THE STATE AND THE SOCIAL
State Formation in Botswana and Its Pre-Colonial and Colonial Genealogies

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Botswana has often been portrayed as an oasis of peace and harmony, admired for its continuous parliamentarian democracy, esteemed for the sustainable strength of its postcolonial state and widely recognized for its tremendous economic growth. One might assume that these developments have come about due to Western ideas and practices of government, with their strong emphasis on electoral democracy and a well-functioning state bureaucracy having successfully replaced the premodern structures of power. It is my contention, however, that the postcolonial state of Botswana is best comprehended as a unique, complex formation arising dialectically from the intersection of Western ideas and practices with indigenous structures of power. On the one hand, I argue that symbolic conceptions and hierarchies of authority rooted in indigenous politics have, to a significant extent, been integral to the contemporary political processes of state formation in postcolonial Botswana. On the other hand, I shall explain how global forces have been decisive for state formation in the country, in postcolonial as well as precolonial times.

Let me say at once that my argument is not primordial, nor do I claim that contemporary Botswana is simply the invention of colonial and postcolonial modernism. There are significant continuities from the past into the present that I want to explain by examining the transformation of state processes in precolonial and colonial times with reference to a globally determined, shifting historical context. But the postcolonial significance of these continuities is the result of modern forces acting on and through sociopolitical symbols and institutions that have lengthy lineages, which are, I reiterate, both historical and in a constant state of change.
There is vast literature by political economists, political scientists and sociologists on Botswana that has contributed much to our comprehension of the development of an efficient, modern state government, a sustainable parliamentarian democracy and a forceful state-centred, diamond-driven political economy. In general, this literature presents a political economy that furnishes the state treasury with tremendous resources – financing very extensive state ‘development’ policies, programmes and projects that have also been massively supported, technically and financially, by international ‘development’ agencies. These scholars do, however, not agree on how successful Botswana’s development has been, especially in view of escalating income differences, leaving a very substantial section of the population persistently below the official poverty threshold (Taylor 2005: 46f.). Further, the celebration of Botswana’s parliamentarian democracy has been questioned, particularly with reference to all the powers concentrated in the Office of the President and the Botswana Democratic Party ruling ever since independence in 1966. Nevertheless, virtually all of the literature acknowledges the successful establishment of a strong state with a forceful ruling group and an efficient government apparatus.

And so do I. However, my approach to the question of how this has come about is different. In my view, the main conditions for the formation of a strong postcolonial state in Botswana cannot be found by means of government-centred approaches, notwithstanding their significance for understanding how the political economy has evolved and governmental institutions are constructed and operate. Major conditions for Botswana’s relative success in establishing a strong state with a sustainable government – seen in relation to many other African countries – have to be discovered by examining how it has progressively situated itself in the larger social context. I shall do so without restricting myself to local issues of ‘state effects’ since I am centrally concerned how the post-colonial state has grounded itself in the larger social context, encompassing the ‘local’.

In this pursuit, I am centrally concerned with how it could be that people of power and wealth across ‘tribal’ boundaries joined together with other significant elites in a highly sustainable grand coalition underpinning the ruling group that took firm control over the state at Botswana’s independence in 1966. Seen in a wider African context of competing elites generating weak states with notoriously unstable governments, this is a critical question. And there is no obvious answer to it, when taking into account the considerable potential of mobilisation amongst some of Botswana’s indigenous polities. At the time of independence the large majority of the country’s population was embraced by seven Tswana kingdoms (merafe, singl. morafe), including vast ethnic ‘minorities’. Their ruling groups, and above all, the supreme royal authority known as kgosi (pl. dikgosi) had been strongly empowered under the British wing. What have been the conditions for these and other dominant elites’ shared ambition in developing a modern nation-state, despite all their difference and conflicts? And how did they continue to prevail in the context of the merafe under post-colonial circumstances?

These are key questions because the dominant elites ensured, on the one hand, that indigenous institutions of jurisprudence – and thus extensive structures of social control – were, from the outset, quite integral to the post-colonial state’s administration justice. On the other hand, these elites constituted a major agency of transformation by which the conjunction of Eurocentric ideas and institutions, indigenous authority structures and distinctive global forces related to international beef and diamond trade conditioned a rapid development of a modern state. I am addressing this issue from the perspective that state formations everywhere are representing a unique assemblage of power, determined by local, regional and global conditions, by contemporary and historical trajectories.

Afro-pessimistic, Eurocentric orientations assert that the calamities of postcolonial Africa would be remedied if African governments would subscribe to human rights principles, adhere to a Christian moral code, adopt Western technology and managerial practices, practise free trade and undergo a radical political modernisation. It has often been claimed that a well-functioning modern state would naturally follow the introduction of a Western-style democratic government, operating in terms of Weberian bureaucratic virtues of universalism and separation of public larger scale. What is often recognized as the seminal work on political anthropology – African Political Systems (Fortes and Evans-Pritchard eds. 1940) – provides early examples of such an effort, as do a range of subsequent studies, including Leach (1954), Barth (1959), Geertz (1980), Claessen and Skalnik eds. (1978), Vateri (1985), Kapferer (1988), Trouillot (1990) and Hansen (1999).
and private interests. Thus, Africa must get rid of what is conceived as its heritage of clientelism and all the ‘irrational’ ideas and practices arising from exercise of occult power. As other scholars have pointed out, such an outsider’s view of African political life reflects a broader ‘tendency in Western social scientific and popular writings on Africa to deal in stereotypes, to reduce its politics to typifying adjectives – communalist, patriarchal, paternalist’ (Comaroff and Comaroff 1997b: 129). Consequently, those imbued with a Western outlook often draw the conclusion that the ideal of a sustainable, autonomous nation-state is only possible following emancipation from the ostensibly destructive influence of premodern political formations.

The case of Botswana challenges such views and demonstrates that indigenous political and social conditions do not necessarily generate unstable strongman structures with fluctuating clientelistic networks that operate violently and destructively in relation to efforts of developing a stable modern state. On the contrary, I shall argue that however ‘modern’ the postcolonial state in Botswana appears in its manifestation of vast modern Western-style practices and institutions of government, the development of its force is very attributable to extensive incorporation of symbolism and institutions of authority anchored in indigenous cosmology. These are cosmologically anchored structures highly integral to people’s lives and have, as we shall see, been reproduced through their own transformations and adaptation to post-colonial circumstances. One important dimension to be examined is the strong popular perception of hierarchies of authority as essential to peace and order (kagiso) – existentially critical to good health, prosperity and welfare.

Concentrating especially upon the formative and consolidating period of the post-colonial state (1966–1990) in this volume, I want to explain how agents of the state have, quite successfully, exploited this symbolic wealth in the effort to develop an imaginary of the state in accordance with people’s idealising perception of authority as ‘the one from whom good things come.’ The considerable degree of legitimacy the ruling group seems to have enjoyed during this critical period of time – combined with the coherence of the dominant elites – has been imperative for capturing indigenous institutions of social control into the structures of the modern state. The indigenous symbolism, practices and institutions of authority have, moreover, been conducive to bringing people into the process of state formation by working on their subjectivities by virtue of state agents’ interventions in the population, gently and with very limited use of overt coercive force. In order to come to terms with the distinctive ways in which indigenous symbolic and socio-political conditions have been important for the rise of a strong postcolonial state in Botswana, I shall trace their genealogies in precolonial and colonial state formations by an examination of their historical development.

All that said about processes and structures significant for the formation and consolidation of the modern state in Botswana, let me stress that I do not view ‘the social’ as solely a passive, contextual matter in which the state has grounded itself: I am centrally concerned with people’s experience of the state through the discursive and material realities which the state has given raise to (cf. Krohn-Hansen and Nustad 2005: 15) and how people have increasingly reacted to repercussions of post-colonial state formation that have affected their lives adversely. In order to come to terms with such repercussions I am moving beyond the formative and consolidating decades of the postcolonial state because these repercussions are most evident after 1990.

In this pursuit I shall address two major trends. On the one hand, vast communities of ethnic minorities that have been under the domination of the major Tswana merana since precolonial times, have voiced their protest in public against discrimination and demanded recognition – along with dominant Tswana – within the context of the nation-state. In view of the magnitude of these communities I shall discuss their attack on the state leadership and examine the conditions for ‘minority’ mobilization against the perceived dominant Tswana. On the other hand, escalating discrepancies of income and wealth have progressively given rise to social tensions and adversely affected the legitimacy of political leaders. Occasionally this development has manifested itself in popular protests entailing violent confrontations with state armed forces. I am addressing these trends in view of their apparently growing potentialities of challenging seriously the post-colonial state.

Let me then proceed to develop the points suggested so far in the pursuit of spelling out the major issues of the following chapters and how I want to address them.

Issues of Patrimonialism, Globalisation and Modern Nation-State Building in Africa

My concern with the relationship between modern state formation in Africa and indigenous ideas, practices and structures of power, links up with issues that have attracted considerable scholarly interest for a long time. In important respects this trend of research has been much inspired by Bayart’s (1993) seminal study The State in Africa. The book’s subtitle, The Politics of the Belly, refers to a celebrated virtue of political leadership
found in many societies in Africa. Bayart (1993: 242–43) speaks of this virtue as an ‘African way of politics’ by which a ‘man of power who is able to amass and redistribute wealth becomes a “man of honour”’... material prosperity is one of the chief political virtues rather than being an object of disapproval ... [W]ealth is a potential sign of being at one with the forces of cosmos’. This is rendered as patently a ‘patrimonial’ kind of political system where the accumulation of wealth is conceived by subjects as essential for their protection, support and welfare. Bayart (1993: 261) asserts its pervasive significance within the postcolonial context where the state ‘functions as a rhizome of personal networks and assures the centralisation of power through agencies of family, alliance and friendship’, militating strongly against a development from a ‘weak’ to an ‘integral state’. The logic of ‘the politics of the belly’ under the conditions of the postcolonial state implies ‘the unbridled predatoriness and violence of political entrepreneurs’ (1993: 243). The heated competition for power generates notoriously political fragmentation that involves a dangerous battle – of life and death (1993: 238) – making ‘the State in Africa’ fragile, weak and failing.

Similarly, Chabal and Daloz (1999: 162) claim that in African postcolonial states there is an ‘inbuilt bias in favour of greater disorder and against the formation of Western-style legal, administrative and institutional foundations required for development’. In such unstable states, ‘political acts are played out on the market place of the various patrimonial networks concerned’ (1999: 157, emphasis added) generating a notoriously destabilising force. They argue that ‘in the absence of any other viable means needed to sustain neo-patrimonialism, there is inevitably a tendency to link politics to realms of increased disorder, be it war or crime’ (1998: 162, emphasis added). Berman (1998: 305), equally concerned with the destructive impacts of ‘patrimonialism’, argues that ‘[p]atron–client networks remain the fundamental state–society linkage in circumstances of social crisis and uncertainty and have extended to the very center of the state’. The ill fate of African postcolonial states has in other words often been conceived in a Weberian, central-government-focused conception of ‘patrimonialism’, and, by extension, ‘neo-patrimonialism’ or even ‘pathological patrimonialism’. (I shall question the utility of the notion of ‘patrimonialism’ at the end of the following section.)

Many of Africa’s political disasters have thus been attributed to a contradiction between, on the one hand, ideals of the autonomous state premised on Western, bureaucratic rationality and, on the other, African realities of particularism and clientelism. It is often assumed that such realities give rise to monstrous leaderships and terrorist movements and stir up tribalism. The perception of such threats amongst postcolonial political leaders committed to projects of nation-state building are clearly reflected in how they in many instances tried to get rid of or reduce substantially the significance of indigenous authorities during the first era of independence. President Samora Machel of Mozambique, for example, asserted that ‘[t]o unite all Mozambicans, transcending traditions and different languages, requires that the tribe must die on our consciousness so that the nation may be born’ (Machel 1974: 39, quoted after Bertelsen 2009: 125). Only in some very few countries ‘tribes’ and their leaders were officially recognized, and this includes Botswana. In this country, the status of the royal Tswana chiefs (dìgosi, singl. kgosi) had been consolidated, but by no means created, by the British and it was further enshrined in the Constitution of the independent state of Botswana. African postcolonial state leaders were – with obvious reason – deeply worried about the dangers of ‘tribalism’. Subscribing to Western ideals of political modernisation, many made considerable efforts to curtail or eliminate traditional authority figures.

Finally, the West has, in postcolonial times, acted much as protagonists for the establishment of the modern state on African soils, yet also – in other disguises – represented major forces working contrary to their strength and sustainability. While much attention has been given to the deteriorating impacts of globalisation on nation-states all over the world during recent decades, such impacts have a long history on this continent all through the eras of imperialism and colonialism. During the latter half of the twentieth century – the postcolonial era – the rulers of many African states have maintained internal control with the support of one of the superpowers, at least until the end of the Cold War. And they did so, argues Reno (1999: 22f.), by using this support to coerce domestic ‘strongmen’ into structures of clientelism rather than to develop a state apparatus on the basis of bureaucratic principles. This strategy has generally created extremely shaky states, especially because as soon as the Cold War terminated, the conditions for clientelism evaporated and the strongmen turned against their previous patrons at the centre of government. In this vein of analysis of the formation of the postcolonial state, all the ostensibly destructive practices of patrimonialism reviewed above are directly related to global forces.

The consequence has, in many instances, been notoriously unstable states, often characterized by violence. It has been maintained that this

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8. The other countries in which traditional authorities were given official recognition at their independence include Nigeria and Malawi beside Botswana.
trend has generally given rise to an unattractive image of ‘Africa’, militating effectively against foreign investment, effecting consequent economic stasis and excessive poverty (e.g., Bhinda et al. 1999). And when transnational capital interests have spotted a profitable opportunity on the African continent, they have operated in highly selective ways within specific areas without concern for a positive economic impact upon larger regions and without working constructively to support the state political economy of the relevant country. Also, the massive penetration of nongovernmental organisations on the continent has apparently at best played an ambiguous role in relation to the sustainability of the nation-state in Africa (e.g., Ferguson 2006: 13–14).

From Abandonment to Resurgence of ‘Traditional Authorities’

The case of Botswana is important because it illuminates so well ways to avoid such calamities. A case study of this country might thus contribute to remedy what Englebert (2002: 51ff.) has identified as a major problem of theories that purport to offer continent-wide explanations: they ‘fail to account for intra-African differences’. Most apparently, while diamond economies have substantially amplified violent conflicts and civil wars in countries such as Angola and Sierra Leone, Botswana’s diamonds – like its cattle industry – have been successfully integrated into the state-centred political economy in ways that have, as I shall explain in this volume, contributed decisively to bringing the major elites of the country together in a persistent and strong interest in political stability and societal peace and order. The state has been able to counter external forces from a position of considerable strength, which for example has enabled it to bring the various NGOs under Botswana’s umbrella of government programmes and projects. In view of the often uneasy relations between capitalist corporations and nation-states (e.g., Hardt and Negri 2000: 325ff.), it is quite remarkable how the state in Botswana has managed to establish an advantageous, sustainable agreement with such a powerful corporation as the De Beers mining company. Their joint agreement has ensured that the state receives a substantial share from mining proceeds as well as direct representation on the board of the mining company, which has further strengthened the state’s bargaining position (Sentsho 2005: 138; cf. Harvey and Lewis 1990: 123ff.; Leith 2005: 61ff., Chapter 3 below).

However, in order to come to terms with how international relations could possibly have such a constructive impact upon postcolonial state formation in Botswana, we need to address carefully another field of difference that has become ever more apparent since the late 1980s. While many postcolonial state leaders in Africa attempted at the inception of the independent state to eliminate ‘traditional authorities’, their force, vitality and persistence proved in due course to be considerable. For example, in such a turbulent state as Zaïre (Congo), many chiefs de facto consolidated their … authority in the institutional and administrative chaos that followed independence. In an attempt to depoliticize the country after the 1965 coup, Mobutu returned to office all the chiefs that had been deposed (De Boeck 1996: 82). Unsuccessful attempts were made to terminate this policy in the 1970s. In spite of the fact that ‘the regime continues to view the traditional authorities as potentially threatening’, the chiefdoms had to be restored to their full status, which ‘led to a situation in which the state apparatus co-exists in various degrees of interdependence with traditional socio-political structures of varying degrees of coherence, power and autonomy’ (De Boeck 1996: 82–83). The Zaïre example exemplifies the kind of contradictions of, on the one hand, conflicting interests and, on the other, mutual dependency between ‘state’ and ‘chiefdoms’ that has become increasingly evident throughout most of the continent since decolonisation. Such contradictions have sponsored transformations and instabilities in many different state contexts, with, for each case, particular configurations of ambiguities and ambivalence.

This trend has apparently triggered a major shift of state strategies – from abandonment to resurgence of ‘traditional leaders’ (e.g., see Ray and van Rouveroy van Nieuwlaat 1996; von Trotha 1996). There are, to be sure, different scholarly views about what this trend actually involves.

9. I am, to be sure, not suggesting that diamonds have caused calamities everywhere else in Africa; other cases in point where diamonds have no such consequences include Namibia and South Africa.

10. Ambiguities and ambivalence in the relationship between postcolonial state and indigenous authority figures are clearly reflected in von Rouveroy van Nieuwlaat’s (1999) comparative discussion of what he refers to as the ‘hybrid role of chieftaincy in postcolonial Africa’. They are, moreover, reflected in a number of case studies, including Cameron (Awaaso 2005), Ghana (Lenz 1998; Rathbone 2000), Mozambique (Berretli 2003; Buur and Kyed 2006), Nigeria (Vaughan 2006), South Africa (Oomen 2005), Tanzania (e.g. Bien 1970), Uganda (Karlstrom 1996), and Zimbabwe (e.g. Ladley 1991). These ambiguities are interestingly illuminated by Western Zambia, where there has been an opposite trend: Van Binzenbergen first explained that ‘chieftainship is closely interlocked with state authority [in modern Zambia] to the extent that “the incumbents of positions of the state … in their effective exercise of popularly supported power, simply cannot do without chiefs”’ (1987: 191–92). Later he related that “[w]hile the first decades of the postcolonial era they [the royal chiefs] effectively expanded into formal administrative and representative bodies of the modern state, this process has now been reversed, largely as a result of regional ethnic conflict’ (1999: 129).

11. Cf. Kyed and Buur 2007 for a recent, comprehensive review; see also van Dijk and van Rouveroy van Nieuwlaat 1999.
While Skalnik (2004) argues that the resurgence of traditional leaders reflects ‘failed states’ efforts to regain their strength, others place emphasis on the ability of the stronger postcolonial states to make indigenous authorities instrumental to expand their governmental controls and interventions in the population. Englebert (2002: 190), for example, claims that the legitimacy of the state in Africa would be enhanced by its incorporation of traditional institutions. In a similar optimistic spirit, Sklar (2005) makes the case for a notion of ‘mixed government’ and sketches a model according to which there are two distinct structures of authority whereby chiefs and state relate to the citizens through separate spheres. Such a model is, however, not problematic, maintain Buur and Kyed (2007: 105) with reference to the case of postcolonial Mozambique, where the state has recognized some four thousand traditional leaders as community authorities since 2002. They maintain that these authority figures ‘may actually increase their access to and enlarge their scope of power’ by which the state may ‘run the risk of distanced traditional leaders from the communities they formally represent’ (2007: 123–4; see also Englebert 2005: 54; Wernher 1996: 16).

The dilemma suggested here echoes the contradiction Gluckman identified long ago in his seminal analysis of ‘the village headman’ in a colonial context. He argued that ‘the delicacy of the headman’s position arises from conflicting principles’ (Gluckman 1949: 93). In order to come to terms with this kind of conflict, we have to go significantly beyond the scope of all the scholarly works that restrict the issue of ‘resurgence’ by focusing narrowly on the relationships between the state governments and indigenous authority figures. As I hope the present work will demonstrate, we need to carefully examine the whole system of social relations in which such ‘traditional leaders’ are embedded, especially the symbolism of power grounded in indigenous cosmology and constitutive to hierarchies of authority relations.

A number of scholars have recognized the great significance of indigenous hierarchies of authority to the formation of a modern state in Botswana. Contrasting Botswana and Congo, which both are blessed with abundant, highly valuable mineral wealth but are radically different in respect of the sustainability of state leadership and societal controls, Englebert (2002: 107) argues that ‘the quality of leadership and the construction of state capacity in Botswana are directly related to the embeddedness of its postcolonial state into pre-colonial patterns of political authority.’ Furthermore, in search for the political foundation of development in Botswana, Beaulier and Subrick (2006: 105) claim that in this country ‘political authority stems from traditional sources.’ Maundeni (2002: 126) holds that the postcolonial state in Botswana ‘inherited an indigenous state culture which it used to construct an indigenous development state.’ Moreover, under the subtitle ‘Chiefdomacy and democracy as dynamic realities in Botswana’ Nyamnjoh (2003: 235) asserts that ‘the assumption that ... [chiefdomacy] is incompatible with modernity and democracy has no empirical foundation.’

In a wide ranging, critical review of scholarly usage of the Weberian notions of ‘patrimonialism’ and ‘neo-patrimonialism’ in African contexts, Pitcher, Moran and Johnston (2009: 149) argue, with particular reference to Botswana, that ‘there is nothing inherent in patrimonialism to prevent creation of a democracy by leaders determined to do so.’ They hold that ‘[f]or Weber, patrimonialism was not a synonym for corruption, “bad government,” violence, tribalism, or a weak state. Instead it was a specific form of authority and source of legitimacy’ (ibid.: 126). Thus conceived, they argue, ‘[a] more complete application suggests that Botswana – one of Africa’s success stories – may also be one of its most clearly “patrimonial” or “neopatrimonial” states.’ (ibid.: 150) They claim that this country’s ‘elites have not abandoned patrimonialism or overcome it; rather they have built a democratic state on a foundation of traditional and highly personalized reciprocities and loyalties’ (ibid.: 145, emphasis added).

These authors argue that indigenious authority structures might work forcefully in favour of the development of a strong state in Africa, which I, of course, endorse. However, I reject their notion of Botswana as an example of how patrimonialism in the Weberian sense might constructively underpin the formation of a modern, democratic state. The authors’ conception of what they call ‘patrimonial legitimacy’ as a matter of highly personalized reciprocities and loyalties leads them to suggest that ‘patron-client’ relationships have been crucial for the successful grounding of the modern state in indigenous political relations in this country. In my analysis, by contrast, the post-colonial leadership in Botswana has succeeded because indigenous authorities have not been linked up with the modern state in relationships of ‘highly personalized reciprocities and loyalties’. Rather, they were, as we shall see, from the outset incorporated in the bureaucratic structures of the modern state as civil servants by means of rational-legal provisions.

12. Weber did not speak of ‘patrimonial legitimacy’, but patrimonial domination and rule (Weber 1978 1020f), the ruler’s authority being predominantly – but not necessarily entirely – sourced by ‘traditional grounds’ for claim to legitimacy (ibid.: 215). Hence, it does not make sense to insist that ‘patrimonialism’ is ‘not a regime type’ but ‘a kind of legitimacy’ (Pitcher et al. 2009: 149). After all, notions of ‘patrimonial state’, ‘patrimonial administration’ and ‘patrimonial domination’ – i.e. ‘regimes’ – are indeed apparent in Weber’s texts (e.g. Weber 1978: 1013f.).
This means that they were effectively barred by state legislation from engaging in party politics. There have, to be sure, been some instances of informal and tacit impacts by indigenous authorities upon the modern political field. But on the whole they have been kept efficiently at bay. Furthermore, it would be far off the mark to classify the modern political practice as clientelistic. Although the ruling party has increasingly been under attack for attempting to gain support by means of allocating favours and other practices of bribery and corruption, political life in this country contrasts sharply with that of countries like Italy where my recent research has made it evident to me how the country's pervasive networks of patron-client relations work in ways highly detrimental to democratic political processes (Gulbrandsen, in prep.).

I want to show that, by incorporating indigenous authorities at different levels in the structures of the post-colonial state of Botswana, the political leadership has, quite successfully, encompassed indigenous hierarchies of authority into the process of modern state formation. These are institutionalized hierarchies that do not necessarily open up for the kind of political entrepreneurship associated with a patron's operation of personalized clientelistic networks. Although they certainly have that kind of potentiality also in Botswana, the strength of the state has depended much upon its leadership's capacity to prevent this potentiality to manifest in post-colonial politics, especially during the formative and consolidating decades that are, I reiterate, of major concern in this volume.

Even more significantly, I shall explain, these hierarchies and indigenous governmental structures are inseparable from people's everyday lived-in-world, and are institutions right in the middle of it. We are hence faced with the complex task of coming to terms with the intricate ways in which this form of indigenous symbolism, practices and institutions of authority have interfaced with European ideas and practices in the formation of a distinctively Botswana modern state. For this purpose I question the analytical value of the notion of 'patronialism,' especially when conceived as a matter of 'personal connections between leader and subject, or patrons and clients' (Pitcher et al. 2009: 129). That is, a conception of reciprocal relations between ruler and subjects that focuses the transactional pragmatism-aspects of exercise of power (cf. Weber 1978: 101ff.). Certainly, such an approach might be very beneficial to analyze particular features of pre-modern political systems, especially those of an acephalous kind as eminently demonstrated by Barth (1959). Also in the present study I have found some use of an actor/interaction perspective and, of course, the Weberian conception of sources of authority (1978: 215).

Nevertheless, I find use of the Weberian notion 'patronialism' problematic because it easily leads scholars' (including Pitcher et al.) attention primarily to personalized relations of power, e.g. in the form of individualized patron-client bonds. While this is a perspective that might be helpful to examine certain features of African, post-colonial politics (as demonstrated by Bayart [1993] and others), it is far too narrow to come to terms with how indigenous authority hierarchies, like the ones with which I am presently concerned, are constructed and operating in relation to modern state formation in Africa. Moreover, the highly inclusive socio-political hierarchies found in indigenous societies of Botswana are, as already suggested, constructed in ways that make it hard to distinguish between 'the governmental' and 'the social.' These points link closely up with a chief argument of the present section: The relationship between agents of the state and indigenous symbolism, practices and authority structures might be captured into modern state formation as constructive underpinnings. In this vein, it is required to go beyond Weber, who to great extent separated 'the governmental' from larger social order (e.g. 1978: 1006–1110), and to open up for comprehending how processes of state formation transcend governmental institutions. In this endeavour I now turn to presenting approaches I have found helpful for pursuing this and other issues indicated so far.

Approaching the State and the Social

Machiavelli (1977: 47) observed long ago that 'every prince' would like to be both loved and feared. And 'since it is hard to accommodate both of these qualities, if you have to make a choice, to be feared is much safer than to be loved'. Nevertheless, he asserts, 'every prince should prefer to be considered merciful rather than cruel'. This was, as we shall see, clearly a strategy adopted by the postcolonial ruling group from the outset, and I shall argue that the modern state in Botswana prevails to a great extent because the ruling group's domination is achieved and reproduced in relation to the population with a minimal exercise of perceived violent, coercive power. Paradoxically perhaps, the broader significance of this point is suggested by a study of authoritarian regimes as extreme as Mobuto's Zaïre. Schatzberg (1988: 71–72) argues that no state can rely entirely on coercion for long: 'Although regimes may arrive in power and initially maintain themselves through force, they most often achieve stability and continuity by encouraging citizens to accept valid symbols and metaphors of authority'. Legitimacy in the population is in other words crucial for the sustainable strength of the state.

In the present case, legitimation involved, at Botswana's independence, the challenge to make such a Western phenomenon as a modern state comprehensible, acceptable and even attractive to the population. Following Taylor's (1999: 127) rendering of Hegel, this is a matter of preventing
‘alienation’ from arising. Alienation, in the Hegelian sense, ‘arises where important ideas of man and society and their relation to nature embodied in the institutions of a given society cease to be those by which its members identify themselves’. This means that the introduction of all the new institutions of a modern state – as in the present case – represents a formidable challenge of ensuring popular identification. As we shall see, this is not only a matter of designing policies to meet expectations that are already prevalent in the population. From the outset the state leadership made tremendous efforts – by local encounters with people all over the country – to explain and discuss in detail the significance of all the ‘development’ programmes that have been recurrently launched.

We shall see that the major changes effected by this leadership did not conflict with ‘tradition’ in any significant respect, one important condition being that the symbolism of authority vested in Tswana kingship (bogosi) and anchored in indigenous cosmology has, at all times, capitalized the digosi to engage in radical transformations like changing major ritual and social practices to satisfy evangelising missionaries. This point is reflected in state agents’ manifold efforts to develop an imaginary of the state that has resonance in a population highly committed to virtues of authority vested in indigenous cosmology.

At the same time, I am centrally concerned with the ways in which the modern state in Botswana, through its interventions in the population in the Foucauldian (1978) sense, works upon popular consciousness in ways that generate subjectivities with ‘ideas’ congruent with those vested in modern state institutions. This brings me beyond issues of legitimacy since, in my view, the development of the postcolonial state in Botswana cannot alone be comprehended in terms of popular appreciative imaginary of the state. Its strength and stability rest also upon state practices in relation to social and material realities by which the population are brought into the web of power centred in the state. This is a major problem of the social, which I shall address by an approach much inspired by Deleuze/Guattari, Foucault, and Kapferer. This approach recognizes the distinctiveness of the dynamics of the state yet rejects any notion of the state as a freestanding entity as its point of analytical departure. It does not, therefore, reduce the state to ‘a fiction of the philosophers’ (Radcliffe-Brown 1940: xxiii) or an ideological construction (Mitchell 1999: 95) or an ‘illusion’ (Asad 2004: 282), but recognizes the sociomaterial reality of any state.

I see the state as vested with inherent dynamics that, in the words of Kapferer (2008: 3), ‘is oriented to achieving an exclusive and overarching determining potency in the fields of social relations in which it is situated and which state or state-related practice attempts to refine’ (see also Kapferer 1997: 274ff.). The state is hence always in the making, which is a conception of the state that corresponds to Deleuze and Guattari’s (1984: 360) notion of the state as sovereignty, yet it ‘only reigns over what it is capable of internalising, appropriating locally’. Although Foucault (1980: 121) abandons the Hobbesian notion of ‘sovereignty’ as expressed in his famous statement of a need ‘to cut off the King’s head’, he similarly recognizes the ‘omnipotence’ of the state. Not as a fixed capacity, but as an independent ‘super-structural’ force that dominates by virtue of its capacity to control ‘a whole series of already existing power networks’ (1980: 122).

Note, however, that this is not simply a notion opposite to that of Hobbes’s Leviathan, in the sense of conceiving the force of the state as a matter of ‘power comes from below’ (cf. Sahlin 1999: 37). Beside the conception of the state as omnipotent, Foucault (1982: 224) maintains that ‘power relations have become more and more under state control’. Such a development reflects what Kapferer names, I repeat, ‘the state’s overarching determining potency’, which is a conception of the state as unlimited in respect to potentially engaging and exercising power in all societal fields. And it corresponds with Deleuze and Guattari’s relativistic conception of ‘sovereignty’, as indicated above. Notwithstanding the differences that distinguish these scholars, they all render a conception of the state that transcends a restricted central-government conception; the state is, in brief, essentially vested with an omnipotent, expanding force to prevail as a superstructural or an overarching force.

The development of a strong postcolonial state in Botswana in a context where the vast majority of the population was embedded in indigenous structures of power is comprehensible if we come to terms with how the state has become an overarching force in relation to these structures. I am therefore centrally concerned with how the networks of power vested in indigenous hierarchies have been captured into the process of postcolonial state formation in ways that have not only brought them under control but contributed significantly to the strength of the state.

This analysis requires a comprehension of the character of the major hierarchical structures – Tswana merafe – because they inhibit, as already suggested, numerous communities that were caught into their structures of domination in precolonial and especially colonial times. The persistently hegemonic character of Tswana domination is comprehensible only by an analysis of its development in preindependence times. I start therefore by explaining – again aided by the general approach explained above – how the central power in these merafe grew in strength and scale from the late eighteenth century by capturing vast communities into their structures. By the establishment of the Bechuanaland Protectorate in 1885, they were
subjected to British supremacy. Yet at the same time, their capacity of capture vis-à-vis other communities under their domination was reinforced.

In the Foucauldian conception, the colonial state – extensively practising ‘indirect rule’ – prevailed as superstructural to a whole range of power networks in which Tswana rulers of each of the merafes in precolonial times continued being at the apex of a hierarchy of power relations. Under British supremacy Tswana rulers lost their full sovereignty, yet were at the same time empowered by the British to transform, expand and achieve control over vast communities in the extensive, bounded territories assigned to them by the colonial power. When the British withdrew – just as peacefully as they had arrived – the indigenous hierarchies of authority, which had expanded and been reinforced under colonial conditions, were captured by the process of modern state formation in ways that again involved substantial transformations of these hierarchies.

And more than that: the state, following Foucault (1980: 122), ‘consists in the codification of a whole number of power relations which render its functioning possible’. This is a notion of an intervening state that he also describes as ‘a very sophisticated structure, in which individuals can be integrated, under one condition: that this individuality would be shaped in a new form, and submitted to a set of very specific patterns’ (Foucault 1982: 214). This notion of the state as intervening in the population is probably best developed in his conception of the governmentalization of the state (Foucault 1978). This is a concept that, we shall see, is very helpful to come to terms with how the modern state in Botswana has expanded its network of power extensively in relation to citizens beyond indigenous authority structures, yet much aided by them.

State interventions are, however, not confined to the modern state. Under the conditions of the colonial state there were extensive state practices that Deleuze and Guattari (e.g., 1991: 434, 448ff.) have identified as ‘overcoding’. For example, in the present case, the British initiated the colonial era by stating that the dikgosi could, with only small restrictions, continue to rule their subjects as they had always done. But, in due course, the colonial power discovered that they had contributed to empowering the dikgosi to such an extent that they were featuring as highly autocratic to an extent that also challenged the colonial power. As we shall see, the British overcoding of their authority made dikgosi capable of expanding their powers in ways that escaped the imaginaries of their overlords. They even felt forceful enough to challenge the British. In Deleuze and Guattari’s (1991: 449) exemplification, ‘the overcoding of the archaic State itself makes possible and gives rise to new flows that escape from it’. This suggests that even the successful formation of a strong state has repercussions that challenge states to empower themselves; there is always something exterior to states that attacks, resists or evades. I recall here Deleuze and Guattari’s and Foucault’s relativist notions of the state; the state being what it is actually, at any time, capable of bringing under its supremacy.

In brief, there is always an exteriority of forces to the state that might work benignly towards state formation and its agents acting cooperatively. Conversely, these forces also become frequently hostile, damaging or neutral and evasive positions vis-à-vis state-formation processes. Further, such exteriority is not confined to neat territorial distinctions and may, hence, be of local or of global origin. Thus the state formations in focus here have, at all historical stages, been surrounded by ever-changing exteriorities of forces of such diversity.

Deleuze and Guattari (1991: 361) see the exteriority as what ‘escapes the State and stands against the State’. In their conception, ‘the outside of the State cannot be reduced to “foreign policy,” that is a relationship between states’. The outside appears, on the one hand, in the form of ‘huge world-wide machines’, like multinational organisations or religious formations, such as Christianity and Islam, and, on the other, ‘local mechanisms of bands, margins, minorities, which continue to affirm the rights of segmentary societies in relation to the organs of State power’. These are all forces exterior to the state in the sense of being vested with potentialities of a particular kind of power, denoted ‘war machines’. This has nothing to with armies or other institutionalized entities of violence; such forces are integral to the ‘state apparatus of capture’ (1991: 437). Rather, it is ‘a form irreducible to the State and that this form of exteriority necessarily presents itself as a war machine … [It] exists in a commercial circuit as in a religious creation, in all flows and currents that only secondarily allow themselves to be appropriated by the State’ (1991: 360). In the present case we shall see, for example, how Christianity, on the one hand, in the form of institutionalized missionary churches was captured into the power structures of the merafe, while, on the other hand, gave birth to Christian ‘syncretistic’ movements beyond the merafe with properties typical of war machines: assemblages of power of a rhizome type that are antihierarchical, deterritorializing and operating in highly unpredictable ways from the point of view of the state. These properties posit these assemblages against the state apparatus of capture that is, conversely, characterized by hierarchizing, institutionalizing and territorializing features. Further, while states are stable, stationary and in transformation, war machines operate laterally in ‘nomadic’ ways – in flight – and change by metamorphoses, to appear in ever-new disguises. War machines are all forms that are exterior to the state with the potentiality of attacking the state. In the present case, as suggested, the merafe are always only incompletely
appropriated by the colonial — and I now add postcolonial — state, with considerable potentialities of forces challenging the state.

As suggested above, in this conception the ‘sovereignty’ of the state is a relative matter, being determined by the capacity of the ‘apparatus of capture’ to appropriate what escapes states or stands against it. In such terms, we shall see that the state forms in focus here — from precolonial to postcolonial times — can be characterized as quite successful. It seems required to expand the conceptual scheme in order to recognize explicitly that the exterior also contains entities other than those that are antagonistic or evasive in relation to the state, yet with potentials of state empowerment. For example, the expansion of Western settlers into the nineteenth-century interior of South Africa had clearly rhizomic qualities from the point of view of the precolonial Tswana states, located on the edge of the Kalahari. Although there were some ambiguities surrounding the British establishment of the Bechuanaland Protectorate, on the whole the British overlordship warded off the war-machine potentialities of the surrounding settler states as well as strengthened the apparatus of capture vested in Tswana meraka. In this context the British Empire — with all its war-machine potentials across the globe — manifested itself to Tswana ruling groups as an empowering force. This was, though, entirely different from the point of view of communities involuntarily subjected to the dominant Tswana meraka.

This brings me back to the perspective suggested at the beginning of this chapter: considering state formations as conditioned by conjuncture between Eurocentric ideas and institutions, indigenous ideas, practices and institutions of power and global markets for cattle and diamonds. For example, as we shall see, such a ‘huge world-wide machine’ — in the language of Deleuze and Guattari — as the diamond company of De Beers in relation to the state in Botswana has been crucial for empowering the state by supplying its treasury with tremendous revenues. However, to explain why diamonds helped to strengthen the state and stabilized its government requires comprehension of other important conditions that coincided with the discovery of diamonds. Another exteriority — that of some Western states — was highly instrumental in establishing a modern state in Botswana by bringing the whole complex of modern statecraft into the country during the process of decolonisation. That they, in contrast to many other places, succeeded quite well is comprehensible only in view of the ways in which privileged and powerful people across the country merged in support of a strong, centralized state.

The major transformations with which I am concerned in this volume — from pre- to postcolonial times — also require a conception of exercise of leadership. A conjugation of conditions for major transformations does not help much if there is no leadership. This is, as we shall see, apparent in the development of the strength and scale of Tswana meraka in the beginning of the nineteenth century as it developed during the years following Botswana’s independence. Intriguingly, the agency of transformations can, in important respects, be personalized by, probably, the two most celebrated icons of Tswana leadership, Kgosi Khama III — the Great — (r. 1872/1875–1923) and his grandson, Seretse Khama, the founding president of Botswana. Their transformative agency combined, in important respects, the two modes of domination that Gramsci (1991: 12) assigns to ‘civil society’ (hegemony) and ‘political society’ or ‘the State’ (‘direct domination through juridical or political apparatuses’). In such ‘tribal’ kingdoms as that of the Tswana, there is, as already suggested, no institutionalized divide between civil and political society. In fact, it is not clear either that Gramsci made any strict separation of the two as he asserted that “State should be understood as not only the apparatus of government, but also the “private” apparatus of “hegemony” or civil society’ (1991: 261).

In scholarly literature the notion of ‘hegemonic domination’ is not unambiguous. For the present analytical purpose I have found it useful to define it with reference to Eagleton’s (1991: 115–16) rendering: ‘as a whole range of practical strategies by which a dominant power elicits consent to its rule from those it subjugates. To win hegemony ... is to establish moral, political and intellectual leadership in social life by diffusing one’s own “world view” throughout the fabric of society as a whole’. Following this notion, hegemony is to be conceived as always in the making and a matter of degree, always competing with other orientations.

In all historical contexts of the present case, we shall see that the ‘practical strategy’ of the state apparatus of capture to ‘win hegemony’ is characterized by an often gradualist, nonconfrontational approach. This is an approach to reach consent about submission in the spirit of peace and harmony, which is a virtue of great symbolic significance amongst communities far beyond the dominant Tswana. The approach involves extensive exercise of ‘consultation’, which, especially in postcolonial times with radical changes, reflects the above-mentioned Hegelian concern about alienation in relation to issues of legitimacy. In this volume we shall see how this presents challenges of ‘winning hegemony’ in distinctly different historical contexts, ranging from Tswana dikgosi’s acceptance of missionaries’ requests for transforming or abandoning major rituals and other important practices, to the radical institutional change of authority by the establishment of the highly Western-fashioned, modern state.

The cultural construction of hegemony differs, however, in some important respects between, on the one hand, that of the dominant Tswana merafe in precolonial and colonial times, and, on the other, that of the postcolonial, modern state. In the former cases, leadership was constructed on the basis of a notion of the Tswana rulers and their ruling communities as anchored in a cosmological order. They were thereby indisputably authorized to govern all the subjects within their domain; their custodianship of the social order was beyond question. The hegemony of the postcolonial state leadership is certainly Tswana-biased as it has been to a great extent composed by Tswana, as indicated by the name of the postcolonial state and the selection of Setswana as the national language. But it would, of course, have been counterproductive for a political leadership in an electoral democracy to establish hegemony on the basis of a strongly pronounced Tswana orientation when a substantial section of the population do not identify themselves with the dominant Tswana but, on the contrary, often enough experience their discriminatory, repressive practices in a multitude of informal encounters. I shall argue that the establishment of the modern state reduced notably – but not eliminated – the problem of Tswana identification as the postcolonial state leadership was able to adopt extensively the virtues of ‘development’ in the Western sense and create what I shall call a hegemonic discourse of development which, in important respects, is ethnically neutral. Although its implementation has not always worked in that way and, in addition, accelerated very substantially inequality of wealth, the postcolonial leadership managed at an early stage to win hegemony and to capture the population into its dependency.

All this will, hopefully, bring out that the development of a strong postcolonial state might beneficially be seen as a matter of conjunctures of conditions that, at different historical stages, have been particular to this case, in accordance with Sahlin’s (2000: 472) notion that ‘[t]he very ways in which societies change have their own authenticity, so that global modernity is often reproduced as local diversity’. Botswana, then, is, as all other African countries, special – yet in ways that are comparatively recognisable if we pursue the approaches indicated in this section, aiming at coming to terms with how the larger social context becomes significant for state formation.

Overview

The larger social context for state formation in Botswana is, I repeat, indigenous symbolism and institutions of authority, particularly in the large-scale structures of the Tswana merafe. These are conditions which have their genealogies that go back to the colonial and precolonial past. Although I insist that my argument is not of a primordial kind, it is important to comprehend how these structures, conceived as conditions for postcolonial state formation, have evolved historically. I am particularly concerned with the potentialities vested in the Tswana merafe; for example at once giving rise to a persistent dominant class underpinning the postcolonial ruling group and representing major repressive structures in relation to vast groups of ‘minorities’.

In order to trace these genealogies of power I start in precolonial times (Chapter 1) in an effort to explain how the once small state formations at the edge of the Kalahari, now known as Tswana merafe, developed in strength and expanded in scale since the late eighteenth century. I aim to show how external communities were captured into their hierarchical order in which they became subjects to forces of assimilation in ways that transformed the power structures radiating from the royal centre. I shall argue that the imperial forces propelled these transformations, including linking up with intercontinental trade, the operation of evangelizing missionaries and subjection to British colonial power. This also means that the dominant Tswana merafe of present Botswana were not ‘imposed’ from outside or ‘created’ by the colonial power (Abbink 2005: 187), although the British overlordship had considerable impact upon their transformations during colonial times.

This is, in particular, an argument about empowerment of the ruling group of the Tswana merafe selected by the British at the establishment of Bechuanaland Protectorate (1885), enhancing their capacity to capture and keep subject communities under their domination. In Chapter 2 I pursue the issue by examining Tswana rulers’ growing autocracy that also became a challenge to the British, as the dikgosi were increasingly perceived as a force ambiguously related to the colonial state, at times exterior to it. Yet the dikgosi prevailed to a significant extent, indicating, amongst other things, how dependent the British remained on their administration of the respective ‘native reserves’, their collection of tax and their extensive networks of power for the exercise of social control. These networks of power, radiating from the Tswana royal centres, are of significance to the present study because they were readily transferred from the colonial to the postcolonial context where, as we shall see in Chapters 4, 5 and 6, they proved highly instrumental to the development of the nation-state in Botswana during the formative and consolidating decades. The second part of Chapter 2 focuses upon the creation of an embryo to the ruling group of the independent state in this country. I explain their conflicting relationship to the dikgosi and their co-operation with
the British for the establishment of Botswana's Constitution and a highly peaceful process of decolonization.

The historical development of a ruling group and – as I explain in Chapter 3 – the formation of a dominant class is a major condition for the rapid rise of a strong, modern state in this country. I pursue this issue in Chapter 3 by invoking Bayart's (1993: 160) point that many postcolonial African states are weak and failing because of the absence of a persistent, dominant class. I shall explain that in Botswana, by contrast, people of power and wealth – across the ruling communities of the dominant Tswana merafe – modern vs. traditional orientation and urban vs. rural residence cohered into a dominant class underpinning the ruling group of the postcolonial state from the outset. This involved the formation that Sebudubudu (2009) has named a 'grand coalition' which prevented the development of an exteriority of what Deleuze and Guattari speak of as 'war-machines' with great potentialities of generating destabilizing rhizomic forces. I shall explain that livestock production, Botswana's immensely privileged access to the European beef market and the development of the diamond mining industry gave rise to a powerful state-centred political economy that progressively drew an increasingly diversified class of people into a privileged dependency of a progressively strong state. That is a dominant class which – despite all their conflicts and rivalries – had in common a major interest in a strong state and sustainable government.

The progressive capture of people privileged by governmental policies and programmes into the orbit of the state does, however, not help to explain the ways in which all the rank and file sections have become subjects to the postcolonial state. In Chapters 4–7 I address this issue from different angles. The overarching theme is the various ways in which the state has captured indigenous institutions of authority into its structures and become highly instrumental to control and manage the population and draw people into the process of state formation. In Chapter 4 I am centrally concerned with, first, the relationship between the state and the Tswana merafe, explaining how the dikgosi were co-opted into the state where they on the whole have been working as loyal civil servants, though not without notable exceptions. I examine two major cases of challenges to the state that perfectly illuminate, on the one hand, popular continued attachment to the symbolic wealth and sociopolitical order of the merafe vested in the bogosi and, on the other, the prevailing rhizomic potentials vested in the Tswana merafe in relation to the state. In the second major part of Chapter 4 I explain the significance of the dominant, everyday activity vested in these hierarchies of authority – administration of justice – and how it contributes to their reproduction under postcolonial circumstances. This examination helps to come to terms with

Nyamnjoh's (2003: 247) suggestion about 'chieftaincy' in Botswana as 'a dynamic institution, constantly reinventing itself to accommodate and be accommodated by new exigencies... [that] has proved phenomenal in its ability to seek conviviality between competing and often conflicting influences'.

I am centrally concerned with the observation that during the formative and consolidating decades, which are, I repeat, of major concern in this volume, the population was to a great extent kept in the fold without much of state policing and exercise of violence. As I explain in Chapter 5, this fitted perfectly well a state government which sought legitimacy in the population at large by attempting to build popular identification with a nation-state by envisaging a prosperous future of developmental modernity by invoking indigenous symbolism of authority – a symbolism merged with all the virtues of Western modernity. I shall explain how the state leadership attempted to win hegemony in relation to all the rank-and-file sections of the population by featuring as custodian of the common good by means of massive programmes of social infrastructures and services. That is, programmes of Western 'welfarism' which are expressed in a major, national discourse of development. To this discourse belongs also all the entrepreneur-promoting programmes I examine in Chapter 3, and I discuss the relationship between the two orientations – collective virtues of the common good versus ideals of liberal individualism – in a class-formation perspective.

Moreover, the all-encompassing character of the 'discourse of development' means that agents of the state attempt, I shall explain, to capture minorities into a process that is presented as 'national', with no relevance to ethnic or 'tribal' affiliation. In the second main part of Chapter 5 I go beyond 1990 because it is only during more recent times that minorities, despite state efforts to appear ethnicity neutral, have protested against Tswana domination and being treated as secondary citizens. I shall explain how these protests have been met by agents of the state and discuss the ongoing transformations of majority-minority relations, including questioning the rhizomic potentials vested in the 'minorities' which in sum possibly outnumber the dominant Tswana.

In Chapter 6 I pursue this issue further in an effort to explain how the indigenous authority structures, especially the discursive fields of its councils known as dikgota (sing. kgota), facilitate agents of state's exercise of the discourse of development in the pursuit of establishing legitimacy in relation to the rank-and-file sections of the population by making all the modern interventions familiar. With a major focus on the formative and consolidating decades, I explain how the state leadership has attempted to win hegemony by co-opting indigenous ideals of government by
'consulting with people', i.e. introducing 'democratic' practices through which opposition parties have been excluded to a great extent. These antipolitics practices are exercised by cabinet ministers and members of Parliament who, with great frequency, engage with local communities all over the country in intimate interaction within the context of the kgotla.

State methods to capture the population into the process of modern state formation is pursued further in Chapter 7 by focusing upon the ways in which the state intervenes in the population, especially with all its 'development' and welfare programmes. To the state leadership, these interventions have amounted to a major force for establishing hegemony by capturing the population into extensive bureaucratic practices that continuously work on their subjectivities. These are state practices that I shall consider as a matter of governmentalization of the state (Foucault 1978): a conception helpful to understand the peaceful and tacit, yet penetrating, ways 'power relations have been progressively governmentalized, that is to say, elaborated, rationalized, and centralized in the form of, or under the auspices of, state institutions' (Foucault 1982: 224). I shall discuss how and to what extent these processes have been working upon people's subjectivities to the effect of creating subjects ever more conforming with and dependent on state policies and programmes.

The state's work on people's subjectivities involves the rise of aspirations, which has, I shall argue, been nourishing the progressive conflicts between a minority of people who have risen to power and wealth and all the rank-and-file sections of the population amongst whom a substantial part has remained below the official poverty datum line. I shall address this development as an important aspect of the state-centred political economy by examining popular reactions to what they perceive as political leaders' abuse of power. These are reactions to what are perceived as rhizomic forces destructive to the idealized order of the state, finding their most profound expression in a discursive practice based upon people's imagination of political leaders' exercise of occult practices. Such an imagination of dangerous and damaging practices at the heart of the postcolonial state seems to resemble Mbembe's notion of the postcolony as 'an intimate tyranny' (1992: 22, italics original), which links the ruler with the ruled in ways that undermine both of them through the 'mutual zombification of both the dominant and those they apparently dominate ... [meaning] that each robbed the other of their vitality and this has left them both impotent' (1992: 4). But the resemblance is only apparent because, as we shall see, reactions in Botswana to perceived hidden abuses of power are of a different kind. In popular imagination, however violent, they are patently a matter of moral condemnation of secretive practices motivated by individual greed: they are, in this conception, deterritori-valorizing, exterior to the order of the state and hence with war-machine properties. Their opacity transgresses the indigenous ideal of political transparency and is experienced by people as detrimental to the common good. In what I shall describe as an evolving subaltern discourse, these rhizomic forces are seen as emanating from the very epitome of a modern state – state bureaucracy and representational democracy.

Geographic and Demographic Features in Brief

With a total area of 570,000 km², Botswana is about the same size as France, Belgium, Luxembourg and the Netherlands combined. This vast plateau at the centre of Southern Africa lies at a mean altitude of 1,000 metres above sea level. Approximately two-thirds of its surface area is comprised of the semiarid Kalahari Desert, the sandy soil of which supports a low, savannah-type vegetation. The rainfall, on an average less than 450 mm annually, is vulnerable to high evapo-transpiration rates.

The factors historically most determinant for people's settlement patterns have been the fertility of the soil, rainfall, and availability of water. Thus, more than three-quarters of Botswana's population – which numbered only some 2.15 million in 201014 – live in the east in the drainage basin area of the Limpopo, which comprises less than 10 per cent of the country's land area. Here reasonably fertile soils and higher rainfall (annual averages 450–550 mm) permit arable agriculture. With underground water technology, commercial livestock production has expanded far beyond these limits, especially since the 1970s.

As already indicated, cattle have been the major asset – economically, politically and symbolically – since precolonial times and before the diamond era. Although crucial for postcolonial state formation before the state treasury became sourced by revenues from diamond mining, livestock production – like diamond mining – is highly labour extensive. While cattle have, in addition, always been very unequally distributed, a very limited part of the population has made a living entirely from livestock production. This feature has become ever more pronounced in postcolonial times (Gulbrandsen 1996a: Ch. 10).

Since the late nineteenth century, very large numbers of men have ensured the survival of vast parts of the families in the country through circular labour migration, predominantly to the South African mines (Schap-
era 1947a; Gulbrandsen 1996a). This employment pattern was drastically curtailed in the beginning of the 1980s with a substantial reduction in recruitment of foreign labourers. About the same time, however, the development of urban areas in Botswana accelerated, involving a building boom that recruited many of those who had previously gone to South Africa. Especially the capital of Gaborone, which was established from scratch at independence, entered a process of momentous growth, propelled by the substantial enlargement of governmental institutions and the rapid expansion of the private sector of the economy from the late 1980s onwards. Nevertheless, unemployment rates have persistently remained high (see Siphambe 2003: 481).

However massive, this demographic trend did not depopulate rural areas because Botswana had, at the same time, a high population growth rate. Moreover, and highly significant for central arguments in this volume, the capital is surrounded by five of the seven Tswana royal towns (see below) and a number of large villages, mostly within an hour’s drive or less from the capital. Many people employed in urban centres have thus continued to live within the context of family and descent groups or at least kept in close touch with rural family households. The royal towns which have, from precolonial times, been – in an African context – exceptionally large with thousands, if not tens of thousands, of people (Gulbrandsen 2007), also have growth momentum as district governmental centres, service and trading centres and by some minor industries.

Map 1 displays the administrative division of the Bechuanaland Protectorate as implemented by the British upon colonization in 1885. In the eastern and northwestern part of the country, the divisions are named ‘native reserves’, dominated by the eight Tswana kingdoms which, as already suggested, the British officially recognized and whose rulers were subjected to the colonial administration as instruments of government. The native reserves were, as Map 1 shows, of highly unequal size, territorially and population-wise. The tremendously large areas denoted ‘crown lands’ were extremely sparsely populated by people living scattered in small villages, hamlets and mobile bands. The Tswana-centred native reserves, mainly located in the Eastern part of the Protectorate, were ethnically mixed to a very different extent, with the four largest ones – the Bangwato, the Bakwena, the Bangwakets and the Batawana – comprising vast groups of different origins.

The respective Tswana dikgosi were located in the royal towns of, respectively, Serowe (Bangwato), Molepolole (Bakwena), Kanye (Bangwakets), Maun (Batawana), Mochudi (Bakgatla), Ramotswa (Malete) and Tlokweg (Batlokwa). The small area in the extreme southeast denoted

Map 1: Sketch map of Bechuanaland Protectorate
(source: Schapera 1970)

Barolong farms serving as agricultural lands for the Tswana people of Barolong-Tshidi centred in the royal town of Mafeking on the South African side of the border.
By comparing Maps 1 and 2 it is readily apparent that there is considerable correspondence between the colonial and postcolonial administrative divisions. This is most evident in the case of Central (Ngwato), Kweneng, Kgateng, Ngamiland (Tswana) and Southern (which includes the Ngwaketse and the Barolong farms). The Tswana royal towns serve as district administrative centres in all these cases. The Batlokwa and the Bamalete are combined into the small South-East District, with Ramotswa as the district centre. Moreover, the Tswana royal towns host the postcolonial administrative centres – Maun (Ngamiland), Serowe (Central), Molepolole (Kweneng), Kanye (Southern), Mochudi (Kgateng) and Ramotswa (South-East). The additional, most sparsely populated districts of Kgalagadi, Ghazi, Chobe and North-East do not fall into this pattern.

On 3 October 2005 Botswana’s state president, Festus Mogae, unveiled what is known as the Three Dikgosi Monument in the capital, Gaborone (see cover of this book). The monument commemorates Kgosi Sebele I of the Bakwena, Kgosi Bathoen I of the Bangwaketse and Kgosi Khamo III of the Bangwato, renowned for their diplomatic mission to London in 1895. The president asserted in his speech, ‘During the early years of colonialism these three distinguished monarchs played a leading role in ultimately ensuring our territory’s independent future, by preventing its administrative handover to neighbouring white settler regimes’. In such terms the three dikgosi were declared the founding fathers of the nation, ostensibly preventing the subjection of their countries to Cecil Rhodes’s settler regime and the racist regimes of Rhodesia and South Africa. At the time of unveiling, which amounted to no less than a state act of establishing the principal national monument, there were minority voices in Botswana which saw this as an (other) expression of Tswana domination (Parsons 2006: 680).

Neil Parsons (1998: 255) has suggested that the best way to grasp the significance of the dikgosi’s journey in 1895 is to ask what would have happened if Khama, Sebele, and Bathoen had not gone to Britain. Obviously, there were no other leaders in the country at that time representing policies of sufficient strength to engage with the British in efforts to prevent