Spatial Practices

Territory, Border and Infrastructure in Africa

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Chapter 6

Territorial Power without Sovereignty: Hunters and the State on Côte d’Ivoire’s Northern Margins

Katharina Heitz Tokpa

Introduction

This paper is a contribution to our understanding of how spaces are governed and signified in areas of limited statehood. Spaces of limited statehood are generally ascribed to the weakness of states (Cruise O’Brien 1991; Jackson 1990; Risse and Lehmkuhl 2006; Migdal 1988; Rotberg 2003). They may be found in so-called informal settlements controlled by armed gangs rather than by the state’s police, or in remote rural areas where it seems too costly for the state to provide basic infrastructure. Despite the limited presence of the state, social life may be bustling in these areas, to say the least. To learn more about how these spaces are governed has been a major interest of social scientists over the last decade. Deficit descriptions of the African state have been criticised for their lack of explaining how governance actually works (Förster 2007; Hagmann and Hoehne 2009). Therefore, scholars have turned their attention to socio-political order(s) beyond, below or beside the state (Engel and Mehler 2005; Bellagamba and Klute 2008). Over the last decade, fieldwork-based studies have revealed governance arrangements including, for instance, political authorities with pre-colonial origins (Klute and von Trotha 2000), or more recent actors such as INGOS (de Bruijn 2008). Armed actors, too, have received much attention, such as neo-traditional hunters (Förster 2009, 2010) or more ephemeral strongmen and their armed groups (Utas 2012).

This strand of research shows that a range of non-state actors provide governance services in spaces of limited statehood. Such governance arrangements are seldom based on explicit mutual agreement or legally ordered regulations. They are often a cause of tension or even violent conflicts. In particular, armed non-state actors, may be perceived as a threat to the state’s monopoly on force (Förster 2009; Utas 2012). Despite the breadth of this research, we still know little about how the daily side-by-side of these diverse governance actors is organised. In what follows, I will show how space (and scale) are crucial in governance arrangements between hunters and the state in Côte d’Ivoire. At the core of my analysis are territorial authority and “informal” modes of governance in the local arena (Agnew 2013).
The analysis is based on an ethnographic case study from the border region of Côte d'Ivoire’s north, more precisely from the préfecture or district of Ouango-dougo1 whose main town is also called Ouangolodougou.2 Since colonial times, the northern part of Côte d'Ivoire has been administratively neglected. Colonial and post-colonial administrations have privileged the cash crop rich south (Chauveau and Dozon 1985; Nassa 2005).3 By and large, the state’s physical presence in this peripheral area is limited to urban centres and the north–south road that connects Côte d'Ivoire’s seaport with its landlocked neighbours Mali and Burkina Faso. Most roads branching off from this main axis are not tarred in the northern part, including the road leading eastwards to the historic town of Kong. The gendarmerie, which theoretically is in charge of security and dispute resolution in rural areas, is understaffed and under-equipped to patrol these vast rural areas.

Even if scattered, life in the “bush” is bustling and growing particularly due to immigration. People in search of land and jobs have come over the open border to farm, graze their cattle or do business in Côte d’Ivoire. Particularly during the decade-long violent crisis between 2002 and 2011, immigration took place beyond the regulatory eye of the state. Elders or chiefs have played a major role in taking care of newcomers, finding a place for them and resolving conflicts between stranger and host population. Furthermore, due to the closeness to the border, armed gangs have created insecurity in this area for decades. Since I started my fieldwork in February 2014, there has been a major attack on people on frequented roads in the bush nearly every other month.

In this chapter, I will focus on security and the work of the hunter association, as it allows us to explore the role of space in governance arrangements with non-state actors. I argue that hunters have security and control functions in more or less clearly circumscribed social spaces in rural areas – “the bush” – in tacit agreement with the local state.4 Both actors engage in spatialisations of authority. At strategic points where bush and town meet both actors, the state

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1 “-dougou” refers to the territory of a village in Jula, the vehicle language, which is a Manding variety. Often people simply say Ouangolo.
2 Field research was conducted between February and April 2014, as well as in November 2014 and February 2015. Most of the data were collected with informal talks and observations. In Ouangolo, I am particularly indebted to my host Domba Ouattara, chef de terre and chief of the hunters’ association.
3 During colonial and early post-colonial times, Côte d’Ivoire’s north used to serve as a labour reservoir for the cash crop producing southern forest belt.
4 By “local state”, I mean for instance the prefect and the chief of police and gendarmerie in a specific region. I distinguish them from the “central state”, the administration at the national level in Abidjan (see Boone 2003).
agents and the hunters make attempts at enlarging their territorial reach, challenging the other’s authority. Generally, such subtle provocations are solved amicably. The examples provided, however, also show that we are looking at a hierarchical space (Agnew 2013). For the time being at least, the weaker actor, the hunters, keep a low profile to maintain their space of action beside the state (Bellagamba and Klute 2008).

In the first part I introduce the hunters’ security movement. Drawing on existing scholarship, I describe the relationship between the hunters and the state, with a focus on the hunter movement’s spatial expansion, and containment at the national level, between the 1990s and today. In the second part, I present an ethnographic case study from the north of Côte d’Ivoire to analyse how spaces are governed and signified by the hunters and the local state.

Hunters and the Security Movement

In all parts of Côte d’Ivoire, there are hunters. In addition to “ordinary” hunters, however, there is a special brotherhood of hunters, called *dozoton*, in the Manding-speaking areas. This hunter brotherhood also exists in the Manding-speaking areas of Mali, Guinea, Côte d’Ivoire and Sierra Leone. The hunters of this brotherhood are called *dozos*. They distinguish themselves from other hunters by healing and protection powers that the brotherhood mainly draws from their patron spirit, Manimory. The Manding believe that all animals have *nyama*, a kind of soul that is dangerous for the one who kills the animal (Bassett 2003, 3; Hellweg 2011). *Dozos* are known for their powers to overcome and combat these and other dangers on the hunt. They often wear their hunter gown that has been washed in protective potion, draped with amulets including small mirrors and magical objects wrapped in leather (McNaughton 1982; Hellweg 2011). Other typical accessories include a flute, pointed hat or rifle – often a 12-gauge shotgun. To join the brotherhood, everyone has to go through an initiation ritual, in which they vow not to “lie, steal, commit adultery or betray other *dozos*” (Hellweg 2011, 4). Initiates who do not follow these rules

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5 By “ordinary” hunters I mean (mostly) men who complement their diet by killing game from time to time.

6 *Dozos* is the plural of *dozo* or alternatively *donso*, depending on the regional Manding variety. Note that in this article I will use *dozos* and hunters interchangeably, as in the north there are hardly any hunters who are not part of *dozoton*, the *dozos’ society or brotherhood*.

7 Anyone considered morally apt can join the brotherhood; the social anthropologist Joseph Hellweg was initiated during his work on the *dozos*. 
can no longer count on Manimory’s protection. This gives the brotherhood an ethical basis on which to operate.

The dozos have long had a significant societal role beyond that of hunting game. Due to their mastering of the wilderness with their weapons, medicine and mystical knowledge, they protect human settlements from all kinds of evil (such as wild animals, hostile attacks, sorcery, illness) (Cissé 1964; Hellweg 2011). Today, with the subjection of local societies to the territorial regime of the nation state, the societal context of the hunters has changed. State hunting laws, and laws regulating gun ownership, have led to conflicts between state agents and hunters in Côte d’Ivoire, as well as in neighbouring states. The situation was most tense in Mali in the 1980s, where hunters felt a need to fight for their place in society. Consequently, they created a bureaucratically organised association in order to negotiate with the state. Thereafter, the dozos became guards of forest reserves and provided security in rural areas. The hunter movement in Mali calls itself benkadi, which means “agreement is sweet” and it became an inspiration for the dozos in Côte d’Ivoire (Hellweg 2011, 128–129).

With the economic decline in the 1980s, Côte d’Ivoire’s crime rate soared. So-called coupeurs de routes, or highway men, regularly attacked buses, particularly in the north. According to figures presented by Bassett (2004), armed robberies went up from 275 in 1981 to roughly 5,780 in 1991. Côte d’Ivoire’s police and other security forces were unable to fight crime and provide security. They were underfunded, lacked appropriate equipment and were badly paid, which rendered state agents susceptible to bribes from gangsters (Hellweg 2011, 29; Förster 2010). As a consequence, security became privatised. Those who could afford it employed private security agents, and the larger part of the population resorted to forming vigilante groups: these were watches organised by neighbourhood chiefs and staffed by youths or the mystically protected dozos. Introduced from Mali and starting in north-western Côte d’Ivoire, the benkadi movement – that is the bureaucratised security movement of the dozos – gradually spread over the network-like dozotons to the entire north of Côte d’Ivoire at the beginning of the 1990s (Hellweg 2011, 130–132).

Hunters and the Central State: Between Expansion and Retreat

Before describing the situation in the préfecture of Ouangolodougou today, I will summarise the changing spatial reach and role of the dozos’ benkadi movement, and the relationship between it and the state since benkadi started in the 1990s. It is necessary to distinguish here between the state as an administration and the government or regime in place.
At the beginning of the 1990s, Côte d’Ivoire’s first president, Félix Houphouët-Boigny was still in office and his country went through an economic recession. When he realised that the police and gendarmerie were unable to put a halt to the rising crime rates, he called upon the population to support the state in bringing back security. The *dozos* were quick to respond and soon managed to bring back safety on the main north-south axis where highwaymen, had regularly attacked trucks and passengers. In northern cities, the *dozos* successfully organised nightly security patrols. This brought them countrywide fame and acknowledgement. People in the south wanted to hire *dozos* as night guards, so that there was a countrywide boom of *dozo* security watches (Bassett 2003, 10, 2004, 36; Hellweg 2004). Thus, in the first half of the 1990s, *dozos* were popular and there was a spatial expansion of *dozo* activities at the national level.

In the second half of the 1990s, however, under President Henri Konan Bédié, also a man from the centre, the government developed a different attitude towards the *dozos*. Soon, Bédié perceived the *dozos* as a threat. He suspected them of supporting his political rival for the presidency, Alassane Ouattara, who shared northern descent with the *dozos*. Bédié’s government therefore portrayed the *dozos* as an armed militia not unlike the *kamajors* in Sierra Leone (Ferme 2001), and restricted the *dozos*’ activities to their “original cultural and geographical sphere” (Bassett 2004, 41). They were no longer allowed to carry arms or work as guards in the south. As a measure to control and contain the *dozos*, the government conducted a census which revealed that out of 42,000 dozos, 33,000 had rifles (Bassett 2003, 18). Bassett shows how the government downscaled the *dozos*’ security movement from the national to an allegedly culturally-defined regional level, restricting the *dozos*’ “spatial reach” to their geographical heartland (Bassett 2004, 34). The “containment” of the *dozos* (Bassett 2004), was part of a more general plan of the Bédié government to weaken the influence of northerners in the country and to prevent Ouattara from standing in the 2000 presidential elections. Already in 1999, however, President Bédié was ousted from power by a bloodless military coup.

Bédié’s successor as head of state, General Robert Guéï, first allowed *dozos* to guard public places in Abidjan and to man checkpoints throughout the country. Later, however, when the general harboured ambitions to become

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8 Out of the fear that weapons might be confiscated, many *dozos* left their best guns at home (Bassett 2003).

9 “Northerners”, in French “*nordistes*”, are citizens originating from the northern part of the country. Over the last two decades, this term has been produced as a discursive strategy in the struggle for power, clustering Manding, Senufo, Lobi and Muslim identities (Banégas 2006).
president himself, his junta asked the *dozos* to stop working in public spaces (Bassett 2003, 19–20). According to Bassett (2003), however, it was under President Laurent Gbagbo, who came to power in 2000, that *dozos* experienced their worst repression. Leading figures fled to the northern parts of the country (Bassett 2003).

The same northerners that President Laurent Gbabgo’s government persecuted in the army and in political parties, as well as in student organisations, prepared the coup against him. During the ensuing violent conflict (2002–2010), the country was divided into an insurgent-held north and a government-controlled south. Many *dozos* sided with the mostly young soldiers of northern origin who had instigated the insurgency, for they shared their political grievance of exclusion by the government of Laurent Gbagbo (Förster 2010). In the government-held parts of the south, the *dozos* kept a low profile, for they were considered as the insurgents’ brothers in arms. Some *dozo* initiates joined the insurgents, others acted as an auxiliary force apart, and yet other *dozos* were more reserved and did not join the fight. Generally speaking, the *dozoton* remained a force apart and in its own right (Förster 2010; Heitz 2013).

In Korhogo, the major town of the north, the insurgents had to consent to the strong presence of the hunter brotherhood, which claimed to do security work within the city of Korhogo. The insurgents’ realm started at the outskirts of the town. Insurgents and hunters engaged in what has been described as a “segmentary governance figuration” (Förster and Koechlin 2011). The term “segmentary” highlights complementarity and equality of rank, rather than the hierarchical relationship that can be observed under different state administrations.10 This example shows that during insurgent rule, the *dozos* had greater possibilities to play their security role in certain social spaces than under state administration.

When the northerner Alassane Ouattara won the 2010 presidential elections against the incumbent Laurent Gbagbo, the latter refused to step down. It was only through a joint military intervention, including French forces, the UN, the insurgent forces, parts of the Ivorian army and *dozos*, that Ouattara was able to take office in May 2011. In the course of the offensive in 2011, a group of *dozos* participated in a massacre in Duékoué, a town in Côte d’Ivoire’s west, putting the *dozos* into the international limelight and shedding a negative light on them (Straus 2011). This put the government under pressure to act.

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10 “Segmentary” has been used in social anthropology to describe societies that are organised in descent groups. The idea is that the descent groups are of the same kind and of equal rank (Evans-Pritchard and Fortes 1950).
During his first term in office, the Ouattara government outlawed all parallel forces – including the *dozos* – by decree. However, the decree has not been implemented, at least as far as the *dozos* (in the north) are concerned. As the present government is indebted to the above-mentioned armed forces including the *dozos*, the *dozos* have managed to (re-)establish themselves as community guards in the multi-ethnic agrarian society of the south. In the north, the hunters have maintained their more public role. As I will show using ethnographic examples from Ouangolo, the relationship with the state today is a more hierarchical one than during the insurgency.

**Hunters and the Local State in the North**

Ouangolodougo is located in one of the northernmost regions of Côte d'Ivoire, bordering Burkina Faso and Mali. It has around 25,000 inhabitants and is the chief town of the district (*préfecture*) and *sous-préfecture* with the same name, Ouangolodougo. Ouangolo has a gendarmerie, police station, general hospital and two colleges. Its biggest asset, however, is the customs clearance service to and from Burkina Faso. To date, the town has preserved the character of a village. The customary chiefs still enjoy a high degree of authority among the population, and relationships with state agents are strengthened by personal visits and the exchange of gifts. In the *préfecture* of Ouangolodougo, the hunter society comprises an estimated 1,500 to 2,000 registered *dozos*. The Ouangolo section is subordinate to the next higher level in Ferkessédougou, following the state's administrative logics. In Ouangolo, there is a *dozo* chief, a secretary and a treasurer, not unlike any other association in Côte d'Ivoire.

In the present post-conflict period, there are still many weapons around. Combatants who have not managed to find an occupation are particularly feared. Roads heading across country, therefore, are avoided by the gendarmerie at night. Most of them come from elsewhere in Côte d'Ivoire and do not want to risk their lives in Ouangolo’s bush.

Contrary to most state agents, *dozos* are generally from local families and consequently have local knowledge of who is who within the local social landscape. As they live in Ouangolo with their families, they have a personal

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11 The estimated 1,500 to 2,000 *dozos* for the *préfecture* of Ouangolo is based on a list of members provided by the secretary of the *dozo* brotherhood in Ouangolo. There are 5,209 registered members for the *région* of Tchologo, whose main town is Ferkessédougou (with roughly 65,000 inhabitants). The *région* consists of eleven *sous-préfectures*, five of which belong to the *préfecture* of Ouangolodougo.
interest in protecting both people and goods in this area. They sit down at crossroads and village entrances, or act as border guards. Almost daily, the *dozos* go into the bush and remote villages by motorbike, armed with rifles and knives. Regularly, people living in the countryside stop the *dozos* when they see them passing on motorbikes, to tell them about various problems they have encountered, ranging from cattle theft to cases of adultery.

If cattle have disappeared, for instance, farmers usually turn to the *dozos* for help. *Dozos* will search for the lost animals in the bush, which the gendarmerie would not do. The *dozos* are also contacted in the case of crops being destroyed by cattle. The farmer and the cattle herder are usually summoned by the chief hunter in Ouangolo, who listens to both sides. Then the sums are fixed which the herder must pay to the farmer and to the *dozo* chief.

According to state law, civil cases (like conflicts between herders and farmers) should be treated by the *sous-préfet* who is meant to calculate the amount to be paid as compensation together with someone from the Ministry of Agriculture. However, it is the *dozos* who patrol the bush and are able to reclaim cattle from a thief, or bring back runaway cattle.

Local state agents say that they are simply unable to cover the vast territory with the means at their disposal. Therefore, the state is glad that it can rely on the *dozos* as an auxiliary force. Regulations prohibiting the exportation of cashew nuts, for instance, are difficult to implement without controlling the rural border crossing points. During the cashew campaign in 2014, the *dozos* handed over to the police any traders who tried to cross into Burkina Faso in the hope of getting a better price for their products. In this case, the *dozos* functioned as an auxiliary customs service to implement customs regulations in the bush.

The spatial ascription of activities is crucial in this collaboration. In today’s post-conflict phase, the *dozos* keep their activities to the bush or domains concerning the bush, while the territory of the state armed forces is in towns and on tarred roads. This territorialisation of authority is also linked to material gains. Both state agents and *dozos* take money from passengers for their private use, even if on a different scale: where state agents demand FCFA 1,000, the *dozos* ask for FCFA 100 (€1.50 in comparison to €0.15). Consequently, there is a certain competition between the hunters and the state agents to occupy strategic points. During the insurgency, roadblocks on tarred roads in the north were manned by hunters and insurgents alike. With the return of the state's security forces, however, the *dozos* were asked to leave the tarred main roads to the state. But they were allowed to continue their security work in the bush. This kind of agreement between the *dozos* and the state in the local arena is not fixed in writing, it is based on oral agreement. At the level of the central state,
parallel forces are considered illegitimate. Where the sphere of one authority begins and where it ends is a shared understanding of all actors concerned.

**In Dozo Territory**

A particularly telling example of the *dozos'* authority and autonomy in rural areas can be found in the border village of Bemavogo Badala, a relatively recent settlement located at the border with Burkina Faso. During harvest time, traders from Ouangolo and Burkina Faso come with trucks to buy corn, groundnuts and other foodstuffs. The prices in this remote area are comparatively good. Despite the fact that the cross-border trade is considerable, it is still not profitable for the state to send security or tax agents to this region. Neither the Ivoirian nor the Burkinabe state has set up border guards at this border crossing point.\(^{12}\)

When Chief Bema, the founder and present chief of the village, initiated the market, he asked *dozos* from nearby hamlets, who were active members of the hunter society, to provide security. This was necessary due to business or drinking quarrels on market days. First, the hunters sat down at the entrance of the village to watch over the market. But soon, the hunters chose a place near the border, where everyone crossing the border stream to Burkina Faso had to pass.

In the dry season of 2014, I visited Bemavogo for the first time. It happened to be the market day. In the shade on the roadside, several hunters were sitting on a wooden bench, their guns resting against a tree. Every now and then, people passed by, either going to or coming from the market. Some came on motorbikes, others by foot or on bicycles. People on motorbikes the hunters did not know were asked to produce the papers or the bill of sale for the motorbike. The reason for this is that motorbikes are often stolen in one country and sold on the other side of the border – out of administrative reach, so to speak. If the papers shown were considered satisfactory by the *dozos*, the passenger was allowed to continue his journey over the lowered rope.

A hunter who was literate would take care of such cases. Meanwhile, his colleagues would attend to other passengers, asking them where they were going and asking for some coins to buy tea. The average fee for passing a *dozo* checkpoint is FCFA 100, roughly €0.15. However, this group of *dozos* had realised the opportunity offered to them by the passage at the stream – a bottleneck, so to speak. If someone came from Burkina Faso with chickens, he had to pay FCFA

\(^{12}\) The village carries Bema’s name today: Bemavogo Badara; “-vogo” means here “hamlet” in Senufo. Badara is Jula and can be translated as “by the waterside”.

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250, and they demanded particularly high sums from cattle herders, a minority in this region.

Upon inquiry among the population in Bemavogo, my research assistant and I discovered great discontent with the group of dozos on guard at the checkpoint. A major complaint was that they took money from the population, while doing little or nothing in return. The chief also complained about their drunkenness, which made them unable to intervene when the need arose.

In February 2015, the chief of Bemavogo had the checkpoint moved back to its initial place at the entrance to the village, and the head of the group of dozos was removed. There had been an incident that finally broke the camel’s back. According to the village chief and the victim, the dozos had tied the victim to one of the trees next to their checkpoint, in revenge for a conflict with the victim’s elder brother. The man was beaten badly and was asked to pay an exorbitant sum of money. When influential members of the victim’s family complained to the chief, Bema took action and addressed the chief of the dozos in Ouangolo. Chief Bema – himself a hunter – registered himself as a dozo with the dozo brotherhood. Supported by Ouangolo’s chief hunter, he obtained an authorisation to mount his own checkpoint in accordance with the dozos’ hierarchy in Ferkessédougou. Bema produced a paper stating that the checkpoint in Bemavogo with the number 1,350,711 had been “officially” installed in July 2011. The paper was signed and stamped by the president in Ferké. It is noteworthy that such a quasi-official document issued by the hunters’ benkadi movement was considered necessary in that case. It would quell all disputes concerning the dozo who had been dismissed. The dozo association and hierarchy would defend the right of Bema to have a checkpoint in his village. To calm the situation, the dismissed dozo received an official dozo authorisation to install a checkpoint not far from his hamlet, which is closer to Ouangolo. Approved by the dozo hierarchy, there was little the man could now do. Of course, the checkpoint near his hamlet would be much less lucrative. People said that he had stopped farming, so profitable had the checkpoint at the border been for him.

On the market day of 7 February 2015, the new-old checkpoint at the entrance of the village was reopened with the new dozo group, composed of some old and some new members. A rope was put up to bar the passage, but most of

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13 Korotoume Ouattara works as my research assistant. She is fluent in Senufo, Jula and French. As a young woman, she has worked for the social anthropologist Kerstin Bauer (Bauer 2007) who recommended her to me.

14 A picture of the attestation is in the possession of the author.
the time the rope was lying on the ground. Chief Bema put one of his sons in charge of the checkpoint. People attending the market and travellers stopped and exchanged greetings. Those who the *dozos* did not know were asked where they were going, but no one was asked to pay money on this day.

An interesting point about the case of the border village of Bemavogo is the way the conflict with the *dozos* was entirely taken care of and resolved among the *dozos* and within their hierarchy – not unlike a parallel structure to the state with its own means of sanction and correction. This case illustrates the authority and autonomy of the *dozos* in the realm of the bush. When rangers from the water and forest police came back to the area after the end of the armed conflict in 2010, they had themselves accompanied and guided by *dozos* on their inspection missions into the bush, emphasising yet again that rural space is *dozo* territory.

By patrolling the bush and policing rural communities, as well as by setting up checkpoints, the hunters mimic state technologies of power and perform sovereign functions of the state – to a certain extent and within a particular space. To facilitate their daily side-by-side with the state, the leading figures of the *dozo* brotherhood cultivate close relationships with local state agents. When I talked to the police about the *dozos’* border checkpoint in Bemavogo, the chief of police said something like: the *dozos* have not informed us, but we are aware of it. In other words, the local state knows about it, but does not see any need to stop *dozo* activities for the time being.

Publicly, though, it is not easy for state agents to express support for the *dozos’* work. My investigation (informal talks) among gendarmes and policemen revealed that there are two different views concerning the role of the *dozos* and their collaboration with the state. The first view expressed is rather normative. Such a respondent would stress that the *dozos* were hunters, that what they were doing was illegal and simply a remnant of the violent crisis that would soon be eliminated. This view downplays the role that the *dozos* have played in this part of the country since the 1990s.

The second view is more practical and conciliatory. Such a respondent would still say that the work of the *dozos* lacks a judicial basis, but would equally acknowledge the support of the *dozos* as an “auxiliary force” due to their local knowledge. The *dozos*, like any other locals, have a better knowledge of who is who, and this is often indispensable for understanding and solving social disputes. Ideally, the *dozos* should hand over serious cases to the gendarmerie and the police, so that the state can handle them according to standardised procedures. What state respondents criticise is when *dozos* take things into their own hands, judging and punishing according to their own norms.
Contestations of Territorial Authority

Since late 2014, hunters in Ouangolodougou have begun checking the ownership of cattle at the towns’ slaughterhouse. Increasingly, stolen cattle have been killed in the bush and sold in town with the help of corrupt veterinarians who have lent butchers their stamp. Every night, Ouangolo’s dozos patrol the outskirts of the town and inspect the brands of cattle to be slaughtered at the abattoir in the morning. Public authorities are aware of this new practice and so far they welcome or tolerate the initiative.

Such new tasks for the dozos often emerge out of the absence or failure of state regulation, but also out of the dozos’ sense of business. For some time in early 2014, for instance, the dozos set up a checkpoint behind the railway station at the entrance to Ouangolo. Every Sunday – market day in Ouangolo – farmers use this road to bring their products to the market for sale. The dozos, as well as traders, positioned themselves behind the rails to buy products from the passing farmers. The group of traders stopped motorbikes and bought beans, game and other products for a lower price than what they would have to pay in the market. They even had a pair of scales with them. As a result, the mayor’s office was unable to earn taxes on these products or the exchange. Fifty metres closer to the town, the passing farmers were stopped again, this time by the dozos who asked them for money to buy tea.

Civilians must have lodged a complaint at the local police station about the roadblock. The chief of police called the dozos’ chief and prohibited the dozos from keeping a roadblock there. The dozos obeyed and the checkpoint disappeared. This example illustrates the power differential in the relationship between the dozos and the state, but also a certain territorialisation of authority. Close to the social space of the town, away from “the bush”, the dozos were unable to maintain their checkpoint. The state easily reclaimed its territory and reinforced the boundary between the realm of the dozos and its own.

In another example, it was the other way round: the gendarmerie tried to extend its territory to the bush. One of the leading figures in the hunter society, the secretary, heard about a crossroads in the bush on the way to Burkina Faso, where two gendarmes were waiting to stop travellers and check their insurance for their motorbikes. A woman from Burkina Faso, an acquaintance of this dozo, did not have Ivoirian insurance and risked having to pay fcfa 10,000 if the gendarmes checked her papers. It was new that gendarmes came to this road and the secretary decided to escort his friend wearing his complete dozo outfit with gown and gun as usual. In his eyes, the bush and this dirt road was dozo territory. At the beginning of the road, there was even a dozo checkpoint. When the dozos’ secretary reached the gendarmes, he stopped and greeted them, explaining that he had come to accompany some visitors (I was among
them). The woman was not checked, nor were the two other travellers who had joined us. The example shows how the secretary of the hunter society in very subtle ways demonstrated that he had authority in the bush. Despite this, however, the hunters had no power to dissolve the gendarmes’ checkpoint. In post-conflict Côte d’Ivoire, the hunters may have territorial power, but without supreme authority, ergo sovereignty.

Conclusions

As shown in this chapter, for the social order in northern Côte d’Ivoire it seems to be important that the dozos confine their field of action to a more or less clearly defined social space, la brousse, the bush. The bush starts at the outskirts of towns and includes settlements and dwellings that are only rarely visited by state security providers. The division of space or the territorialisation of spheres of control helps in organising the daily side-by-side of the dozos and the state. Contestations of authority frequently occur in spaces that are on the threshold between bush and town.

A look back into Ivoirian history has revealed different phases of dozos’ spatial reach and their relationship to the central and the local state. In the context of ethnicised multi-party democracy in the 1990s, the dozos as a regionally-anchored armed actor were seen as a threat to the sitting government. In the context of political struggles, the Bédié government “contained” and restricted the dozos’ nation-wide activities to the Manding-speaking heartland in the north of the country (Bassett 2004). The subsequent manipulation of multi-party democracy led to the coup in 1999 and to an armed insurgency in 2002.

During insurgent rule in the north, the side-by-side of the dozos and the insurgents was of complementary or “segmentary” character (Förster and Koechlin 2011). With the return of the state administration to the north, however, the situation has changed. As several examples have shown, the spatially ordered realms of authority between the hunters and the state remain unequal in scale and different in their reach. Nominally, the Ivoirian state has authority over its rural areas. But as long as the dozos do not challenge the state’s monopoly of force at the national level, the state will turn a blind eye to their territorial power in local arenas. This laissez-faire attitude changes, however, as soon as the population complains about dozo activities. The example of the checkpoint at the entrance to Ouangolo has shown that the state is able to put a halt to their activities if need be. An important strategy for the dozos’ success seems to be to operate in a niche. In other words, the dozos do not engage in political claim-making. Generally, the dozos avoid openly challenging the state in its
claim to authority or monopoly of power. Even if the *dozos* subtly defend their territorial power in the bush in everyday practice, they do not use or signify this power politically. Territorial sovereignty remains the privilege of the state. By sticking to this tacit agreement with the local state, the hunters manage to play a central role in the governance arrangements of northern Côte d’Ivoire.

**References**


