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Chiefly Power in a Frontline State: Kgosi Linchwe II, the Bakgatla and Botswana in the South African Liberation Struggle, 1948-1994

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*Chiefly Power in a Frontline State: Kgosi Linchwe II, the Bakgatla and Botswana in the South African Liberation Struggle, 1948–1994**

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Kgosi Linchwe II of the Bakgatla-ba-Kgafela – a cross-border chieftainship in Botswana and South Africa – was at the centre of a network of trans-frontier links that played an important role in the liberation struggle in South Africa. In the context of the reluctant inaction of Botswana's national government, as a state surrounded by states under South African influence and economically dependent upon them, this case demonstrates a hitherto hidden aspect of the activities of the liberation movements in the region. The case of Linchwe II demonstrates the ways in which the authority, influence and connections that underpinned his chiefly power made it possible to assist the liberation movements in ways that the state government was unable to do because of concerns for national security. This study reveals a hidden history of involvement in the struggle that has been obscured by the historiographical focus on the international politics of Botswana, using a deep, micro-historical focus on a region that was highly involved in, connected with and affected by the South African liberation struggle.

Introduction

In May 2012 Thabo Mbeki spoke at a gala dinner held by the Sir Ketumile Masire Foundation in Gaborone. In a speech in which he paid tribute to the role of Botswana in the South African liberation struggle, Mbeki's recollections capture the intense difficulties faced by the governments of Seretse Khama and Masire in balancing the compulsion to support the anti-apartheid movements and being hamstrung by dependence on the minority-rule regimes that almost entirely surrounded the recently independent and economically fragile state. In this context of fraught diplomacy at the national level, it was the role of individual agency that made it possible for Botswana to be a 'genuine Frontline State' which 'played a critical role in the struggle to end the apartheid system'.¹ Mbeki focused on three individuals who all

*I am indebted to my informants, to Professor Fred Morton and Sandy Grant in Botswana for their time and valuable insight, to my supervisor Dr Emma Hunter, to Dr Paul La Hausse de Lalouvière and Dr Tim Gibbs at the University of Cambridge for their valuable comments, to the ABORNE Winter School in St Louis, Senegal, in January 2013, and to the anonymous JSAS readers, for their helpful commentary. This work was supported by the Arts and Humanities Research Council, the Smuts Memorial Fund, the Royal Historical Society, the Fox International Fellowship at Yale University, and Sidney Sussex College, University of Cambridge, without whose generous funding this research would not have been possible.

1 Thabo Mbeki, 'Address of the Patron of the Thabo Mbeki Foundation at the Sir Ketumile Masire Foundation Fund-Raising Dinner, Gaborone', 11 May 2012, transcript of speech available at <http://www.thabombekifoundation.org.za/Pages/FundRaising-DinnerGaborone.aspx>, retrieved 6 January 2015.

operated outside the main sphere of central government and the ruling Botswana Democratic Party (BDP). The role of the first, the African National Congress (ANC) member, Treason Trialist and radical politician Motsamai Mpho, has already received significant attention, and his contribution to the struggle is well-documented.² The second was Simon Hirschfeld, who became the first Motswana Commissioner of the Botswana police force in 1971, and who had played a key role in attempting to organise safe passage for Steve Biko into and out of Botswana in 1976. But perhaps the most intriguing case of individual action from within Botswana heralded by Mbeki was that of Kgosi Linchwe II of the Bakgatla-ba-Kgafela, operating in his cross-border chieftainship centred on Mochudi – forty kilometres north of Gaborone. Mbeki identified Linchwe as a crucial part of the ‘underground ANC machinery’ that had been established in Botswana prior to the opening of the office of the ANC’s official representative in Gaborone in 1974.³

This assertion has dual significance. It publicly acknowledged, for perhaps the first time, the routes through Bakgatla territory that served as conduits for members of the liberation movements moving into and out of South Africa, alongside the well-documented crossing points of Lobatse and Francistown. But by celebrating the role of Kgosi Linchwe II in this network, Mbeki also prompted important questions about the nature and resilience of the institution of chieftainship in this region. To what extent was it Linchwe’s chiefly status and authority that made his participation in the ANC’s ‘underground machinery’ so effective? Did the resilience of the trans-frontier networks of power and influence based on the institution of chieftainship enable political engagement of this type to bypass the hamstrung Botswana state, which had been rendered powerless to support the liberation movements publicly?

Analyses of the geopolitical situation that necessitated the foreign policy choices of the national government dominate the existing historiography concerning Botswana’s role in the South African liberation struggle. Many scholars have assessed the dilemmas faced by Botswana’s government in balancing the moral obligations of participation against the danger to territorial and human security posed by the constant threat of economic blockades and violations of its borders.⁴ J.H. Polhemus’ conceptualisation of Botswana’s approach to its geopolitical dilemma as the ‘non-springboard’ policy, whereby the government could not afford to be seen to permit violent activity to be launched from within its borders, became part of contemporary discourse, and remains significant.⁵ Much contemporary literature centred on the diplomatic aspect of Botswana’s position as an ‘island’ of successful majority rule in a region overshadowed by apartheid.⁶ Where studies have explored the impact of the struggle

2 J.A. Müller, *The Inevitable Pipeline into Exile: Botswana’s Role in the Namibian Liberation Struggle* (Basel, BaselerAfrikaBibliographien, 2012), p. 110; M. Mpho and W. Edge, *The Autobiography of Motsamai Mpho* (Gaborone, Lebopo, 1996); H. Macmillan, *The Lusaka Years: The ANC in Exile in Zambia* (Johannesburg, Jacana, 2013), p. 28; South Africa Democracy Education Trust, *The Road to Democracy in South Africa* (Cape Town, Zebra Press, 2004), p. 414.

3 Mbeki, ‘Address of the Patron’.

4 M.G. Molomo, ‘Civil and Military Relations in Botswana’s Developmental State’, *African Studies Quarterly*, 5, 2 (Summer 2001), pp. 37–59; B.Z. Osei-Hwedie, ‘The Role of Botswana in the Liberation of Southern Africa since 1966’, in W.A. Edge and M.H. Lekorwe, *Botswana: Politics and Society* (Pretoria, J.L. Van Schaik, 1998), pp. 425–39; J. Hanlon and P. Spray, ‘Botswana: Cautious but Outspoken’, in J. Hanlon, *Beggar Your Neighbours: Apartheid Power in Southern Africa* (London, James Currey, 1986), pp. 219–34; P.T. Mgadla, ‘“A Good Measure of Sacrifice”: Botswana and the Liberation Struggles of Southern Africa (1965–85)’, *Social Dynamics: A Journal of African Studies*, 34, 1 (2008), pp. 5–16.

5 J.H. Polhemus, ‘Botswana’s Role in the Liberation of Southern Africa’, in L.A. Picard, *The Evolution of Modern Botswana: Politics and Rural Development in Southern Africa* (London, Collings, 1985), pp. 228–70.

6 R. Dale, *Botswana’s Search for Autonomy in Southern Africa* (London, Greenwood Press, 1995); C. Coker, ‘South Africa: A New Military Role in Southern Africa 1969–82’, in R. Jaster (ed.), *Southern Africa: Regional Security Problems and Prospects* (Aldershot, Gower, 1985), pp. 142–50; M. Evans, ‘The Front-Line States, South Africa and Southern African Security: Military Prospects and Perspectives’, *Zambezia*, 7 (1984/5), pp. 1–19.

on Botswana's society, they have focused largely on the practical and political impact of the considerable refugee traffic through Botswana in this period.⁷ Recent work has begun to acknowledge a greater degree of participation of Botswana in the liberation struggles of neighbouring countries than has been documented in studies focusing on high-level politics and diplomacy.⁸

This article seeks to continue the expansion of the historiography of Botswana's role in southern Africa's liberation struggles by exploring the existence of previously undocumented networks that took the struggle across the border with South Africa. These links and connections facilitated a significant degree of assistance and protection afforded to members of the liberation movements across an extended period of time, in a region that has thus far been left out of existing accounts of Botswana involvement. Central to this study is the crucial significance within these networks of Kgosi Linchwe II, as the most prominent figure of traditional authority among the Bakgatla people and whose territory straddled the border. This example will demonstrate the ways in which the authority, influence and connections that underpinned Linchwe's chiefly power enabled him to assist the liberation movements in moving through his trans-frontier community in ways that were impossible for the national government. This article seeks to document the role of the Bakgatla people in the struggle, and to situate the particular case of Kgosi Linchwe II within a wider context of the potential roles and channels made possible by the existence of traditional authority alongside the national political system in Botswana in this period.

The article makes use of archival documents, official records and newspaper collections consulted in the Botswana National Archives and the University of Botswana in Gaborone between June 2012 and September 2013, and in the recently migrated archival records in the National Archives at Kew. A series of oral historical interviews were also conducted, the contents of which have been used to triangulate evidence from contemporary newspaper reports and official records. The interviews were also an invaluable conduit by which it was possible to gain access to anecdotal information not found previously in documentary sources because of the clandestine nature of the activities that this article documents. Where this was the case, the evidence has been triangulated with follow-up interviews. The interviews were carried out in June–October 2012 and July–September 2013, in Botswana and South Africa. Full transcripts of all interviews are available. In one case, a face-to-face interview was not possible for logistical reasons and so the communication took place via email. One interview with an expatriate informant was conducted in London, and information from subsequent written personal communications has also been deployed in this article. Similarly, written personal communications with a key figure in Mochudi continued after leaving the field, and were useful in further triangulating evidence. Written transcripts for these communications are available. The first informants were identified as those known to have had close connections with Kgosi Linchwe II during the period of the struggle, those who have publicly discussed their role in assisting the liberation movements from bases in Botswana in different areas of the borderlands, and those connected to the incidents described in contemporary media and government reports. These interviews proved fruitful in terms of source material and for

7 R.J. Southall, 'Botswana as a Host Country for Refugees', *Journal of Commonwealth and Comparative Politics*, 22, 2 (1984), pp. 151–79; M. Rwelamira, *Refugees in a Chess Game: Reflections on Botswana, Lesotho and Swaziland's Refugee Policies* (Uppsala, The Scandinavian Institute of African Studies, 1990); Q.N. Parsons, 'The Pipeline: Botswana's Reception of Refugees, 1956–68', *Social Dynamics: A Journal of African Studies*, 34, 1 (2008), pp. 17–32.

8 C. Saunders, 'Botswana and the Liberation of Southern Africa', *Social Dynamics: A Journal of African Studies*, 34, 1 (2008), pp. 2–4; W.G. Morapedi, 'The Dilemmas of Liberation in Southern Africa: The Case of Zimbabwean Liberation Movements and Botswana, 1960–1979', *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 38, 1 (2012), pp. 73–90; M.M. Bolaane, 'Cross-Border Lives, Warfare and Rape in Independence-Era Botswana', *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 39, 3 (2013), pp. 557–76.

suggestions of further potential informants who had been part of the networks that worked to assist the liberation movements. These suggestions were followed up, and several proved to be valuable in a similar way. Because of the sensitive nature of the subject material, the informants, where appropriate, have been anonymised. Key details including initials, date and place of interview have been retained, and the necessary contextual details have been included.

Kgosi Linchwe II and the Bakgatla-ba-Kgafela

The Bakgatla-ba-Kgafela community straddles the colonially imposed international border between Botswana and South Africa. It is one of many such partitioned groups across the continent; a community identity based on the territorial limits of the Bakgatla chieftainship has proved resilient to the present day. In 1870 over half the population moved northwards into the Bechuanaland Protectorate to escape the increasingly violent demands for labour from Kruger's authorities in the Transvaal. Some stayed, however, and the Bakgatla *kgosi*⁹ has remained the recognised traditional authority of those resident in either country. The Bakgatla capital is Mochudi, in Botswana, and throughout this period the kgosi nominated a deputy to sit at Moruleng in the North-West province of South Africa. The Kgatleng district forms the 'Botswana' section of the Bakgatla chieftaincy, where Kgosi Linchwe II presided between 1963 and 2007. The artificial nature of the border meant that it was not only physically porous, because it was sparsely patrolled, but also ideologically porous. The lives of members of Bakgatla society transcended the demarcation in many ways, the deepest being kinship networks, family links and temporary flows and migrations. Older residents in Mochudi recall many Bakgatla who were resident in Botswana regularly travelling to South Africa for work, usually living there for nine months in every year.¹⁰ The territorial distinction and the frontier made little practical or ideological difference to Linchwe's chiefly authority.

Between 1948 and 1994, therefore, the Bakgatla straddled a hugely significant political frontier. While part of the territory lay in apartheid South Africa, the remaining section was located within the British Bechuanaland Protectorate until the creation of independent Botswana. Important parallels can be drawn with other 'traditional' or pre-existing communities and identities that straddled South Africa's borders, many of which had networks and channels of communication that transcended the boundaries of either nation state and facilitated movement and activity into and out of the apartheid state. These include the BaHurutshe, BaTlokwa, Barolong, Babirwa and Bamalete across the Botswana border, the KaNgwane Bantustan on the Swaziland border,¹¹ and the Transkei Bantustan, which shared a border with Lesotho.¹² All of these cases saw significant cross-border traffic throughout this period. The fundamental ties and obligations underpinning such a cross-border community meant that the Bakgatla were embedded within the struggle against apartheid in South Africa, with geographical, political, social and familial connections that facilitated a high level of local participation in clandestine activity.

9 Chief; the plural is *dikgosi*.

10 Group interview, 13 September 2012. This group was put together by Kgosi Segale Linchwe in Mochudi, as a group of men of between 60 and 80 years of age. The questions focused on everyday life in Mochudi and experiences of connections with South Africa that existed for work, commerce, and kinship across the time period addressed in this article.

11 M.S. Ginindza, 'KaNgwane: A Life in and Beyond', *South African Historical Journal*, 64, 1 (2012), pp. 144–51.

12 T. Gibbs, *Mandela's Kinsmen: Nationalist Elites and Apartheid's First Bantustan* (Woodbridge, James Currey, 2014).

While one aim of this article is to address the lack of scholarly work concerning a part of Botswana's 'underground machinery' in the liberation struggles of southern Africa,¹³ the major significance of this case lies in the role played by the central figure of Kgosi Linchwe II. Utilising the authority he held as chief of the Bakgatla, he was the driving force behind the support networks that helped members of the liberation movements to cross the border and move through Bakgatla territory. The political action of a chief here demonstrates the ways in which traditional authority could be used as an alternative channel for political action in a context where the national government's influence was limited by considerations of national security and diplomacy. Just as Arianna Lissoni has recently illustrated in the case of the Bahurutshe chief Kgosi Moiloa, the case of Kgosi Linchwe II demonstrates the way in which chieftaincy remained highly significant as a structure for political mobilisation in a rural area.¹⁴ This is an interesting and significant divergence from much of the historiography concerning traditional authority in this region,¹⁵ which has only recently begun to acknowledge the ways in which hereditary structures retained or regained a perhaps surprising degree of legitimacy and influence despite the damaging and disruptive impacts of the imposition of indirect rule policies by colonial administrations.¹⁶ Though the manipulation and coercion of positions of traditional or hereditary authority was undoubtedly widespread, and is particularly evident in the creation of the Bantustans in South Africa,¹⁷ there are cases, such as this one, where the power and influence exercised by chiefs remained legitimate and resilient through this period. While the National Party's restructuring of South African rural society after the 1951 Bantu Authorities Act resulted in a system of government in which 'power rested with a hierarchy of compliant chiefs',¹⁸ recent historical research has brought to light a number of instances – such as those demonstrated in Tembuland, Sekhukhuneland, Eastern Mpondoland, Bophuthatswana, and Lehurutshe – that demonstrate the ways in which certain individuals who had inherited chiefly status or were connected to networks of traditional authority spearheaded resistance to the national government, and in some cases were directly involved with the liberation movements.¹⁹ This analysis of the case of Kgosi Linchwe II and the Bakgatla continues in the same vein as this

13 In many discussions of the role of South Africa's neighbours in facilitating activity connected to the liberation struggle, there is little or no mention of Botswana or members of its population, for example: N. Worden, *The Making of Modern South Africa* (Oxford, Blackwell, 1995), p. 115; South Africa Democracy Education Trust, *The Road to Democracy in South Africa* (Cape Town, Zebra Press, 2004); J. Pauw, *Into the Heart of Darkness: Confessions of Apartheid's Assassins* (Johannesburg, Jonathan Ball, 1997).

14 A. Lissoni, 'Chieftaincy and Resistance Politics in Lehurutshe during the Apartheid Era', *New Contree*, 67 (November 2013), p. 58.

15 M. Mamdani, *Citizen and Subject: Contemporary Africa and the Legacy of Late Colonialism* (Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1996); L. Ntsebeza, *Democracy Compromised: Chiefs and the Politics of Land in South Africa* (Leiden, Brill, 2005).

16 J. Willis, 'Chieftaincy', in R. Reid and J. Parker (eds), *The Oxford Handbook of Modern African History* (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2013), pp. 208–23; S.E. Cook, 'Chiefs, Kings, Corporatization and Democracy: A South African Case Study', *Brown Journal of World Affairs*, 7, 1 (Summer/Fall 2005), p. 12; J. Michael Williams, *Chieftaincy, the State and Democracy: Political Legitimacy in Post-Apartheid South Africa* (Bloomington, Indiana University Press, 2010), p. 12; J. Fokwang, *Mediating Legitimacy: Chieftaincy and Democracy in two African Chiefdoms* (Bamenda, Langaa Research and Publishing CIG, 2009), p. 18.

17 J.C. Myers, *Indirect Rule in South Africa: Tradition, Modernity and the Costuming of Political Power* (Rochester, University of Rochester Press, 2008), p. 66; P. Harries, 'Exclusion, Classification and Internal Colonialism: The Emergence of Ethnicity Amongst the Tsonga-Speakers of South Africa', in L. Vail (ed.), *The Creation of Tribalism in Southern Africa* (Berkeley, University of California Press, 1991), p. 108; M. Lange, *Lineages of Despotism and Development: British Colonialism and State Power* (London, University of Chicago Press, 2009), pp. 181–2; C. Crais, 'Custom and the Politics of Sovereignty in South Africa', *Journal of Social History*, 39, 5 (2006), p. 732.

18 I. van Kessel and B. Oomen, 'One Chief, One Vote: The Revival of Traditional Authorities in Post-Apartheid South Africa', *African Affairs*, 96, 385 (1997), p. 563.

19 Gibbs, *Mandela's Kinsmen*; Various Authors, Special Issue: Let's Talk About Bantustans, *South African Historical Journal*, 64, 1 (2012), pp. 1–157.

recent work. In exploring previously hidden aspects of the liberation struggle in South Africa, it demonstrates an alternative aspect to links between chieftainship and the struggle in sharp contrast to the ties between Bantustan politics and co-opted traditional authority structures that have hitherto received most scholarly attention.

The case of Kgosi Linchwe II and the Bakgatla speaks to the burgeoning literature on the resilience and socio-political significance of chieftainship in 20th-century southern Africa,²⁰ and to debates concerning the endurance of cross-border communities amid strong networks and flows of people and ideas.²¹ This is particularly interesting when considered within the context of the liberation struggles in the region, and provides fresh insight into the role a figure of traditional authority was able to play. Recent research has begun to examine previously unexplored local aspects of the struggle outside the much-documented urban ferment and transcontinental network of the liberation movements in exile in this period. Regional rural areas have been identified as vital sources of support,²² and have been important in liberation struggles elsewhere on the continent.²³ Thus important, but perhaps unexpected, involvement in the recruitment process for the armed movements was undertaken by certain traditional authorities within South Africa.²⁴ The South African liberation struggle relied upon a diverse and complex network of local actors carrying out significant tasks that were fundamental to its operations, survival, and later success. What is yet to be explored is the extent of this network beyond South Africa's borders, in spaces outside the well-documented training camps.²⁵ The analysis of cross-border political activity in a frontier region here demonstrates ways in which the channels of movement for members of the liberation movements were facilitated by the actions of individuals and personal networks at a local level – outside the sphere of national-level diplomacy.

20 For example: J. Willis, 'Chieftaincy', in Reid and Parker (eds), *The Oxford Handbook of Modern African History*, pp. 208–23; B. Oomen, *Chiefs in South Africa: Law, Power and Culture in the Post-Apartheid Era* (Oxford, James Currey, 2005); S. Berry, *Chiefs Know Their Boundaries: Essays on Poverty, Power and the Past in Asante, 1896–1996* (Oxford, James Currey, 2001); C. Leonardi, *Dealing with Government in South Sudan: Histories in the Making of Chiefship, Community and State* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2013); E. A.B van Rouveroy, 'Chieftaincy in Africa: Three Facets of a Hybrid Role', in E.A.B van Rouveroy and R. van Dijk (eds), *African Chieftaincy in a New Socio-Political Landscape* (Münster, Lit Verlag, 1999), pp. 21–48; C. Lund, 'Twilight Institutions: Public Authority and Local Politics in Africa', *Development and Change*, 37, 4 (2006), pp. 685–705; Ø. Gulbrandsen, *The State and the Social: State Formation in Botswana and its Precolonial and Colonial Genealogies* (New York, Berghahn Books, 2012).

21 A.I. Asiwaju, *Partitioned Africans: Ethnic Relations across Africa's International Boundaries 1884–1984* (New York, St Martin's Press, 1985).

22 T. Gibbs, 'Chris Hani's "Country Bumpkins": Regional Networks in the African National Congress Underground, 1974–1994', *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 37, 4 (2011), pp. 677–91; L. Switzer, *Power and Resistance in an African Society* (Madison, University of Wisconsin Press, 1993).

23 N. Bhebe and T. Ranger, *Society in Zimbabwe's Liberation War* (London, James Currey, 1996); N.J. Kriger, *Zimbabwe's Guerilla War: Peasant Voices* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1992); B. Berman and J. Lonsdale, *Unhappy Valley: Conflict in Kenya and Africa, Vol. 2* (London, James Currey, 1992); J.S. Saul, 'African Peasants and Revolution', *Review of African Political Economy*, 1,1 (1974), pp. 41–68; T.H. Hendriksen, 'People's War in Angola, Mozambique and Guinea-Bissau', *Journal of Modern African Studies*, 14, 3 (1976), pp. 377–99; J.B. Forrest, 'Guinea-Bissau Since Independence: A Decade of Domestic Power Struggles', *Journal of Modern African Studies*, 25, 1 (1987), pp. 95–116.

24 R. Suttner, 'Culture(s) of the African National Congress of South Africa: Imprint of Exile Experiences', *Journal of Contemporary African Studies*, 21, 2 (2003), p. 310; Ntsebeza, *Democracy Compromised*, p. 260; A. Manson and J. Drummond, 'The Transformation of Moiloa's Reserve in the Western Transvaal: Politics, Production and Resistance in a Rural Setting, 1919–1986', paper presented at the University of the Witwatersrand History Workshop: Structure and Experience in the Making of Apartheid (1990), available at <http://hdl.handle.net/10539/7911>, retrieved 2 February 2014, p. 11; P. Delius, *The Lion Amongst the Cattle: Reconstruction and Resistance in the Northern Transvaal* (Oxford, James Currey, 1996), p. 120.

25 T. Lodge, 'State of Exile: The ANC of South Africa, 1976–86', in P. Frankel, N. Pines and M. Swilling (eds), *State, Resistance and Change in South Africa* (London, Croom Helm, 1988), pp. 229–58; S. Ellis, 'Mobokodo: Security in ANC Camps, 1961–1990', *African Affairs*, 93, 371 (1994), pp. 279–98; G. Seidman, 'Guerrillas in their Midst: Armed Struggle in the South African Anti-Apartheid Movement', *Mobilization: An International Quarterly*, 6, 2 (2001), pp. 111–27.

Kgosi Linchwe II's position as Bakgatla chief afforded him a legitimacy and authority that operated alongside that of the national government in Botswana. His networks, connections and resources were derived from an institution of traditional authority that was distinct from the state in a way that could be effective and important to the liberation struggle. His chieftainship was an example of one of Lund's 'twilight institutions',²⁶ capable of exercising public authority at a local level and bypassing the state, but still an integral part of the process of state formation in postcolonial Botswana.²⁷ In independent Botswana, the continued significance and resilience of the authority that underpins chieftainship can be explained by locating them within this intermediary sphere. In the context of a recently formulated national state, built upon structures of colonial rule, the institutions of government lack a monopoly of control over the exercise of public authority. An incorporative understanding of the nature of local authority is needed in order to recognise the ways in which power is vested in individuals and institutions which may appear and operate in a manner very different from that of the central government, but are none the less significant. The institution of chieftainship in Botswana has been one such intermediary source of authority, based on 'legitimacy that is rooted in culture and tradition, in a completely different rationale from that of the state'.²⁸

It was the ability to operate in this intermediary context that made possible Linchwe's involvement in assisting members of the liberation movements operating in the territory under his jurisdiction. He had the authority and influence of a local community leader, which was derived wholly from his chiefly position and the hierarchical power structures that underpinned his role. But, on the fringes of the central government structures – sitting in the advisory-only House of Chiefs, and a member of the Kgatleng District Council – his actions were not limited by the high political considerations that necessarily preoccupied the central government figures. With the centre's options severely limited, it was only individuals on the periphery of government who could operate in support of the liberation movements. In the main, this support was limited to the extreme efforts of individuals, such as Motsamai Mpho, Mike Dingake and Fish Keitseng.²⁹ But in Mochudi, Linchwe was able to combine a personal political commitment with the authority vested in his position as *kgosi* to effect real and significant support for those travelling across the border that transected the territory under his jurisdiction.

Botswana: Independence or Dependence?

Throughout this period Botswana was almost entirely surrounded by the minority-rule and increasingly defensive regimes of South Africa, Southern Rhodesia (Zimbabwe) and South West Africa (Namibia), with only a 100-yard border with Zambia, at Kazungula. Landlocked, drought-prone, and lacking the agricultural or industrial development for self-sufficiency, Botswana was economically dependent on South Africa and Southern Rhodesia, as markets for its staple export, beef, and for the rail and port links that were essential for trade.³⁰ The potential for blocks and delays on these channels was a real threat to the survival of its population.³¹ Botswana used the rand as currency until 1976, as part of the Southern African

26 Lund, 'Twilight Institutions'.

27 Gulbrandsen, *The State and the Social*, p. 1.

28 Oomen, *Chiefs in South Africa*, p. 27.

29 Mpho and Edge, *The Autobiography of Motsamai Mpho*; M. Dingake, *My Fight Against Apartheid* (London, Kliptown Books, 1987); F. Keitseng, J. Ramsay and B. Morton, *Comrade Fish: Memories of a Motswana in the ANC Underground* (Gaborone, Pula Press, 1999).

30 Mgadla, 'A Good Measure of Sacrifice', p. 5; Osei-Hwedie, 'The Role of Botswana', p. 425.

31 Hanlon and Spray, 'Botswana: Cautious but Outspoken', p. 220.

Customs Union. Militarily, Botswana was extremely weak – the army, the Botswana Defence Force, was formed only in 1977, prior to which the only armed defence came from the very small armed wing of the police. The South African aim of incorporating Botswana into South Africa constantly threatened its very existence. In 1972, the Bophuthatswana Bantustan was declared a self-governing homeland. The seven isolated enclaves situated on or near the frontier incorporated the Bakgatla lands that lay within within South Africa.³² In 1982, South Africa built dams on the headwaters of rivers within Bophuthatswana that flowed into Botswana,³³ threatening its water supply. For its part, Botswana refused to recognise the independence of Bophuthatswana, despite persistent pressure from South Africa.³⁴ In 1979, South Africa announced its vision of a Constellation of Southern African States (CONSAS),³⁵ aiming to expand South African influence and economic dominance over the subcontinent.³⁶

President Seretse Khama set out his response to dealing with the reality of dependence on the apartheid regime at the first National Assembly meeting on 6 October 1966. Botswana's precarious situation meant that its territory could not 'be used as a base for the organisation or direction of violent activities directed towards other states'.³⁷ He went on, however, to provide assurances that Botswana would 'continue to offer genuine political refugees a safe haven'. This pragmatic approach to dealing with Botswana's precarious situation,³⁸ the 'non-springboard approach',³⁹ remained the official stance until 1994. Within the confines of the policy, the government of Botswana nevertheless formally recognised the ANC, and allowed it to open an office in Gaborone from 1974.⁴⁰ It was also a founder member of the 'Front Line States' and was active in the Southern African Development Co-ordination Conference (SADCC) which excluded South Africa.⁴¹ Both Khama and Masire refused repeated attempts by the South African government to sign a form of pact or non-aggression treaty similar to the Nkomati Accord signed with Mozambique in 1984.⁴²

The term 'refugee' was both political and problematic, especially given Botswana's ideological sympathies with the liberation movements in South Africa. The categorisation of individuals necessarily overlapped⁴³ and were, in many cases, disputed. The distinction made by Khama's government referred simply to the activities conducted by individuals while on Botswana's soil, and not to their political memberships or their previous activities.⁴⁴ There were two major categories of 'refugee' traffic into Botswana, which received different responses from the authorities in Gaborone. By the 1970s, there was concern about increasing

32 M. Lawrence and A. Manson, 'The Dog of the Boers: The Rise and Fall of Mangope in Bophuthatswana', *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 20, 3 (1994), p. 453.

33 The South African government refused to engage in negotiations, insisting instead that Botswana must approach the government of Bophuthatswana, in an underhand attempt to force the official recognition of the Bantustans as independent nation states.

34 R. Ajulu and D. Corumack, 'Lesotho, Botswana and Swaziland: Captive States', in P. Johnson and D. Martin, (eds), *Frontline Southern Africa* (Peterborough, Ryan, 1989), p. 217.

35 'The Constellation of Southern African States: A New Strategic Offensive by South Africa', *Review of African Political Economy*, special issue on Zimbabwe, 18 (May–August 1980), p. 103.

36 G.M. Khadiagala, *Allies in Adversity: The Frontline States in Southern African Security, 1975–1993* (Athens, Ohio University Press, 1994), p. 220.

37 Sir Seretse Khama, quoted in Q. Masire, *Very Brave or Very Foolish: Memoirs of an African Democrat* (Gaborone, Macmillan Botswana, 2006), p. 256.

38 Parsons, 'The Pipeline', p. 28.

39 Polhemus, 'Botswana's Role', p. 264.

40 Mbeki, 'Address of the Patron'.

41 Evans, 'The Front-Line States', p. 1.

42 Khadiagala, *Allies in Adversity*, p. 192.

43 Southall, 'Botswana as a Host Country', p. 158.

44 The National Archives, FCO 141/1276, Government Secretary (Mafeking) to Divisional Commissioner South (Lobatse), 'Political Refugees: Lobatsi' (6 May 1960).

numbers of refugees from Southern Rhodesia, as the liberation struggle there escalated.⁴⁵ The majority intended to stay for relatively long periods, seeking financial assistance and employment. Still an intensely poor country, Botswana lacked the economic resources to absorb such influxes, and tension between communities began to emerge.⁴⁶ With numbers predicted to have reached 30,000 by 1979, Botswana was forced to overhaul its policy of dealing with refugees on a case-by-case basis, and constructed a large settlement camp at Dukwi, some 125 kilometres north of Francistown.⁴⁷ Similarly, in the wake of the Soweto uprising in 1976, significant numbers of students crossed into Botswana. Reluctant to align themselves with either the ANC or Pan Africanist Congress (PAC) and undertake guerrilla training elsewhere, many remained in the south of Botswana, where their presence in significant numbers generated tensions in the towns where they settled, and increased the diplomatic pressure on the government from their South African counterparts.⁴⁸

The second category of refugees, and the one with which this article is most concerned, stayed for much shorter spells in Botswana. The vast majority of those who passed through the Bakgatla lands were travelling through Botswana on the journey between South Africa and the bases of the liberation movements in Lusaka and Dar es Salaam. Botswana received a constant flow of refugee traffic from South Africa, with increases after the extension of the pass laws in the Republic in 1958,⁴⁹ and after the suppression and banning of the liberation movements in the early 1960s.⁵⁰ Many of the young people who crossed into Botswana after the 1976 Soweto uprising were categorised, or categorised themselves, as refugees, even though many were also members of the liberation movements, and their passage was in many cases part of their activities in support of the struggle. While 'refugees' were supposed to cross at formal points and register,⁵¹ the infiltration of the border authorities and activity of South African agents at these crossings was widespread, and abductions were common. Thus many of those who entered the Bakgatla lands did so illicitly, and much of the assistance that was provided facilitated this border-hopping. The length of Botswana's borders and its minuscule military force meant that the fences were sparsely policed. The government was not overly concerned about the transit of such 'refugees' through the Botswana 'pipeline'.⁵² Many were seeking safe passage through the country and not intending to remain for longer periods (indeed, most moved on within a matter of days)⁵³ and so were treated with leniency by the officials.⁵⁴

Inevitably, the presence of refugees meant that Botswana had constant difficulty in 'demand[ing] respect for its borders'.⁵⁵ The threat and reality of violent attack was permanently present, both before and after independence, accompanied by the continual presence of South African agents.⁵⁶ In 1974, a parcel bomb sent from South Africa killed the

45 Morapedi, 'The Dilemmas of Liberation', p. 76.

46 The National Archives, FCO 45/451: G.D. Anderson (British High Commission, Gaborone) to W. Wilson (Central and Southern African Department, Foreign and Commonwealth Office), 25 June 1970, p. 1; Parsons, 'The Pipeline', p. 29.

47 J. Zetterqvist, 'Refugees in Botswana in the Light of International Law', *Research Report: Scandinavian Institute of African Studies*, 87 (1990), p. 22.

48 Southall, 'Botswana as a Host Country', p. 169.

49 Lissoni, 'Chieftaincy and Resistance Politics', p. 63.

50 Southall, 'Botswana as a Host Country', p. 155.

51 The National Archives, FCO 141/1276, Acting Resident Commissioner (Mafeking) to Commissioner of Police, Divisional Commissioners, Acting District Commissioners (30 June 1960).

52 Parsons, 'The Pipeline', pp. 17–32; Morapedi, 'The Dilemmas of Liberation', p. 78.

53 Parsons, 'The Pipeline', p. 19; Southall, 'Botswana as a Host Country', pp. 158–9.

54 The National Archives, FCO 141/1276, 'Telegram: Kalahari to Divisional Commissioners and District Commissioners re. Proclamation 23 of 1960' (13 April 1960).

55 Bolaane, 'Cross-Border Lives', p. 563.

56 Keitseng, Ramsay and Morton, *Comrade Fish*, p. 49.

South African Students Organisation (SASO) leader Abraham Tiro when he was in Botswana.⁵⁷ Later, MK member Vernon Nkadimeng was killed by a car bomb planted by South African agents in Gaborone.⁵⁸ In 1978, South Africa embarked on a conscious strategy of destabilisation of its unsympathetic neighbours in the region,⁵⁹ and 'soldiers wantonly crossed the border to harass the rural population'.⁶⁰ In June 1986, ten suspected ANC recruits betrayed by *askari*⁶¹ Joe Mamasela and en route to Botswana for training were apprehended just short of the border and executed by lethal injection in a staged road accident.⁶²

In June 1985 the SADF raided Gaborone. Twelve people were killed⁶³ and several injured.⁶⁴ The South African government insisted that it was a counter-insurgency measure that had hit 'the nerve centre of the ANC machinery'.⁶⁵ Both Botswana's government and the ANC denied claims that those killed were involved in illegal activity, and there was international condemnation of the actions of the SADF.⁶⁶ The raid marked a turning point for Botswana, which had until then escaped any large-scale reprisals over the presence of South African exiles – unlike other neighbouring states, such as Lesotho. President Masire insisted that Botswana's refugee policy would continue,⁶⁷ but the ANC offices in Gaborone were closed down.

Cross-Border Networks and the Struggle

Several of the key routes used to cross between South Africa and Botswana were facilitated by social and kinship networks that were transected by the border. In the late 1950s, a significant number of BaHurutshe sought refuge from fatal shootings at Gopane, which followed resistance to the extension of the pass laws.⁶⁸ By 1960, Lehurutshe, transected by the major route between Zeerust in the Republic and Lobatse in the Protectorate, had become a key section of the route taken by members of the liberation movements travelling northwards or southwards,⁶⁹ through links and connections facilitated by community and family networks that transcended the frontier. Lobatse was perhaps the most significant border town in this regard during this period, thanks in large part to its centrality in Fish Keitseng's network of transportation and safe houses that helped large numbers make safe passage between South Africa and Zambia.⁷⁰ Once inside Botswana, the major north–south road and rail route loosely followed Botswana's eastern border, linking Lobatse, Gaborone, Francistown and Kazungula on the Zambezi. Francistown, Botswana's second-largest city, was a major point on this route, and was also frequently used by Zimbabwean refugees. The

57 Southall, 'Botswana as a Host Country', p. 159.

58 *Truth and Reconciliation Commission Final Report*, Vol. 6, Section 3, p. 212, para. 137.

59 Coker, 'South Africa: a new military role', p. 145.

60 Mgadla, 'A Good Measure of Sacrifice', p. 14.

61 Denotes a member of the ANC/liberation movements captured by the South African army and 'turned' to work for the apartheid regime.

62 Pauw, *Into the Heart of Darkness*, p. 23.

63 Ajulu and Corumack, 'Lesotho, Botswana and Swaziland', p. 209.

64 L. Nyelele and E. Drake, *The Raid on Gaborone: June 14th 1985* (Gaborone, E. Drake, 1986), pp. 9–25.

65 Hanlon and Spray, 'Botswana: Cautious but Outspoken', p. 224; *The Star* (Johannesburg), 14 June 1985, p. 3.

66 UN Security Council, *Resolution 572 (1985) Adopted by the Security Council at its 2609th meeting, on 30 September 1985*, S/RES/572 (1985), available at: <http://www.unhcr.org/refworld/docid/3b00f16c0.html>, retrieved 18 October 2012.

67 *Botswana Daily News*, 21 June 1985, p. 1.

68 S. Badat, *The Forgotten People: Political Banishment Under Apartheid* (Leiden, Brill, 2013), p. 81.

69 Lissoni, 'Chieftaincy and Resistance Politics', p. 63.

70 Keitseng, Ramsay and Morton, *Comrade Fish*; Parsons, 'The Pipeline', p. 20; R. Kasrils, *The Unlikely Secret Agent* (New York, Jacana, 2010), p. 139; G. Benneyworth, 'Armed and Trained: Nelson Mandela's 1962 Military Mission as Commander in Chief of Umkhonto we Sizwe and Provenance for his Buried Makarov Pistol', *South African Historical Journal*, 63, 1 (2011), p. 82; *Botswana Daily News*, 'Struggle Hero to be Laid to Rest' (1 April 2005).

significance of such settlements lying close to the frontier and to this route, serving as points of contact between the border fence and the major transport routes, has received little attention, beyond the brief acknowledgement that a network of contacts and safe houses was established by the ANC in towns such Bobonong and Mochudi during this period.⁷¹ Straddling a frontier that was violated frequently by South African incursions, the Bakgatla community was inescapably embedded within the struggle. However, the extent of their involvement, orchestrated largely by Linchwe himself, was proactive. The Bakgatla were also critically important: cross-border networks in this region were crucial for the movement of members of the liberation movements, arms and supplies, in addition to the more prominent crossing points of Lobatse and Francistown.

The Influence of an Individual

Kgosi Linchwe II was chief of the Bakgatla-ba-Kgafela from 1963 to 2007. The early period after independence was an uncertain one for traditional authorities in Botswana, as the new government attempted to scale down the influence of dikgosi by banning their active participation in electoral politics and creating the *Ntlo ya Dikgosi* (House of Chiefs), a purely advisory body with no legislative power.⁷² The separation of chiefly authority and electoral politics was held to be essential in order to protect the free exercise of the franchise by an electorate new to the democratic process and accustomed to the hereditary rule of chiefs.⁷³ Having stood down as Bamangwato kgosi during the crisis surrounding his marriage, the way was clear for Seretse Khama, as leader of the Botswana Democratic Party (BDP), to become the first President of the Republic. Kgosi Bathoen II of the Bangwaketse similarly gave up his role to join the main opposition party, the Botswana National Front (BNF).⁷⁴ Linchwe decided not to step down from his position. He became an outspoken critic of the government, with a keen interest in the politics of the new nation and in smaller, local issues that affected the Bakgatla. In the *Ntlo ya Dikgosi*, he participated in key debates – including, notably, challenging the designation of *dikgosi* as civil servants in 1973.⁷⁵ He clashed with the government over his re-introduction of the *bojale* and *bogwera* initiation schools in 1975. Though he made his opposition to government policy well known when he thought it necessary, he was also a capable and supportive figure, trusted enough to be appointed as ambassador to the USA between 1969 and 1972.

The Bakgatla royalty had long-standing connections with the organisations campaigning for political change in South Africa. Kgosi Linchwe I (Kgosi Linchwe II's great-grandfather) had been appointed an 'honorary vice-president' of the South African Native National Congress (SANNC, renamed ANC after 1923),⁷⁶ while Kgari Pilane, Linchwe I's brother, acted as treasurer-general of the organisation,⁷⁷ and was a founding member of the Transvaal

71 The ANC had several safe houses along the railway that ran parallel to the frontier, 'with contacts in border places such as Mochudi', Parsons, 'The Pipeline', p. 20.

72 J.H. Proctor, 'The House of Chiefs and the Political Development of Botswana', *Journal of Modern African Studies*, 6, 1 (1968), p. 61.

73 C. Logan, 'Selected Chiefs, Elected Councillors and Hybrid Democrats: Popular Perspectives on the Co-existence of Democracy and Traditional Authority', *Journal of Modern African Studies*, 47, 1 (2009), p. 102.

74 Bathoen stepped down from the chieftaincy in order to contest the Kanye seat against Ketumile Masire, the incumbent national vice-president and BDP stalwart. He won, and became leader of the party from 1969.

75 M.G. Molomo, 'Widening the Democracy Debate: *Bogosi* and Ethnicity in Botswana', in D.I. Ray, T. Quinlan, K. Sharma, T.A.O. Clarke, (eds), *Reinventing African Chieftaincy in the Age of AIDS, Gender, Governance and Development* (Calgary, University of Calgary Press, 2011), p. 451.

76 C.J. Makgala, *A History of the Bakgatla-baga-Kgafela in Botswana and South Africa* (Pretoria, Crink, 2009), p. 176–7.

77 J. Ramsay, 'Happy Birthday ANC', *Sunday Standard*, Gaborone, 1 September 2012.

African Congress.⁷⁸ Other Bakgatla also played prominent roles: among the founders of the SANNC was Daniel Letanka, born in Saulspoort in South Africa.⁷⁹ He was vice-president of the Transvaal National Congress,⁸⁰ worked for *Bantu World*, and was the founder editor of the newspaper *Motsoaelle* – the widely read weekly newspaper in the Transvaal, which merged in 1912 with *Abantu-Batho* to become the official newspaper of the SANNC.⁸¹ Another prominent figure originally from the region was Stephen Segale,⁸² President of the Transvaal wing of the ANC Youth League in the early 1960s, who was arrested and imprisoned many times.⁸³

Linchwe himself had a wide international network of personal contacts, which were important in the creation and maintenance of the networks that facilitated the cross-border activity that underpinned his recently celebrated contribution to the struggle. He had been educated in South Africa and Great Britain, where he had met by chance Naomi Mitchison, a writer and campaigner who regularly travelled to and stayed for prolonged periods in Mochudi from the early 1960s until the 1990s, writing prolifically about the Kgatlang, and the Batswana in the early years of independence.⁸⁴ In both his official role as Kgosi and for personal and social reasons, Linchwe regularly travelled to South Africa, not least because the Protectorate's administrative capital was located at Mafeking until 1965. He was used to contact with the South African authorities: 'he had been bullied, frightened and insulted' in South Africa,⁸⁵ while trying to get a permit for a car, sitting on a 'whites-only' bench to eat a picnic lunch, having been refused service at a restaurant,⁸⁶ or when attempting to go through a 'whites-only' door at Johannesburg airport.⁸⁷ He was known for taking an assertive stance when possible – prohibiting the local station master from entering Mochudi after an incident when a Bakgatla woman sat on a 'white' seat in 1965,⁸⁸ and replying to racist comments in Afrikaans in a Mahalapye bar which led to – as described in Mitchison's typically dramatic and colourful style – 'a flaming row, glasses broken, chairs used as weapons, guns out and all that'.⁸⁹ Linchwe was also proactive in his opposition to apartheid, and he made his feelings known as far as he could, given the restraints on his political role. He made several 'semi-official' visits to Zambia. In 1977 he made a call for Bakgatla men to volunteer to fight Ian Smith's army in Rhodesia, as the conflict had been spilling over the border around Francistown and further north,⁹⁰ and in 1979 helped to launch the Association for Relief Funds for Victims of External Aggression.⁹¹

Linchwe's hospitable attitude towards refugees and participants in the South African struggle was well known. In his 1963 installation as Kgosi, he publicly invited people to

78 F. Morton, J. Ramsay and P.T. Mgadla, *Historical Dictionary of Botswana* (London, Scarecrow Press, 1996), p. 27.

79 E.J. Verwey, *New Dictionary of South African Biography* (Vol. 1) (Pretoria, HSRC Publishers, 1995), p. 137.

80 P. Limb, 'Intermediaries of Class, Nation and Gender in the African Response to Colonialism in South Africa, 1890s to 1920s', in P. Limb, N.A. Etherington and P. Midgeley (eds), *Grappling with the Beast* (Leiden, Brill, 2010), p. 73.

81 L. Switzer, *South Africa's Alternative Press: Voices of Protest and Resistance, 1880s to 1960s* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1997), p. 30.

82 Makgala, *A History of the Bakgatla-baga-Kgafela*, p. 180.

83 South Africa Democracy Education Trust, *The Road to Democracy*, p. 222.

84 J. Ramsay, 'Kgosi-e-Kgolo Linchwe II (1935–2007)', *Sunday Standard*, Gaborone, 26 August 2007.

85 N. Mitchison, *Return to the Fairy Hill* (London, Heinemann, 1966), p. 47. It should be noted that Mafeking became Mafikeng in 1980, and Mahikeng in 2010.

86 *Ibid.*, p. 34.

87 S. Grant, 'A Chronological Career Summary of Chief Linchwe II Kgafela', *Botswana Notes and Records*, 17 (1985), p. 48.

88 *Ibid.*

89 Mitchison, *Return to the Fairy Hill*, p. 188.

90 *Botswana Daily News*, Gaborone, 12 January 1977.

91 Grant, 'A Chronological Career Summary', p. 50.

Mochudi – ‘in the name of human conscience, we shall always welcome those who have to leave the Republic as refugees’,⁹² despite the obvious danger that would be the inevitable consequence of direct involvement in refugee assistance and visible links with the liberation movements. He clearly recognised the ways in which the cross-border nature of the Bakgatla community, and its long history of interaction and kinship transcending the international boundary, made Mochudi a realistic and viable destination for many who left South Africa for political reasons, alongside other frontier communities. In 1968, Refugee Advisory Committees were set up in the settlements that were receiving significant influxes from outside Botswana – Francistown, Ghanzi, Gaborone, Lobatse, Kasane and Maun, as well as Mochudi.⁹³ The long-standing links between Bakgatla on both sides of the border and the liberation movements meant that the section of Bakgatla territory outside the boundaries of the apartheid state was a convenient safe haven for those attempting to leave South Africa.

Linchwe gave both land and permission for the creation of a community centre to serve as a transit centre for incoming refugees from South Africa in the wake of the 1960 Sharpeville massacre. It was the brainchild of Martin Ennals – then General Secretary of the National Council for Civil Liberties and later Amnesty International – and Nana Mohomo, the PAC representative in London. Ennals took the advice of Naomi Mitchison, whom he knew in London and who had just returned from attending the installation ceremony of Kgosi Linchwe II, in April 1963. Its location and the backing of Kgosi Linchwe II made Mochudi an ideal site for a base from which to provide assistance to refugees: close to the border and to the border post at Deerdepoot/Sikwane, and only two miles from Pilane railway station. Ennals travelled to Mochudi, and rapidly set about laying the foundations for his project. He approached the British Colonial Administration and Kgosi Linchwe II, armed with a memorandum written for him by Mitchison as an introduction.⁹⁴ Linchwe agreed to the proposal,⁹⁵ and donated the land for the centre provided that it served also as a community development centre for the Bakgatla. After a series of meetings with Major A.J.A. Douglas, Chief Secretary to the Resident Commissioner, R.P. Fawcus, in Mafeking, Ennals became increasingly concerned with using the development project to address the issue of refugees in Mochudi. The administration limited the refugees whom the centre would be able to assist to those who had already arrived within the Territory, and it was not permitted to help with entry or border-crossings.⁹⁶ Construction began on the main building in late 1963, and a borehole was sunk. Ennals returned to London and formed the London Committee for the Bakgatla Development Centre, which was to be chaired by the Labour peer, Lord Listowel, who had been the Governor-General of Ghana during its transition to independence. The committee had a clear four-year plan for the development of the Mochudi centre. A hostel was built at the community centre under the management of Sandy Grant, housing refugees mainly from South Africa, but also from further afield, such as a pair of Frelimo members from Mozambique.⁹⁷ Among those who spent time at the centre was David Sibeko, the PAC’s Director of Foreign Affairs and Representative to the UN,⁹⁸ who was later assassinated in Dar es Salaam.

92 Kgosi Linchwe II’s installation speech, quoted in Makgala, *A History of the Bakgatla-baga-Kgafela*, p. 272.

93 Müller, *The Inevitable Pipeline*, p. 63.

94 Mitchison, *Return to the Fairy Hill*, p. 75.

95 Kgosi Linchwe II: ‘I organised for the building of the Mochudi Community Centre as a Refugee Transit Camp’, M. Moswela, ‘Politics in Kgatlang: Nationalism or Parochialism’, University of Botswana BA research paper (1980); *Mochudi Historical Text No. 15*, ‘Interview with Chief Linchwe II’, 14 August 1979.

96 The National Archives, CO 1049/860, A.J.A. Douglas, Chief Secretary, HC Mafeking to Secretary of State for the Colonies, ‘Note of Meetings with Mr Ennals’, 21 October 1963, pp. 1–5.

97 J. Gumb, letter from Mochudi, 2 November 1965, recipient unknown. Johnny Gumb was a volunteer in Mochudi between 1965 and 1967, where he set up and ran a printing press at the community centre.

98 *Black Panther Intercommunal News Service: David Sibeko Special*, San Francisco, 18 March 1972. Sibeko was known as the ‘African Malcolm X’.

The refugee assistance project did not develop to the extent originally envisaged by Ennals and Mohomo. Though geographically close to the border, the land on the South African side was heavily developed in agricultural terms, which made fence-jumping difficult. A much easier crossing point was at Lobatse, which thus became the major reception point for incoming refugees. While most of those coming into and out of South Africa were en route to Zambia, many also congregated in Francistown, along with most of those from Zimbabwe. Botswana's second-largest town was the site of what was called the 'White House', and later the 'Joint Commission for Relief Work in the High Commission Territories' sponsored a new refugee transit centre there, which was bombed in 1964.⁹⁹ Both towns also had airstrips and better transport and communication links than Mochudi. However, both Lobatse and Francistown were located in the 'concessions' granted to colonial prospectors in the 19th century, and outside the eight 'tribal' reserves in the Bechuanaland Protectorate.¹⁰⁰ Part of the London Committee's rationale for the Mochudi centre had been that the creation of a further hub for refugees located within the Bakgatla reserve would perhaps be safer and less vulnerable to South African pressure.¹⁰¹

Instrumental Figures in the Kgatleng

A key player in the networks around Mochudi, who was 'warned that he was going to be picked up under the *Suppression of Communism Act*',¹⁰² was Ismail 'Ish' Matlhaku. Matlhaku relocated to Mochudi in 1963, bringing with him the truck and minibus that had formed the basis of his taxi business in Johannesburg.¹⁰³ There, he had been a well-known figure in the underground political scene, providing clandestine transport for major ANC leaders, including Mandela and Tambo,¹⁰⁴ whom he knew well.¹⁰⁵ It was in Johannesburg that he had met Kgosi Linchwe II's sister, Tshire, and it was she who introduced the two during Linchwe's installation as kgosi in 1963.¹⁰⁶ While in South Africa, Matlhaku had been 'involved ferrying activists to the Botswana border where he helped them scale the fence into exile', and he continued to perform the same role from his new base in Mochudi.¹⁰⁷ Upon Matlhaku's arrival, Linchwe gave him a two-roomed house close to his compound. Listed by the Ministry of Home Affairs as a permanent ANC refugee in 1965,¹⁰⁸ Matlhaku had a wide network of high-profile connections with those involved in the liberation struggle on both sides of the frontier.¹⁰⁹ His first wife, Happy Letanke, was a relative of the ANC stalwart, Daniel. He later married Martha Lonake, the sister-in-law of the future PAC President, Zephania Lekoane Mothopeng – commonly known as 'the Lion of Azania' – who served a series of long prison sentences, including 15 years on Robben Island.¹¹⁰ Martha Matlhaku arrived in Mochudi to join her husband on an exit permit in 1965, having lived for several

99 Dale, *Botswana's Search for Autonomy*, p. 38.

100 O. Selolwane, 'Colonization by Concession: Capitalist Expansion in the Bechuanaland Protectorate, 1885–1950', *Pula: Botswana Journal of African Studies*, 2, 1 (February 1980), p. 97.

101 Mitchison, *Return to the Fairy Hill*, p. 91.

102 *Ibid.*, pp. 114–5.

103 M. Harper and R. Kavura, *The Private Marketing Entrepreneur and Rural Development: Case Studies and Commentary*, Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) Agricultural Services Bulletin, 51 (1982), p. 59.

104 'Shebeen King Activist', *The Sowetan*, Johannesburg, 20 February 2003.

105 S. Grant, 'Et Cetera', *Mmegi*, Gaborone, 25 February 2003. Matlhaku's link to Mandela was important to him, and he kept a framed photograph of the two of them together displayed in his living room for many decades.

106 'Matlhaku to be Buried Tomorrow', *Botswana Daily News*, Gaborone, 21 February 2003.

107 'Shebeen King Activist'.

108 Parsons, 'The Pipeline', p. 26.

109 Mitchison, *Return to the Fairy Hill*, p. 146. Mitchison recalls being introduced by Matlhaku to the prominent Motswana ANC member and Treason Trialist Motsamai Mpho.

110 'Shebeen King Activist'.

years under house arrest in Johannesburg.¹¹¹ She was also well-connected to the ANC's central figures, having worked for several years as Mandela's personal secretary at the ANC offices in Johannesburg.¹¹² The Matlhakus had lived in Johannesburg close to the family of Linchwe's future wife, Kathleen Nono Motsepe, when she was working as a nurse in Baragwanath Hospital.¹¹³ Building up a small business empire, starting first with a small butchery in Mochudi which then expanded to Gaborone, and then a general store in Artesia,¹¹⁴ Matlhaku remained a central figure in Mochudi: he was the main contact to whom Martin Ennals referred Sandy Grant upon his arrival in 1963,¹¹⁵ and both Grant and Mitchison recalled being picked up by his familiar taxi to be taken to the town from the Pilane railway station.¹¹⁶

Kgosi Linchwe II's well-known support for the struggle meant that a number of prominent figures visited Mochudi regularly throughout this period, and were known to be in close contact with him and other members of the royal house. Among them were Duma Nokwe and Alfred Nzo, successive general secretaries of the ANC between 1958 and 1991, as well as the PAC representative in Botswana, Solly Ndlovu.¹¹⁷ Chris Hani reportedly stayed for extended periods with a certain Mmoloke Moje in Mochudi.¹¹⁸ A crucial element was the development of an ANC cell based at Molefi secondary school by the teachers Siphobuthlezi and Eugene Mokeyane Mohulatse, to provide a base for both temporary ANC visitors and students who had relocated from South Africa and enjoyed the relative security offered by the fact that the South African police were unable to operate as freely within the confines of a school campus as they could elsewhere.¹¹⁹

The 'Underground Military Machinery' in Botswana

Linchwe personally supported those who came to Mochudi, including hosting several individuals as they made the journey through Bakgatla territory.¹²⁰ He engaged in debate

111 Mitchison, *Return to the Fairy Hill*, p. 200.

112 S. Grant, personal communication, 15 October 2012.

113 'Matlhaku to be Buried Tomorrow', *Botswana Daily News*.

114 Harper and Kavura, *The Private Marketing Entrepreneur*, p. 60.

115 S. Grant, personal communication, 11 April 2012.

116 Mitchison, *Return to the Fairy Hill*, p. 194.

117 Author's interview, Gaborone, 13 August 2013. This interview with a key operative in the activities of the ANC in Botswana gave a useful overview of and insight into the process of crossing the border and evading detection by the South African security forces.

118 Victor Ramono Linchwe, personal communication, 12 August 2013. The informant is an uncle of Kgosi Kgafela II, the son and successor of Kgosi Linchwe II. In a supporting affidavit signed in January 2013, submitted to the North West High Court, Mafikeng, Republic of South Africa (RSA), in the ongoing case of Kgosi Kgafela II and the Bakgatla-ba-Kgafela Traditional Community vs. The Premier of North West Province, the M.E.C. responsible for traditional affairs in the North West Province, Nyalala John Molefe Pilane, and the Traditional Council of Bakgatla-ba-Kgafela, the informant declared the following in clauses 13–14: 'In 1975, I joined Kgosi Kgafela II as his second in charge, in a project which was called Underground Military Machinery which operated in Botswana under the command of Kgosi Linchwe II, but supervised by the leadership of the African National Congress (ANC). Kgosi Linchwe and I concealed and distributed arms for the ANC and accommodated refugees in Mochudi during the armed struggle'.

119 Author's interviews: Mochudi, 1 August 2013; Mochudi, 14 August 2013; Gaborone, 8 August 2013. All three of these informants were closely involved in the activities of the liberation movements in Mochudi and the Kgatlang. The first was a South African, resident in Botswana since 1961, who co-ordinated ANC cadres in Mochudi and the surrounding area. The second was the son of a key ANC operative in Johannesburg, but was himself born in Ramotswa, Botswana. He was a member of the Medu Art Ensemble, which was founded in Gaborone by South African exiles and was known to provide cover for ANC activities in Botswana. The third was a journalist based in Mochudi, and was close to Kgosi Linchwe II throughout this period.

120 Author's interview, Mochudi, 4 September 2012. The informant is a close family member of Kgosi Linchwe II, who was alive throughout this period.

with and offered advice to those he came into contact with,¹²¹ including through his football team, which included several South Africans.¹²² Mbeki's speech, to which we referred earlier, and the affidavit of Victor Ramono Linchwe¹²³ suggest that Linchwe's main role in the 'struggle machinery' concerned the transport and storage of weapons.¹²⁴ According to Kgosi Linchwe's wife, and also to key ANC activist Scara Aphiri, storage sheds were built within the chief's compound, and later the weapons were secretly moved to the Nfetledi cattle-post, which he had converted for the purpose, ('our wardrobes are still there')¹²⁵, 30 kilometres or so northwards into the bush.¹²⁶ After the unbanning of the ANC and the PAC in 1990, Kgosi Linchwe and Mbeki met at the soccer match between Botswana and South Africa held in Gaborone national stadium in 1992.¹²⁷ Together they agreed that Linchwe would inform the Botswana police that, as a result of his position as a traditional leader, he had been made aware of the existence of the arms caches that remained at his cattle-post, and that they should come to retrieve them.¹²⁸ The ANC had no further need for them, and it was in nobody's interests to put the public at risk by leaving them untouched, while it conveniently allowed Linchwe to find a way for the police to seize the weapons without him 'getting into trouble with the government'.¹²⁹

South African Counter-Insurgency in the Kgatleng

Throughout this period, the South African security forces were well informed of political activity in Mochudi. They had an extensive intelligence network of informants within Botswana: armed police drove around Mochudi and the surrounding area at will,¹³⁰ and they were able to pinpoint individuals involved in refugee assistance. The sense of the everyday threat posed by the South African security forces was as potent in Mochudi as in the rest of Botswana. The South African Air Force 'buzzed' Mochudi during the Independence Day celebrations in 1966,¹³¹ aiming to deliver a 'warning to refugees of the wrath to come'.¹³² In July 1964, the 'White House' refugee centre in Francistown was bombed,¹³³ and there was little doubt that efforts to assist refugees and members of the liberation movements were

121 Mitchison, *Return to the Fairy Hill*, p. 54: 'I had realised that there was a good deal going on and that there were doubtless tie-ups with various bodies which one might call the resistance'.

122 Author's interview, Mochudi, 24 September 2012: 'I used to sit with them and him together, off the pitch, and I used to hear him telling them how to go about in the struggle and everything – assisting them ... advancing information'.

123 Supporting affidavit signed in January 2013, submitted to the North West High Court, Mafikeng, RSA, in the ongoing case of Kgosi Kgafela II and the Bakgatla-ba-Kgafela Traditional Community vs. The Premier of North West Province, the M.E.C. responsible for traditional affairs in the North West Province, Nyalala John MolefePilane, and the Traditional Council of Bakgatla-ba-Kgafela, the informant declared the following in clause 15: 'My mission (UMM) [Underground Military Machinery] which I had to carry out in Botswana ended in 1994 when South Africa attained democratic rule. The last arms cache we had was dug out at a farm presently belonging to the first applicant [Kgosi Kgafela II] and handed over to the Botswana police in 1995'.

124 Mbeki, 'Address of the Patron': 'The late and outstanding Botswana and African patriot, Kgosi Lentswe, was part of the machinery we established before the ANC representative arrived, which enabled the ANC to pass war materiel through Botswana, to enable us to carry out military operations in South Africa'.

125 Author's interview, Mochudi, 4 September 2012.

126 Author's interviews, Mochudi, 24 September 2012; Mochudi, 4 September 2012; Mochudi, 1 August 2013. Victor Ramono Linchwe, personal communication, 12 August 2013.

127 Author's interview, Mochudi, 1 August 2013.

128 Mbeki, 'Address of the Patron'.

129 Author's interview, Mochudi, 25 September 2012. The informant was a prominent figure in both the Mochudi and national political spheres throughout this period.

130 S. Grant, 'Botswana: the Mochudi Community Centre (1)', *Mmegi*, Gaborone, 18 November 2005.

131 Mitchison, *Return to the Fairy Hill*, p. 216.

132 Parsons, 'The Pipeline', p. 23.

133 South Africa Democracy Education Trust, *The Road to Democracy*, p. 425.

fraught with danger. In June 1979, two suspected activists were abducted by South African forces at Ramothlabaki in the Kgatleng.¹³⁴ During the 1980s, the SADF made several raids into the small border village of Oliphant's Drift.¹³⁵ On 23 April 1990, the Chand family from Sikwane (on the border) were murdered and their house bombed by a unit from the Vlakplaas special branch, led by Eugene de Kock. Sam Chand, a trader, had assisted members of the PAC and the Azanian People's Liberation Army (APLA) to cross the border over several decades. De Kock's testimony to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission in 1996 confirmed that Chand's house was targeted as a suspected 'PAC stronghold',¹³⁶ in a brutal attack that sent shockwaves through Botswana society. Both Chand and his wife, along with three sons, two of whom were disabled, were shot repeatedly at point-blank range with automatic weapons.¹³⁷ Before returning to South Africa, the commandos planted a large amount of explosives that completely destroyed the house.¹³⁸

Given the extent of South African intelligence, and the bombings, kidnappings and assassinations elsewhere, it is perhaps surprising that there was not a direct attack on the refugee assistance base at the Community Development Centre. This was probably partly due to the relatively low numbers of refugees the centre was able to help, despite its bigger original ambitions,¹³⁹ in comparison with similar facilities located elsewhere, such as in Lobatse and Francistown. It was also a high-profile affair, owing to its international origins and the original sanction it had received from the colonial administration under Peter Fawcus. Linchwe was never served with a banning order or subject to a direct attack on his life, probably owing to his status within Botswana. In any case, the South African authorities did not 'eliminate' several other figures heavily involved in the struggle from Botswana, such as the Matlhakus in Mochudi and, in the wider Botswana context, Fish Keitseng and Motsamai Mpho, all of whom were well known to the security forces.

Conclusion

The extent to which a significant number of Botswana's citizens assisted and were involved in the activities of the South African liberation movements has been obscured by the official stance of non-participation that the central government was forced to take throughout this period. The case of Kgosi Linchwe II and the Bakgatla people has demonstrated the existence of significant cross-border networks of support in a borderland region that has as yet received little attention in the context of the South African struggle. This local example is of particular significance because it was made possible by the involvement and leadership of a figure of traditional authority. Linchwe's status as Bakgatla chief not only afforded him the power and legitimacy necessary for effective local governance in this region, but also meant that channels of participation that were closed to the politicians of the central government remained open for him and his associates. Linchwe's active support of members of the liberation movements is a demonstration of the potential for individual agency and political

134 Mgadla, 'A Good Measure of Sacrifice', p. 10.

135 Makgala, *A History of the Bakgatla-baga-Kgafela*, p. 278. It is unclear exactly where the location referred to as Rathlokwa is: a cattle-post approximately 15 kilometres from the village of Oliphant's Drift is commonly referred to by this name, but, if so, why it was of special interest to the SADF is unknown.

136 Truth and Reconciliation Commission, Application No. AM: 0066/96, Murder of Chand Family, Day 5, available at http://www.justice.gov.za/trc/amntrans/1999/9905240623_pre_990531pt.htm, retrieved 8 January 2015.

137 Author's interview, Gaborone, 14 August 2013. The informant is a close family member of the Chand family, and was resident in Gaborone at the time of the attack at Sikwane.

138 Pauw, *Into the Heart of Darkness*, p. 87.

139 Parsons, 'The Pipeline', p. 23.

involvement offered by the nature of chieftainship in 20th-century Botswana. The resilience of chiefly legitimacy underpinned Linchwe's ability to mobilise both human and material resources within his community in support of a political cause where the central government could not act. Despite official policies of non-participation, Botswana's borderlands were inevitably intersected by numerous routes well-trodden by members of the liberation movements travelling into and out of South Africa. Where communities that pre-dated the construction of the border existed, the potential for travel and refuge was particularly significant. The Bakgatla region is a crucial example of this, with the networks of kinship, communication and commerce that underpinned a community identity based on the structures of chiefly authority that transcended the international border.

Mochudi thus became the centre of a transnational network of individuals and organisations engaged in the anti-apartheid struggle. The town played a significant role in hosting, supporting and assisting refugees. The foundation of the Community Development Centre as a base for refugee assistance was important, as was its sanction from both Linchwe's local and Fawcus' colonial administrations. Mochudi became a base and refuge, whether temporary or permanent, for numerous individuals involved in the liberation struggle in South Africa. This was made possible by the involvement and personal activity of Kgosi Linchwe II, who used the authority, influence and resources that were the basis of his chiefly power to participate in an international political sphere with a greater degree of flexibility and agency than the national government.

Mbeki's recent account of the covert yet direct role of Kgosi Linchwe II in assisting both refugees and the struggle serves as an illustrative example of the wide network of communication, co-operation and assistance that operated across the region throughout this period. This provides an alternative perspective on the highly contentious debates about the role and actions of traditional authorities in this region during the struggle. Though *realpolitik* determined the non-involvement of the national government, this perspective demonstrates that channels of support for the liberation struggle among the Batswana were of a deeper and more diverse nature than has previously been acknowledged.

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