. "Having been the scourge of Beeby for years in the Legco [the Legislative Council of the Protectorate] Masire had found it frustrating to have to go along with Beeby's ideas in Cabinet under the doctrine of collective responsibility" (Parsons, Henderson, and Tlou 1995, 234).

33. Lekalake, now an eminent post-civil servant himself, the sometime Director of Personnel, Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Commerce, founder of the Botswana Power Corporation, and manager of other parastatals, is Gobe's closest friend and constant companion. Not a Kalanga and with a father from Kweneng, he grew up and was educated in South Africa, taking his degree in chemistry at Fort Hare. As Manager, Lekalake turned Kgaladadi Breweries into one of Botswana's most successful companies; see below on his partnerships with Gobe, including shares in Land Holding and other real estate companies.

34. As part of the "rising tide towards localisation," in 1973 Landell-Mills was succeeded in his post by the future president Festus Mogae.

35. A few years earlier Richard Mannathoko, the other leading Kalanga Permanent Secretary and perhaps the first to point the way, left the civil service to head BP (British Petroleum).

36. After Botswana Game Industries Limited was taken over by Engen, Gobe became Vice Chairman and still sits on Engen's board, along with his great partner, Lawrence Lekalake.

37. The same is said to be true of President Festus Mogae, a close friend of Gobe's, who, like him, rose through the salariat and invested in real estate along with Gobe in the 1980s.

38. At that time the Indian businessman, still a local wholesaler, was yet to become perhaps Botswana's biggest motor magnate, importing and dealing in vehicles on a vast, national scale (on Kalanga and Indian business links, see chapter 4).

39. For a brief profile of this Kalanga notable and close friend of Gobe's, as a leading post-civil servant and highly successful entrepreneur, see chapter 4 above.

40. Gobe agrees with the view now widely held among political scientists that, despite early differences in pan-African or socialist rhetoric by opposition parties, in contemporary party politics ideological differences are largely absent. As du Toit puts it, “The embryonic ideological divide that set up the BNF [Botswana National Front] and the BPP [Botswana Peoples Party] against the BDP [Botswana Democratic Party] dissolved in favor of the technocratic priorities of the BDP and the state” (1995, 54).

41. Lekorwe points out that such a rally, known as a Freedom Square, had anti-*kgotla* origins, from the time when some tribal authorities refused to give permission to address *kgotla* meetings. The Freedom Square introduced norms of harsh and abusively partisan rhetoric in opposition to the respectful and deliberate debate expected at the *kgotla*.

EPILOGUE

1. For an example of this tendency, see Hansen and Stepputat 2001, 29.

2. Only repeated breakdowns and embarrassing headlines seem to have persuaded President Festus Mogae to give up relying mainly on the Bentley he inherited from his predecessors.

3. Although Herero activists seem less assertive, in some ways, than Kalanga, Durham makes a similar point about the high value Mahalapye Herero put on citizenship in Botswana: “When I traveled with a group from the Herero Youth Association in Namibia [their country of ancestral origin] over Christmas 1994 and New Year’s 1995, they paraded their Botswana identity openly and proudly, even making a visit to the Botswana embassy to greet their (unknown) countrymen and receive any instruction on behavior in Namibia as Botswana citizens” (2003, 173).

4. On this risk in the United States as a “procedural republic,” see Taylor 1994, 58.

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AUTHOR INDEX

- Allen, C. K., 214n20, 221
- Bamgbose, Ayo, 206n7
- Barry, Brian, 206n6, 221
- Batibo, Herman, 207nn7–8, 221
- Bayart, Jean-Francois, 2, 78, 221
- Bechuanaland Government, 221
- Bell, Kathleen, 214n20, 221
- Bellamy, Richard, 221
- Bennett, John, 204, 221
- Bent, Allan, 164, 221
- Berman, Bruce, 64, 84–85, 209n9
- Blumberg, Abraham, 221
- Bond, George, 214n4, 221
- Botswana Daily News*, 169
- Botswana Gazette*, 45, 206n10, 221
- Botswana Guardian*, 14, 87, 89, 97, 100, 207n19, 210n25, 211n4, 232
- Briscoe, Andrew, 28, 206n10, 221
- Bruun, Frank, 214n2, 221
- Burke, Charlanne, 42, 221
- Business Focus*, 75, 77
- Campbell, Alec, 70, 222
- Carrol, Rory, 17
- Chamo, Leatile, 130, 222
- Charlton, Roger, 19, 20, 206n11, 222
- Chebanne, Andy, 207n8, 209n17, 221
- Ciekawy, Dianne, 207n8, 209n17, 221
- Comaroff, Jean, 191, 214n5, 216n29, 222
- Comaroff, John, 191, 214n5, 216n29, 222
- Coombes, Yolanda, 214n2, 221
- Cowan, Jane, 5, 203, 222
- Dembour, Marie-Benedicte, 5, 203, 222
- Denbow, James, 70
- Denbow, Jocelyne, 70
- Douglas, Jack, 213n5, 222
- du Toit, Pierre, 4, 205n1, 216n27, 220n40, 222
- Durham, Deborah, 7, 14, 19, 34, 42, 52, 203, 207n15, 209n14, 214n14, 222
- Edge, Wayne, 17, 19, 29, 223
- Egner, Brian, 205n3, 224
- Ekeh, Peter, 223
- Ellis, Steven, 2, 78, 221
- Englund, Harri, 144, 203, 214n8, 223
- Ethnicities*, 206n6, 228
- Evans-Pritchard, Edward, 135, 209n9
- Eyoh, Dickson, 223
- Fardon, Richard, 206n7, 223
- Fatton, Robert, Jr., 2, 223
- Ferguson, James, 7, 209n1, 223–24
- Fernandez, James, 41, 209n4, 223
- Fisiy, Cyprian, 214n7, 223
- Forman, Shepard, 203–204, 223
- Fortes, Meyer, 136, 138, 197, 223
- Fox, Richard, 204, 223
- Friedman, Jonathan, 41, 223
- Furniss, Graham, 207n7, 223
- Gallie, W. B., 33, 223
- Geschiere, Peter, 69, 214nn5–7, 223–24
- Gluckman, Max, 16, 214n16, 224
- Good, Kenneth, 19, 205n1, 206nn9,10, 211n4, 224
- Grant, Sandy, 205n3, 224
- Griffiths, Anne, 214n22, 224
- Grillo, Ralph, 208n4, 224
- Gugler, Joseph, 69, 223
- Guillette, Elizabeth, 214n2, 224
- Gulbrandsen, Ornulf, 19, 35, 42, 213n13, 224
- Gupta, Akhil, 7, 224
- Gutmann, Amy, 61, 208n1, 224
- Habermas, Jürgen, 187, 224
- Haljan, David, 206n6, 229

AUTHOR INDEX

- Handelman, Don, 123, 214*n*20, 224
Hansen, Thomas, 220*n*1
Hays, Jennifer, 207*n*8, 225
Henderson, Willie, 150, 171, 175-76,
210*n*20, 217*nn*10-11, 218*nn*21-22,25,
219*nn*27-28,32, 228
Hermans, H. Q, 28, 206*nn*8-10, 221, 227
Hewart, Lord, 214*n*20, 225
Hibou, B., 2, 78, 221
Hitchcock, Robert, 34, 43, 206*n*5, 213*n*1,
225
Hodgson, Dorothy, 43, 225
Holm, John, 38, 193, 205*n*1, 225
Hutcheson, P. G., 214*n*20, 232

Ingstad, Benedicte, 214*n*2, 225

Jefferis, Keith, 18-19, 225
Jeskova, P., 206*n*8, 227

Kalabamu, Faustin, 111-13, 122, 213*nn*4,6-7,
225
Kalaben, O., 80, 233
Kelly, T. F., 19, 225
Khumalo, Joshua, 211*n*5, 225
Klaits, Fred, 7, 19, 34, 225
Klaits, Frederick. *See* Klaits, Fred
Kymlicka, Will, 34, 206*n*6, 207*n*13, 208*n*2,
225

La Fontaine, Jean, 137, 225
Lekorwe, Mogopodi, 38, 39, 177, 220*n*41,
225
Lentz, Carola, 209*n*1, 225
Lesetedi, Isaac, 205*n*4, 208-209*n*11, 232
Letsididi, Bashi, 205*n*4, 208*n*11, 233
Lewis, Stephen, Jr., 4, 16, 205*n*1, 225
Leyton, Elliott, 123, 214*n*20, 224
Lienhardt, Godfrey, 144, 226
Livingston, Julie, 214*n*2, 226
Lonsdale, John, 64, 68-69, 206*n*6, 226
Lyman, Stanford, 216*n*5, 226

Mahoney, Nicholas, 33, 226
Malikongwa, Albert, 209*n*5, 210*n*18, 215*n*7,
226
Mannathoko, Changu, 67, 209*n*8, 226
Masire, Q. K. J., 110-11, 118, 226
Mathuba, B. M., 11, 226
Maundeni, Zibani, 39, 90, 226
Mazonde, Isaac, 19, 32-34, 207*n*8, 226

Mbembe, Achille, 226
Midweek Sun, 233
Mirror, 105, 233
Mmegi, 14, 81, 83, 97, 100-101, 104, 207*n*21,
211*n*4
Mmegi Monitor, 53-54, 86, 233
Mmegi Wa Dikgang—The Reporter, 16, 81-
82, 233
Modood, Tariq, 208*n*4, 211*n*28, 230
Moeti, Mesh, 209*n*12, 233
Mogae, Festus, 54, 232
Mogapi, Spencer, 103, 233
Mokhuwa, Gladys, 16, 230
Molokomme, Athaliah, 35, 226
Molomo, M., 90, 226
Molutsi, Patrick, 28, 38, 179, 202-203,
206*n*8
Moroke, Abdul Salaam, 54-55, 93, 99-
100, 106, 208*n*6, 211*n*5, 212*nn*15,18,
212-13*n*19, 225-27. *See also* Moroke,
Alpheons
Moroke, Alpheons, 53, 233. *See also* Moroke,
Abdul Salaam
Morrison, J. Stephen, 3, 205*n*1, 227
Mothobi, M., 105-107, 234
Motlalo, Stryker, 55-56, 234
Motzafi-Haller, Pnina, 19, 227
Mugabe, Mbulawa, 214*n*2, 227

Nader, Laura, 7, 227
National Assembly, 121, 227
Ndaba, Batshani, 208*nn*7-8, 232
Ngome, Enock, 214*n*2, 227
Ng'ong'ola, Clement, 113-14, 213*nn*2,4,8,
227
Nkala, Gideon, 47, 93-95, 104, 107, 211*n*6,
212*nn*9-10, 215*n*15, 234
North-East District Council, 215*n*15, 234
Nteta, D., 206*n*8, 232
Nthoi, Leslie S., 33, 227
Nyamnjoh, Francis, 9, 34, 69, 137, 203,
205*n*2, 209*n*9, 227
Nyati-Ramahobo, Lydia, 33, 59, 206-207*n*7,
208*nn*8,17,19,23, 209*n*12, 227

Orufeng, Daniel, 228
Othogile, Bojosi, 80, 180, 207*n*14, 210*n*24,
228

Parekh, Bikhu, 208*n*2, 228
Parish, Jane, 214*n*11, 228

AUTHOR INDEX

- Parson, Jack, 21, 228
 Parsons, Neil, 150, 171, 175-76, 210n20, 228
 Phumaphi, Persal, 206n1, 232
 Picard, Louis, 228
 Piot, Charles, 205n3, 214n9, 228
 Pitso ya Batswana, 56, 234
- Ramsay, Jeff, 66, 228
 Republic of Botswana, 17, 207n7, 228
 Roberts, Simon, 214n22, 228
 Rollnick, Roman, 17, 228
- Samatar, Abdi Ismail, 4, 21-22, 72, 78, 85, 175-76, 205n1, 206n10, 228
 Sandel, Michael, 61, 229
 Sanders, Todd, 214n5, 227
 Saugestad, Sidsel, 19, 210n19, 213n1, 229
 Saunders, Barbara, 206n6, 229
 Schapera, Isaac, 42, 229
 Schmidt, Peter, 206n3, 229
 Scott, Marvin, 213n5, 226
 Sechele, Sechele, 205n3, 229
 Seidman, Robert, 229
 Sekgoma, Gilbert, 20, 229
 Selolwane, Onalenna, 31, 38, 141, 229
 Semolekae, Gloria, 38-39
 Sesinyi, A., 73, 234
 Shaibu, Sheila, 214n2, 229
 Shore, Chris, 204, 232
 Skelemani, Phandu, 94-95, 103-104, 232
 Solway, Jacqueline, 19, 41, 207n9, 209n4, 210n23, 211n29, 229
 Squires, Judith, 206n6, 229
 Stanley, Arthur, 146-47, 165, 167-69, 178-79, 186-87, 215n16, 229
 Stedman, Stephen, 2, 4, 205n1, 229
 Stepputat, Finn, 224
 Strathern, Marilyn, 204, 229
 Student Representative Council, 80, 234
 Sutherland, Alistair, 33, 229
- Tambiah, Stanley, 36, 230
 Tati Land Board, 27-28, 232
 Taylor, Charles, 34, 41, 61-62, 191, 206n6, 220n4
 Taylor, Ian, 16, 205n5, 206n5, 230
 Tlou, Sheila, 214n2, 230
 Tlou, Thomas, 70, 150, 170, 175-76, 210n20, 217nn10-11
 Tsiako, Douglas, 83, 234
 Tsonope, Joe, 207n7, 230
 Tully, James, 206n6, 230
 Tutwane, Letshwiti, 46, 91, 98, 100-101, 104, 113, 207n22, 209n11, 234
- United Nations Development Program (UNDP) (2000), 230
- van Binsbergen, Wim, 7, 37, 40, 70-72, 84, 207n7, 209n10, 216, 230
 Van der Geest, Sjaak, 214n2, 230
 Veblen, Thorstein, 74, 230
- Wade, H. W. R., 214, 230
 Waldron, Jeremy, 206n2, 214n20, 230
 Wallhagen, M., 214n2, 229
 Weeks, Sheldon, 209n13, 229
 Weiss, Brad, 214n13, 229
 Werbner, Pnina, 203n4, 208n4, 211n28, 229
 Werbner, Richard, 3, 5, 13, 21, 26, 28, 32, 41, 44, 61, 65, 118, 142-43, 203, 206n6, 207nn8,12,16,18,19, 209n7, 213nn10,12,14, 214nn1,6,10,12, 215n14, 216n22, 231
 West, Harry, 214n6, 232
 Wilmsen, Edwin, 34, 43, 232
 Wilson, Richard, 5, 203, 232
 Wraith, R. E., 214n20, 232
 Wright, Sue, 204, 232
- Yuval-Davis, Nira, 208n4, 232

SUBJECT INDEX

Page numbers in italics refer to illustrations.

- absurd, experience of, 122–25, 128, 130.
See also land boards
- accessibility, ethos of, 24, 174
- accountability, elites', 26, 28; government and press, 15
- accumulation, 179, 202. *See also* company formation; entrepreneurship; investment, elites'
- administration, 26, 27, 51, 97, 105, 109–10, 164; technocrat managerialism, 21. *See also* bureaucrats, in Afro-pessimist representations; civil service; managerialism; technocrat, rhetoric
- affairs, 190. *See also* Balopi Commission; Discussion Group Affair; Khumalo, Justice Joshua Mdabula; Landell-Mills Affair; Nswazwi Affair
- affirmative action, 35
- African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights, 32
- Africanist agenda, 1–2, 192. *See also* Afro-pessimism
- Afro-pessimism: critique of, 1–3, 188, 196, 205*n*11; defined, 2. *See also* ethnicity; pluralism; political culture, violence; postcolonial, wisdom; public sphere; state
- ageing, 214*n*2; and public sphere, 134–38
- agenda, different, 73, 168, 172, 192. *See also* conspiracy; Kalanga, scare; "takeover"
- agonistic ritual, 143–44, 198. *See also* commemorative ritual
- agriculture, bush-fallow system in North East District, 72, 114–15, 213*n*12
- AIDS, government program, 17
- alienation, from postcolonial state, 14
- alliance politics, 59. *See also* coalition politics
- alternative public sphere, 144, 198–99
- ambush, as political tactic, 102, 194. *See also* "blundering"
- ancestors, care for, 65, 133. *See also* elderhood; ritual; shrines
- Anglo-American, 30
- apartheid, 169. *See also* discrimination
- appeal, land boards, 61, 64, 112
- apprenticeship, in civil service, 164–65
- army, 49, 90
- assimilation, 31, 33, 192; colonial and postcolonial, 37. *See also* nationalism; One-Nation Consensus
- Association of Training and Development Officers (ATDO), 147, 157, 187
- associations: civic, 67; interethnic, 44
- Attorney General Phandu, 54, 65, 88, 92–93, 95–105, 113, 122, 212*mn*9, 11–14, 16, 19; profile, 94, 211*n*6. *See also* Skelemani, Pandhu
- Attorney General's Chambers, 53, 91–95, 97–98, 194
- authority: frailty in, 16; Kalanga, 106–66; postcolonial, in elderhood, 144. *See also* public authority; state
- autochthony, 69. *See also* belonging; Kalanga, historical consciousness; strangers, incorporation of
- Bakalanga Students Association (BSA), 65. *See also* Society for the Propagation of Ikalanga Language (SPIL)
- Balopi, Patrick, 43. *See also* Balopi Commission
- Balopi Commission, 31, 43, 44–45, 47, 52–53, 56, 61, 70, 72–73. *See also* Presidential Commission of Enquiry
- Bank of Botswana, 89–167
- Bantustan, Transkei, 69

SUBJECT INDEX

- Barclays Bank, 179; chairman, 23, 76, 182, 202; skyscraper in Leno Affair, 82–83, 179–80. *See also* Tibone, Mbiganyi Charles
- batswa kwa* (those from far away, aliens), 70
- Batswana (citizens of Botswana), defined, 205*n*6
- Bechuanaland African Civil Service Association, demands, 157, 161, 168
- Bechuanaland Protectorate, 38, 110, 170; public service, 157, 167. *See also* Botswana
- Beeby, Alf, 175, 219*nn*30–32
- belonging: city and, 69; cosmopolitan, 64; elites at home, 65, 140, 215*n*10; politics of recognition and, 49, 53, 70. *See also* urban villagers
- beneficial tenure, 115–16
- Bent, Alan (District Commissioner and author), 164, 216*n*2
- Bernhard, Rita, x
- Bible translation, ethnicity and, 28, 156
- big business, 76
- Big Men, 1, 137
- big villages, 118–20. *See also* centralization
- biography: ethnography and, 10; narrative method, 147, 199; public anthropology and, 9, 187; reflexive unfolding, 9, 147, 156
- Birwa, 33, 141
- “blundering”: in capable state, 20, 86–87, 91–96, 103, 108, 194; importance of pressure group, 97, 105–106. *See also* ambush, as political tactic
- Bogosi, paramount chiefship, 53, 194. *See also* paramount chiefs
- boom, diamond-led, 77–80, 193
- borderland, ethnicity, 36, 69–71, 191
- Botswana: administration, 21, 26, 27, 51, 97, 105, 109–10; banking, 20; capable state, 21, 192; citizenship, 14, 49–51, 191; civic state, 14, 17, 97; conflict-free diamonds, 16; development policy success, 17; diamond boom, 77–78, 93; ethnic diversity, 42; ethos of state action, 3; exceptionalism debate, 2–3, 21, 205*n*1; federal Protectorate to Republic, 38, 46; financial option, 20; human development index, 17; identification with the state, 14; majoritarian dominance, 21–22; Miss Universe, 16; name politicized, 53; precolonial kingdoms and heterogeneity, 36; prehistory, 70; presidential commissions of enquiry, 26–27, 31, 42–43, 61, 94, 100–101, 175–76, 188–89, 195; public welfare, 17; scale, 22; state of emergency, 14. *See also* government; process; state
- Botswana Building Society (BBS) Mall, 84
- Botswana Civil Service Association (BCSA), 67, 168–69, 175–76. *See also* Bechuanaland African Civil Service Association, demands
- Botswana Confederation of Commerce, Industry, and Manpower (BOCCIM), 67–87
- Botswana Congress Party (BCP), 105–86
- Botswana Daily News*, 15, 171, 218*n*20
- Botswana Democracy Project, 179
- Botswana Democratic Party (BDP), 20, 39, 46, 219*n*27, 220*n*40
- Botswana Development Corporation (BDC), 26, 89, 179. *See also* parastatals
- Botswana Game Industries (BGI), 179, 219*n*36
- Botswana National Front (BNF), 62, 182–83, 186, 220*n*40
- Botswana National Productivity Centre, 57
- Botswana Open Golf Championship, 182
- Botswana Peoples Party (BPP), 218*n*25, 220*n*40
- Botswana Power Corporation, 26, 76
- Botswana Society, 147, 187, 215*n*9
- Botswana Student Association, 23
- Botswana-ization, 53, 71, 84, 191, 220*n*3
- bounded systems, elderhood in, 135, 197–98. *See also* Fortes, Meyer
- bourgeois: bureaucrats, 169, 177; economic nationalism, 80
- BP (British Petroleum), 30, 219*n*35
- Britain, 175–76
- Bulawayo: Francistown white settlers and, 163; Francistown’s dependence upon, 163
- bureaucracy, 17, 200; balance of power, 2–102; insider, 89; Gobe Willie Matenge’s view, 48, 167, 171–72. *See also* administration; quasi-bureaucrats; technocrat, rhetoric
- bureaucrats, in Afro-pessimist representations, 1
- Bushmen. *See* Kalahari peoples, relocation of; San
- Business Focus*, 75
- business partnerships, 75–76, 179–81
- Cabinet, 89–90, 219*n*32. *See also* names of specific commissions and ministries
- Campbell, Alec, 148
- capital accumulation, 179–80, 202; salariat,

SUBJECT INDEX

- 25, 27, 147, 176, 217n10. *See also* business partnerships; company formation; entrepreneurship; investment, elites'; Matenge, Gobe Willie
- capital city, ethnicity in, 42–69. *See also* Gaborone
- care, kinship and ritual of, 140
- cartoons, 81, 83
- Catholic Church, 151, 155
- cattle, domestic herds, 114–15, 154, 213nn11–12; elite investment shift from, 76–78, 178–79, 219n37; investment in, 114, 154, 176. *See also* agriculture, bush-fallow system in North East District; land boards
- Central District, 121, 153, 209n2
- Central Kalahari Game Reserve, 15. *See also* San
- centralization, 21, 117–21, 215n14
- Chief Justice, 23, 54–61. *See also* Nganunu, Julian
- chiefs: Kalanga and Tswana attitudes to, 37; Yei, 60. *See also* Chieftainship Act
- Chieftainship Act, 60, 207n19
- Chiepe, Gaositwe, 216n25, 217n13
- circle, urban friends, 24–25, 28–29, 190
- citizen: dignity, 48–49; ownership, 78
- citizens: clientalization of, 123; land board clients, 111–12; nation-state and, 191; naturalized, 77, 170–71; public interest of, 95; quasi-bureaucrats, 111–12. *See also* citizenship; clientization; Customary Court of Appeals; High Court; press, freedom of; rights
- citizens' rights, 191; land boards, 110–11; redress against the state, 104
- citizenship, 3, 14, 31, 33, 70–71, 84, 220n3; conference on, 33; constitutive processes, 190; dual, 31, 37, 192; human rights, 31, 48–49, 94; liberal idea, 148; national and tribal conjuncture, 31, 37; One-Nation Consensus and, 38; politics of recognition and, 48–62; rights and equality, 37–41, 48–49, 138; tribal, 37–38, 60. *See also* administration; Botswana-ization; process; public sphere; rights; state; tribe
- civic associations, 67, 187
- civic culture, 24, 34, 67; education, in commission of enquiry, 97; nationalism, 191–92
- civic state, in Botswana, 14, 17, 97, 220n3
- civic virtue, 3, 27, 86, 107, 171
- Civil Procedure Act, 209n11
- civil servants: commercial ban, 78; investment options, 78, 178–79
- civil service: apprenticeship in, 164–65; constitutional vs. developmental tendencies, 174–76; dispute settlement, 117, 173–74; due process and procedure in, 171–74; duty to political masters, 97–106, 201–202; glass ceiling, 74, 79; land boards and, 112, 124–25, 127; marriages, 29; postcolonial Old Guard, 167; professional network (*see also* Fawcus protégées), 170–71; rhetoric, 24, 94; rumor, 74; separation from politics, 78, 169–74; Young Turks, 171. *See also* Discussion Group; elites; localization; post-civil service; salariat; staff associations; technocrat, rhetoric; tribal, land
- civil society: dismissed by Africanists, 2; post-civil service and, 28. *See also* public sphere
- civility, 3, 107
- class, 190; dominant, 21; working class, 163. *See also* elites; entrepreneurs; state salariat
- clientization, 123–24
- coalition politics, 44, 47, 59
- cobra ad, 97, 147
- colonial: ethnography, 135; Kalanga as primary school language, 143–44; past in postcolonial present, 5, 34, 41–42, 59. *See also* postcolonial; translocal relations, colonial and postcolonial
- colonial administration, 51, 110, 117. *See also* administration; Bechuanaland Protectorate; civil service; paramount chiefs
- colonial liberator, 149. *See also* Fawcus, Peter, “colonial liberator”
- commemorative ritual, 143–44; agonistic, 140–41; postcolonial significance, 142–45, 198–99. *See also* elderhood; memory work; shrines
- commercial elites, 25, 75–84, 151
- commission. *See names of specific commissions*
- Commission of Enquiry, salaries, 147
- Commission on Recruitment, Training, and Localisation Policy (1966), 216n25
- common sense, in Khumalo Affair, 93
- community, closed, 136–37, 198. *See also* bounded systems, elderhood in; moral ethnicity
- Companies Act of 1980, 80

SUBJECT INDEX

- company directorships, 26–27, 77–78;
in postcolonial studies, 77–78
- company formation, 26, 83–84, 163, 202.
See also business partnerships; directorate-technocrat complex; entrepreneurship; Land Holding Botswana; post–civil service
- compromise, 45; ambiguity of, 95; negotiated, 96, 104–105, 194–95. *See also* negotiated power
- “concerned Batswana,” 53, 96, 104–105, 194–95. *See also* neo-conservatives
- conflict resolution, 104
- Congress Party (CP), 185
- consensus: national, 46, 38–39, 79; One-Nation Consensus, 38–39, 79. *See also* Khama, President Seretse
- conspiracy: ethnic, *see* Kalanga, scare; rumour, 97
- constitution: conflict of law, 60; crisis in Khumalo Commission, 94; discriminatory clauses, 31, 39, 42–43, 46, 60–61; judiciary in, 55, 87; tribal sections, 39, 43. *See also* Balopi Commission; referendum, on judiciary
- conviviality, 24
- Corning Pipe Botswana, 211n4
- corporate enterprise, and civil service, 78
- corruption, 72, 77, 84; family use of official car, 173–74; fight against, 28, 90, 128, 187, 189, 206nn9–10, 211n4
- cosmopolitan, white settler, 163
- cosmopolitan ethnicity, defined, 63
- Cosmopolitanism: civic associations and, 67; urban, 63–64, 76–78, 192, 200, 209n1. *See also* cosmopolitan ethnicity, defined; elites
- Criminal Investigation Department (CID), 74. *See also* Special Branch
- critique, public sphere and, 148, 155
- cultural imperialism, 37; in 1970s, 119, 121, 124
- cultural nationalists, 37
- culture: anthropologists’ problematic, 56; assimilation, 31–33; associations, 44, 57–58, 67, 98, 157; civic, 34–67; commodification of, 70; cosmopolitan ethnicity, 63–64, 70; difference and ethnicity, 28, 36, 40–41, 42, 68; essentialist view, 5; Gobe Willie Matenge on, 156–57; Kalanganess, 28, 30; minority, 41; misrecognition of, 124, 128–29; national, 49, 53; objectification, 5; permeable ethnicity, 68–69; political, 35, 71, 107, 159, 174, 194; President Mogae on, 68; pressure groups, 44, 48, 157; right to, 34; rights, 37, 49, 155–56; transcendence of, 40; Tswanaization, 37–38, 69–70; unbounded system, 135, 144. *See also* assimilation; Botswana-ization; cultural imperialism; culture, associations; ethnicity; Lentswe la Batswapong; multiculturalism; Pitsot ya Batswana (Forum of the Tswana); Society for the Propagation of Ikalanga Language (SPIIL); super-tribalism; tribalism
- Customary Court of Appeals, 26
- customary land. *See* tribal, land
- Daily Gazette*, 80
- Dambe, Amos, Minister of Home Affairs, 172, 218n4
- Dambe, Chris, 24, 26, 29, 68, 172, 216n21, 218n24
- De Beers Botswana (Debswana), 30, 77, 89
- De Boeck, Filip, x
- dead, burden for living, 139
- debt, 154
- defamation, 97. *See also* ethnicity; Kalanga, scare
- deliberation: and compromise, 96; discussion groups and, 176; in Khumalo Affair, 92, 96–97
- democracy, 4, 38, 51, 62, 179, 183–85, 189, 193; compromise in, 96; ethics in, 1, 185; horizon of, 15–16, 203; liberal language of, 48–49, 56, 106, 110, 118, 194
- Department of Public Service Management (DPSM), 97
- development, 4, 14, 17–18, 124, 154, 174–76; ideology of merit, 118–19; National Accelerated Rural Development Programme (NARDP), 177; tribal, 124, 154
- developmental state, 16, 20
- diamond boom, 77–78, 93
- diamonds: conflict free, 16, 206n5; revenue from, 20, 23, 30, 77
- diaspora: Herero, 191; Kalanga, 191; post-colonial, 135, 198. *See also* translocal relations, colonial and postcolonial
- difference: politicized, 28, 41; transcended, 40
- directorate: insider information, 97–98; national, 25, 76–78
- directorate-technocrat complex, 25–27. *See*

SUBJECT INDEX

- also* elites; entrepreneurship; Leno Affair; post-civil service
- discrimination, 31, 41, 43, 44, 53, 60–61, 73, 209n1; in Bechuanaland Protectorate, 60
- Discussion Group: ended by President Khama, 171–74; in Ministry of Finance, 176; Gobe Willie Matenge, 170–74, 201
- Discussion Group Affair, 169–74, 217nn12–13
- disenfranchisement, 129
- distinction, of elders, 137–38
- District Commissioner, 117, 125–26, 130, 147, 164, 168, 177
- District Council, 11
- Ditshwanelo (human rights association), 206n5
- divining shrine, 137–38. *See also* elderhood; Tallensi
- Domboshaba Ruins, 70, 208n7
- domesticated man, 137
- Donald, Major Alan, 172–73
- Durham, Deborah, x
- dynasties, 80
- Economic and Social Research Council, ix
- economy: diversification, 20, 181; growth in Botswana, 17; poverty policy, 19–20
- education, 22, 72, 150, 152–53, 157, 164, 218nn21,29
- elderhood, 214n3; endurance in shrine, 137–38; exemplary, 137, 150; in feminist studies, 134, 196; memory in, 154; in political anthropology, 134–35; public authority, 144; ritual ordeal, 133, 135–37; shrine ritual, 65; “small boy” and, 65; spiritual quest of Tallensi, 137–38; Tallensi shrine of, 136–38
- elders, elite wives of, 29. *See also* elites; patriarchy; reasonable radicals
- elites: agency, 8–9, 75–76, 195–96, 203; Balopi Commission and, 52–53, 206n12; Botswana, as exceptional, 2, 20; Catholics, 157, 162; commercial 25, 75–84, 151; company formation, 75–76, 79–84; dearth of research, 7; education of, 150, 152, 157, 162; ethics, 27; ethnic identification, 52; family and, 214n24; friends’ circle, 25, 28, 29, 65; friendship and occupation, 180; home communities of, 59, 80–81, 215n10; insider information, 77–78; interaction of producers and state, 3; interests and company register, 26; interethnicity, 76–78; interpenetration, 26; investment alternatives, 76–78, 143, 179, 211n4; judiciary attacked, 55; land board membership, 111; leisure of, 9; in London Missionary Society, 150–51, 157, 199; majoritarian, 53–54; memory work, 27; Methodists among, 80–81; national, 24, 59, 150, 184; network, 79; North East District, 124, 128; office and rank, 24; organic, 28; in parasitals, 26, 46, 85; pluralism and minorities, 22; politics of recognition and, 50; poverty perception of, 19; and public service, 27; ruling party and, 184; “small boys” at home, 65, 140; social capital, 75–76, 151, 178–80; sociality, 8–9, 23–24, 190; state building, 22, 171, 188; straddling by, 8, 139; translocal ritual and patriarchy, 139–40; tribal self-identification, 59; trust, 8, 75–77; urban, and Kalanga shrines, 139–40; voice, 9, 203. *See also* bureaucrats, in Afro-pessimist representations; cosmopolitans; culture, pressure groups; directorate, national; directorate-technocrat complex; education; entrepreneurship; ethics; Fawcus protégées; friendship; interlocking directorates; investment, elites; majoritarians; Matenge, Gobe Willie; minority; networks; public service; quasi-bureaucrats; reasonable radicals; ruling party; salariat; staff associations; technocrat, rhetoric; unions, perception by President Khama; urban villagers
- emergency, state of, 13–14, 86
- Engen, 219n36
- entrepreneurship, 75–85, 151, 163, 202–203; social capital and company formation, 178–80. *See also* Barclays Bank; class; company directorships; company formation; corporate enterprise, and civil service; corruption; Dambe, Chris; G. M. Five; investment, elites; Lekalake, Lawrence; Mannathoko, Richard; Matenge, Gobe Willie; Nganunu, Julian; Tibone, Mbiganyi Charles
- equality, and citizenship rights, 50
- equality of opportunity, 41, 45
- ethics: civic, 24, 34; of power in democracy, 96; open-ended, 197; patriarchal, 140, 143–44, 197; postcolonial problematic, 1, 196; professional, 27

SUBJECT INDEX

- ethnic: backlash, 52–53, 55–56, 61; conspiracy, *see* “takeover”; diversity, expert knowledge of, 68; diversity, history of, 36, 42; group, 52 (*see also* tribe); homogeneity, mere appearance, 42; identification, elites 28, 65; joking, 30; nationalism, 71, 191; patrons, 31; pluralism 38, 42; representation, 31; rumor, 34; slander, 64, 73–74; trust, 9, 63, 76–78, 84; violence, spectre of, 42, 63, 144. *See also* political culture, violence
- ethnicity, 28, 40; appeal to history, 36; borderland, 36; cosmopolitan, 63–64, 70, 72, 76–78, 84; permeable, 56, 63, 67; transcendence, 56, 63, 67; trans-local, 28, 36. *See also* culture; identity politics; interethnic, marriage; strangers, incorporations of
- ethos of state action, 3
- expatriates, 21, 74, 166, 170–71, 182; anthropology and, 204. *See also* citizens, naturalized; white settlers
- factionalism, 72, 180. *See also* regionalization
- factions, party, 90
- Fawcus, Peter, “colonial liberator,” 149, 157, 166, 169–70, 172
- Fawcus protégées, 149, 167, 171, 175, 180. *See also* Hermans, Quill; Matenge, Gobe Willie; Murray-Hudson, Hugh; Tilbury, Alan
- feminists: consensus check on patriarchal authority and, 141; critique of patriarchy, 134; expansion of public sphere, 31, 61; recognition of difference, 31; social histories, 134, 141
- fieldwork, 188; confidentiality, 9; cooperation, 150; emergency during, 13; funding, ix; maze in city, 149; prohibited immigrant in, 13; teacher’s advice, 13
- financial option, state, 20
- flows, boundary-crossing, 136
- foreign capital investment, 78
- Fortes, Meyer, 136, 138, 197, 190, 201, 204
- forum as process, 4, 6, 10, 171; Discussion Group Affair, 169–74, 187. *See also* affairs; alternative public sphere; civic associations; civic virtue; civil society; compromise; culture, associations; culture, pressure groups; deliberation; democracy; Discussion Group; feminists; Freedom Square; good governance; High Court; land boards; negotiation; political culture; politics of recognition; power; Presidential Commission of Enquiry; press; press, freedom of; public anthropology; public authority; public sphere; staff associations; unions
- franchises, of elites, 76
- Francistown, 25, 40, 75, 120, 146, 151, 163, 180, 200
- Freedom Square, 220n41
- friendship circle, 24, 47, 66–67, 69, 73, 75, 246, 167, 171. *See also* Matenge, Gobe Willie; Fawcus protégées
- funding, for author’s fieldwork, ix
- G. M. Five, 180
- Gaborone, 42, 47, 66–67, 69, 73, 75, 146, 167, 171, 175, 180, 212n12, 215n5, 216n2; first-generation city, 31; real estate, 109. *See also* autochthony
- galactic polity, 36–37. *See also morafe*
- Gaseitsiwe, Boithomelo, ix
- Gaseitsiwe, Sebata, ix
- gatekeepers: Gobe Willie Matenge, 165; Mpubuli Matenge, 151, 200
- gender, 29–30, 133, 135, 137, 217n3. *See also* elderhood; feminists; patriarchy
- Gluckman, Max, 13
- go-between, in colonial administration, 165
- good governance, 4, 15, 27, 33, 93, 97, 201; compromise in, 96; professional network of early civil servants, 170–71
- government: accountability, 15; adversarial action, courts vs. land boards, 124–28; early paranoia in 218n22. *See also* Attorney General Phandu; Bechuanaland Protectorate; Botswana; Botswana-ization; bureaucracy; Chief Justice; chiefs; citizens; citizenship; civil service; class; colonial; compromise; consensus; constitution; development; elites; financial option, state; forum as process; good governance; House of Chiefs; judgment; judicial review; Khama, President Seretse; land boards; liberal democracy, language of; Masire, President Quett Ketumile; Ministry of Agriculture; Ministry of Finance; Ministry of Finance and Development Planning (MFDP); Ministry of Lands and Local Government; Ministry of Works and Communications; Mogae, President Festus; One-Nation Consensus; nationalism; negotiation; parastatals; pluralism;

SUBJECT INDEX

- political culture; post-civil service; post-colonial; power; presidential commissions; press; process; public anthropology; public authority; public service; quasi-bureaucrats; referendum; rights; ruling party; salariat; *specific names of commissions and ministries*; state
Government Gazette, 92–93, 98
groundnuts (manongo), and Kalanga education, 64
guerrillas, legal, 102
Gulbrandsen, Ornulf, x
guns under the bed, 73–74
- Haskins, Jimmie, 151
Herero, 51–52
Hermans, Quill, 167, 170, 175–76, 217n2
hierarchy, 51
High Court, 66, 102–105, 122, 164, 194, 200, 208, 209n11; limit on judicial review, 60–61; peri-urban land, 109–112; peri-urban land, and demolition decision, 113
history, ethnicity and, 69–70
Hodes, Peter, senior counsel to Phandu Skelemani, 99, 101–102
Holm, John, 179
Horn, Justice, 102
House of Chiefs, 39, 43, 45–46, 51–52, 72, 80, 207n12
House of Delegates, 52, 72. *See also* House of Chiefs
House of Dikgosi, 45–46. *See also* House of Chiefs
human development index, 17
human rights, 31–33, 48–49, 53
- identity, minority options, 34–35, 64–65. *See also* racial inequality; segregation
identity politics, 28, 34, 49, 64–65, 72–73, 203; majoritarians, discourse of, 73. *See also* culture, pressure groups; language politics; minority; politics of recognition; San ideology: of development merit, 118–19, 129–30; parties and 184
income policy, 68, 176, 217n10
Independence celebration, 177–78
Independent Electoral Commission, 94, 98, 102–103, 211n5
Indians, Kalanga and, 76–78
indigenization, 4, 43, 48, 190–91; defined, 43. *See also* Kalahari peoples, relocation of; San
indigenous rights, 43, 48. *See also* human rights
indigenous rights movement, 4
Industrial Tribunal, assessor, 24, 26, 29
insider information, 178–79
installation rites, 133–34, 139–42
interest groups *See* culture, pressure groups
interethnic: marriage, 29–30, 56, 63; moral resemblances, 71; partnerships, 76–78, 163, 219n33
interlocking directorates, 9, 24, 28, 78–84. *See also* directorate-technocrat complex
International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, 32
International Monetary Fund, 89
intractable power, 139
investment, elites', 76–78, 178–79, 219n37
- J. Haskins and Sons, 151, 153, 163
James, Deborah, x
jokes, ethnic, 30
judgment: Kamanako cases, 60; Pitso ya Batswana case, 102–103
judicial review, 60–62, 194–95, 220n4
judiciary: attack on, 97; referendum on, 55
Jules-Rosette, Bennetta, x
justice, minority passion for, 108
- Kalahari peoples, relocation of, 15, 206n5, 213n1. *See also* indigenous peoples; San
Kalanga: agriculture, 72, 114–15, 151; ancient kingdoms, 36, 69–70; attorney-general, 195 (*see also* Skelemani, Phandu); audience at SPIL, 58; authority figures, 38; Bible translation project, 28, 156; borderland ethnicity, 36, 69–70, 191; Chief Justice, 55–56 (*see also* Nganunu, Julian); civil service headship, 74; commercial elite vanguard, 74, 77–78, 188, 219n35; company formation, 75–76, 80–84, 179–80; cultural association (SPIL), 54–55; cultural imperialism and, 37, 119; Director of Education, 64; education of, 72, 152–53, 210n16; elite wives of, 29; elites, kin and, 76; elites and shrines; elites at Balopi Commission, 52–53, 70, 72; ethnic group, not “tribe,” 52; entrepreneurship, 75–84, 188; ethnic joking, 30; festival at Domboshaba, 70, 208n7; fieldwork, 33; historical consciousness, 36, 52, 69–71, 210n16; identity options, 34–35, 64–65; interethnic friendships

SUBJECT INDEX

- Kalanga (*continued*)
 and partnerships, 75–76, 192, 219n33;
 intermarriage, 29, 75, 208n7; investment
 in South Africa, 77; land shortage, 114,
 120; land tenure, 114–17; land tenure
 terms, 116–17; language, 151, 156–57,
 207n22; language rights, 34; lawyers,
 555–61, 82, 97, 107, 195, 207n22; liter-
 acy, 72, 131, 150; Minister of Finance,
 79; Minister of Health, 17–18, 18, 25–
 26; Minister of Home Affairs, 43; Mwali
 cult, 70; Ngwato and, 36, 37, 41, 151,
 208nn5–6; partnerships of, 76–78; pa-
 triarchy as checked power, 104, 182;
 political logic and Tswana, 37; precolonial
 kingdoms, 36–37, 52; President Seretse
 Khama and, 72, 79; professionals, 30, 65,
 71–72; prominence, 28, 53–56, 71–72,
 74, 200; reasonable radicals tradition,
 150–56; resistance to subordination, 36,
 41–42, 66–67, 151–52, 154–56; ritual
 ordeal of elderhood, 133, 140; ritual
 prominence of women, 142; sacred
 centrality, 138–39, 143; scare, 64, 73–
 74, 210nn19–20; self-identifying, 52,
 64; settlement, 115, 120; shrine and
 the intractable, 138–39; Sub-Chiefs, 117,
 152; Supa-Ngwao Museum, 156; super-
 tribalism, 51, 53; “takeover,” 71–74,
 210nn19–20; Tswana counter-elites and,
 53; Tswana similarities to, 71; university
 graduates, 29, 72; white settler as speaker
 of, 151; wife-receivers, in Zimbabwe, 13,
 70. *See also* Balopi Commission; cosmopol-
 itan ethnicity; discrimination; education;
 elites; ethnic group; interethnic, marriage;
 jokes, ethnic; Khumalo Affair; identity
 politics; language politics; *mazenge*; minor-
 ity; Nswazwi Affair; North East District;
 patriarchy; Pitso ya Batswana (Forum of
 the Tswana); Society for the Propagation
 of Ikalanga Language (SPIL); Tati Land
 Board; Tati Reserve; super-tribalism; trib-
 alism; Tswana
- Kalanga Cultural Association, 157
 Kalanga Symposium, 1989, 147, 156
 Kalanganess of elites, 30
 Kenya, 68
 Kgalagadi Breweries, 219n33
 Kgatlang Land Board, 113
 Kgopo, M., 171, 218n18
 Khama, Jacqueline, 173–74, 218–19n26
 Khama, Paramount Chief, 36
 Khama, President Seretse, 21, 39, 72, 74, 79,
 168, 173–74, 176–77, 192–93; perception
 of unions, 169, 217n9; respect for consti-
 tutional procedure, 171, 174, 177
 Khama, Ruth, 176
 Khama, Vice President Ian, 90
 Khumalo, Justice Joshua Mdabula, 87, 91–
 92, 101–102, 104, 211n5
 Khumalo Affair, 87–108, 195; common
 sense in, 93; crisis in 101
 kin, ritual responsibility, 65
 kingdoms, precolonial, 36
 Kitchen Cabinet, of President Mogae, 24,
 159
 Koma, Kenneth, 186
 Kuru Development Trust, 57
 Kutlwano, 178
 Kymlicka, Will, 34
- labor migration, 75; national, 31, 42, 143,
 147, 198; transnational, 42, 143, 179, 198
 land: peri-urban 109, 113; peri-urban demoli-
 tions, 113; scandals, 78–84, 109, 113; tribal,
 109–30
 land boards, 31, 39, 109–10, 114–18; betwixt
 and between, 111, 125; cases, 125–28;
 changing functions of, 111, 118, 123; cli-
 entization, 123–24; jurisdiction, 112, 118,
 122. *See also* Kgatlang Land Board; Tati
 Land Board
 Land Holding Botswana, 82–83. *See also*
 Leno Affair; Lekalake, Lawrence; Manna-
 thoko, Richard; Matenge, Gobe Willie;
 Nganunu, Julian
 land rights, 39, 112–13, 122
 land tenure: conflict of national and local
 state, 109, 112, 122; rights, 114–16, 120,
 213n1 (*see also* Kalanga); state policy, 109;
 status shifts, 116–17
 land tribunal, 112, 122
 Landell-Mills, Pierre, 175, 219n34
 Landell-Mills Affair, 175–76
 language politics, 41, 50, 53, 62, 70, 156,
 206–207n7, 212n15
 leadership: moral, 9, 155; political, 1, 2, 4
 Lefatshe Larona (ethnic brotherhood), 79,
 81. *See also* Tswanalization, defined
 legal pluralism, 130
 Lekalake, Lawrence, 175, 180; profile, 219n33
 Leno Affair, 21–22, 25, 72; cartoons, 81, 83;
 case history, 78–84

SUBJECT INDEX

- Lentswe la Batswapong, 47, 208*n*7. *See also* culture, associations; culture, pressure groups
- Lesetedi, Justice, 209*n*11
- liberal democracy, language of, 53, 62, 106
- Lilima (Kalanga dialect), 71. *See also* Kalanga, language; Society for the Propagation of Ikalanga Language (SPIL)
- literacy: Kalanga, 70–71, 209*n*13; Shiyei, 209*n*13. *See also* education
- livestock, 116, 179. *See also* capital accumulation; cattle, domestic herds; investment, elites'
- Lobatse, 164, 200
- local government, 111
- locality, and land tenure 116
- localization, 89, 156, 158, 161, 203, 216*n*27, 219*n*34
- London Missionary Society (L.M.S.), 150–51, 157, 199. *See also* Methodists
- Mafeking, 163, 166–67, 169–71, 179–80, 216*n*2
- Mahalapye, 52
- majoritarians, 44, 45, 48; backlash of, 50, 53–55, 59; democratic ideals of, 9; discrimination against, 41; dominance, 21–22, 34, 72; liberal discourse of, 53, 62, 106. *See also* autochthony; culture, pressure groups; language politics; Lefatshe Larona; minority; Pitso ya Batswana (Forum of the Tswana); politics of recognition
- Makepe, Pauline, ix
- Makepe, Phineas, ix
- Makhwadi, Dick, 82–83; Leno Affair, 170
- Mambo, ancient kingdom of, 52, 210*n*16. *See also* Kalanga; kingdoms, precolonial man of substance, 25
- managerialism, 21, 85, 158, 167. *See also* Ministry of Finance and Development Planning (MFDP)
- Mannathoko, Changu, 67, 205*n*71, 209*n*6
- Mannathoko, Gwafila, 79–84, 194
- Mannathoko, Richard, 205*n*7, 209*n*6,7, 210*n*20, 213*n*15; Kalanga and Tswana social logics, 37; minority interest in universal rights, 107–108; Mr. B. P., 30; permanent secretary, 121; photo with author, 66
- Mannathoko, Rosina, 30, 205*n*7
- Marx, Emanuel, x
- masculinity, in elderhood, 65, 137–38, 150
- Masire, Grace, 81. *See also* G. M. Five
- Masire, President Quett Ketumile, 17, 21, 26, 42, 44, 72–73, 78, 80–90, 94, 96, 98, 175, 177; on chiefs, 44, 110
- Matante, Philip, 174, 218*n*25
- Matenge, Daisy, 214*n*2
- Matenge, Gobe Willie, 10, 146, 181, 190; academics and, 186; accessible management, 165, 178; activism, 167, 176, 182–84, 186, 201, 217*n*8; advocacy of political pluralism, 183–86; Alan Bent as role model, 164; appearance, 146, 148; apprenticeship, 164–65; as critic, 181; attitude toward authority, 151–52, 155, 166–67, 182, 201; autobiographical project, 147, 156; Barclays Bank director, 179–82, 202; big businessman, 147, 178–82; biographical method, 147, 156; birth, 146; boon companion, Lawrence Lekalake, 219*n*33; Botswana Civil Service Association, 160, 168–69, 176, 201; business failures, 84, 180; career in civil service, 159–60, 177; centralization policy, 156; Chairman of Botswana Society, 160; character of, 146–47, 186, 215*n*5; civic virtue, 146; commercial elite vanguard, 178–79; Commonwealth observer (Uganda General Election), 148, 160; company board critic, 181–82; company formation, 80–84, 179–80, 202; constitutional vs. developmental tendencies, 174–76, 186, 202; cosmopolitan Francistown, 163, 202; court interpreter, 165; credible witness, 149, 172; critique of arbitrary power, 148, 165, 185–86; cultural diversity, 151; curriculum vitae, 159; democracy question, 183–85, 203; Deputy Chief Immigration Officer, 148, 167, 181; Discussion Group, 170–74, 201; dispute with Sub-Chief Ramokate, 117; dispute with Vice President K. Q. Masire, 177; District Administration, 164–65, 177; District Commissioner, 177; dress, 146, 148; education of, 162, 160; egalitarian ethos, 155–56; elite circle, 24–25, 28–29, 65, 150; empathy with workers, 147, 165; employment history, 159–60; encounter with President Khama, 171–74; entrepreneurial skill, 178–80, 202–203; executive officer in civil service, 165, 167, 201; exemplary Uncle Mpubuli, 150–56; fairness of civil

SUBJECT INDEX

- Matenge, Gobe Willie (*continued*)
 service, 165–66; family, 147, 214*nn*2–4, 215*nn*10,16; family languages, 156, 162; favorite whiskey, 186–87; Fawcus protégée, 149; financial discipline, 179–80, 202; fluency in Tswana, 162; formative experiences, 147, 200; founder, Association of Training and Development Officers, 160; founder, national archives, 150, 178; founder member, Bechuanaland African Civil Service Association, 160; friendship, 150, 180, 219*n*33; friendships, *see* Campbell, Alec; Chiepe, Gaositwe; Dambe, Chris; Haskins, Jimmie; Hermans, Quill; Lekalake, Lawrence; Makhwadi, Dick; Manna-thoko, Richard; Mogae, Festus; Murray-Hudson, Hugh; Nganunu, Julian; Sesinyi, Bernard; Skelemani, Pandhu; Stanley, Arthur; Tibone, Mbiganyi Charles; Tilbury, Alan; Werbner, Richard; Gaborone house, 148; gatekeeper role, 165; gold mine clerk, 162, 199; grey eminence, 182–84; High Court experience, 166; hobbies, 160, 166; in Home Affairs, 147–48, 160, 164, 178, 202; house in rural home, 215*n*6; identification with Protectorate administration, 164; impresario, 177–78, 202; intelligence officer, 166–67, 217*n*6; inter-ethnic forums, 201; interethnic marriage, 156; Jimmie Haskins and, 163; joke about Isaac Schapera’s authority, 166; kin, 152, 214*nn*2–4, 215*nn*8,10–11,13–16; Kitchen Cabinet of President Mogae, 24; Land Holding director, 83; language rights, 156; localization, 156–57, 216*n*25; management training, 147, 157, 178, 200; manager, Wade Adams, 170; maverick, 182–86, 200; memory, 147, 149, 154, 162, 174; messenger, 159, 164; monitoring civil service, 148; mother Goitseman, 215*nn*10–16; National Accelerated Rural Development Programme (NARDP), 160, 177, 202; networking, 83, 180; not of graduate cadre, 162; opposition party supporter, 182–86; paradoxes of, 186; partially sighted, 166, 217*n*6; party politics, 182–86; patience with fieldworker, 182; perception of colonial officials 157; Permanent Secretary, 147–48, 164, 167, 178; personal integrity, 147, 167; planning and scheduling, 148, 215*n*8; “politician” concept, 152, 155; politician/civil servant balance of power, 168, 172, 174; populist convictions, 148–49, 218–20; post-civil servant, 146; President Festus Mogae and, 24, 159; President Quett Masire and, 178; President Seretse Khama and, 167, 169, 170–74, 201–202; presidential medal for, 178, 202; press, 218*n*20; promotion, 147–48, 177–78; of Protectorate trial procedure, 165; public good, 152–54; public interests, 149–51, 187; Public Officer Emeritus, 146; public service, 165–66; public sphere, 146, 187, 201; racism and, 163–64, 170–71, 200; radical, 183; ranches, 185–86; retirement speech, 168; retrospection, 147–48; ruling party, 183–84; secularist, 150–51, 200; self-image, 146, 183; sense of justice, 167, 186; social capital, 178–80; speeches, 157–58, 185; spends budget, 178; sport, 160; Standard Bank savings, 180; tribal subjection, 151–52, 155; Undersecretary, 177; up from the ranks, 147–48; view of British Protectorate officials, 157; village of, 146, 154, 163; voluntary service, 160; Werbner family’s perceptions of, 181; white settlers, 163–64; wife Daisy, 147, 214*n*2; work ethic, 146, 167, 186; worker and salariat activist, 158, 168, 217*n*10; workers’ struggles, 147, 158, 163, 180, 201; youth in town, 163
- Matenge, Godfrey, 150, 163, 215*n*15
 Matenge, Goitseman, 215*nn*10–16
 Matenge, Joseph, 155
 Matenge, Mpubuli, 150–56, 163, 199, 215*n*13, 216*n*19
 Matenge, Tjakaba (Ambassador), ix, 150, 199, 215*n*13
 Matenge, Zola, ix
mazenge (demons of the wild), 28
 Mazonde, Isaac, ix, x
 Mazonde, Pelonomme, ix
 media. *See* press
 melting pot, 33. *See also* assimilation
 memory: social, 27, 37, 41, 44, 47, 69, 137, 154; translocal 137, 139, 143, 197
 memory work: passion in, 144; postcolonial rites, 144–45, 189, 197; ritual recreation of dead, 137, 143, 197
meratshwana (minorities), 35
 Methodists, 218*n*21. *See also* London Missionary Society (L. M. S.); United Congregational Church of Southern Africa

SUBJECT INDEX

- methodology, elite research, 9
- Minister of Presidential Affairs and Public Administration, 98
- Ministry of Agriculture, 23, 111
- Ministry of Finance, 175
- Ministry of Finance and Development Planning (MFDP), 21, 22, 25, 29–80, 176
- Ministry of Home Affairs, 54, 147, 150
- Ministry of Lands and Local Government, 26–27, 80, 121
- Ministry of Works and Communications, 80, 167
- minorities: ambitious, 178; marginal, 34. *See also* minority
- minoritization, 41–42, 78–79, 121, 190; defined, 34, 40, 163
- minority: cultural imperialism, perception, 37, 119, 121; language right, 34, 46; law as profession, perception, 107; rights, 31 (*see also* human rights); reform pressure, 189; settler minorities, universal rights support, 161, 189. *See also* Birwa; Herero; Kalanga; San; Tswapong; Yei
- mirrored super-tribalism, 64, 67
- misrecognition, clients and quasi-bureaucrats, 124
- Mmusi, Vice President Peter, 72
- Moathodi, Alice, ix
- Moathodi, Gaseitsiwe, ix
- Mochudi, 113
- Mogae, President Festus, 4, 45–47, 68, 186, 190, 195–96, 209n11, 2, 4, 219nn34–37, 220n2; blunders, 14, 86–87, 92, 100; finance as engine of growth, 20; first graduate cadre, 87; High Court judgment, 113; peri-urban bulldozing threat, 113; profile, 87, 89; speech of, 57–59
- Mogwe, Archie, 168–69, 173–74, 217n11
- Molefe, Jimmie, 172–74
- Molutsi, Patrick, 28
- Monarch mine, 162
- Mongwa, Elizabeth, ix
- Mongwa, Timon, ix
- Monnakgotla, Thomas, 216n26
- Mookodi, Bias, 171, 218n16
- morafe* (political community), 35
- moral ethnicity, 68–69, 206n6
- morality, political, 53, 105, 108, 206n6
- Mortensen, Dee, x
- Mothobi, Michael, Pitso lawyer, 106, 211n5, 212–213n19
- multiculturalism, 34, 61, 206n6, 208n4; United Nations backing for, 33
- Murray-Hudson, Hugh, 170–71, 192
- Mwali cult, 76
- Nasha, Minister Margaret, 207n19
- nation, rhetoric of, 38, 49–51, 53, 58, 70–71, 73, 107
- nation building, 171, 192
- National Accelerated Rural Development Programme (NARDP), 160, 177
- National Development Bank, 26
- National Museum and Art Gallery, 148
- nationalism, 37, 80; assimilationist, 31, 38, 61; civic vs. ethnic, 191; uncivil, 84. *See also* moral ethnicity
- natural justice, in Khumalo Affair, 94
- negotiated power, 95, 192–94, 199
- negotiation, 95; land, 114–17, 192; quasi-bureaucrats and clients, 111–12, 122–27
- neighbors, land tenure and, 114–17
- neo-conservatives, 53, 55–56. *See also* Pitso ya Batswana (Forum of the Tswana)
- neo-liberal rhetoric, 53
- networks: elite, 22, 75, 77, 84; open, 135, 144; personal security, 138
- Nganunu, Julian, 169, 211n4; Chief Justice, 23, 54–61; commercial lawyer, 82–83, 180 (*see also* Leno Affair)
- nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), 15, 55
- North East District, 37, 46, 56, 70–72, 110, 114–15, 119, 123–24, 130, 146, 151–52, 162
- North West District, 59
- Northerners vs. Southerners, regional opposition, 40–41, 68, 80, 91
- Notwane Club, 9, 23, 27, 159–60, 166, 186–87
- Nswazwi Affair, 41–42, 66–67, 71, 151–52
- Nswazwi, Sub-Chief John, 66–67, 151
- Nuffield Foundation, ix
- Nyamnjoh, Francis, ix, x
- Nyamnjoh, Henrietta, ix
- Nyati-Ramahobo, Lydia, 59
- Office of the President, 44, 72, 79, 91–92, 95, 98, 167, 169–70, 174, 176–78. *See also* Selepeng, Molosiwa, Permanent Secretary to the President
- Old Guard: in postcolonial civil service, 167, 171; legacy of, 174

SUBJECT INDEX

- One-Nation Consensus, 31, 38–39, 74, 79, 84, 192
- organic bonds, urban elites, 28, 65, 143
- Odhogile, Bojosi, 211*n*5
- paramount chiefs, 36, 41, 51–52, 80, 110, 117, 121. *See also* chiefs
- parastatals, 2, 6, 26, 76, 89, 179
- Parliament, members' interest declaration, 26
- patriarch, Kalanga, 133
- patriarchy: as checked power, 140–41, 182; feminist critique of, 134, 196; symbolism, 138, 142; women and maternal origins, 137
- permeable ethnicity, 68–69
- Phumaphi, Joy, 17, 18, 25–26, 205*n*7, 206*n*1
- Phumapi, Persal, 205*n*7
- Pilane, Sydney, Presidential Adviser, 91–92, 98–101, 106, 211*n*5, 212*nm*8, 17. *See also* Balopi Commission
- Pitso ya Batswana (Forum of the Tswana), 53–57, 96, 98–99, 102–103, 105, 107, 194, 208*n*6
- pluralism: defined, 200; legal, 130, 208*n*11; political, 3, 6, 38, 187, 193–94; political morality in, 208*n*4, 11; state's new direction, 62, 78. *See also* multiculturalism
- political anthropology. *See* public anthropology
- political culture: cartoons, 81, 83; ethnicity, 68; morality in, 107; of *morafe* (political community), 35; rallies, 220*n*41; state systems and, 36; violence, 1, 42, 49, 191, 193
- politics: coalition, 44, 47; language, 49; personal influence and, 151; sport and, 58. *See also* politics of recognition
- politics of recognition, 9, 34–35, 41, 44, 47–62, 85, 191–92, 203; peaceful, 49
- politics of the belly, 2, 78, 137. *See also* Afro-pessimism
- polyethnicity. *See* ethnicity
- populist tradition, in civil service, 171. *See also* Fawcus protégées
- positioning: anthropologist's, 8–9, 204; in politics of recognition, 50–54, 59. *See also* elites; fieldwork
- post-civil service, 25, 28; defined, 27, 148. *See also* Matenge, Gobe Willie
- postcolonial: Botswana as exemplary 1, 2, 85; colonial subjection, campaign against, 39; early civil service tendencies, 174–76; official management styles, 176; paper-work overload, 174; permeable ethnicities, 68; politics vs. administration, 201–202; regionalization, 40; second era (pluralism), 9; studies of decision-making elites, 10; transplants, 110; “when we’s,” 16; wisdom, 2, 4, 13–31, 85, 188–90, wisdom, defined, 21. *See also* administration; Botswana; citizenship; civil service; company directorships; culture; directorate-technocrat complex; democracy; elites; ethnic, violence, spectre of; identity politics; minority; *morafe*; nation, rhetoric of; nationalism; negotiated power; political culture; pluralism; politics of recognition; press; press, freedom of; process; public anthropology; public authority; public consciousness, shift in; public good; state; super-tribalism; translocal relations, colonial and postcolonial; tribal, citizenship; tribal, land
- poverty, 19, 85
- power: balance, civil servants, and politicians, 201–202; checked in patriarchy, 140–41, 182, 198; democratic ethics and, 95–96, 183–86; distrusted in ritual, 143–44; Gobe Matenge on, 152, 155; intractable, 139; among Kalanga, 139; negotiated, 96, 192, 196, 198–99; among Tallensi, 137. *See also* authority; coalition politics; compromise; ethics; negotiation; political culture
- President, Office of, 44, 72, 79, 91–92, 95, 98, 195
- President's Office vs. Attorney General's Chambers, 195
- Presidential Commission of Enquiry, 26–27, 31, 43, 61, 94, 100–101. *See also* Balopi Commission
- Presidential Commission of Enquiry, Landell-Mills, 175–76
- Presidential Commission on Economic Opportunity, 188–89, 195
- press, 14, 40, 55–61, 80, 91–92, 94, 97, 100, 105, 107, 195, 205*n*2; in emergency, 14; freedom of, 15, 17, 208–209*n*11; personalizes public affairs, 92, 97, 100, 104; “release boys,” 218*n*20
- procedural republic, 62, 220*n*4

SUBJECT INDEX

- process, 190. *See also* clientalization; indigenization; minoritization; regionalization; reintegration
- public anthropology, 2, 4–5, 188, 203–204
- public authority, 97, 106. *See also* Attorney General Phandu; elderhood; feminists; forum as process; good governance; Kalanga, elites; Kumalo Affair; negotiation; power; public anthropology; public good; public service; public sphere
- public consciousness, shift in, 34, 192
- public culture, shared (Kalanga, Tswana), 71
- public good, 18, 27–28, 61, 94–95, 108, 188, 194, 196–99; pluralism doubted as, 38
- public life course, 36–38, 147, defined, 196
- public service, 150, 157–58, 199–200; ban on profitable business, 78; urban elites and, 26–27, 107, 150
- public sphere, 27–28, 35, 61, 71, 94–97, 128, 135; alternative, 139, 144; difference in, 34, 62; dignity in, 48; Discussion Group Affair, 169–74; dominance in, 159; expansion of, 31, 34, 55, 67, 86, 107, 176, 200, 203; feminist contribution in, 31, 61; popular assemblies (Kalanga, Tswana), 71; thriving in Botswana, 15; transethnic arena, 34, 85. *See also* deliberation; forum as process; civil society; government; identity politics; pluralism; politics of recognition; press; public anthropology; public authority; public service
- quasi-bureaucrats, 111–12, 123, 128, 197
- racial inequality, 163–64, 170–71, 200. *See also* apartheid
- Radio Mall, 16
- Ramokate, Sub-Chief Kathulo, 117, 119, 155–56, 162
- Ranger, Terence, x
- real estate, 78–84, 160; in Gaborone, 26, 180. *See also* Gaborone; High Court; land boards; Leno Affair
- reasonable radicals: activists, 167–68; apparent rarity in Africa, 1; Botswana Civil Service Association, 168; civic associations, 187; cosmopolitans, 63–64; dialogue among, 182–86, 199; entrepreneurs, 26, 80–84, 163, 178–80; ethnic interests, 65, 156; interest in minority and language rights, 34, 156; networks, 83, 180; tradition defined, 199; workers' struggles and, 157, 161. *See also* cosmopolitan ethnicity, defined; Matenge, Gobe Willie
- referendum, on judiciary, 93
- referendum dispute, 55, 86, 91–92, 99–100, 102. *See also* Attorney General Phandu; Khumalo Affair
- referendum writ, 92–93, 211–12 *n*7
- reflexive unfolding, 9, 147, 156. *See also* biography; Matenge, Gobe Willie
- reform, minority pressure for, 189
- refugees, 71
- regionalization, 40, 41, 80, 190; defined, 40
- reintegration: tribal, 38, 39, 45, 190, 207 *n*17; defined, 40
- reinvention of law, 121–22, 125–27, 130
- relational analysis, 6
- religion, 150–51. *See also* ritual; shrines
- representation, 31, 51
- research method, 8, 9, 189. *See also* fieldwork
- reserves, financial, 20
- responsibility, 27, 105, 140–41
- revelatory moment, 35, 37, 41, 45, 53
- rights, 3, 32, 35, 37, 41, 45, 53, 60, 66–67, 121, 156; citizens and land boards, 114–18; culture and, 5, 41, 45, 48–50, 62; group, 48–49, 59; human, 3–4, 48–49, 53; indigenous, 43, 49, 213 *n*1; land board, 114–18, 121, 130; politics of recognition and, 48, redress against state, 104; squatters, 113
- ritual, 65; procedural responsibility of kin, 198. *See also* ancestors, care for; commemorative ritual; elderhood; memory; patriarchy; shrines
- Robbins, Joel, x
- Rotarian, Kalanga elite, 65
- rule of law, 60, 111, 130, 194
- ruling party, 39, 46, 62, 78, 124, 182–84, 214 *n*8, 219 *n*27; 1969 Manifesto, 110
- rumor, political, 7, 16, 31, 82–83, 93, 105, 195. *See also* press; “takeover”
- rural-urban, 6; dynamics in ritual, 198
- sacred centrality, Kalanga, 143, 198
- sacrifice, 133, 140–41; Attorney General Skelemani and, 65, 214 *n*1

SUBJECT INDEX

- St. Joseph's College, Kgale, 157, 162
- salariat, 25, 27, 147; capital accumulation, 179, 202; income demands, 147, 176
- Salaries Review Commission, 147, 217n10
- San: precolonial, 36; relocation criticized, 15–16, 43, 191, 213n1. *See also* indigenization; Kalahari peoples, relocation of scandal, 206n8; Leno Affair, 82–83
- Schapera, Isaac, 37, 42, 166; honored, 216
- Sechaba Investment Trust, 179. *See also* investment, elites'; parastatals
- Sefalana, 179. *See also* investment, elites'; parastatals
- Segopolo, Segametse, 211n7
- Selepeng, Molosiwa, Permanent Secretary to the President, 91, 95–96, 99–100
- self-allocation, tribal land, 113, 125, 127
- self-identification, 52, 64
- Selolwane, Onalena, x
- Serowe, 79, 84. *See also* Tshekedi, Ngwato, Paramount Chief
- Sesinyi, Bernard, 120, 125–26, 171–72, 218n17
- settler minorities, 26, 76–77, 219n38
- shareholding, 163; civil servants allowed, 78
- shrines: devotion by Attorney General Skelemani, 65, 140; division of labour, 140, 198; endurance, 137, 142; man's public life course, 36–38, 197; momentum image, 141. *See also* divining shrine; Kalanga; Tallensi
- Skalnik, Peter, x
- Skelemani, Phandu, 45–46, 87, 88, 93, 95–105, 211nn12,15–16,19; career history, 94; Tswana language competence, Kalanga speaker, 207n22, 212n15; sacrifice by, 65, 140. *See also* Attorney General Phandu
- social capital, 76, 178–80. *See also* company formation; Matenge, Gobe Willie; networks
- social science, organizing ideas, 204
- Society for the Propagation of Ikalanga Language (SPIL), 54, 57–59, 66–67, 98, 208nn6–9. *See also* Bakalanga Students Association (BSA); Kalanga Cultural Association
- Solway, Jackie, x
- South Africa, dominance of, 78, 170–71; Kalanga investment in, 77
- Southern African Customs Union (SACU), 175
- Special Branch, 170, 172; government paranoia and, 218n22
- spin doctor, of President Mogae, 44, 191–92, 206n12. *See also* Pilane, Sydney, Presidential Adviser
- squatting, 113
- staff associations. *See* Bechuanaland African Civil Service Association, demands; Botswana Civil Service Association (BCSA)
- state: as amoral market, 1; capable in Botswana, 2, 20–21, 27, 85, 94–95, 192; co-optive, 39, 73–74, 79; criminalization, 2; customs union, 175–76; developmental, 20–21; emergency, 13, 14, 86; ethos of action, 3, 4; financial option, 20; human rights, 31; indigenous rights, 31, 48; local and national, tension, 39, 109, 123–24; majoritarian dominance in, 22, 50–51; ministries and Leno Affair, 82; minority languages in, 34, 46; minority rights, 48–51, 60; negotiated power in, 96; parastatals in, 2, 6, 26, 76, 89, 179; politics of recognition in, 48–49. *See also* administration; Attorney General's Chambers; Bechuanaland African Civil Service Association, demands; “blundering”; Botswana; Botswana Civil Service Association (BCSA); *Botswana Daily News*; bureaucracy; colonial; centralization; citizenship; civil service; civil society; De Beers Botswana; development; good governance; government; High Court; land boards; Matenge, Gobe Willie; *names of specific ministries*; pluralism; populist tradition, in civil service; post-civil service; postcolonial; Presidential Commission of Enquiry; public authority; public good; public service; public sphere; quasi-bureaucrats; salariat; staff associations; technocrat, rhetoric
- state building, 4; elites, 87, 89
- state salariat, 147, 168
- Steenkamp, Philip, 26, 72, 117, 217n11, 218n20, 219n27
- stigma, 108
- stocks, investment, 178
- straddling, 3, 41; defined, 205n2; elderhood, 135, 139; strangers, 138. *See also* networks; urban villagers
- strangers, incorporation of, 42, 68, 70, 116, 191. *See also* autochthony; capital city; ethnicity

SUBJECT INDEX

- studying up, 7
- subjection, tribal, 60. *See also* Kamanakao Association; Nswazwi Affair
- subjectivity: ethics and, 136, 197, 203; in ritual passion, 13–17
- subordination, Kalanga resistance to, 154–56, 184. *See also* Nswazwi Affair
- Sunday Tribune*, 208n8
- Supa-Ngwao Museum, 156
- super-tribalism, 51, 53, 69–70, 192, 209n7; colonial boarding school students and, 67; cosmopolitanism and, 64, 67; defined, 67; mirrored, 64
- systems: bounded vs. unbounded, 135; closed, 197
- “takeover,” 45, 54, 73, 97, 210nn19–20. *See also* Kalanga, scare
- Taleland, 136–38
- Tallensi, 136–38; maternal origins and patriarchy, 137
- Tati Company, 151, 216n22. *See also* J. Haskins and Sons
- Tati Land Board, 110, 114–15, 119, 122–23
- Tati Reserve, 151–55. *See also* North East District
- Taylor, Charles 34
- technocrat: on land boards, 112, 124, 130; of President Mogae, 89; rhetoric, 23; wisdom, 15, 18, 23. *See also* post–civil service
- territoriality, 110. *See also* translocal relations, colonial and postcolonial
- Thema, B. C., Minister of Education, 171–72, 218n21
- Thusanyo, real estate company, 84
- Tibone, Mbiganyi Charles, 25, 76, 181; chairman, Barclays Bank, 23, 182
- Tilbury, Alan, 170, 217n12
- trade, colonial, 111, 117, 151, 196–97
- traditional authority, 144. *See also* chiefs; land boards; memory work; patriarchy; public authority; tribe
- transcendence, interethnic, 56, 63, 67
- Transkei, Kalanga and, 69
- translocal, memory work, 139
- translocal relations, colonial and postcolonial, 28, 36, 42, 136, 198
- transparency, 26, 194
- Transparency International, 28, 187
- transplanted institution, 110, 123, 128
- tribal: bureaucrats, 197 (*see also* quasi-bureaucrats); citizenship, 33–35, 39–40, 42, 51–52, 60, 110, 114–17, 129–30, 177; inheritance, 113, 126–27; land, 31, 51, 60, 110, 113–16, 197; postcolonial policies, 110, 197; postcolonial reform, 39, 52, 110; private interests in, 113, 116, 122; self-allocation, 113, 125, 127; subjection, 31, 42. *See also* Nswazwi Affair
- Tribal Territories Amendment Act, 52
- tribalism, 39–40, 53, 55, 68, 74, 97–98, 119
- tribe, 30–31, 35, 135; ambiguous definition, 35, 37, 52, 60; heritage defended, 53; process of reintegration, 110, 118. *See also* galactic polity; *morafe*
- trust: intra-ethnic and interethnic, 63, 76–78, 85; personal and interpersonal, 38–40, 45, 180; state context for, 34, 77, 105
- Tshekedi, Ngwato Paramount Chief, 66–67, 151–52
- Tswana: ethnic, 21, 30, 38, 64, 67, 80–81; nationalists, cultural, 37; historical consciousness of, 69–70; polity (*morafe*), 35–37
- Tswanalization, defined, 38. *See also* Lefatshe Larona; Tswanification
- Tswanification. *See* Tswanalization, defined
- Tswapong, 47, 190, 209n2. *See also* Lentswe la Batswapong
- Tuzin, Don, x
- tyranny, 189
- unbounded systems, 135, 144
- uncivil nationalism, 84
- unfinished narratives, 41. *See also* Nswazwi Affair
- unions, perception by President Khama, 169, 217ng. *See also* Bechuanaland African Civil Service Association; Botswana Civil Service Association (BCSA); staff associations
- United Congregational Church of Southern Africa, 151. *See also* London Missionary Society (L. M. S.)
- unity in diversity, 45, 49
- university graduates, first cadre, 22, 162. *See also* Dambe, Chris; Makepe, Phineas; Mannathoko, Richard; Mogae, President Festus; Nganunu, Julian
- University of Botswana, 23, 28, 33, 54, 59, 70, 72, 80, 104, 185–86

SUBJECT INDEX

- University of Botswana Democracy Project,
38, 179, 192
- urban villagers, 42, 44, 192; defined, 6,
31, 215*nn*10–11; memory work at home,
139–40, 143; in rural ritual, 65, 139,
143
- Vice President, 72, 89–90
- vultures, in Parliament, 90
- Wade Adams (Pty), 166, 178–79
- Wenner-Gren Foundation, ix
- Werbner, Ben, 187
- Werbner, Donna, 187
- Werbner, Pnina, v, x, 24, 187
- whistle-blower, Leno Affair, 171, 180
- White Paper, on constitution, 45–47,
207*n*21
- white settlers, 26, 76–77, 151, 163. *See also*
Beeby, Alf; Haskins, Jimmie; Hermans,
Quill; Murray-Hudson, Hugh; Steenkamp,
Philip
- Winstanley, George, 217*n*12
- witchcraft, 134–35, 151
- women: importance for patriarchy, 140–
41, 134, 137, 182, 196; Kalanga men and
Tswana, 30
- work ethic, 165
- working class, 147, 158, 162, 165, 180
- World Bank, 75
- World Group, 75
- Yeyi, 36, 59
- Young Turks, 171. *See also* Old Guard
- Zimbabwe, 13–14, 36, 70–71, 189, 192

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