
BUILDING A CULTURE OF PEACE IN AFRICA: TOWARD A TRAJECTORY OF USING TRADITIONAL KNOWLEDGE SYSTEMS

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Abstract

This article purports to study the peace project in Africa, using African social formations and traditional knowledge systems, by taking Botswana as a case study. It focuses on three aspects of Botswana culture: bogosi (chieftainship), ethnicity and botho (humility). Although the concepts are interrogated from a Botswana perspective, they have wider applicability in sub-Saharan Africa. This article will first explain these concepts, and then discuss their relationship to peacebuilding and development. Africans need to appreciate the endurance of traditional systems of governance despite the application of modern political institutions and processes. The article concludes that building a culture of peace should be filtered through social values that are culturally embedded. As Africans engage with culture and ascribe it a role in peacebuilding, they must take cognisance of its limitations and shed the negative aspects of African culture. More profoundly, building a culture of peace should be based on a recognition and tolerance of other people's cultural heritage.

Introduction

Characterised as a 'fragile bloom' (National Democratic Institute 1990:8), and 'an authoritarian liberal state' (Good 1996:1), Botswana is generally regarded as a model of a working democracy in Africa. This article submits that Botswana's political stability and success could, in part, be traced to its culture and traditions. It first unpacks Botswana's cultural heritage to understand how it has become the basis of a stable democratic rule and development. The article has three substantive foci: *bogosi*, ethnicity and *botho* as

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manifestations of traditional Tswana society.¹ First, the article unpacks how *bogosi* as a traditional system of governance has contributed to the peace and stability of the post-colonial state of Botswana. It underscores the centrality of *bogosi* in promoting peace and development and stable democratic rule. Its basic thrust is to link *bogosi* to the peace dividend that Botswana enjoys and that leads to sustainable development. The government relies on the *kgotla* (village assembly) as a forum for consultation, communication and dissemination of information, which is presided over by *dikgosi* or chiefs). The *kgotla*, presided over by a chief, stands out as an important forum for public and democratic discourse in Botswana.

Second, the article discusses how, according to Muller (2008:19), 'ethno-nationalism has played a more profound and lasting role in modern history than is commonly understood'. In this regard, Botswana's cultural and traditional heritage must be unpacked to understand the basis of its stable democratic rule. In a paradoxical way, ethnic nationalism needs to be

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seen as a force for resolving larger issues of democratisation and inclusion, which, if not properly harnessed, could become a source of political instability. Third, the article underscores how *botho* has helped to shape people's values and their attitudes to other people and political systems in Africa. Overall, the article seeks to problematise the

peace project in Africa and to find out why it has eluded Africa and how it could be nurtured. By and large, the rich diversity of African knowledge resources in the areas of peace studies and conflict resolution and transformation remain untapped. The Afro-centric conception of peace seeks to dispel popular misconceptions of Afro-pessimism and the hopelessness of the peace project in Africa. It seeks to reincarnate the African identity and African ways of building and restoring peace. The article proceeds to address these concerns, first by providing a conceptual and theoretical framework for appreciating the value of traditional knowledge systems.

African Social Formations and Peacebuilding

Africa is being called to look into its belly for solutions to its problems of insecurity. It happens to be the home of endemic state collapse and societal fragmentation, with the resultant effects of violent armed conflicts — loss of life and destruction of property and social bonds. Although this situation might lead to hopelessness and despair, it might also provide an opportunity for re-examining indigenous resources for peacebuilding and governance. As Prah points out, 'unless the historical and cultural exigencies in Africa are taken into account, Africa will forever be the bedrock of instability' (2002:32). In response to numerous crises in Africa, for example, the United Nations Security Council has recommended that Africa should develop regional brigade-size standby forces to enforce peace on the continent (Fisher 208:152). As regions work towards establishing such forces, it is probably opportune that Africa looks to traditional knowledge systems to inform its peace project. Of course, advocating Afro-centric approaches to peacebuilding does not negate the usefulness of other approaches; rather, it underscores the relevance of African social formations in social reconstruction and engineering. Such an endeavour should begin by unpacking social formations in sub-Saharan Africa with a view to embracing their positive attributes.

Botswana's experience with peace and democracy is widely documented (Tlou & Campbell 1984; Mgadla & Campbell 1989; Ncgoncgo 1989; Molutsi & Holm 1989; Morton & Ramsay 1987). Although there are strong debates (Mgadla 1989; Ncgoncgo, 1989) about the substance and nature of democracy in Botswana, Khama (1970) firmly believed that it is rooted in traditional Tswana culture. It is anchored on the *kgotla* system of consultation, which is based on the assertion of *mafoko a kgotla a mantle otlhe* (free speech). *Dikgosi* ruled their people, at least during the pre-colonial period, as absolute sovereigns who enjoyed hegemonic influence, although their decisions were almost always based on consensus (Mgadla & Campbell 1989:49; Somolekae & Lekorwe 1989:186; Peters 1994). The assertion that *kgosi ke kgosi ka batho* ('a chief is a chief by the grace of people') underpins Tswana traditional democracy. *Dikgosi* exercised their authority based on the respect they received

from their people. They preside over *dikgotla*, which were, and still are, forums for deliberating public policy. Traditionally, the *kgosi* was the embodiment of the state and a legitimate head of the people (Peters (1994:33). The thread that runs through this article recognises the centrality of *bogosi* in matters of traditional governance. Furthermore, the attributes of the Tswana culture emphasise *botho* (humility) and courteousness. Batswana believe that *tlhong botho* ('humility is noble').

Although *dikgosi* were instrumental in state formation and also sought British protection in 1885 when there was an eminent threat of attack from Dutch settlers, they lost out when it came to the drafting of the independence constitution. It established Botswana as a unicameral parliamentary system with parliament as the only chamber with legislative authority. To placate them, *dikgosi* were given a lower house, *Ntlo ya Dikgosi* (House of Chiefs) with no legislative powers and serving merely in an advisory capacity on matters of tradition and culture. As a result, *dikgosi* suffered loss of stature and authority, but they remain highly respected in their ethnic communities.

Modernisation, Governance and Bogosi

Arising from the modernisation theory of social change (Apter 1965; Lerner 1958; Rostow 1971), there was a strong perception that in order for Africa to develop, it needed to transcend the parochial traditional institutions and embrace modern ones. Lerner in *The Passing of Traditional Society: Modernising the Middle East* (1958) argued that with the advent of modernisation, ethnic identities and traditional values would disappear, and in their wake modern ones would develop. The dominant paradigm of the modernisation thesis is that *bogosi* is an institution of traditional societies, and as people and societies modernise, it must give way to republican institutions, which are perceived to be more 'progressive' and democratic. Following from cultural and modernisation theories, there is ongoing debate as to whether *bogosi* promotes democratic values when the institution is

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Moreover, Mamdani contends that rule by *dikgosi* leads to the bifurcation of society, where people's loyalties are divided between the republication government and the traditional institution of *bogosi* and ethnic group. The stark reality is that 'whether politically correct or not, ethno-nationalism will continue to shape' world affairs into the new millennium.² The ethnic identity is in a profound way an essentialist identity, a core identity that cannot be wished away or eroded by a cosmopolitan identity that is gaining ground in the era of globalisation. People today acquire multiple identities, but their core personalities, based on their ethnic and common ancestry, will not disappear. As a result, modernisation theory is flawed because it fails to appreciate the enduring effect of ethno-nationalism.

inherently undemocratic (Mamdani 1996). The apprehension arises from the fact that *dikgosi* ascend to the throne by birthright rather than by merit in a democratic process of popular participation (Mamdani 1996).

Bogosi and democracy

Bogosi represents the traditional form and structure of governance in Botswana. In pre-colonial times, the *kgosi* was an ultimate sovereign and presided over a given geographical area, which he controlled through conquest and annexation of other people's territories. The institution has evolved and been influenced by modernisation and globalisation. While recognising the pervasive influence of globalisation, the essential premise of this discourse is that a people's existence is based on their deep sense of cultural belonging. In instances

where people negate their cultural heritage through, for instance, the abolition of the institution of chiefs, conflict often sets in. The cases of Mozambique and Uganda are illustrative of this point. Ever since Milton Obote deposed the Kabaka of Buganda in Uganda in the late 1950s and established a republic, Buganda nationalism has been a political issue in that country (Potholm 1976). Similarly, after Mozambique attained independence in 1975, Frelimo abolished the chieftainship system, and that became a rallying point for its adversary, the National Resistance Movement (Harrison 2002; Gonçaves 2002).

The argument that *bogosi* is anathema to democratisation is a simplistic and perhaps a Eurocentric way of looking at African social reality. Democracy must be seen as a socially constructed and contested process that is mediated by prevailing cultural institutions (Molomo 2006:189-190). In Botswana, as clearly articulated by Nyamnjoh (2003:111), *bogosi* is a 'dynamic institution, constantly reinventing itself to accommodate and be accommodated by new exigencies' of democratisation. The interface between *bogosi* and democracy constitutes an 'unending project, an aspiration that is subject to renegotiation with changing circumstances and growing claims by individuals and communities for recognition and representation' (Nyamnjoh 2003:111). This interface defines a peoples' political culture.

Botswana's uniqueness in creating a stable democratic state when most sub-Saharan African states have experienced phases of political instability could be attributed to Tswana traditions, *bogosi* and the *kgotla* system. Despite the tenuous relationship that exists between *dikgosi* and politicians, a judicious balance between institutions, they complement one

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another in matters of governance. Although the post-colonial state has curtailed the powers of *dikgosi* in their judicial, political and administrative matters, they are still accorded a lot of respect and have considerable influence. The primary functions of *dikgosi* are to mobilise *morafe*, or ethnic groups, for development and to perform an important judicial function. They

have a responsibility to instil a sense of community, discipline and stability within the areas of their jurisdiction. The structure of *bogosi* is decentralised. The *kgosi* presides over the main *kgotla*, and the *dikgosana* (headmen) preside over wards.³ All the wards are courts of arbitration, which resolve disputes within communities. In this way, *bogosi* has the effect of being omnipresent among the people.

The *kgotla* system is widely regarded as the cradle of Botswana's democracy (Khama 1970; Tlou & Campbell 1984; Ngcongco 1989) since it facilitates dialogue and consultation between the government and the people. The primary functions of *dikgosi* are to mobilise *morafe* (ethnic groups) for development, and they also fulfil an important judicial function. They have the responsibility to instil a sense of community, discipline and stability within the areas of their jurisdiction.

The Republic of Botswana was created as a unitary state based on the Westminster system with parliament as the only legislative authority and the House of Chiefs as a second chamber without legislative powers. This defines the structure of power in Botswana. Provisions in the constitution, the Chieftainship Act (1970), the Tribal Land Act (1968) and Amended Act (1993) and Matimela Act (1977), among others, circumscribe the political, judicial, and economic roles of the chiefs. A dual structure exists in which district commissioners have executive authority (Peters 1994), while *dikgosi* remain symbolic heads of their ethnic areas. Creating a healthy balance between these two domains has gone a long way to promoting

peace and stability in Botswana. Today, *dikgosi* operate as civil servants under the political authority of the Minister of Local Government and preside over customary courts. They command a lot of authority, and through the *kgotla* they preside over institutions that the government relies on for popular consultation. In recognition of their effectiveness, the government has set up *dikgotla* in urban areas for the first time, to assist in resolution of disputes and the administration of justice. In summary, Botswana postulates a unique case where the post-colonial state has successfully negotiated a fusion of traditional and modern political institutions in dispensing stable democratic rule.

Ethnicity and citizenship

The ethnic question in Botswana is intimately bound up with the issue of *bogosi*; ethnic nationalism also contests the notion of citizenship. Citizenship under the liberal democratic set-up guarantees the enjoyment of individual and civil rights as well as equality before the law, irrespective of race, class or ethnic group (Werber 2002). Yet these rights are contested in Botswana given the perception that some ethnic groups are 'major' and others 'minor'. At issue is that ethnic minorities reject the assumption that they should assimilate Tswana culture and suppress their own in the name of nation-building. They argue that their cultural heritage must be recognised in the public sphere, so that their languages are not only recognised as an official language, but are also taught in the schools. What was also contested was the hierarchy of tribal administration implied in the constitution. The social stratification that developed during the pre-colonial and colonial periods formed the basis of the composition the House of Chiefs. The eight paramount chiefs were accorded an ex-officio status, and sub-chiefs of ethnic groups outside the 'native reserves' came into the house by election, on a rotational basis. This implied hierarchy has been used to ensure that the constitution is ethnically neutral. Section 3 of the constitution guarantees every Motswana fundamental human rights irrespective of race, place of origin, political opinions, colour, creed or gender. However, there were widespread perceptions that Sections 77, 78 and 79 were discriminatory. These provisions specified, among others, that the House of Chiefs shall comprise eight ex-officio members representing eight Tswana ethnic groups as paramount chiefs and representatives of the other ethnic groups by elections, as sub-chiefs. This differential treatment implies a hierarchy in the authority of *dikgosi* and is subject to considerable debate.

After a presidential commission of inquiry reported on these sections of the constitution (Government of Botswana 2000), public discussion of issues around ethnicity revealed deep-seated ethnic tensions. In a real sense the debate arising from the commission brought back ethnicity as an important dialectic of understanding politics and society in Botswana. Although amendments to the constitution respecting the said sections did not remove the hierarchical structure of *dikgosi* in the House of Chiefs, it increased the composition of the House from 15 to 35 to include more ethnic minorities. Nevertheless, the struggles by the

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ethnic minorities for inclusion and recognition as equals are negotiated on the basis of a stable democratic rule. As Botswana goes beyond the 'third wave' of democratisation, ethnicity is taking primacy as a new site for

democratisation. Now that independence has been won and consolidated, ethnic minorities that had accepted their low status in the past are increasingly questioning the social ordering in society. Without questioning the legitimacy of the post-colonial state, they demand the state should be more inclusive and accommodating. It is essentially the successful resolution of these disputes, which would ensure that peace and tranquillity prevail, not only in Botswana but also in Africa as a whole.

Ethnicity as identity and belonging

Shraeder (2000:138) defines ethnicity as a sense of 'collective identity in which a people perceive of themselves as sharing a common historical past and a variety of social norms and customs'. These norms and customs also define 'relationships between males and females, rites and practices of marriage and divorce, legitimate forms of governance and the proper means of resolving conflict'. In another formulation, the recognition, for instance, that gender is a socially constructed epithet marks a critical juncture in the development

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of a theory of gender relations. Moreover, the struggles by ethnic minorities to have their languages recognised as national and official languages 'encompasses much more than access to education and jobs in the modern sector' (Horowitz 1985, cited in Diamond

1987:122); notably, it also embraces notions of people's dignity and recognition. Although cultural attributes are not tangible, they form an essential part of people's identity, self-esteem and dignity. Horowitz delves into the realm of 'social psychology' and argues that there is nothing more degrading than to deny a person her or his self-esteem and dignity. In discussing the 'politics of ethnic entitlement', he asserts that fear of domination and exclusion by far outweighs the drive for material gain (Horowitz 1986 cited in Diamond 1987:122). These forms of identity are both mythical and real, and recognising them would go a long way toward understanding the dynamics of African culture. In Botswana, these identities are not only fostered by linguistic differences, but also by the territorial division of tribal and administrative districts.

The patriarchal structures that are embedded in traditional societies tend to constrain women's engagement with and participation in politics and leadership roles. While *dikgotla* are said to form the basis of democratic rule in Botswana, they cannot be said to encourage popular participation. In the past, women and children were not allowed to take part in *kgotla* proceedings, let alone assume office. Moreover, the *kgotla* excluded ethnic minorities such as the Bakgalagadi and Basarwa (Peters 1995).⁴ However, the inclusion of other minorities in the expanded House of Chiefs indicates that there is some accommodation of other ethnic groups, although the hierarchy implied in the traditional Tswana setting fully is not fully addressed. The patriarchal structure of society tended to suppress women's voices and denied them leadership positions. However, the installation of Mosadi Seboko in September 2003 as *Kgosi Kgolo* (paramount chief) of Balete, was a clear indication that *bogosi* was adapting to a new wave of democratisation, and was beginning to be more inclusive. According to Ngcongco (1989), the connection between culture and peacebuilding in Botswana is borne out by the fact that Batswana are historically known as a peace-loving people. This perception is supported by the Tswana proverb *ntwa kgolo ke ya molomo* ('it is better to dialogue rather than go to war'). Language or a manner of speech is a manifestation of self-expression; through idioms, poems and songs, people express their being and aspirations for fulfilment. Cultural settings form the basic forms of cognitive interaction and embody societal values that shape the character of individuals and societies. The peace-loving nature of Batswana is further signified by the fact that when the Tswana chiefs faced the threat of invasion and incorporation into South Africa, they travelled to England to seek protection from the British.

Often, calls to revive African cultures and practices are taken as a return to ancient practices where traditional authority or *bogosi* was arbitrary and oppressive, where people practised polygamy, genital mutilation and gender inequalities, witchcraft and *muti* and ritual murders.⁵ These are traditional practices that must be avoided and discouraged because

they are not only illegal, but also violate all norms of decent behaviour and of civility. Positive Tswana traditional institutions and practices, such as *bogosi*, ethnicity and *botho*, need to be emphasised to realise the values they could bring to facilitate peacebuilding and contribute to societal stability. In the past, *mephato* (age regiments) were used to forge a sense of community and build social bonds. They took part in community projects such as building schools, roads and bridges. They were also warriors whom the chief would deploy to hunt lions or wild dogs and prevent cattle or elephants from destroying crops. Among the Bakgatla, *bogwera* (circumcision) and *bojale* (women's initiation college) are customary institutions, which are being adapted to make them socially relevant today. As a precaution against HIV and AIDS, males are circumcised using modern surgical procedures, a practice which Bakgatla *bogosi* is promoting.

Ethnicity, land and bogosi

The struggles for ethnic identity and autonomy play themselves out in the acquisition and control of land and *bogosi*. This results from the Tribal Territories Act, which subsumes certain ethnic groups under the territorial domain of other ethnic groups. For instance, in the Central District, several ethnic groups, including the Bakalanga, Batswapong and Baborwa, are placed under the control of the Ngwato chieftaincy. Similarly, in Ngamiland, the Batawana royalty presides over an area that includes Wayeyi, Hambukushu and other population groups. In an ironic way, although *dikgosi* do not formally control land, the symbolic gesture of being referred to as 'mother of the people' and owner of tribal land gives them a lot of authority in tribal affairs. In the past, *dikgosi* allocated land, but now it is under the domain of Land Boards. Ethnic minorities detest the ex-officio status accorded to the eight Tswana chiefs, but where they reside in their territorial domain, they cannot assume a status equal to theirs, and this has been a source for dispute. Increasingly, ethnic

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minorities have challenged the dominant paradigm of nation building through the diffusion of the values of the dominant Tswana culture. Minority groups have argued that Botswana is not the homogeneous society that it is often projected to be. The Botswana nation is made up of several ethnic nationalities. Therefore, it is said, nation building should be anchored in democratic ideals of individual freedom and civil liberty, and should be founded on the recognition of other cultures besides the dominant Tswana groups.

The Society for the Promotion of Ikalanga Language is perhaps a frontrunner in articulating ethnic consciousness and the need to promote *Ikalanga* as an avenue of self-actualisation by *Bakalanga* speakers. This obviously runs counter to the dominant Tswana culture, which is bent on promoting Setswana as the national language. The struggles for socio-cultural, political and economic hegemony became more pronounced after the 'Clarion Call for Batswana' (*Pitso ya Batswana*) was launched to raise the consciousness of Tswana-speaking Batswana. Although the Tswana constitute a numerical majority, *Pitso ya Batswana* popularised the view that they are economically marginalised, especially by *Ikalanga*-speakers in the job market. Kamanakao Association, a Bayeyi cultural organisation that has taken the government to court over the lack of recognition of the tribe, has also forcefully raised the ethnic question. As far back as 1948, the Bayeyi made demands that they be accorded their own *dikgotla* and given a voice in tribal administration. They also demanded the restoration of their land rights. On 24 April 1999, the Bayeyi enthroned Calvin Kamanakao as paramount chief and demanded his recognition by the government. They demanded jurisdiction over their tribal lands and for the designation of Gumare as their district headquarters. They also demand that their language, *Shiyezi*, be introduced in schools.

The government of Botswana came under attack at a United Nations sitting of the Committee on the Elimination of all Forms of Racial Discrimination in 2002, when representatives of the *Bayeyi* and other minority groups lodged a complaint against the perceived discrimination. The committee raised concerns about

the discriminatory character of certain domestic laws, such as the Chieftainship Act and the Territorial Act, which only recognises the Tswana-speaking tribes. Other tribes, especially *Basarwa*/San peoples, are reported to suffer from cultural, social, economic and political exclusion, do not enjoy group rights to land, and do not participate in the House of Chiefs (Committee on the Elimination of all Forms of Racial Discrimination 2002:3).

Ethnicity remains a central issue in the dispute over the land rights of the *Basarwa*. They are often referred to as 'remote area dwellers', a minority who were historically exploited as a servile underclass by the dominant Tswana and other groups as cattle herders and labourers. They reside in areas far removed from the major urban centres, and despite the government's rural development efforts, infrastructure and service delivery to their areas are limited. They are also remote from the locus of political power. Many of them have not benefited from formal education and do not have positions of influence in the public service or political administration. As a result, decisions are taken on their behalf in a paternalistic manner that conforms to the ethos of the dominant Tswana society.

Since 1982, the *Basarwa* have engaged the government of Botswana in a legal tussle with the support of the First People of the Kalahari, Survival International and Ditshwanelo (Botswana Centre for Human Rights). The government has used the provision of infrastructure as a pretext to relocate the *Basarwa* from the Central Kalahari Game Reserve to New Xadi and Kaudwane. To enforce its decision, the government withdrew services to the *Basarwa* inside the reserve. Roy Sesana of First People of the Kalahari has called the

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relocation 'cultural genocide'. To expect a people whose mode of livelihood is hunting and gathering to rear goats and cattle is like expecting fish to live outside water. The new role they are expected to play in order to be integrated into mainstream society has

rendered them voiceless. The *Basarwa* challenged their relocation as unconstitutional and took the government to court, maintaining that the game reserve is their ancestral land. On 13 December 2006, the high court gave relief to both parties, ruling that the relocation was unconstitutional and that the government was not obliged to restore the facilities inside the reserve. Since there was no decisive winner in the case, the parties have been advised to negotiate a lasting settlement (*Mmegi* 2006:4). The Committee on the Elimination of all Forms of racism expressed concern about the ongoing dispossession of *Basarwa* people from their land and about reports stating that their resettlement outside the game reserve does not respect their political, economic, socio-cultural status and land rights. The committee recommended that negotiations between the government and the *Basarwa* be resumed about their relocation from the game reserve, and that a rights-based approach to development be adopted (Committee on the Elimination of all Forms of Racial Discrimination 2002:3).

Botho and virtuous living

Over the years, Botswana's guiding philosophies have been anchored in four national principles of 'democracy, development, self-reliance and unity' (National Development

Plan, 1991:24). Following the adoption of Vision 2016, a fifth principle, *botho*, was added. *Botho* is a central pillar of African culture that is premised on building a person who is well rounded, 'compassionate, just and caring', 'well-mannered, courteous and disciplined' (Presidential Task Group 1997:8), respectful of culture, and who contributes positively to

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his or her community. *Botho* is not an institution characteristic of Botswana only; it is found widely among Bantu language speakers. In eastern and central Africa it is known as *bantu*, and among the Nguni in Southern Africa as *ubuntu* (Mmualefhe 2007:1). As a philosophical concept, it sets high standards of social morality and the 'uprightness' expected of young and old alike in community life (Gaie & Mmolai 2007:36). It enjoins honesty and accountability and emphasises the humane treatment of others with respect and humility.

Human beings are seen as the product of a culture that moulds their behaviour as humane individuals who accord others the dignity they deserve. As a social and cultural construct, *botho* lays the foundation for an ethical, just and accountable political system. The virtue that sees people as a collective rather than as individuals has a high intrinsic value in an African community. *Botho* helps to build an 'open, democratic and accountable nation' with 'moral and tolerant' virtues (Presidential Task Group 1997:8) that instil moral uprightness, and to promote recognition of the divergent cultures within the polity. Moreover, it demands high standards of morality, accountability, respect for the rule of law and transparency in national governance.

Towards an Alternative Trajectory

Conceptualising an alternative trajectory of culture and peace should start by taking into account a tradition of the United Nations since 1992 that has been the dominant paradigm in peacebuilding and reconstruction.⁶ An alternative trajectory also addresses the intellectual dominance and dependence associated with colonial and post-colonial social formations and power structures. Conceiving colonialism as a civilising mission has for a long time obscured the visibility, legitimacy and primacy of African intellectual thought. This predisposition was meant to instil sense of inferiority among Africans and to persuade them to look to the West for salvation. The alternative trajectory seeks to demystify the politics of knowledge and information and assert Africa's prominence as a fountain of traditional knowledge. Moreover, it needs to be emphasised that Africa and Africans have ways of resolving problems without recourse to modernisation.

The first president of the Republic of Botswana, Sir Seretse Khama, said 'a nation without a past is a lost nation and a people without a past are a people without a soul' (Khama 1970). The chiefs have made a contribution at a deeper cultural level by ensuring that people live in harmony with one another and with the society they live in. The Botswana government has come to terms with the fact that it would be a mistake to make its people choose between liberal democracy and *bogosi*. Instead, the republican form of government has embraced *bogosi*, if not co-opted it into its own structures. This ensures, for instance, that when government representatives address meetings in the rural areas, they do so in *dikgotla*, which are structures that are recognised by the people. There has been a symbiotic exchange between *bogosi* and the republican government to the extent that one can talk of a fusion between the two institutions. Although *dikgosi* have lost most of their formal powers, they are still revered and enjoy a lot of respect. On matters of settling disputes at the local level, they handle arbitration, resolution of disputes and the administration of traditional justice⁷. For democracy

to be relevant, it has to be based on local conditions and mediated through peoples' dreams, aspirations and struggles. Botswana's unique democracy is a successful example of the blending of the Westminster model and the traditional institution of *bogosi*. Dikgosi should be seen as intermediaries, who in a manner different from civil society 'straddle the space between the state and society' (William 2004:122).

Globalisation takes the form of an open and boundless world characterised by free trade, free capital flows, free movement of goods and services and the universalisation of culture. In the era of globalisation, cultural authenticity is difficult to sustain given global networks, capital flows and the free flow of ideas. In the pre-colonial period, culture was an embodiment of myths, norms and practices; in the era of globalisation, culture is amorphous and fluid and comes pre-packaged in various forms through the mass media. Clearly, under globalisation, social, economic and cultural norms and practices are becoming increasingly unified in an uneven process in which African culture, which lags behind in technological advancement, is relegated to the backwaters. Perhaps a new cosmopolitan culture is emerging, one that the World Trade Organisation is promoting in order to set norms and standards for doing international trade. African economies have also been opened up to global trade, but with the manifest legacy of colonialism and capitalism, Africa is integrated only in a marginal way, resulting in the pillage of its raw materials. Perhaps, as Prah (2002:34) concedes, 'we cannot wish away globalisation, threatening as it is ... somehow we must make it work for us, perhaps more modestly, make it less threatening.'

Conclusion

This article affirms that a return to traditional norms and practices could rekindle aspects of African culture that people in rural areas could relate to and use in building lasting peace and development. The protection of indigenous cultures in Botswana is surely emerging as a new

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site for the struggles for authenticity and self-actualisation. Prah (2002) submits that culture is the missing link in development planning in Africa. Although ethnic minorities in Botswana are increasingly vocal and assertive about their right, they are not as it were challenging the authority of the state but want to be counted as

equals in a democratic state. They are clamouring for greater inclusion and accommodation in the political system; hence the view that ethnic nationalism is emerging as a new force for democratic debates, which would lead to greater political stability.

Despite the severely curtailed powers of the *dikgosi*, the maintenance of the institution is recognition of the value of the Tswana cultural heritage and of the influence that traditional leaders have on the people, especially in the rural areas. In a constructive way, the Botswana government has struck a judicious balance between traditional institutions and liberal democratic institutions as a basis for stable democratic rule, a phenomenon that is unique in Africa. *Bogosi* has been reinvented to play a supporting role in the process of democratisation and building peace. Ethnicity should not be wished away as an identity of the past; it must be recognised as a core identity and cannot be replaced even when people acquire other forms of identity. Building a culture of peace means becoming free from fear of violence and oppression and free to express one's identity and sense of belonging; having the latitude to pursue opportunities and space to enjoy the civil liberties; and enjoying the right to self-determination. Drawing on the traditional virtues of *botho* or *ubuntu*; Africa needs to recapture the spirit of communalism, sharing and compassion to

build lasting peace. For peace to endure in Africa, Africans must listen to the voices of their cultures, engage in cultural revival and recognise the diversity that makes a people. Botswana's unique model as a democratic model that draws on traditional and modern institutions calls for further inquiry and research.

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Endnotes

¹ *Bogosi* is a system of traditional Tswana governance in which a chief (*kgosi*) presides over an ethnic group. Ethnicity is perceived as 'collective identity in which a people see themselves as sharing a common historical past and a variety of social norms and customs' (see Shraeder 2000:138). *Botho* is a set of moral values held by Bantu-speaking people that embraces civility, humanity and compassion.

² World War 1 and 2 were about the struggle to contain German nationalism in Europe. European stability during the Cold War was, in fact, due partly to the widespread fulfillment of ethno-nationalist projects. And since the end of the Cold War, ethno-nationalism has continued to reshape European borders. The few exceptions were Czechoslovakia, the Soviet Union and Yugoslavia. But these countries' fate only demonstrated the ongoing vitality of ethno-nationalism. After the fall of communism, East and West Germany were unified with remarkable rapidity, Czechoslovakia split peacefully into Czech and Slovak republics, and the Soviet Union broke apart into a variety of different national units. Yugoslavia saw the secession of Croatia and Slovenia and then descended into ethno-national wars over Bosnia and Kosovo. See Muller 2008:18-35.

³ Every village has wards, which are used for arbitration. For instance, in Mochudi the main wards in the village according to seniority are Kgosing, Morema, Mabudisa, Tshukudu and Manamakgota. Two other wards of Phaphane and Boseja (north and south) were created as a result of the expansion of the village.

⁴ Historically, the Bakgalagadi (people who live in the Kgalagadi district) and Basarwa (the San) were considered by Tswana speakers as a servile class who occupied low strata in the social hierarchy. Although the constitution prohibits discrimination on the basis of ethnicity, it became so institutionalised that it will take time to eradicate.

⁵ The ritual murder of Segametsi Mogomotsi in 1994, a pupil of Radikolo Community Junior Secondary School in Mochudi, is a case in point, illustrative of the dark traditional practices that should be discarded. It is widely believed that *muti* (traditional medicine prepared from human private parts), acquired through ritual murder, can be used to enhance one's electoral support, fame or wealth.

⁶ The United Nations, in its 1992 publication *An Agenda for Peace*, enunciated principles for building lasting peace in the post-modern era. The agenda identified four major areas for peace-building; first, preventive diplomacy, the use of negotiation and persuasion to prevent latent conflicts from erupting into war and existing conflicts from escalating; second, peace-making, bringing warring parties to the negotiation table and encouraging them to cease hostilities; third, peacebuilding, a sustained effort at reconciling and rebuilding war-torn communities which entails identifying and addressing the root causes of conflict and working out ways to ensure that the warring parties see value in peace. Fourth, post-conflict peacebuilding, which involves creating viable options for all parties to a peace agreement and demonstrating that it pays to work for peace. It also means demobilisation of ex-combatants, resettlement of displaced communities and the reintegration of belligerent forces into society.

⁷ The administration of traditional justice sometimes takes the form of corporal punishment, which Western culture believes is primitive, but it has proven to have greater chance of rehabilitation than the prison system that is used by the 'modern courts' (Linchwe II 1989: 99-102).

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