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## ETHNIC IDENTITY AND NATIONHOOD IN BOTSWANA

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### INTRODUCTION

There are about 55 distinct indigenous groups speaking about twenty-six languages in Botswana (Nyati-Ramahobo, 1998; Botswana Language Use Project, 1996). The Khoisan are classified into nine main ethnic groups, and they speak about 23 languages and dialects. The rest of the languages and ethnic groups are Bantu. These numbers need to be treated with caution since there are fundamental issues relating to what constitutes an ethnic group and the debate between language and dialect. Eight of the Bantu groups speak Setswana as their mother tongue. Each one of these is officially considered a majority group. All others, including the Khoisan languages are regarded as minority languages and ethnic groups. The use of the term minority and majority languages and ethnic groups in Botswana therefore bears no numerical significance. It simply distinguishes between those who speak Setswana as mother tongue and those who would speak it as a second language and embrace it as their national heritage in accordance with the assimilationist model. Given this background, therefore, it is inaccurate from a linguistic and ethnic point of view to speak of majority and minority languages and ethnic groups in Botswana, but rather about marginalised versus non-marginalised linguistic and ethnic groups (Molosiwa, 2001).

At Independence, Botswana adopted a modernist/assimilationist policy of social development for its peoples. Setswana is the national language, while English is the official language. In order to build a nation state using Setswana, all other languages that were taught in schools before Independence were banned from use in all social domains, including education, the media and judiciary. Setswana became the medium of instruction in schools. Every child in every community is expected to learn in Setswana and later in English. While English is the main language of the courts, Setswana is the only indigenous language which is acceptable in the courts, through interpretation or translation into English. It is the only language accepted in official public domains such as the *kgotla*. Since Independence, the national population census does not segregate the population by language and ethnicity. No official forms require ethnic or language identity as one of the personal details to be supplied. The exception to this is when a suspect is required to provide their ethnic identity by the Police. The state media (radio and newspaper) disseminate information only in Setswana and English. The radio station only broadcasts those cultural programmes that reflect the culture of the eight Setswana speaking ethnic groups. All these policies and practices are to foster nationhood, a state with one people, one language, one culture and a single flag. In this sense, nationhood is seen as synonymous with homogeneity.

For the past thirty-three years, therefore, the Government of Botswana has worked tirelessly to achieve the ideal goal of a homogenous nation state in which ethnic identities would disappear or would lose significance. For instance, The first President of Botswana, Sir Seretse Khama, while addressing the Teachers' Union Conference at Lobatse on December 15th, 1969, said:

Likewise, all moves towards closer inter-tribal co-operation will be encouraged, such as, for instance, the organisation of the tribal and other groups into local councils, into which smaller tribal units will be

absorbed for their own economic benefit, even if they retained a small measure of tribal identity (quoted in Carter and Morgan, 1980: 291–292).

The President was calling for all tribes which are non-Tswana speaking to assimilate into Tswana speaking groups for economic benefit. The Chieftainship Act (Republic of Botswana, 1966, Cap. 41: 01) states that 'tribe' means 'the Bamangwato Tribe, the Batawana Tribe, the Bakgatla Tribe, the Bakwena Tribe, the Bangwaketse Tribe, the Bamalete Tribe, the Barolong Tribe and the Batlokwa Tribe' (41: 3). These are the eight Setswana speaking tribes. According to this Act, non-Tswana speaking tribes are not recognised since they have to be absorbed into other tribes. The Tribal Territories Act also defines tribal territory with respect to these tribes (Republic of Botswana, 1966, Cap. 32: 03), meaning that only those eight tribes mentioned above have group land rights, and it is distributed under their jurisdiction within their territory.

The paramount chiefs of these eight tribes were the sovereigns of the soil. Consequently, the country was divided into eight regions called Districts: Kgalagadi, Ghanzi, Kweneng, Central, Ngwaketse, Kgatleng, Ngamiland (Northwest) and South East District. In those districts in which Tswana speaking groups reside, the name of the district would be the same as the name of the tribe and that of the body that distributes land in the district. For instance, Kgatleng District Council has its capital in Mochudi village where the Bakgatla tribe resides and the name of the land governing body is Kgatleng Landboard. Thus, we have Ngwato Landboard, Tawana Landboard, Ngwaketse Landboard, and Kweneng Landboard. The Balete and Batlokwa tribe reside in the South East District. Group rights to land is not an issue that is sensitive in terms of who arrived there first (Mogwe, 1994), what matters is that these tribes speak Setswana. As mentioned earlier, group rights are also not sensitive to who forms the majority. For instance, the North West District is referred to in popular discourse as Goo-Tawana, meaning the land of the Batawana, and yet the Batawana form the minority of the minorities in the district in numerical terms. Everyone in the district is officially a Motawana tribesmen, a political rather than a cultural definition of identity (Bennett, 2000). At the heart of this definition is discrimination, as it allows a Motawana to view himself or herself not only politically (territorially, belonging to Tawanaland) but also ethnically, and would, for example, bury their dead according to Tawana custom. On the other hand, a Moyeyi is both politically and culturally defined as a Motawana, as he or she is expected to sing to a Motawana Chief in Tswana and not in Shiyeyi.

Hence, the definition denies the non-Tswana groups their right to define themselves culturally, and be able to live according to their cultural traditions and customs. This definition is meant to foster acculturation and assimilation into Tswanaedom. The result, as will be discussed later, is cultural erosion among non-Tswana speaking groups. Central to the discrimination is not so much the use of the word 'tribe' as Bennett (in this volume) seems to emphasise, but rather its qualifier, the tribal name that comes before it in the documents under discussion. That is, the Batawana tribe, Bangwato tribe and so on. It is the selection of a specific ethnic group to define and refer to other groups, which are both linguistically and culturally unrelated. This could serve no other goal than to subjugate and assimilate the sub-group. There is no obvious political motivation why a Moyeyi should be called a Motawana, or the other way round. Essentially, therefore, there is no reason why the Wayeyi should politically or otherwise be referred to as the Batawana.

Closely related to the issue of tribe or ethnicity is chieftaincy. The House of Chiefs is part of the legislative branch of Government and it is highly symbolic, as chiefs are seen as the custodians of

culture. Currently there are 15 members. Eight of the members are paramount chiefs of the eight Setswana speaking tribes, meaning that they are chiefs by birth. Four are elected sub-chiefs from areas where languages other than Setswana are spoken and do not fall under any of the eight paramount chiefs. These include the North East, Kgalagadi, Ghanzi and Chobe Districts. The eight Tswana speaking groups in the House of Chiefs, the country's traditional parliament, represent all non-Tswana speaking groups or the marginalised. Those tribes in the Northwest (Ngamiland), including the Hambukushu, Herero, Subia, Wayeyi, Baciriku (Baqcereku), and Basarwa are represented and ruled by the Batawana and are regarded and referred to as such. The House especially elects three more members. Tribes, whose members do not speak Setswana as mother tongue, are not allowed to be represented by their paramount chiefs. For instance, the Wayeyi installed their paramount chief in April of 1999. The Government has refused to recognize him and continues to impose the chief of the Batawana onto the Wayeyi and all other tribes in the district. Those who speak Setswana as a first language must represent all non-Tswana speaking groups. This is in the spirit of the assimilation of everyone into the Setswana language and culture.

Statements made by the various Presidents of Botswana at different times encourage this philosophy. For instance, the first President, Sir Seretse Khama, informed the nation that his party stands for a gradual but sure evolution of a nation state '...to which tribal groups will, while in existence, take secondary place' (Carter and Morgan, 1980: 291). In 1989, the second President, Sir Ketumile Masire, asked Batswana 'not to spoil the prevailing peace and unity in the country by fighting for ethnic language groupings to take precedence over Setswana, and that tribes insisting that their languages become media of instruction within their respective areas would break up the nation' (*Botswana Daily News*, June 30, 1989, no.123:1). This is a reflection of an orientation towards Setswana to the exclusion of other languages. A journalist reported on the visit of the third President, Festus Mogae, who was Vice President at the time, to Dukwi and Mosetse villages in the Central District to defuse tension between the Bangwato (Tswana) and the Bakalanga (non-Tswana) tribes after two sub-chiefs from the former were imposed on the latter. He is reported to have said that all people who live in the Central District should consider themselves Bangwato (Moeti 1998). In October 1999, the Vice President Ian Khama Seretse Khama said the same thing to the Bakalanga in Nkange, thus justifying Ngwato hegemony over tribes like the Basarwa, Bakalanga, Babirwa, Batswapong and others who are considered minority groups. At policy level, therefore, Tswanaedom has been achieved through the assimilationist model. The Tswana have group rights to land, they have the right to use their languages in all social domains and they have the privilege to live their culture. The question that remains to be answered is, has a nation state with one language, one culture and one flag been formed and secured?

Ottaway (1999:300) argues that,

Human beings belong to natural groups, which share common culture and language... The natural groups are not political entities, but they often are and many believe that they should be the basis for the formation of one. In nineteenth century Europe, the natural group called the 'nation' was expected to become the basis for the formation of the political 'nation-state'. The nation state then came to be regarded as the model of the modern state, to the point the term is often misused today to refer to countries, including African ones, that are clearly multiethnic, and thus not nation-states in any meaningful sense of the word.

The term 'nation state' was therefore used to refer to a small community, a natural and apolitical group. Once this group becomes the basis for the formation of a political system, the grouping has gone beyond this small community to be more heterogeneous. However, as the concept was imported in a political sense, it is understood in its natural sense. Hence, African leaders strive to create homogenous but political states through assimilation. From the 'natural' definition of a nation state, it is difficult to speak of a nation state in a multilingual and multi-ethnic sense. Political states like Botswana, which have always been composed of small nations which form a larger heterogeneous society. Ottaway (1999) goes on to say that it is the Europeans that applied this concept to Africa. Just as Europeans belonged to natural groups called nations, Africans belonged to natural groups which were called tribes because they were regarded as primitive compared to their European counterparts, hence the term 'nation' used in Europe had to be replaced by 'tribe' in Africa. Consequently, nationalism is seen, as a European concept while tribalism is an African term.

It is therefore clear that the concept of national identity is both artificial and non-primordial. On a daily basis individual forms of identity resemble cultural values, symbols and styles (Royce, 1982). When an object falls from the hands of a Mokgatla, s/he exclaims 'Bakgatla wee' (a call onto his or her tribe's people to help). They do not say, 'Batswana wee' (which would refer to a political entity – people of the state of Botswana). Equally, when a Moyerai hears of something surprising they would exclaim to their totem. If for instance, their totem is a monkey, they would say, '*Ushizirwa wa mashinkazi, Wangaukazi!*', an appeal to the female monkey, who they regard as their mother, to come and assist. The suffix – *kazi* denotes femaleness, and as the Wayeyi are a matrilineal society, their totems are the female animals.

Ethnic identities seem stronger than 'national identities' as they work at the very micro level and on an immediate and daily basis. After thirty years of efforts to form a nation state in which ethnic identities would disappear, Botswana remains a multi-ethnic society in which ethnic identities have not gone away. However, most Batswana are proud of their political identity as a people of the same republic. They are proud of the economic progress and the general international standing of the country in Africa and the world. They would like, however, to couple this with their cultural identities. The attitude and relations between Tswana and non-Tswana groups in their communities has always been of superiority and inferiority respectively.

Despite the persistence of ethnic identities, African leaders continue to reject the recognition of ethnic and linguistic nations other than their own, on the basis that they cause conflict. The First President of Botswana, Sir Seretse Khama said:

When I say the greatest enemy of independent Africa is tribalism... it becomes dangerous when it leads people to think in exclusively tribal terms. It becomes a threat to the stability and security of our state when it is carried out to the point when a man in a responsible position thinks of himself as a tribesman before he thinks of himself as a Motswana (Carter and Morgan, 1980:303 quoted in Nyati-Ramahobo, 1991:201).

Despite this assertion by his father, the Vice President, Ian Khama Seretse Khama, the son of Sir Seretse Khama is currently a supporter of the Serowe Development Trust, a non-governmental organization that belongs to and is run by the Bangwato tribe. He has provided a vehicle for this organization and he recently sought donor funds to assist with the purchasing of Moducare, some medication that boosts one's immune system. Moducare would be distributed to victims of rape

cases in Khama's constituency (Radio Botswana News Bulletin, May 16, 2000). Ethnic identity has not disappeared either in Khama's area or from his own son, thirty years later. For example, the Vice President visited Etsha, an area dominated by marginalised groups such as the Hambukushu, Wayeyi and Basarwa, and informed them that for as long as they are members of the ruling party, they should not support organizations that are formed along tribal lines as they are tribalistic and divisive (Radio Botswana News Bulletin, March 25th, 2000). This is an attempt to highlight political over ethnic loyalty. He was aware that his audience was ignorant of his loyalty to his own ethnic group. The assimilationist efforts are continuing. When marginalised groups assume their natural groupings, they are being tribalistic. On the contrary, when Tswana speaking groups do the same, they are not considered tribalistic but are seen to be promoting nationhood. Parsons (1985:27) maintains that the concept of 'Tswanaedom', that is both philosophical and territorial, has led many observers to assume that Botswana is a mono-ethnic state'. He goes on to say that this is so 'only in so far as the Tswana minority has successfully imposed its culture on the majority population of the extreme diverse origins'... but even then 'ethnic identities have not disappeared'. The case of the Wayeyi is an example of the persistence of ethnic identity despite more than 250 years of servitude.

### THE IMPACT

Le Roux (1997) describes assimilation as a one way process in which minority groups give up their languages, cultures and traditions and assume those of the dominant group. He calls this model the 'ice-cream plus salt theory' (p.21). The current situation indicates that there has been a substantial amount of assimilation into Tswanaedom by some minority groups, this is more so of those that were enslaved. For instance, the Wayeyi were enslaved by the Batawana and were punished for speaking Shiyeyi (Nyati-Ramahobo, 2001). There has been a tremendous amount of language shift among the Wayeyi. Most Wayeyi now cannot speak Shiyeyi and it is one of the endangered languages of the world. The Kalanga were ill-treated by the Bangwato and consequently, most Kalanga who live in Serowe cannot speak Ikalanga. There is a general trend of cultural erosion in the nation including the Tswana culture as it competes with English hegemony. Most minority groups have lost their traditions and customs and adopted those of the Tswana. For instance, all the ethnic groups in the North West District marry according to Tswana custom and not their own. The Wayeyi, who are matrilineal in inheritance, have shifted to patrilineal patterns of ownership and inheritance.

There is also evidence of amalgamation, also called the melting pot (Le Roux, 1997) in some communities. In this assimilationist model, minority and majority cultures mix to form a new and unique culture, with distinct characteristics from the original cultures. The co-existence of the Wayeyi and the Batawana in the North West District, for instance, has resulted in some new linguistic features, which belonged to neither of the two. Words such as *tswii* (water lily), are not of Tswana or Shiyeyi origin, but are associated with the Creole which has been formed by contact between Shiyeyi and Sengwato (the Tswana dialect spoken by the Batawana). This Creole is called Setawana (Nyati-Ramahobo, forthcoming). The way in which birth rites are conducted combines some aspects of the Wayeyi and Tswana culture. For instance, originally, the Wayeyi would confine the mother and nurse the umbilical cord of the baby for about three to four days after birth. Once the umbilical cord falls off, the mother is able to cook and carry out other chores for herself. Currently, the period has been extended (a Tswana feature) and the mother and child should stay in confinement for about two to four months. It can be argued that such features owe more to assimilation than amalgamation, as

the Batawana do not seem to adopt any of the Wayeyi features. The process is therefore one way.

Concerning land rights, one observes features of structural assimilation or the 'blender' theory (Le Roux, 1997). This is yet another assimilationist model in which there is total rejection of any kind of grouping on the basis of religion, language, ethnicity and so on. It is also called the 'open community' ideology. In this theory, groups have no rights, only individual rights are regarded as the core of social order. Marginalised groups in Botswana have no land rights. As stated earlier, the land on which they live was managed under the jurisdiction of the nearest Tswana speaking Chief, and now by a Land Board. Individuals from these non-Tswana or marginalised groups can have land as individuals or as some other group and not a linguistic or ethnic group. For instance, the application for land by the Kamanakao Association was rejected in May 2000. Proponents of structural assimilation believe that group rights restrict individual rights to some extent, and they regard assimilation and amalgamation as anti-pluralist. In Botswana, group rights are tolerated through registered organizations. However, when such organizations call for the rights of minority groups, they meet resistance from Government. Organizations such as the Society for the Promotion of Ikalanga Language (SPIL) and the Kamanakao Association, which are working on the development and promotion of the Ikalanga and Shiyeyi languages respectively, have met Government resistance, with some Government officials labelling them as tribalist (Radio Botswana News Bulletin, 2000). This indicates some degree of intolerance of minority group rights.

Perhaps the greatest impact has been the unintended goal of cultural loss even for the Tswana groups. The spirit of suppressing ethnic identities for marginalised groups has unintentionally spilled over as a low regard for the culture of the Tswana speaking groups as it competes with the English culture. As languages are in a diaglosic relationship, in which English commands the highest respect, followed by Setswana, and then marginalised group languages (Arthur, 1996) which do not even exist from the official perspective, this result is not surprising. Minimal efforts were geared towards the development and preservation of the language of Tswana speaking groups, and greater efforts towards the eradication of the languages of non-Tswana speaking groups, the overall result is that Botswana has quickly lost a lot of its cultural heritage. 'The baby was thrown out with the bath water'.

### WHO GAINS FROM THIS EXCLUSIVE AND ASSIMILATIONIST PHILOSOPHY?

The exclusive philosophy adopted by the ruling party is not only reflected in language related choices. It transcends into social, cultural, political and economic options. For instance, certain minority areas are the least developed in terms of infrastructure and other social amenities. They have the highest illiteracy rates, and have no access to information. For these reasons, they are the easiest to exploit for political purposes. The Department of Youth and Culture provides financial assistance only to Tswana related cultural activities. The exclusion of Batswana in general in the economic life in favour of expatriates is quite evident and is seen by many as an over-spill of the exclusive ideology in which Government has acquired a culture of not protecting its citizenry. Consequently, most Batswana live in poverty, while the few minorities in Government enjoy the riches of the country. The question is, given the persistence of ethnic identities, save some degree of cultural erosion, would we still justify the assimilationist or exclusivist model in relation to the desire to build a nation state. Botswana's leadership has thrived on ethnicity for political power. The reason most politicians stand for elections in their area of birth is that they would gain sympathy and support

amongst their own people. Besides most ethnic conflicts in Africa are not caused by ordinary citizens but by African leaders who exploit ethnic identities to stay in power. As Uvin (1999) reported, ethnic violence in Rwanda was planned and executed by the elite of the minority Tutsi who wanted to stay in power. Nyati-Ramahobo (1998) maintains that what has been termed tribal conflicts in Africa, or ethnic conflict and racism in the United States, have not been caused by people of different tribes hating each other simply because they belong to different tribes. More often than not, there would be a cause of conflict between human beings due to different interests, ideologies, economic benefits and so on. In lobbying for support some form of identity and a sense of belonging, it is necessary to gain that support. Language and ethnicity become an easy and highly suitable form of identity due to the need to communicate and share a common value system. Nnoli (1989:2) states that:

In reality, ethnicity is a very complex phenomenon. It is characterised by ethnocentrism, common consciousness, identity, and exclusiveness. Like any other social phenomenon, it is not immutable. It can alter its form, place and role in the life of a society. New elements may appear in its content. Its links with other social phenomena may change, posing new questions. In addition, ethnicity does not exist in its pure form. It is always closely associated with political, juridical, religious and other social views, which constitute its important ingredients as well. ... Indeed the ethnic process by itself has no meaning, unless it is understood in its interactions with these other processes, especially the labour process.

Ethnicity therefore, on its own it is an innocent phenomenon, it is as simple as a personal name. However, as a form of bonding to achieve certain goals, it is a powerful source of group cohesion that can drive forces and direct its energies and powers into either a positive or a negative course. The women's movement in Botswana has become so powerful that Government has acceded by placing women in positions of power, even if it is for their (political leaders) own political gains. The Wayeyi tribe has bonded so well that Government has failed to divide them for the past five years since they began their quest for self-rule from the Batawana tribe.

African governments can no longer use nationhood as a reason for exclusive policies, as conflict has occurred even in those countries with few ethnic groups, such as Lesotho. This indicates that conflict is not necessarily related to or caused by ethnic relations. Ottaway states that one of the factors that have led African leaders to reject the legitimacy of ethnic identities, 'even when relying on them to bolster their power' was because the world, especially Europe looked at ethnic relations in Africa as backward tribalism, rather than accepting them as part of the same phenomena as nationalism which existed in the countries of Europe (Ottaway, 1999:303 and Werbner, in this volume). The rejection of ethnic difference, as if it were always 'tribalism' is then simply a lesson imported and well learned from European indoctrination rather practice from Europe. African leaders reject ethnic differences not because they really believe they cause conflict, but because it is a European desire (not practice) to do so, and certain factors are likely to interact which may deny them an opportunity to hold on to power. In Botswana, non-Tswana ethnic groups are rejected because leaders from opposition parties, who belong to these ethnic groups, may gain political support and take over power. Therefore, while Tswanaedom guarantees Tswana leaders power, through the natural bonding process, non-Tswanaedom may bring some uncertainties. They also reject ethnic communities because they want to cause conflict when and as necessary to maintain power. This was the case in Rwanda. African leaders have learned to reject themselves and their own people, and



deny them self-actualization, as a way to cause disharmony and consequently live in perpetual conflict. This conflict benefits the few in power, and the West as it supplies the artillery to the war zones. When the Wayeyi demanded to have their own chief and land, Government officials referred them to the Batawana tribe.

This was a clear attempt to cause conflict between the two tribes, so that in the final analysis, the Wayeyi would be labelled as tribalist and engineers of ethnic conflict. This would then serve as a lesson to other ethnic groups not to demand their rights. The Wayeyi refused to talk to the Batawana, as it was not necessary. They made their demands to Government as the policy making body and took it court as the peaceful way to get recognition. The other reason African leaders reject ethnic communities is to assist the English hegemony movement. As they reject African languages and cultures, they spend more resources on the promotion of English language and culture. The African leader therefore, only recognises his people as far as the elections are concerned, largely he is working tirelessly to please the colonial master, or his successor.

In Botswana the amount of resources spent on the promotion of English cannot be compared with those spent on Setswana. The African leader to this day continues to serve as a tactful exploitative agent between his own people and the colonial master. This is solely for his own personal gain. The African leader has failed the African continent and turned the blame on ethnicity. The pretence not to acknowledge the existence of ethnic diversity has led some leaders to be tyrannical to their people. When Tom Mbuya was assassinated in 1969, ethnic violence erupted between the Luo and Kikuyu, as it was believed that Kikuyu killed him while he was a Luo. President Kenyatta (a Kikuyu) visited Kisumu and his troops opened fire on angry Luos and killed eleven people and injured 78 (Nnoli, 1989). He could not acknowledge and appreciate that the Luos had the right to be angry for losing one of their own. As a leader, instead of bringing a message of peace to them he brought more misery.

The issue of chieftaincy has also been highly politicised. Since most people in the country still hold respect for their chiefs, they tend to vote for the party to which their chief is sympathetic. As chiefs are Government employees, they naturally pay allegiance to the Government. This is one of the factors that has contributed to Botswana being described as a one party state (Molutsi, 1994). Under the circumstances there is little hope, if any, for any other party to rule. The word democracy has taken on a new meaning in Africa. It simply means choiceless, fraudulent, pretentious elections every five years. On the positive side, it means freedom of speech without anyone listening to you, and loss of freedom after speech after that.

As reported in Nyati-Ramahobo (forthcoming), ethnicity, particularly Ngwatodom has benefited leadership in Botswana. After the death of Seretse Khama, the first President of Botswana, who resigned as chief of the Bamangwato tribe, President Masire who is a Mongwaketsi (a tribe that belonged to the opposition party) had to appease the Bamangwato by appointing Seretse's cousin, Lenyeletsi Seretse to the position of vice-presidency. Equally, in 1999 President Mogae, had to appease the Bamangwato by appointing Seretse Khama's son, Ian Khama to the vice-presidency. Ian Khama was also expected to use his chieftaincy to the Bamangwato throne and his father's charisma to win the elections for the ruling party, which had lost face in the 1994 general elections. Issues of ethnicity, language and chieftaincy will continue to dominate the political debate in the country. The modernist assimilationist model enshrined within Sections 77 to 79 of the Constitution, which allows ex-officio membership to the House of Chiefs for paramount chiefs of the eight Tswana speaking tribes, the Chieftainship Act and the Tribal Land Territories Act, fosters their continued existence.

## ALTERNATIVE MODELS

Like marriage conflicts, ethnic conflicts are difficult to completely eradicate but can be managed. Marriages which have celebrated their 50th anniversaries are not without conflicts, but have survived on open communication, understanding and appreciation of one another's needs, points of view and values. They have been nurtured through respect and the desire to continue to live together for a common purpose. This is the ideal approach to managing conflicts. Perhaps the answer lies in what the International Commission on Education (1996) calls 'learning to live together', which entails the ability to appreciate one another as an equal, accepting the other person as having something unique to contribute to the well-being of both of you. It entails tolerance and the desire to know more about the other. African leaders must learn to live with and for their people and appreciate the diversity of the cultures and their ethnic states. They must accept that no object on earth is made of one type of material. Heterogeneity is therefore the norm rather than the exception. Only four per cent of the World population lives in mono-ethnic states (Le Roux, 1997).

Perhaps it is time for Botswana to begin to explore other models for social development for its diverse peoples. Botswana is a multilingual, multi-cultural and multi-ethnic state. There could never be one language, one culture and one flag. There is growing evidence that the assimilationist model has been challenged as being unrealistic, oppressive and conflict. Le Roux (1997) describes three pluralistic models: structural pluralism, modified pluralism and dynamic pluralism. He defines a pluralistic society as 'any community that involves a variety of cultural, ethnic, language and religious groups'. Characteristics of a pluralistic society are those in which one finds (a) diverse cultural groups, (b) groups form part of a common political system, (c) there is relative parity and desired equality between groups, and (d) the continuity of diversity is aspired to.

Searching for these elements within Botswana society one quickly realises that we are not a pluralistic society as not all four points could be found with ease. While Botswana has diverse cultural groups, politically, diversity is true for Tswana speaking groups, which are, alone, publicly recognised as cultural groups. As stated earlier, only they form part of a common political system in that only they govern themselves. There is, relatively, no openly desired equality, as far as the law is concerned, between Tswana speaking groups and non-Tswana speaking groups, as illustrated earlier. Government has some policies, which reflect a desire for allowing diversity, but these have not been put into practice'. For instance the constitution guarantees every citizen fundamental rights and freedoms regardless of race, gender, language, ethnicity and so on (Republic of Botswana, 1966: 00:5, 00:17). In February 1995, Parliament passed a motion to amend Sections 77 to 79 of the constitution. These Sections grant ex-officio membership of the House of Chiefs to the eight Setswana speaking groups only. Another motion to allow the use of other languages in education, the media, and other social domains as necessary was passed on 8 August 1997.

Vision 2016 (Botswana, Republic of, 1998:5) states that 'Botswana's wealth of languages and cultural traditions will be recognised, supported and strengthened in the education system. No Motswana will be disadvantaged in the education system as a result of a mother tongue that differs from the country's two official languages'. These values reflect a much more liberal and open democratic atmosphere in which individuals have the freedom for self-actualization and yet be a part of the country along with ethnic others. They have been strengthened and supported by the process of democratization around the world. In trying to create peace as a pre-requisite for development, the World trends have emphasised human rights, democracy, and social justice. It is within

this global thinking that our local actions should fall as we think globally but act locally. Currently, there are not yet adequate efforts to implement Vision 2016, and those in the opposite direction are quite evident. By reviewing the Constitution, Parliament will demonstrate a move towards inclusion and a pluralistic approach to ethnicity. The use of other languages in education, the media, the judiciary and other social domains will not only strengthen democracy in Botswana but also facilitate development. A move towards inclusion will foster the concept of learning to live together in a just and caring nation.

In conclusion, this paper argues that Botswana is a multi-cultural country and appropriate models to suit the situation at hand will not only create a better-united and proud nation but will also strengthen democracy and foster development. Specifically, modified cultural pluralism seems to be in place but only constrained by laws that exclude non-Tswana speaking groups. Its extension to all groups is a logical step for democracy. The balance between ethnic identity and nationhood has been achieved and maintained in practice, while at policy level it was assumed that ethnic identity has been and should be eradicated to pave the way for nationhood. Ethnic identities have not gone away, even after many years of implementing the assimilationist model. While there has been a cultural and linguistic shift, ethnic identity has remained intact. Even those who assimilate, do so from one ethnic identity to another. It is difficult to find anyone who only thinks of themselves as a Motswana with no reference to their linguistic or ethnic heritage. An exploration of more pluralistic models would be in line with our democratic principles. The assimilationist model has been exploited by the ruling party as a way to hold onto power and not necessarily as a tool for nation building. It falls far short of achieving this goal.

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## NOTES

- 1 I am grateful to Prof. Neil Parsons for his extensive assistance with this paper.
- 2 As this paper goes to press, a new Culture Policy has been announced and approved by Parliament. Its actual significance in practice is yet to be seen of course. The Kamanakao Association has also won a landmark victory in the High Court (see Conclusion to this volume).