

# Localising Anxieties

*Ghanaian and Malawian immigrants,  
Rising Xenophobia, and Social Capital  
in Botswana*

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## General Introduction

This report covers some of the findings from two exploratory trips that I made to Gaborone, Botswana, in March and November 2001. The main purpose of these exploratory trips was to contact two particular immigrant communities in the capital of Botswana and to gain a first impression of the kind of diaspora culture these groups may have developed over the last decade or so. More specifically, the trips were a first attempt to unravel on an exploratory basis some of the features of the relationship between migration and religion. As such, this research interest forms a continuation of my earlier research project on the relationship between Pentecostalism and the migration of Ghanaians to the Netherlands (Van Dijk 2001) and the relationship between Pentecostalism and urbanisation in Malawi (Van Dijk 1992a +b). The two communities therefore that have been the focus of my short stints of fieldwork in Gaborone are those of Ghanaian and Malawian migrants. Over the last two decades Botswana has been a focus of their migration across the African continent and many have found a place to work in one of Botswana's booming economic sectors. In recent years this African expat immigration has been followed, as has been the case elsewhere, by the introduction of a kind of charismatic and highly popular form of Christianity known as Pentecostalism. Most of the new Pentecostal churches in Gaborone have been established by foreigners, Nigerians and Ghanaians in particular. Also in other aspects these migrant groups have been able to occupy specific positions in the Gaboronian economy and urban culture. The position of both groups has been debated in the public media, very much in the context of the wider public discussions in Botswana that concern the presence of foreigners in Botswana society. Over the last year, these debates have hardened in tone and have become more aggressive than ever before. Increasingly, a xenophobic dimension to both public debate and government policy is transpiring whereby it appears as if Botswana is becoming hostile to the presence of foreigners and to the contribution foreign labour is making to its economy. The Botswana *Guardian* reported of the Botswana Parliamentary discussions of February 2001, among others the following:

“On Tuesday (13/2/2001), Parliament underlined Botswana’s hardening attitudes against foreigners with Francistown West MP Tshelang Masisi calling for a campaign to cleanse Botswana of undesirable expatriates. This has set off alarm bells among the expatriate community who feel the line between citizen empowerment and xenophobia has been blurred.” (*Botswana Guardian*, 16/2/2001, “Aliens Bashed: Parliament Attacks Foreigners”).

The article goes on to present in detail all the measures that the Botswana government is taking against foreigners, against the privileges some may have had in the past, and the way in which foreigners must make place for ‘locals’ to take their positions. This so-called ‘localisation policy’ dates from the early 1970s when the principles were discussed in parliament about how to deal with the much needed, qualified foreign labour in the country and the longterm perspective of how ‘locals’ were going to take over. At that time both parliament and government took a more nuanced position:

“Localisation is a long-term goal, but the positive assistance provided by non-Batswana is recognised as essential to achieving national goals. ....increased participation by Batswana, in all aspects of the country’s economic development is desirable....., but there continues to be a role for non-citizens. Localisation provides career opportunities for citizens, enables more decisions concerning Botswana and its development to be made by local officers and in that there is liable to be greater familiarity with Botswana specific situations.” (First Presidential Commission on Localisation and Training in the Botswana Public Service, report 1972, pp. 2).

In recent years, that realistic position has been under pressure and issues of citizenship and belonging have become part of how both the government and the general public feel the economy should be managed. For a long time Botswana had been much dependent on foreign qualified labour, simply because the country did not have the resources to form and train a local class of professionals, teachers, businessmen etc. The revenues from the mining of diamonds in particular have led to a booming economy whereby qualified positions became available in all sorts of new

companies at a speed higher than the educational institutions could deliver. Botswana recruiting teams therefore went to such places as Ghana and Malawi to seek that labour (teachers, managers etc.) and were able to offer jobs with all sorts of fringe benefits attached. However, in a sense the success of the economy became too much for society to cope with as labour migrants from all corners of Africa were beginning to try their luck in what appeared to be one of the rare places in Africa where real wealth and prosperity were being created. Over the last two years, in addition, a massive and largely illegal influx of mostly unskilled labour has followed from neighbouring Zimbabwe, due to local circumstances in that country. Although unemployment rates have been dropping consistently (from 19.6 % in 1998 to 16 % in 2001) and the economy blossoming as never before, minority issues, issues concerning citizenship, immigration and illegality have come to dominate much of the public agenda (see Nyamnjoh 2001). This provides for a situation whereby even the predominance of Ghanaian ownership of hair salons in the city becomes a matter for parliament to debate (*Mmegi Reporter*, June 2000).

The question not only is how and why in such situations of relative wealth and prosperity xenophobia emerge, but also how immigrant groups respond to it. What does that mean for the formation of social capital (cf. Putnam 1993) within these groups and how do such elements as trust, reciprocity, voluntary associations and religion come into play in their interaction with what they perceive as an increasingly xenophobic public domain ?

In this report I will look specifically at the ideological, i.e. religious, dimensions of the Ghanaian and Malawian predicament in this tense context. The report will not give definite answers and will not jump to conclusions on the basis of a number of weeks of fieldwork, but will try to create a context for further research.

On the basis of the first impressions gained, further research questions will be formulated which will function as a basis for the development of follow-up research in the near future. For that research, collaboration is sought with the Sociology Dept. of the University of Botswana where research on rising xenophobia in Botswana has a longer record. Through

this research I hope to be able contribute to a further understanding of some of the ideological cum religious refractions of a phenomenon which appears to be on the increase not only in Botswana, but in other parts of Africa as well. It therefore relates to the emerging social science debates on Africa which centre around such issues of social capital, citizenship and belonging, but will approach this terrain from the angle of an anthropology of religion.

# The Ghanaian Niche: Pentecostal Style and Entrepreneurial Endeavour

## Introduction

This section aims to present a concise overview of the results of a three-week exploratory visit to Gaborone, Botswana, which took place in February and March of 2001. This visit was inspired by the information that had reached me half a year earlier from my friend and colleague Prof. Francis Nyamnjoh, Dept. of Sociology of the University of Botswana, concerning the activities of Nigerian, Ghanaian and Malawian Pentecostal leaders and revival preachers in Gaborone. Over the past two years or so, their activities had given rise not only to a number of newly established charismatic Pentecostal churches and other organisations in the city, but also to concerns by members of the autochthon population, explicitly voiced in the public media. According to this information, this concern related to the foreign basis and origin of the activities of these churches, to the fact that so much 'money-making' was apparently involved in these Pentecostal activities and to the fear that Botswana's well-established missionary churches would now begin to face increased 'competition' for



membership. These churches also feared a kind of religiously inspired contestation of their status and moral authority in Botswana society. As the type of charismatic Pentecostal churches that appeared to be part of this rising concern all seemed to adhere to what is called the 'prosperity gospel', the stereotypical criticism of 'money-making' was likely to be expected. It is the kind of contestation these churches commonly tend to encounter when they enter other African societies; i.e. nothing out of the ordinary. The aspect of this upheaval that drew my attention, however, was the important element of xenophobia that appeared to be expressed in these reports. They particularly seemed to speak - with a tone of suspicion - of these foreigners that could be seen to be bringing this type of Pentecostalism to Botswana: as if foreigners had concocted a clever strategy of entering this society to reap its wealth in a shrewd manner. Whereas in other contexts, such as the ones I studied in Malawi and Ghana, this form of Pentecostalism is first and foremost experienced as an idiom of personal empowerment, here it appeared to lack that overall connotation and instead seemed to fit into a societal debate on matters of autochthony and authenticity. On that basis and in view of the fact that I was interested in a follow up of both my Malawi and Ghana material, I decided to visit Gaborone to gain a first impression of these new issues at hand.

## Objectives of the visit

The overall objective of the visit was to seek an answer, however preliminary, to the question of whether studying the Ghanaian and Malawian Pentecostal churches in Gaborone would provide me with possibilities for a follow-up to my previous research projects in the near future. In other words, is a comparative study of what diasporic Pentecostalism signifies in different contexts feasible by expanding my research to Gaborone? The question here is whether a study of the Botswana case in comparison with my earlier research on the spread of Pentecostalism throughout Sub-Saharan Africa and from Ghana to the Netherlands, was going to provide me with new clues and insights into

the transnational dimensions of this particular faith. Much of the Pentecostal diaspora throughout Africa, and from Africa to Europe, remains little understood. This is particularly the case concerning the formation of transcultural and transnational identities: identities that largely appear to be able to cross the boundaries of nation-states or local notions of autochthony and 'belonging'. In many cases this particular form of Pentecostalism appears to be able to accomplish this crossing of boundaries in spiritual, moral and social terms. It produces its own sense and understanding of multiculturalism in ideological terms, which is also relevant for the Botswana situation where the position of minorities in the project of nation building is being widely debated.

The visit to Gaborone was guided by 4 main objectives:

1. to give a talk at the Dept. of Sociology, on the invitation of Prof. Dr. O. Selolwane (Head of Dept.) and Dr. F. Nyamnjoh on the issue of the relationship between Pentecostalism and transnational migration in the Ghanaian situation.
2. to establish contacts with and within the Ghanaian migrant community in Gaborone and with the Pentecostal churches and their leaders that have emerged in this context
3. to establish contacts with and within the Malawian migrant community in Gaborone and with the Pentecostal churches and their leaders that have emerged in this context
4. to establish working relations with relevant persons from various University of Botswana departments so as to obtain the necessary additional information and written (re)sources on this phenomenon.

The choice for a focus on the Ghanaian and Malawian cases exclusively, as against the communities and Pentecostal churches of other nationalities, such as the Nigerians, was made on the basis of my research expertise on Ghana and Malawi. The choice for establishing working relations with various departments at the university was guided by the combined interest in migration and minority affairs in relation to the study

of religion such as that done by the Department of Religious Studies of the UB.

*Brief summary of results*

With reference to the above-mentioned objectives the following can be said:

Ref. 1. The paper on the topic of the development of Pentecostalism in Ghana, given at the seminar series of the Department of Sociology, because it had been advertised so widely had drawn the attention of some Pentecostal preachers operating in Gaborone. The presentation of the paper, therefore immediately put me in contact with some people who were most relevant to the topic of this exploratory research and who's reactions to the paper were very valuable in the light of developments in the city.

Ref. 2. As will be explained and explored in greater detail below, establishing good contacts and working relations with the Ghanaian community proved to be of no difficulty at all. From the second day of my stay in Gaborone I came into contact with Ghanaians who appeared to be well versed in the community and who welcomed me into an elaborate network of contacts. Within just a few days I was in contact with most of the Ghanaian Pentecostal churches in the city as well as with the Ghana Society, a well-organised association catering to the needs of Ghanaian nationals presently living in Botswana. Because of the 'snowballing' effect this had on my attempts to establish such relationships, the exploration of the Ghanaian network took up the lion's share of the time I had available in Gaborone.

Ref. 3. The objective of establishing extensive contacts with the Malawian community during this stint of fieldwork unfortunately did not develop to the extent that it did with the Ghanaian community. Although Malawian migrants have been in Botswana much longer than the Ghanaians, and the Malawian community is assumed to be much larger than the Ghanaian, it proved to be much more difficult to make inroads

into it. Contacts with Malawians remained extremely limited and the conclusion here is that more efforts must be made in this direction.

Ref. 4. The contacts at the university developed in two directions. First of all, at the Sociology Department a research interest has been developing over the last years on issues relating to the position of minorities in society, rising xenophobia and socio-political concerns over citizenship. This has culminated in the conference on 'Challenging Minorities, Difference and Tribal Citizenship in Botswana' which was held in May, 2000 (see Werbner 2001). Therefore the Department has expertise on these issues and has positioned itself in the national and ongoing public debate on these matters.

In addition, it appeared that there is still a sizeable community of Ghanaian lecturers and library staff at the University of Botswana who occupy positions in departments such as History, Social Work, Law and so on. Some of these persons appear to play a key role in the organisational life of the Ghanaian community and take part in extensive networks. In addition these persons were also crucial to me in explaining aspects of the Ghanaian migration history to Botswana, a veritable brain-drain dating back as early as the 1980s, and the subsequent development in their positions in this society.

The migration of skilled labour into Botswana has been a subject of further detailed study of other departments of the University of Botswana as well, such as population studies) and is recently contributing to the abovementioned debates as well (see for example Oucho 2000). As far as Religious Studies is concerned I was not able to establish any ongoing interest for the relationship between migration and religion, although the research undertaken at this department points at a long standing expertise in the field of the so-called African Independent Churches (A.I.C.'s). That aspect of research proved to be more relevant for the second fieldtrip to Gaborone which was going to focus the position of the Malawian migrant community in the city. For the Ghanaian community, however, these A.I.C.'s didn't appear to play any substantial role.

The churches that were located and contacted in Gaborone were the following:

***Ghanaian:***

- Christ-Citadel International Church (Rev. Felix Larsen, national overseer)
- Prevailing Christian Ministries (Tina Allotey)
- Church of Pentecost (Owusu Brempong)

***Malawian:***

- Bible Life Church (Pastor Enoch Sitima)

***Botswana:***

- Assemblies of God

***Brazilian:***

- Universal Church of the Kingdom of God

In addition to these churches, I also established contacts and working relations with the Association of Ghanaian Nationals in Gaborone, which proved to be a very active group.

Further details on the research methodology, time input and contacts with the various Departments of the University Botswana during this first fieldtrip to Gaborone are presented in the Appendix.

## Insights gained

### *Ghanaian nationals facing localisation policies*

It can be speculated that clear differences must exist in the way in which the two migrant groups, Malawians and Ghanaians, gained access into Botswana society as well as in the way their socio-economic and cultural minority positions have developed. Whereas at a fairly early stage Ghanaian nationals undertook efforts to establish formal bodies and

associations that allowed for a sense of group coherence, on the Malawian side, the second fieldtrip (see section 2) was meant to establish whether and to what extent a kind of distinct communal life has developed.

The Malawi immigration must be older than the Ghanaian immigration that took off in the mid 1980s. Whereas the Malawian migration took place in the context of the general south-bound migration of Malawians (the so-called *nyasas*) to the Southern African mining and industrial areas and was of a 'blue-collar' type, the Ghanaians were adamant in explaining that their migration to Botswana was inspired by the need for 'brains'. At that time the Botswana government probably agreed with the Rawlings regime on measures that would allow for the easy settlement of skilled Ghanaian labourers and professionals in Botswana. The latter faced a serious shortage of qualified labour in sectors such as education, engineering, law, business services (insurance etc.), health and so forth which the relatively well-advanced educational system in Ghana was delivering in numbers that the country could not absorb anymore because of the economic crises it was going through. Ghana was coping with the absorption of 1 million Ghanaian labour migrants who had been expelled from Nigeria in previous years.

Many Ghanaian teachers, academics, engineers and other professionals as well as business men found Botswana an attractive option for employment. Schools, colleges and other institutes such as the university began receiving Ghanaian nationals. For many of the Ghanaian migrants there was no need to engage in immigration on an illegal basis as their labour and skills were in great demand. In addition all sorts of privileges made it even more attractive to leave Ghana and start a new future in Botswana. The Ghanaian immigrant population was and still is multi-ethnic, although many pointed out to me that instead of Ashanti as is the case elsewhere, say in the Netherlands, the community consists more of Ewe and Ga- speaking people.

From the mid 1980s a sense of community life began to emerge through the activities of women who in most cases had arrived in Botswana as dependents. Acting against the pressures to organise associations on an ethnic basis, the women began an inter-ethnic organisation known as *Maa-kuo*. This *kuo* came into existence in 1988.

Inspired by this apparent success, the Ghanaian men in the early 1990s tried hard to establish something that would act more like an umbrella body. In addition to the women's group, a separate men's group would have to be founded also footed on an inter-ethnic basis (*Paa-kuo*). For years, however, this did not materialise because of internal strife, because of the pressure to organise communal life along ethnic lines and because of the lack of an obvious need to come together as Ghanaians on the basis of their national identity and social position.

Things started to change however when towards the end of 1998 the tragic death occurred in Gaborone of one of the prominent members of the Ga-community (Mr. Samuel Odoi). For the migrant community it becomes clear that they were to unite if a funeral was to be held according to the standards that would become a man of his status and prestige. It would have been a matter of social disgrace if the finances had been unavailable to organise things properly, to hold the funeral ceremonies and to send the body home to Ghana. This death and its consequences sent a shockwave through the community and showed the Ghanaians that they had to help each other out in such circumstances and that nothing could be expected from the side of the Botswana government or employers in such instances. The need was felt to establish a trustworthy organisation that could organise funeral arrangements and that could take care of the collection and payment of monies. This would ensure that in the future embarrassing situations concerning the 'future remembrance' of members of the community could be avoided.

This incident coincided however, with some of the effects that government measures came to have on the Ghanaian migrant community; measures that were inspired by increasing calls for 'localisation'. For some time, but probably dating back to the early 1990s, the Botswana government had taken steps to ensure that jobs and positions would fall in the hands of the 'locals' to the exclusion of non-nationals. Although the limited archival research I conducted on the issue of localisation policies showed that the first discussions of these matters in the Botswana Parliament date back to the early 1970s, these policies of localisation have now come to comprise a range of detailed measures. Companies and institutes are forced to employ so-called 'understudies' for any foreigner

who holds a qualified position. In the case of private enterprises these understudies must become shareholders or co-owners of these companies, and must have the opportunity in the near future to take over the leading positions from the foreign owners or leaders. In addition, in certain sectors of the labour force, it is no longer permitted to employ foreigners, while for other sectors all sorts of privileges or bonuses for foreigners are being cancelled. This means for instance that whereas in the past children of expats, such as university teachers, received the benefit of free schooling, nowadays such foreigners must pay for education. Education is free for locals. In the public media, sentiments have been mounting against the influence and position of other nationals in the country and calls for a full localisation of the entire employment sector are frequently heard.

As a consequence, Ghanaian businessmen have begun to look for investment opportunities elsewhere (in South Africa and back home in Ghana for example) as they see their opportunities in Botswana being curtailed by localisation policies. The emergent anti-foreign atmosphere, occasionally evidenced by small forms of brutality and rudeness against Ghanaian teachers and other professionals, has created an increased sense of mutual dependence and support within the migrant community. The Ghana Association is at present actively developing networks through which Ghanaians render all sorts of self-help services to one another. These activities relate for instance to judicial advice, particularly in cases where localisation measures appear to discriminate against Ghanaians, they relate to credit schemes, funeral arrangements, child care, the trading of consumer goods (clothes and cloth) and so forth.

When I met the association again in November 2001, it appeared that it had been engaged in the so-called 'Homecoming Summit' which had been called by the government of Ghana headed by the new president Kuffuor. The Homecoming Summit had been held in June 2001 and had gathered delegations from communities in the Ghanaian diaspora all over the world. Also the Gaborone-based community had sent a delegation to Accra which had become deeply interested in the investment opportunities that the Ghana government was opening for its diaspora. The diaspora is viewed as a development opportunity for Ghana and the



delegations were instructed to take home this message: Ghanaian migrants should know that their home country is waiting for their money and business initiatives. Ghanaian associations should act as intermediaries for facilitating such investments and also the association in Botswana was now in the process of discussing how to organise all this. Many Ghanaians in Gaborone appeared to be interested, wanted to know more and perceived all of this as a great opportunity for building up something of a security outside Botswana in case their position in society and the economy became untenable. It was furthermore interesting to note that both in the delegation to the Homecoming Summit as well as in the discussions concerning business and trade opportunities with and in Ghana women played an important role. In business they display independence and a notion of self-reliance and self-assertion in decision making.

The functions of mutual self-help within the community became acutely needed when a Ghanaian national was arrested and convicted of fraud last year. The man had been active in advertising, internationally, a non-existent school and for hiring teaching staff who were duped into sending him a substantial subscription fee (apparently these teachers in England and elsewhere who showed interest in the school were actually made to believe that in order to accept a position they would have to pay a subscription fee). Given the increasingly tense conditions under which the Ghanaian community perceived itself to be living in Botswana, this incident could cause serious damage to the public image of this expat community. As the perpetrator was to be released on bail, the Ghanaian Association decided to organise a collection of money for the payment of that sum, for the restitution of the victims, and for the deportation of this Ghanaian to Ghana: out of sight, out of mind. Later in November 2001 again a collection of money was to be held, partly organised by the Ghana Association on behalf of another young man who was being held in custody by the Botswana police. The young man had tried to enter the country without proper documents and was found in Gaborone while looking for some form of illegal employment. The members of the Association were afraid the young man was going to receive the same harsh treatment by the police as was known from an earlier case, whereby

the victim was left without enough food and clothing in a cold cell for weeks on end. The policy is that until the Association or somebody else has collected enough money to pay for the return ticket to Accra, the person will remain in custody. This can therefore take many weeks. The Ghana Association noted that the treatment of such cases by the police was increasingly worrisome and generally confirmed the hostile feelings towards foreigners that are on the increase nationwide.

In attending the Ghanaian Independence celebrations that were organised by the association, I obtained a fair impression of their success in establishing a kind of communal life and mutual support, as well as an idea of its composition. During the evening event of the celebration, however, the tense relationship between members of the association and the Ghanaian Pentecostal churches that have become active over the last couple of years, surfaced. While representatives of these churches were invited for prayers, as is common at such types of official gatherings, many Ghanaians present turned their back on the pastors and some even ridiculed their presence. The association has around 200 fully fledged members (who pay an annual contribution of Pula 125) which represents not only a minority in a community of around 2.500 to 3.000 people but also which mainly consists of a highly educated elite of university professors, teachers and other professionals. Here a critical attitude towards the Pentecostal churches operating in their midst was very noticeable, a contestation worth looking into in the near future.

#### *The Ghanaian Pentecostal churches*

Over the last ten years Pentecostal churches of the charismatic type (i.e. not of a missionary and white-led type) have become very active in Botswana and particularly in Gaborone. Most of these churches and groups are of foreign origin and have non-national leadership, an issue that in critical newspaper reports, such as those of the *Mmegi*, is frequently brought up. In addition, well-known Pentecostal preachers from abroad have been visiting Gaborone on their 'crusades', an activity which through the lens of local observers often is perceived as a money-making enterprise, meant to reap the financial fruits of Botswana's prosperity. Within the country, a number of foreign-led Pentecostal

churches have managed to gain success in a relatively short period of time and have become widely known. This is the case for the Nigerian-led Zoe ministries, the Malawian-led Bible Life and the Ghanaian-led Prevailing Christian Ministries. During my fieldwork period in Gaborone, the Brazilian Universal Church of the Kingdom of God also started a broad public campaign. A conversation with one of the leading pastors revealed that they had arrived from Mozambique a couple of years earlier and perceived of Botswana in missionary terms as an interlink between Angola and that country. Contrary to the other Pentecostal churches, their performance was rather poor, their mastery of English limited and their public appeal restricted to the lower socio-economic strata of Gaboronian society.

The other Pentecostal churches, such as the Ghanaian and Malawian have, however, done quite well in their public performance and appeal. Particularly the Bible Life Church of Pastor Enoch Sitima, a former Malawian businessman, has gained a considerable reputation in making converts and in expanding its church operation. The church is building a huge hall for the gatherings of its Gaboronian congregation in the area near the industrial sites of Broadhurst, and Sitima is considered an influential, gifted and charismatic leader. Talks with him and visits to his church revealed that this church is not particularly related to, or located within, a supposed Malawian migrant community. According to Sitima, such a community hardly exists (<sup>1</sup>) and it does not feature within church policies to focus on such a specific nationality. Instead Sitima stresses the need to be 'multi-national' and to carry that ideology forward within Botswana society of the moment; a statement, also repeated by the other Pentecostal leaders I met. There is a deep-felt urge to become 'localised' as one of the other pastors admitted, a need to become accepted by the 'locals' so as to ensure a continuing presence in this society and to counter any kind of criticism as to their true nature and the objectives of their activities in Botswana.

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<sup>1</sup> As section 2 will reveal, there is a considerable Malawian community in the city and this statement by Pastor Sitima is therefore quite remarkable. During my second visit I was unfortunately not able to talk to him about this slightly mysterious perception as he was travelling abroad.

For the three Ghanaian-led Pentecostal churches that I contacted in Gaborone (see above), I discovered, however, that all were in fact firmly rooted in the Ghanaian community and particularly in the Ghanaian Pentecostal ideology and ritual practices I am acquainted with from Ghana.

Most of their members and leaders are Ghanaian, while in terms of cultural styles and repertoires many things relate to a Ghanaian identity. This, applies, for instance to funeral ceremonies, as I witnessed myself during the funeral ceremonies that were held for a deceased member of the community, as well as to other life-crisis rituals, as far as people were able to explain such things to me (outdooring <sup>(2)</sup>, marriage, consecration etc.). While Pentecostal leaders and members expressed their usual cultural critique vis-à-vis certain Ghanaian cultural practices so as to underline the Christianising impact of the Pentecostal faith and practices, little knowledge or interest was shown in the cultural practices of their host society. Thus, whereas Pentecostal churches interfere in their own cultural practices so as to change and Christianise them, no discourse appeared to exist on how Batswana practices concerning eg. marriage, birth and death should be critically engaged. Little knowledge or experience of these practices appeared to exist and also little eagerness to learn more or move closer to them. Inter-marriages between Ghanaians and Batswana apparently rarely occur so that the Pentecostal pastors are never called upon to perform their spiritual duties or to negotiate between families. With regard to the Batswana members in their midst there is no interest from the leaders or the church as a whole to become involved in

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<sup>2</sup> In Ghanaian popular culture this is how the ritual is called whereby a new born is presented to the community and his or her name is publicly announced. Often this takes place in the form of a night long celebration.



*Mission house of the Ghanaian Pentecostal Prevailing Christian Ministries in Gaborone*

their lives or any ritual that needs to be performed. The Batswana live their own lives and the Ghanaian theirs, and whereas the Ghanaian Pentecostal leaders claim to be open to any call from their Batswana members for whatever situation or ritual, in reality this hardly ever happens. Particularly the small branch of the Ghanaian Church of Pentecost made a very secluded impression and in every respect confirmed Church of Pentecost ritual practices as can be witnessed in Ghana.

Their close relationship to a Ghanaian identity is concealed by a discourse that stresses the need to become 'local', that is to attract a wide local following, from different walks of life and with a clear eye of their ritual and spiritual relevance for the lives of ordinary Batswana. A need is also expressed for the establishment of local leadership, for the involvement of local men as pastors, but in reality little transpires of

efforts in that direction. In fact the churches generally feel besieged by the localising policies of the Botswana government in which they are regarded as *fremdkorper*' and therefore are subjected to all sorts of measures. They are obliged to register with the government, must open their books and financial accounts to government inspection and must contribute to community services (some of these regulations have a longer history and emerged already in the 1970s (personal communication J.B. Gewald)).

These elements, as well the overall localisation policies do add to the great distance the Ghanaian Pentecostal leaders perceive between themselves and Batswana society. A feeling of a collective strangerhood transpired and a difficulty in coming to grips with the host society in material as well as in spiritual terms.

It was in this setting that I also discussed some of the spiritual and moral dangers the Ghanaian Pentecostals saw arising from and within their host society. These are spiritual and moral dangers for which the Pentecostal ideology prescribes one uniform panacea: deliverance (*ogyee*). Deliverance is presented particularly to their Batswana members as a spiritual victory over all the dark forces that can be present in society as well as in individuals' lives, regardless of the society or culture a person belongs to. In many ways this proved a sensitive topic to discuss as any talk of occult powers within Botswana society might be interpreted as (unjust) criticism of that society and could stir xenophobic feelings among the general public and thus backfire on their weak position. Nevertheless some explained that their message of deliverance was welcomed by the locals precisely because of the presence of certain powers that affect the daily lives of people. Some Pentecostals for instance expressed their concern with '*muti*' (witchcraft medicine) or with '*tokolosi*', which are believed to trick girls into spiritual marriages with male spirits that intend to keep them in bondage. Other concerns were expressed with 'sea-water' as it is commonly used in the healing rituals of the many prophet and apostolic healing churches in and around the city. A Ghanaian lady specifically expressed her surprise at the locals' ignorance of the dangers that are involved in the ritual usage of sea-water and said "We Ghanaians can teach them a lot of the dangers of Mami Wati: she

always wants something back from you and will keep you in bondage endlessly”. Another expressed his surprise concerning the high level of suicides he noticed in Botswana and the ignorance concerning the evil spirits that instil such forms of behaviour in a society. Deliverance in other words represents a domain of superiority, a domain where the Ghanaians possess advanced knowledge and experience of such matters, a knowledge and experience, furthermore, which must be in great demand in view of such problems.

#### *Pentecostal hairdressing ?*

In terms of their socio-economic position it is clear that the Ghanaian Pentecostal churches are more related to the Ghanaian business community in the city than to the Ghanaian intellectual elite involved in teaching at the Univ. of Botswana for instance. Whereas with regard to this last group a tense and mutually critical relationship exists, this picture changes with regard to Ghanaian business in the city. Ghanaians are known to be very active in private enterprise, to the extent that they have initiated and subsequently monopolised entire sectors. This applies most specifically to the sector of hairdressing and beauty salons, the import of fabrics, cloth and clothes, and the retailing of fashionable West African styled clothing. The Ghanaian owners of the many hairdressing salons are all said to be ‘Christians’ and many of them are members of one of the Ghanaian Pentecostal churches. Within the Pentecostal churches style, beauty, clothing and hairdos are considered of tremendous importance and their membership thus forms a considerable source of clientele for these salons. Some of these salons put up pictures of the leaders of the Ghanaian Pentecostal churches in town, thus strengthening once more this particular and intimate cultural relationship between faith and commerce. Tina Allotey, the flamboyant leader of the Prevailing Christian Ministries, is considered by many a trend-setter as her clothing and hair styles are indeed out-of-the-ordinary and she seems to be a kind of role model for younger women. As my assistants confirmed time and again, many of the younger generation look up to her and find her an inspiring personality.

Other Pentecostal leaders have been involved in ‘consecrating’ (*nteho*) the hair salons so as to protect them from the influence of evil spirits. The

hair salons operate on the morally dangerous borderlines of hair, beauty, sexuality and the body, and as such not only deal with the dangers of consumerism and style, but also with certain spiritual forces. These forces can possess a body and can be transferred from one person to the other by dealing with such things as hair (the symbolic referent to what is inside the head, i.e. one's thoughts and desires) and to the sacrifices somebody is prepared to make for beauty, success and appeal. The use of water in hair-styling links up with the danger of *Mami Wata* as there is no border that can prevent this marine spirit from being present whenever water is flowing. Forces may also relate to witchcraft (*obayie*), as jealousy and envy easily arise between rivals competing in this relatively small market.

The consecration of the business or the shop can take place through prayers and fasting: prayers from the resident Ghanaian Pentecostal pastors and fasting from the side of the owner. In addition, some of these Pentecostal churches also provide for the sprinkling of the business or the shop with consecrated oil. Both of these practices are meant to cast out evil spirits that may reside in these places (known as *pam obonsam* = casting out of spirits). Shop owners also travel to Ghana on a regular basis for visits to one of the wellknown Pentecostal prayer camps in the country where additional spiritual strengthening can be obtained (<sup>3</sup>).

An additional factor that draws both orbits of hairdressing and Pentecostalism closer is that informed sources at the university told me that there is a form of illegal immigration from Ghana into the country specifically of girls and young women. This illegal immigration is said to be focused on these hairdressing and beauty salons as the girls are employed in those shops for a particular reason. The West-African beauty styles are very fashionable in Botswana, whereas the techniques and skills for fabricating the special hairdos (with 'extensions' and the like) and clothes are not commonly found. The girls from Ghana therefore bring skills and techniques which are in short supply and for which there is great demand from the side of salon owners. The same sources also implied that there is an element of prostitution attached to it, whereby the

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<sup>3</sup> In earlier publications I have dealt extensively with the existence, meaning and significance of these prayer camps and their location in Ghanaian transnational circuits.



salons allegedly operate as 'out-stations' so that girls can be put in contact with potential male clients for sexual services. I was however not able to establish anything concrete and substantial about this rumour and have my doubts with regard to the substance of this as such rumouring is part of the rising xenophobic dimensions of urban society. In any case the specific skills, styles and techniques these girls possess do form a major part of the Pentecostal public demonstration of their 'presence', of the way in which members can show off their success and vanguard position in religious innovation. This aspect of ostentation is attractive to many, particularly younger people in the urban environment, who are fascinated by such colourful displays. Many of the young Ghanaian girls attend church, as I witnessed at a number of church meetings, and thus receive all the spiritual blessings that the Pentecostal leaders command. Much more research is needed to understand the position of these girls, the entire relationship with immigration and minority issues and the results of the policies of localisation. Questions have been asked about the hair salons in the Botswana Parliament, questions which specifically related to the fact that they are foreign-owned and thus need to be made the subject of localisation policies as well. The Minister of Commerce and Industry answered these questions by stating that legislative measures were in preparation to make ownership of small-scale enterprises like hair salons exclusively reserved for Botswana in the near future.

In this context the Pentecostal churches may also serve as the kind of places where frustrations about the socio-economic implications of localisation policies can be addressed.

## Conclusions

A study of the immigrant communities of Malawians and Ghanaians in Botswana must take place against the backdrop of the increasing localisation policies of the government. Whereas up till now minority issues in Botswana have mainly revolved around the position of its 'internal' strangers, i.e. the minorities who have been termed minorities in the pre- and post-Independence struggle and as such have formed part and

parcel of the Botswana national project, these minorities in fact concern 'external' strangers; i.e. persons who have a different nationality and therefore have never belonged to the nationalist project from the onset. Tensions around other nationalities are rising in the country, presently because of the substantial influx of Zimbabweans in the northern parts of Botswana who are fleeing from violence. In the Botswana national project, policies of localisation have taken a dominant place since the 1970s, but their real implementation waited another 20 years or so and they seem to have become more prominent in recent years. The national educational system, the employment sector and the development of local industries and other investments appear to be producing the conditions under which the presence of other (well-trained) nationals is considered no longer necessary. In the Ghanaian case, however, the 'escape' into private-sector businesses, such as represented by the hair salons, provides no solution. Increasingly, the Botswana government has begun targeting specific sectors of the economy in view of its localisation policies; sectors in which, such as in the case of hair-salons, other than Botswana nationals appear to have been successful. Very soon therefore the Ghanaian minority, and particularly its business community of 'madams' will have to look for new opportunities for their enterprises other than hairdressing.

On the Malawian side, rumour indicated that they had become particularly successful as illegal tailors in the many tailoring shops that can be found in and around the city. Another rumour indicated that Malawian traditional healers (*asing'anga*) would be very successful and widely known in and around Gaborone. During the first visit a niche of Malawian activity could not be found, and I was not able to establish whether Ghanaians had any specific relationship with, or interest for the kind of activities or sectors in the economy that could be perceived as dominated by Malawians (in other words, whether Malawian tailors, for instance, would have Ghanaian customers or would be interested in copying West-African clothing styles for their own business). When I contacted a small number of tailoring shops in town I met a great deal of apprehension and outright fear for talking to me. Through my assistant I later heard that these shops had been particularly targeted by immigration officials searching for illegal labourers. This means that a further

explorative study of the Malawian immigrant community must be conducted before further details about their position in society can be known and further lines of inquiry can be laid out.

All in all, there are many indications that the Botswana government is seriously executing a type of localisation policy that focuses on these nationalities. This leads to a situation, that is becoming increasingly xenophobic and one where tensions within these communities are rising. Unfortunately, the rise of the foreign-based Pentecostal churches appears to have stirred xenophobic feelings once more, and from an outward perspective has not really helped to improve the situation. Within these communities the Pentecostal churches play a significant, although not uncontested, role in the spiritual, moral and social life of the Ghanaian community. Further research must deal with the question to what extent this form of transnational and even global religion helps to mitigate and mediate localisation anxieties. What role does it play in the formation of social capital in terms of trust, reciprocity and security for the members of the community ?

## 2

# Shrinking Public Space and the Malawian Imagination

### Introduction

This section of the report covers the second visit to Gaborone, Botswana, which took place from 16 October to 1 November 2001. The overall purpose of this visit was to expand on the first exploratory trip that took place in February and March in the same year. That trip had as its explicit purpose the establishment of working relationships with the Sociology Department of the University of Botswana, and a first reconnaissance with Ghanaian and Malawian migrant communities in the city of Gaborone. The new and foreign-introduced Pentecostal churches that have sprung up particularly among the Ghanaian community was one specific focus for that reconnaissance, but soon it was discovered that the Ghanaian migrant community had created its own niche in the urban economy and its socio-cultural features: namely hairdressing. As mentioned in the first chapter, little time was left during that trip to

explore the Malawian migrant community in more depth, and so a comparative perspective was still missing.

The second exploratory trip to Gaborone intended to correct that situation. During this visit an explicit attempt was made to locate and contact the Malawian migrant community and to become informed of at least a number of its specific features and characteristics. The presence of Malawians within the public space of Gaborone was noted to be less conspicuous than the Ghanaian and therefore an effort had to be made so as to see where and how a community of any sort could be contacted. This second chapter gives an overview of the contacts made and the insights gained from that effort. It was clear from the start that Pentecostalism plays a less significant role in the Malawian community as compared to the Ghanaian situation, and therefore the question was which other ideological or social formations could be indicated that might act as a context for identification for the Malawian migrant. Through this short exploration it became clear that the Malawian situation is marked by a specific interaction and engagement with the public sphere. This interaction is not only characterised by the creation of specific niches, similar to Ghanaian hairdressing, but is also marked by its gendered nature. In addition, 'Malawi' featured as a specific domain of imagination, not so much as a state, but rather as a fiction of kinship, family ties and spiritual bonding. Xenophobia appeared to be hitting the Malawi community hard and a clear longing for more 'breathing space', also in spiritual terms, transpired from the talks that I had. In this chapter the exploration of the Malawian community is highlighted, while in the third chapter some comparative conclusions will be drawn between the Malawian and the Ghanaian situation in Gaborone.

### Objectives of the visit

The objective of the visit was to find an answer to the question whether and where a Malawian migrant community could be contacted in the city. This question relates to the overall objective of this exploratory research that looks at the position of minorities in Botswana society in a situation

marked by rigid governmental policies aimed at 'localisation' and nationwide feelings of xenophobia. This produces a range of questions relating to issues of strangerhood, to coping strategies of immigrants, to notions of belonging and citizenship and to the development of a nation-state and its control over the access to the public domain.

This visit to Gaborone was guided by the following objectives:

1. to revamp the contacts I had made with the Dept. of Sociology, the Dept. of Religious Studies and the Dept. of Populations Studies in view of a larger research project I would want to embark on at a later stage.
2. to establish contacts with and within the Malawian migrant community in Gaborone.
3. to revamp some of the contacts I had been making earlier with the Ghanaian community, as have been described in the first part of this report.
4. to check on written sources with regard to the localisation policy of the Botswana government and its recent developments

#### *Brief summary of results*

With reference to the above-mentioned, the following can be said:

Ref.1. The most important contact to be developed was with the Dept. of Sociology. A research-permit for future research will have to go through the department and good working relations with it are of crucial importance. In terms of thematic interest, the work of this department is of great interest to this report as it is building up expertise on the issue of xenophobia and citizenship. Research by Dr. F. Nyamnjoh is directly related to this theme and the possibilities of collaboration with him have been discussed and explored.

As has been the case with the Ghanaian community, it appeared that also in the Malawian case there is a group of Malawian lecturers and other employees at the University of Botswana who hold a specific position in the migrant community. It soon transpired by contacting some

of the Malawian university lecturers that in order to understand the Malawian migrant community in Gaborone, very different domains and corners of urban life have to be approached at the same time. These domains vary from university lecturers, to Malawian tailors, to Malawian traditional healers and illegal hairdressers and even includes a Malawian social soccer team. Of crucial importance for my understanding of the multi-faceted nature of the Malawian community and of the political frictions by which it has been characterised was through the work of Prof. Dr. Kaunda (lecturer at the Dept. of Political Science). Being a Malawian and a leader-founder of the Malawi Association himself, his understanding of developments proved crucial and opened the door to well-founded perception of this community.

Ref.2. It proved not very hard to establish a kind of snowballing contact with the Malawian community in Gaborone. Malawian presence in Botswana dates from colonial times (as their migration was focused on the South African mining towns), but the contacts that I established were basically limited to the group of Malawian migrants that have entered the country over the last decade or so. While the previous group has ceased to exist as a recognisable Malawian community, because of their full integration in local society, the second group is much more subject to the state-orchestrated localisation policies of postcolonial times. This group consists of a variety of different sub-groups, divided by class, status, gender and other characteristics, which each respond differently to the effects of the localisation policies and the rising xenophobia of Botswana society. The next section will give further insights into this. In terms of a kind of 'clustering' of Malawian presence in the city it was soon established that two churches in particular have a kind of pivotal position within this migrant community. These two churches have a substantial Malawian membership in Gaborone and cater to their needs: the Seventh-Day Adventist Church and the Dutch Reformed Church. Particularly the latter appeared to contain a well-organised segment of Malawi membership of tens of families for which specific English language church-services are held. Through them I was able to quickly establish a

range of contacts within the community with people from various walks of life.

Ref.3. The follow-up of contacts with the Ghanaian community necessarily remained limited this time. An important meeting took place, however, of the Ghanaian Association at which its role was discussed vis-a-vis the so-called 'Homecoming Summit' organised in Accra by the new Ghana government in July of this year. My presence at this meeting of the Association helped to strengthen my ties with a number of its prominent members. In addition a small number of the leaders of the Pentecostal churches were also contacted.

Ref.4. Both communities face the effects of the ongoing localisation policy of the Botswana government. These effects were exacerbated by the rising conflict between two major ethnic groups in the country, the Ngwato and the Kalanga, concerning the issue of strangerhood. The Tswana claim their predominance in the country against 'foreigners', and by applying that term in political debate create a hostile atmosphere towards the group which they consider dominant foreigners in the first place: the Kalanga. During the time of this visit, public and political debates on the issue of 'autochthony' ran high leading to increasing hostile proclamations in the media against foreign influence in the country. In a sense, the Kalanga are considered from the perspective of the Ngwato as the internal strangers in society, a discussion which in the public media tends to obscure the issue of the external strangers: the presence of other nationalities. Many newspapers reported on the ongoing conflict over 'true' citizenship and this became part of the collection of written sources to which a limited amount of time was devoted.

Further details on the research methodology, time input and contacts with the various Departments of the University Botswana during this first fieldtrip to Gaborone are presented in the Appendix.



## Insights gained

### *Malawian burial in a vampire state*

The massive labour migration of Malawians, the *nyasas*, to the South African mining areas was greatly reduced after the WENELA contracts expired in the mid 1970s. The decades of migration from Malawi, starting in the years before World War 2 up to the 1960s, had produced particularly in and around Francistown a sizeable Malawian community who had aspired to return home by rail, but never made it any further. This group of stranded migrants had become well-integrated in local society through intermarriage and did not create a specific or recognisable migrant community. Later WENELA contract labourers returned to Malawi not by rail, but by road and by air and therefore ran less risk of getting stuck halfway in Botswana<sup>(4)</sup>.

The migration wave of the 1980s and early 1990s from Malawi to South Africa and its neighbouring countries therefore created a new situation. This migration did not exclusively consist of bluecollar workers, but came to comprise a much more mixed group of people which included whitecollar workers, professionals, academics, entrepreneurs and so forth. The ones that found access to Botswana society and economy felt a much greater need to create a niche, a community, than their illustrious but largely 'invisible' predecessors had done. This need was to a large extent not only informed by their educational level, the specific positions they came to occupy in Botswana society and the specific features of family life they brought along (instead of inter-marrying with locals), but was also inspired by conditions back home. Towards the end of the 1980s and in the early 1990s the first cracks in the Banda political machinery surfaced and the regime reacted, if not overreacted, by putting in place even tougher measures and policies than the previous 25 years of dictatorship had seen. One of these measures was the revamping of ethnic-regional policies which were meant to favour the region from which Banda himself originated, to the

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<sup>4</sup> Nevertheless, a plane crashed near the airfield of Francistown in 1974, killing all returning WENELA Malawian labourers it carried (personal communication J.B. Gewalt).

disadvantage of the northern region in particular. Teachers, academics and other professionals - originally from the North but working in the South - were forced to leave their jobs and 'return' to the North. Their vacant positions were supposed to be taken by southerners, a process which completely failed as northerners had always formed the majority in higher qualified jobs. These policies incited a kind of brain-drain migration of Malawians, northerners in particular, to other countries in the region where chances of a secure career were much greater. In addition, in the early 1990s more and more Botswana companies became active on the Malawian job market, hunting for all sorts of white-collar workers and professionals who were in great demand in the booming Botswana economy. These recruiting activities were intensified after the 1994 democratic transition in Malawi. They became increasingly successful after this transition and liberalisation when it transpired in Malawi that *de facto* very little had changed in the real prospects of the country and in its ailing economy.

Because of the partly politically induced push factors of the Malawian migration to Botswana it may come as no surprise that political tensions played a part in the formation of a recognisable Malawi migrant community and representative body. Although first talks and ideas on the formation of a representative body for Malawians began circulating in Gaborone in 1990, it would take another 8 more years to establish the organisation and register it with the Botswana government. The reason for this long process of formation was the fear of political annexation by any of the rival parties in the struggle surrounding the democratic transition in Malawi. This political distrust divided the Malawian community for a long time and upheld the establishment of the association for which in the meantime many had expressed a dire need. During the Banda era, the dictator's special forces were renowned for their long arms and their effectiveness in hitting hard at oppositional groups outside Malawi. Special forces had bombed opposition leaders in exile (e.g. in Lusaka, Zambia) and had expelled groups from Malawi in violent ways. The Malawian community in Botswana - as it furthermore consisted predominantly of disgruntled Northerners - had every reason to be careful in those years to see how their actions and proclamations were going to be

perceived by the regime back home. While the democratic transition of 1994 brought some relaxation, in the recent one and a half years political tensions have increased again as the ruling United Democratic Front (U.D.F.) of President Bakili Muluzi in Malawi is showing all the signs of returning to the old modes of dictatorial rule once more.

Despite all these tensions and sensitivities, the need for an organised community with a clear representative body remained strong among the Malawian migrants, for one reason in particular: funerals. The prospect of dying in Botswana and particularly of being buried in Gaborone while Malawi is relatively nearby, was for many unacceptable. In terms of preference, but also in terms of social prestige, family relationships, support and ancestry, the entire ideology prescribed that burials should take place in the village of origin, which for many Malawians in Botswana would mean transporting the corpse all the way from Gaborone to the far north of Malawi. This is not only costly, but also requires a kind of effective organisation on the ground that would be able to deal with all that is necessary and capable of managing the proper care of the deceased, his or her family as well as the complicated transport of the corpse back home.

While initially there had been ideas of turning a representative body into the kind of organisation that would cater to Malawian cultural and/or political life, what it turned out to be eventually was a burial society. This proved to be economically sound and politically safe. Many Malawians had been reducing the number of their visits to Malawi over the past years, as they had become too costly due to the high expectations created among their families 'back home' of what they would bring in terms of money and other benefits. Secondly, in political terms the enthusiasm dropped rapidly to pay obligatory visits to Malawi. Over the last one and a half years political tensions were on the increase again, freedom of speech was becoming problematic and families needed to be protected from any sort of property grabbing inspired on a political basis.

Among the Malawians in Botswana, this all lead to a need to seek each other's assistance whenever a death occurred, so as to be able to transport the body home and organise all that is necessary to that extent. Any (financial) assistance from other sources, in Botswana or from Malawi,

was not to be expected and the community felt that it was dependent on its own resources. The need was so strong that it helped to overcome the internal political and ethnic divisions and to create a kind of unified effort in establishing a funeral fund. Since 2000 a funeral fund has been in existence whereby in addition to a membership fee for the association of Pula 75,- per person, each couple must contribute Pula 275,- per year to a kind of collective funeral insurance fund. From this fund a subsidy of Pula 6.000,- can be obtained per death while another Pula 1000,- can be received from the Association as a gift towards the overall funeral expenses. Transporting the corpse back home and all the further expenditures that are involved usually require about Pula 10.000,- meaning that through the funeral scheme of the Association two-thirds of the total costs are covered.

Although nearly 200 families have joined this scheme since its first year of existence, participation remains an upper-middle class affair. Malawians in more difficult positions, with less well paid jobs, bluecollar type of work or illegal residence in the country generally cannot participate in this scheme as the membership fee and the annual contribution to the fund are simply too costly. The funeral fund thus signals a class-based division within the Malawi community with which the community finds it difficult to cope. In a number of cases deaths have occurred of people who had only menial jobs and who did not possess additional financial resources. This then became a hotly debated issue on solidarity and the extent to which the paying members should also be willing to cover the costs for Malawians who did not have the resources to transport a corpse home. Suddenly, patriotic solidarity came to count for much more than kinship or any other form of social capital. Up till now the upper-middle classes appeared to have been prepared to dig deep in their pockets to help out in such situations and to make special donations. The overall ideology here appeared to be that from neither of the states, Botswana nor Malawi, could any real help or support be expected, that neither of the two provided for a community that would embrace the migrant and his or her needs, and that by being a migrant one is out there on one's own: a tormented condition not desired by many. These states only cater to their own needs and there is a widely shared

'cross-class' awareness of the greedy nature of the ruling classes and the kind of solidarity that is required to keep such greediness at bay. Hence the educated, well-paid Malawians in a way organised the funeral scheme as a kind of bulwark against the political machinations that might be expected from the present ruling classes in Malawi. Their divide-and-rule type of manipulations had been interpreted by this middle class as another strategy by which the state might try to ciphher off a bit of the wealth they were accumulating in Botswana.

A group that almost by definition would not be part of the funeral scheme and all it stands for are the Malawian muslims. There are several Islamised ethnic groups in Malawi, such as particularly the Yao and the Lakeside Tonga at Nkotakota. Their funeral ceremonies are very simple and modest and do not require considerable investment or a costly shipment of a body back home (most burials do not even require a coffin, for example). Their interest for and participation in the funeral scheme has therefore been minimal, and for the Yao in particular an additional factor may have been the fact that President Bakili Mulizi is a Yao muslim and his regime is very much supported by this particular ethnic group.

The funeral scheme has laid bare both a sharp class division within the community of the 'haves' and the 'have-nots' as well as a sharp notion of what it means to be a migrant and a stranger with regard to both the Botswana and the Malawi states. While there is an element of communality on the basis of a shared nationality, the way in which Botswana life and urban space and culture is experienced makes for fundamental differences in the community. Some of these differences are discussed in the next section.

#### *Experiencing the urban public realm*

The Malawi migrant community of Gaborone is marked by a highly differentiated experience of the urban space and public sphere this city offers them. To a certain extent these differences are class-based, to another extent, however, there is a specific cultural and occupational difference to it as well.

Malawians that have been attracted to Gaborone on the basis of their occupational qualifications have become part of the upper-middle classes of society. As academics, managers, professionals and the like they are found in the higher income brackets of the urban economy, occupy the better houses in the more expensive housing areas and have benefited from all the privileges that the Botswana government offered them in previous years. They have now become the subject of the Botswana localisation policies which means that some of these privileges have been taken from them (such as free schooling for their children) and they are placed more and more in direct competition with the 'local' middle classes and increasingly are feeling less welcome. This is more and more turning into straightforward feelings of unease and hostility which are partly fed by the feelings of xenophobia they meet in their daily lives. Interestingly none of the upper-middle class families I met had developed friendships with their Botswana neighbours, nor took part in much of Botswana cultural life and important events such as marriages or funerals. Although some of these families had been living in Gaborone since the early 1990s this kind of integration never developed while feelings of seclusion had only been strengthened through the government localisation policies.

This appeared to be of particular significance for middle-class women, often dependent on their husbands' position in society. They are not allowed to work in the many sectors of the urban economy as most of the female sectors of work are highly 'localised'. The companies at which their husbands are employed do not provide them with additional jobs. Applying for jobs in other sectors is almost impossible as these women tend to fear exploitation. Knowing that almost none have employment permits, some employers try to take advantage of the situation and clandestinely offer them jobs at a much lower salary rate than they would usually have. Most of these women, before leaving Malawi to join their husbands in Botswana, had been occupied in jobs or businesses, but their departure to Gaborone had meant that they became economically inactive: for many a gigantic offer they made. These women explained in great detail their feelings of vulnerability now that they were forced to sit at home in their big houses, doing nothing. Their families had now become

totally dependent on one income only, that of their husbands, while they were no longer in a position to contribute to the family income. They could no longer contribute in a substantial sense to the upbringing of their children, and for sending remittances home to their kin in Malawi they had become dependent on whatever their husbands were prepared to donate. Furthermore, being turned into 'housewives' *avant la lettre*, they were forced to play the 'good wife' all the time as any conflict with, or any divorce from, their present husbands would put them in jeopardy. If that occurs deportation from the country would follow almost immediately as they have no economic basis to legitimately stay in Botswana.

There was an element of despair in the talks with these middle-class women as their lives had become idle, an idleness aggravated by a secluded existence in a city that to a large extent remained strange to them. Like their husbands, they felt unable to establish friendships with the locals and were inclined to seek the company of other Malawians in a similar position.

This is in sharp contrast with Malawian women who are active in the lower socio-economic brackets of the urban economy. These women, sometimes living a life as illegals in one of the Gaborone suburbs, appeared to be much more active outside their houses, and were out on the streets to make money as traders, hairdressers, or seamstresses. As there is no immediate economic necessity for the middle-class women to do the same, both groups live an urban life where they come little into contact with one another, although they share the same space. The middle-class women tended to look down upon these 'informal' activities and did not consider them to be realistic options for coming out of their almost Victorian seclusion.

On the men's side, the middle-class white-collar professionals all stressed with great emphasis the temporal nature of their work and stay in Gaborone. Without exception the ones I interviewed stressed their desire to return to Malawi as soon as possible and to set up a better life there. Their incomes amounted to Pula 8000,- per month, excluding all sorts of benefits which their companies had taken on so as to convince them to leave Malawi and accept these jobs (such free housing, a car, health

insurance etc.). In terms of income and livelihood, they are doing fine and have much to spend on their investments in Malawi which they keep as a security for returning home one day. Many are building houses in Blantyre and Lilongwe, many have co-ownership of companies in Malawi and are developing lands in Malawi for agricultural produce or housing and other construction activities.

Again, as with the women, little contact appeared to exist with Malawian migrants in the city who were not in such well-paid positions, but more or less were forced to fend for themselves. Specific niches are formed by two Malawian dominated occupations: tailoring and traditional doctoring. Malawian tailoring is well known and highly valued in the city and there are a number of self-employed Malawian tailors who own their own shops. I interviewed a small number of them and noticed a similar pattern as with Ghanaian businesses in town: it becomes 'national' in the sense that there is a preference for employing fellow Malawians. Their skills in dressmaking are in high demand and are less common among the locals. During the 1990s tailoring appeared as a promising avenue for Malawian labour in the city, but again the localisation policies are hitting hard. For the establishment of a tailoring business every non-local entrepreneur has to pay the Botswana-government nowadays a fee of Pula 65.000,- for a permit to start a workshop. Even after payment it may then still take years before a permit is granted, leaving the owner of the tailoring shop in the insecure position of wondering whether his or her investment will become profitable or not. One of the issues is that the owner must employ a specified number of locals, irrespective of skills or training, and that this must be proven to the authorities as a matter of fact. This labour, however, fluctuates and changes constantly, so that every time and again the application for the permit never corresponds with the actual situation of employees. During that period bank loans are impossible to secure and further investments to improve the quantity and quality of a business are a highrisk affair. The purpose is clear: Malawians must be pushed out of tailoring so as to make room for locals to take over. Tailoring furthermore is experiencing stiff competition from relatively cheap Chinese and Taiwanese clothing that is flooding the market and from the import of secondhand clothing, which penetrates the



market from Zimbabwe and Zambia (the so-called *salaule*). Another complicating factor is the unwillingness of Batswana to pay for the clothes they order at once in exchange for a system of paying in endless instalments. One tailor showed me a room packed with clothes he once made, and for which instalments had been paid, but which had never been collected by their owners. He was still expecting the payment of many final instalments on these clothes, but realised that for most of them that final payment will never come.

Discussing these issues with other business owners, such as a car-mechanic workshop, I found that a heated topic of discussion was the extent to which one was 'localised'. The expression "I have localised" meant to say that as an owner one had been able to comply with all the rigid localisation criteria set by the government. For the tailoring business, I got the impression, this was a lost battle: although being 'localised' the government's intention apparently was to push foreigners out of this line of employment irrespective of the question of whether skills, financial resources and an interest for style and fashion are present among the locals.

For these self-employed Malawians, contrary to their more prosperous fellow country-men, a return to Malawi is not an option. Their incomes have been much smaller, hence their means to invest in something meaningful in Malawi have not been substantial. Although they may have some vague desire of return, there is little that will help them to bring that about. The feeling of being locked into a hostile Botswana society among this group was therefore much stronger: a kind of experience of being pushed with one's back against the wall and nowhere to go. It might mean that among this group many are disappearing into illegality and are now trying to find work by other means. Once a foreign-owned business has ceased to exist, the owner is supposed to leave the country as long as no other employer is prepared to take the person on. The impression is that the Malawian skills of tailoring are still much in demand, but that Malawian tailors have been forced to start working on an illegal basis in companies/workshops owned by others.

Among these groups of Malawians there is a much greater need to interact with locals. There is less a feeling of seclusion from Botswana

society, but a stronger sense of interdependence and even competition and rivalry for certain jobs or segments of a market. Membership of a Malawi nationals Association was considered of minor importance by the tailors that I met and the membership and funeral fees were considered huge sums of money. In their perception therefore the urban sphere was more a space of interaction, opportunity and risk, than a space of exclusion, strangerhood and temporal residence. Still what they had in common with their more affluent countrymen was the feeling of a shrinking public domain. In previous years, opportunities for tailoring, for introducing their style of clothing, for influencing this element of consumer appetite had been larger and much more promising than nowadays and as a consequence of the localisation policies, participation in that space had been pushed even further back into illegality.

For a third group of Malawians however, this conception of the public domain however, worked out quite differently again. This group consists of the so-called 'Malawian doctors' which comprises traditional healers of some sort.

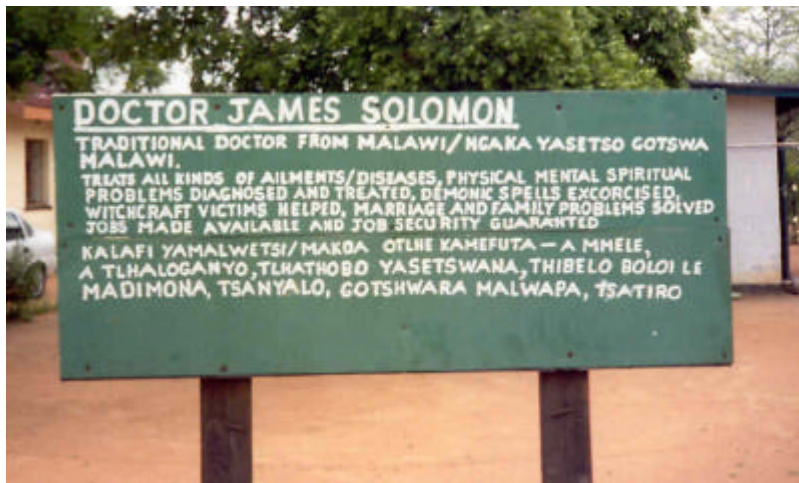
*Malawian powers in the urban domain: of doctors and social soccer in the public sphere*

In a variety of places in and around Gaborone houses can be seen with signs or with sign-boards placed at the road-side reading 'Doctor from Malawi'. In some cases this advertisement will then be followed by an explanation of the traditional medical practice found at that particular place and the kind of illnesses and misfortune treated by the resident doctor.

In some cases these 'doctors from Malawi' occupy nice, neat little houses of which so many can be found in the Gaborone residential areas, in other cases these doctors occupy nothing more impressive than a little shack. I was able to talk, more or less successfully, with three of them who were living in the Bontleng and in the Broadhurst areas. Malawian healers have a great reputation for being able to deal with, and provide for, strong 'muti', which is the catchword for the kind of occult medicine with which a lot can be treated but through which in all of its ambiguity harm can be done to others as well. There is a local fascination with

'Malawi' as the imaginative space from where real and powerful medicines, therapies and doctors originate that can truly make a difference in the Botswana situation of afflictions. All that is extraneous and from beyond Botswana borders figures highly in the locals' search for powerful medicines and therapies, and it is in that sense that the 'doctors from Malawi' have found a growing market in Gaborone. Some locals would rather prefer to turn to these doctors than to those that are clearly of local origin.

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*Sign of doctor Solomon a 'doctor from Malawi'*

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There were two questions that I decided to look into more deeply concerning the 'doctors from Malawi': first of all the question of whether this fascination with Malawi in the realm of healing was limited to these doctors or whether in other forms of healing (e.g. the prophet-healing churches) a predominance of things Malawian could be noted as well. Secondly, the question obviously was, what exactly does 'Malawian' mean? What elements and aspects of these healing practices carry a Malawian identity, and to what extent do the doctors consider themselves to be Malawian in any meaningful way?

To start with the first question, Gaborone is noted for the many healing churches that can be found in and around town. Most of these churches

belong to the type of Independent Christian churches that in most cases have been founded in the past by healing prophets. There is a range of Zion healing churches in town, but also a variety of Apostolic, Full Gospel and 'Ethiopian' churches which all engage in various forms of spiritual healing. Many of these churches have spread over a wider area in the Southern African region and are also known in Malawi where their variety is as broad as it is in Gaborone. Most of these churches are very comparable in terms of church structure, liturgy, symbolism, attire and uniforms. Because of the similarities between Botswana and Malawi in that sense, it could be expected that this type of spiritual healing would be meaningful to the migrants that have travelled from Malawi to Gaborone. There could have been an element of recognition, perhaps even an element of homecoming for Malawian migrants if they participated in such practices that they are already familiar with from Malawi. Furthermore, it may even have been the case, that similar to the 'Doctors from Malawi' these prophet-healing churches would show a fascination for things Malawian and that therefore a conglomerate of healing practices would exist in which 'Malawi' offers a space for healing, powerful medicines and spirits.

The specific location in Gaborone where many of the activities of these healing churches are concentrated is the squatter area of Old Naledi. I therefore decided to tour Old Naledi and contact as many of the prophet-healing churches as I could. The kind of questions to be asked would be whether they had any Malawian membership or any kind of Malawian leadership, whether they originated from or branch out to Malawi and if there was any correspondence in healing practice which what stems from Malawi. I contacted 14 of these prophet-healing churches, ranging from the well-established, large Head Mountain of God Church with its splendid church building and uniforms, to churches hardly anybody knew of, often meeting in little shacks hidden behind larger houses (<sup>5</sup>). Without

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<sup>5</sup> The churches contacted were St. Mathews Apostolic Church, Apostolic Faith Church, Lefoko Apostolic Church, New Jerusalem Church, Head Mountain of God Apostolic Church in Zion, St. Peters Apostolic Church, Dipesalema Church-Apostolic, The Lamb Followers Apostles Church of Alpha and Omega, Memorial Apostolic Church, Morian's

exception the liturgical ground within the church premises is marked by the central position of a burning candle and the arrangement of seats and benches in a circle around that. In local parlance these are the ‘candle-churches’ and none had Malawian membership whatsoever. Neither was there Malawian leadership nor any significant relationship with things ‘Malawian’ where healing practices, herbs or other powers were concerned. Some of the leadership were quite explicit about the absence of Malawians, as they said that these churches “are not for foreigners”. Only the local language is spoken, no English, and for their ritual repertoires, styles, uniforms etc. no direct relationship with anything ‘foreign’ was deemed of significance.

Clearly, the ‘doctors from Malawi’ are indeed a special case. In the three contacts that I made with them I immediately noted that the word ‘Malawi’ is an index for a complex field of meaning and practices. First of all, all three admitted that in being termed ‘doctor from Malawi’, one does not necessarily have to be a Malawian (<sup>6</sup>). It could be the case, as two of these three claimed, but it could also have to do with a relationship of distant kin, such as a great-grandfather as the third one indicated; a great-grandfather who happened to have lived in Malawi even before the country was named as such in post-colonial times. Hence the fact of nationality was as such of more limited significance than what the three shared together, which is the common reference to a set of ideas and medical practices. That is what made them ‘Malawian’ in the first place and attributed them great healing powers. All had registered with the Botswana national traditional healers association, the Dingaka Medical Association of Botswana, but not as foreigners, which would mean a serious obstacle to being allowed to work in Botswana in the first place. Traditional healing again is ‘localised’ and only under very special conditions and criteria can a foreigner be allowed to practice in a field where so many locals are active. When asked, the Dingaka confirmed that only one Malawian was registered with them and that person did not

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Episcopal Apostolic Church, Full Gospel Church of God, Holy Christian Apostolic Church in Zion, St. Nehemiah Apostolic Church, Helekia Christian Church.

<sup>6</sup> These three were: Dr. R. Shumba (in Bontleng), Dr. R. Makhoyo (in Broadhurst) and Dr. J. Soloman (in Broadhurst).

happen to be one of these three as he was residing elsewhere in the country. So, the symbolic and socio-political meaning of the term 'Malawian' became clear from the start: it refers to the nature and power of a certain number of practices while it conceals at the same time the fact that a national identity, a serious matter in Botswana of the moment, can be negotiated.

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*Doctor Shumba, a 'doctor from Malawi' and his divining apparatus*

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Two of the three were prepared to show me the rooms where they treat patients and explained the range of medicines and divinatory practices that they apply. A highly syncretic picture emerged of medicines, herbs, roots and divinatory practices which at the same time showed the vast and extended area over which these doctors assemble their skills and gather their materials. They travel to Zimbabwe, Zambia and Mozambique to collect what they need, guided by certain spirits that show them the way and indicate the right kind of plants and roots to pick and to dig up. However, for the most potent and the most secretive ones a trip to Malawi would be necessary as that is the place where the objects and substances can be found for which there is great local demand. So, by applying the term 'Malawi' they make clear to the general public that not only certain substances are present and available in their practices that originate from that imaginative space, but also that they are prepared to make that explicit effort of travelling that distance and that they are guided by specific spiritual powers; forceful ones capable of covering extensive distances in space and time. One of the two kept a small statue in the cabinet of his medicines which was the representation and proxy of his great-grandfather's spirit, a person who had been a powerful *sing'anga* himself in Malawi many decades ago and who had selected his great-grandson to be inspired by his still-present powers and spirit. The other, a 63 year old pensioner uses hallucinating snuff to call two spirits at the same time, the spirit of his MO/FA and the spirit of his FA/Mo who both lived in Malawi, to guide him while divining. The third healer was not prepared to be that specific and simply talked of ancestral spirits which he indicated by a *Ndebele* term of *madlozi*.

For the divination of the affliction or illness of the visiting patients a range of objects and techniques can be used. The most complex was the first healer who in addition to the throwing of shells applied a kind of random generator in the form of an empty bottle on top of which a balancing piece of bent metal was swinging to and fro. Where and how that piece of metal would drop from the bottle top upon or near the shells would provide the healer with further information on the patient's condition and on the answers that patients would give to his probing

questions. The third healer that I have mentioned here instead of shells uses wooden tablets and a detailed account was obtained of his practice through one of my research assistants who went in for a consult with him.

Whereas the phase of divination is relatively cheap (Pula 10 to Pula 20 per consultation) the actual and prolonged treatment by these ‘doctors from Malawi’ can become a truly costly affair. Depending on the nature of the problems presented to them, the amounts to be paid to them can climb from Pula 1000,- to double that demand, excluding the additional costs for anything or any animal that in the course of the healing practice must be sacrificed. Hence the doctors from Malawi can become more costly than their ‘local’ counterparts for which the Dingaka Association prescribes the kind of rates that can be charged to the general public for their services.

While there is much more terrain to uncover in these healing practices, in its syncretism, in its virtuality of national identities, in its appeal and in the general public’s fascination for it, a question still remained as to what extent these doctors had any relationship with the Malawian migrant community ? Do they cater specifically to Malawian needs ? Do they have a well-recognised position in that community and are they regarded as elements and representatives of aspects of any Malawian cultural life in the diaspora ? None of the three, however, claimed to have a specific Malawian clientele. Perhaps even to the contrary, as their powerful appeal specifically seems to work with regard to the locals and their needs and not so much for foreigners. The Malawians that were prepared to talk to me about such issues as healing by traditional doctors first of all came with the common middle-class rhetoric of being well-educated and Christian people who would never get themselves involved in such things. Others, however, explained to me that these doctors from Malawi in a way are too syncretic, too “mixed” as somebody said to be of any true value for them. When facing problems of a nature that would require this type of care, Malawians would generally prefer to make the explicit effort to travel to Malawi. And some seem to do so on an occasional basis. Often such trips are a kind of multi-purpose visit whereby the family is visited, one’s investments in building a house are checked and a more or



less secretive visit is paid to one of the powerful healers in Malawi. The ones in Gaborone are declared to be ‘charlatans’ as they do no longer represent the pure form of Malawian healing.

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*The Malawi social soccer-team (in white & green)*

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The reason why ‘Malawi’ figures as a place of special powers is not yet clear. A part of the answer may be related to the Malawian notion of ‘washing’; i.e. the total cleansing of the person from all evil powers, particularly witchcraft, through what is known in Chichewa as *kuchapa*. The *Mchape* anti-witchcraft movements had a place of origin in the southern part of Malawi from where they started to spread over a much wider region the 1930s ad 1940s. All of the doctors from Malawi made mention of the fact that bodily ‘washing’ was very much part of their healing practices as well as the catching of one’s reflections in a mirror to check whether all impurity then had left. Also my female assistant was invited by the third traditional healer to be washed by him which in

addition to some of the sensual overtones it may have also resonates with much what the *Mchape* witchfinders did. Much was necessarily left for further exploration here as this reference to those forms of witchcraft eradication practices may not explain all in trying to understand the 'Malawi' popular imagery. The powerful aspect of this Malawian popular imagery was brought home to me again in another and quite unexpected domain: that of sports, social soccer in particular. Gaborone has many football grounds and on Saturdays and Sundays soccer teams occupy these grounds and play games against one another even in blazing heat.

Often these teams are formed on the basis of nationality. There are therefore Zimbabwean, Zambian, Botswanian, Mozambican and of course Malawian soccer teams. The Malawi soccer team is well organised and plays in outfits carrying the national colours: hence their public recognition as being the Malawi soccer team is very much present. In addition to that they are considered extremely tough, rough and powerful. I spent one entire Sunday-afternoon with them and found them drinking pints of beer long before the game they were going to play even started. They were going to meet a Botswana social soccer team, and as they prepared and drank more the atmosphere heated up. Here was a team as one of the coaches explained that really was a team, that took care of one another whenever one of them had problems (for instance with the authorities as some of them are illegal immigrants) or needed any sort of assistance. In that sense my presence at first made them a little nervous, but as I did not appear to be overtly interested in that issue, suspicions evaporated. The point is however, that there is a kind of public aura around the powerful nature of Malawian presence and self-representation. This team, despite the drunkenness of some, and despite the scorching temperatures played a kind of power-play difficult to counter by the other party. Although the audience of other Malawians for this game was very small - a handful - within the Malawi community many seemed to be well aware of the power of this team: it was no place for softies.

Here is therefore a domain for further exploration: the public imagery of the migrants' power in the physical and spiritual world in a context where the 'stranger' is considered the weaker party. Malawians do not

display, nor do they intend to do so, the kind of societal weakness that can be assumed to be present from the side of the host society where strangerhood is concerned. There is in other words an apparent counter image that does not make the Malawian weak and dependent but represents the Malawian as strong and powerful. Unfortunately for the Malawian middle-class women, not all share or are able to share in these aspects of the public imaginary.

## Conclusion: a brief comparison of the two cases.

Whereas both cases show many similarities in how citizenship and nationality are turned into a liability, there is one striking difference in how Ghanaians as compared to Malawians deal with what Mitchell recently has called the 'State-effect' (Mitchell 1999). Through that term, he indicates the ways in which modern states try to adopt a set of practices that result in the state being experienced as an external reality, something that has preceded human action and intervention and thus produces an imagery of being totally outside the context of immediate and communal interaction between subjects. The Botswana state is not theirs, but at the same time neither is the state of the country of origin theirs. It forms an external reality and thus requires specific actions and practices to make it theirs. Ghanaians and Malawians show very different interests in these matters, and home ideologies (cf. Rapport & Dawson (1998)) have very different meanings. In the Ghanaian case, the Ghana state is making explicit efforts to create a new homecoming, to produce an imagery of a 'primordial' national identity that makes it morally compelling to have national interests in mind, to send remittances home, to invest in Ghana and to send delegations from the diaspora back to Ghana in 'Homecoming Summits'. Ghana has a long history of this type of nationalist- inspired home-ties relationship, reproduced every two years at a cultural level also by such things as the PANAFEST festival. Elements of this ideology of 'national care' for the citizenry are reproduced by the association of Ghanaians in Gaborone, which from time to time becomes clear when young and illegal Ghanaians run into difficulties with the Botswana authorities.

This ideology is largely absent in the Malawian case. No homecoming summits in this case, no state ideologies bent on keeping ideologies alive by which migrants are expected to have a clear eye for national even patriotic interests. The Malawi state is perceived by the migrants as deeply introspective, only concerned with its own intrigues, its own and endless bickering over the few resources it controls and marked by a sheer lack of understanding of what its diaspora may mean in economic terms. Malawians opt for a constant retreat into the family circle, into tight-knit

and small scale relationships so as to make the state as 'external' as they possibly can. Thirty years of dictatorship prior to 1994 have imposed upon them a minimalist notion of the state and a highly limited idea of what a public domain is or can produce. Malawi life is very much a circumvented family life with much clearer ideas of what the private domain should consist of, of who is interacting and for what reason. The situation in Botswana did not change much in that respect and in many ways produced a continuation of the family focus of quotidian life. Hence the Malawi association in Botswana developed primarily as a funeral fund, i.e. a reproduction of family interests par excellence, while 'doctors from Malawi' are those who have privileged insight into family related matters in the first place. So while in Malawi people were accustomed to deliberately withdrawing themselves from the public domain as much as they could, in Botswana that reduction of interaction with a public domain was more or less forced upon them by the localisation policies. The Malawian middle-class women and their secluded lives form a most telling example of that process.

The Ghanaian response to the emerging situation was partly different. Five Ghanaian Pentecostal churches have emerged, each with a clear objective of branching out to other parts of Botswana as well. Together with the Ghana Association, but in a sense also in competition with the 'state-effect' characteristics of that organisation, they produce their own public domain. Here things can be said, one's voice can be heard, one's ideas can be expressed, one's status can be shown through clothing, hairstyles, attire etc.. Moreover, that domain is considered to be highly attractive to the 'locals' as well, who tend to be fascinated by West-African flamboyance and elegance. While initially Malawian tailoring may have had a similar effect of creating a specific niche in Botswana society for their identity, the Ghanaian success both at a spiritual as well as at a level of style and public presence has been much greater and more prominent.

In some cases Ghanaians prefer to employ Malawians and other foreigners. They feel that foreigners are often more aware of new African styles than locals, while the locals are considered to be 'provincial' in their appetites, interests and skills as their exposure to a more cosmopolitan

and multi-cultural world, in their view, has remained limited. In addition to this unfamiliarity to modern style, they also feel that employing foreign labourers tends to be cheaper.

Obviously the Ghanaians experience the same effects of the localisation policies as the Malawians do, and while they complain bitterly about it, to a large extent their entrepreneurial response is very different than can be noticed in the Malawian case. The Ghanaian site of Pentecostal inspiration and West-African style and beauty turns 'locals' into strangers with regard to that milieu of consumptivism and hedonism. It makes clear how introvert and introspective the Batswana society is in Ghanaian eyes ("the locals never travel outside" Ghanaians said to me many times, expressing their utter amazement at what they perceive as a sheer lack of entrepreneurial interest), as if Botswana can serve the 'locals' from its own national resources all that they may need in life. The Ghanaian diaspora fosters a competitive identity and specific forms of social capital where businesses, hair salons and even the religious entrepreneurs of the Ghanaian Pentecostal churches compete for their share of the market and their niche in the public domain.

Rising xenophobia in Botswana is playing a part in the making of minorities, in the politics of identity and citizenship and in the anxieties about competition in an increasingly trans-nationalising market-place (see for a more general discussion of these themes in contemporary Africa: Geschiere & Nyamnjoh 2000). While public ideas of a kind of 'splendid isolation' are surfacing in Botswana public debate, particularly as the country is flooded by refugees from neighbouring Zimbabwe, the sheer presence of African expat migrant groups signals the counter-process of diasporic movement that constantly undercuts such discourses. While Botswana identity politics have become largely preoccupied with dealing with issues that concern its 'internal' minorities, its more 'silent' localisation policies deal with the state's 'external' minorities. Still, as this report has aimed to demonstrate, these issues of 'isolation', of transnationalism, and of identity politics come together at the core of debates concerning the future of the Botswana state. Its future, as many commentators in the Botswana newspapers are arguing, is dependent to a large extent on cheap foreign labour which is prepared to do the menial

jobs that autochthone Batswana increasingly refuse to accept. To a large extent it is dependent on entrepreneurial activity and investments that foreigners are prepared to undertake, and on the knowledge and expertise that (African) expats bring to the country (this is highly influenced by the AIDS-pandemic as well, which is hitting the economically active population of Botswana in the first place). Hence, while the Botswana government, for ideological reasons, is pursuing a localisation policy with all the xenophobic identity politics that it produces, it has as a matter of fact little room to manoeuvre when it seeks isolation from foreign labour. What Ghanaians and Malawians have in common is that they do not wait and see. Each is developing its own culturally informed ways of producing social capital within the community which interact with the public domain. Voluntary associations, collaborative entrepreneurial activity, burial schemes and churches all contribute to forms of trust, reciprocity and security that are considered indispensable in making a living in Gaborone. Social capital appears to live at the intersection of the private and the public, thereby paradoxically turning national identity into an asset as well. In both cases these ideological aspects of social capital appear also to be of importance as to how strategies are developed of having securities elsewhere, outside Botswana. Contrary to the 'internal' minorities, these communities therefore devote considerable amounts of time, energy and money to things 'outside' and in that sense the Botswana localisation policy might even backfire and become counterproductive. Little surfaces, however, of whether these kind of considerations are part of the way the Botswana government perceives of its localisation policy and the xenophobic ramifications this has for society.

A future research project to be conducted among Ghanaian and Malawian migrant communities in Gaborone will explore many of the features of the issues of social capital, citizenship and belonging that have been spelled out here. A comparative study will highlight how in one context under prevailing conditions of xenophobia different culturally informed practices and ideological formations can emerge that seek to address this predicament. Little comparative diasporic study has been undertaken in Africa so far and the rising debates in Africa on issues of strangerhood and identity politics make such a research project not only

topical but highly compelling as well. In a separate research proposal, based on this report, further ideas on that comparative research will be developed.

R. van Dijk  
December 2001.



## Appendix

### *Brief notes on methodology and time-input during the exploratory visits.*

The Sociology Dept. of the University of Botswana proved to be crucial for the progress I was able to make in the relatively short period of time that I had available for this exploratory trip. Dr. O. Selolwane, Prof. F. Nyamjoh and Prof. D. Werbner were very helpful in putting me in contact with certain key people, both at the university and elsewhere, and for making me aware of some of the pressing issues with which minority groups are confronted in Botswana society today. A special word of thanks has to be expressed to my friend and colleague Prof. D. Werbner who not only invited me to stay in his house, but showed me some relevant sources at the National and during the second trip kept me informed on the public debates that raged on with regard to the Tswana – Kalanga controversy and what this all meant for the impact of the issue of strangerhood on a national level.

Through the dept. I came into contact with final year students who were willing to assist me on a part-time basis and who proved to be very efficient in putting me in contact with a number of persons and a variety of churches. During the first trip these were Miss. Emereole and Mr. Kagiso, while during the second trip Mr. Kapaya took over from the last named. Their efforts particularly focused on locating the various Ghanaian and Malawian Pentecostal churches in Gaborone and their leaders or other representatives. Their assistance in this was greatly appreciated. They were also of help in translation and interpretation, did some work on the public media archives (newspapers mainly), and occasionally held interviews themselves on my behalf. Their support and dedication has been greatly appreciated.

Contacts with other people and departments at the University of Botswana proved to be of no difficulty at all and extended beyond the initial contacts that I had with the Sociology Dept. The contacts at the university developed in two directions. First of all, there is a sizeable community of Ghanaian lecturers at the UB who occupy positions in departments such as History (Dr. K. Dakwah), Social Work (Prof. K.

Osei-Hwedie), Law (Prof. K. Frimpong) and so on who were of crucial importance to my entry in the Ghanaian community. Some of these persons appear to play a key role in the organisational life of the Ghanaian community and take part in extensive networks. In addition these persons were also crucial to me in explaining aspects of the Ghanaian migration history to Botswana, a veritable brain-drain dating back as early as the 1970s, and the subsequent development in their positions in this society.

Secondly, contacts were also developed on a thematic basis with departments such as that of Religious Studies (Prof. J. Amanze & Dr. O. Kealotswe), Demography (Dr S. Rakgoasi), Population and Sustainable Development Dept. (Prof. J. Oucho), and History (Dr. K. Dakwah). Issues discussed here related to questions of minority status and government policies, the size and history of migrant communities, xenophobia and economic prospects.

During the second trip, Prof. D. Kaunda of the Political Science Department became of great significance to the success I had in contacting the Malawian community and in understanding some of the major developments that have taken place over the last two decades.

The time input was roughly divided into three:

- interviewing key contacts, mainly on week-days
- participation in Pentecostal church life, as well as in some aspects of the migrant community's life, mainly at weekends
- consulting written resources, on weekdays, which comprised many of the Botswana newspapers as they are compiled in the National Reference Library, while the National Archives were consulted on Botswana's localisation policies.

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