

## REVIEWS

Eric Morier-Genoud, ed., *Sure Road? Nationalisms in Angola, Guinea-Bissau and Mozambique* (Leiden: Brill, 2012), xxv + 270 pp., Cloth, ISBN 978-90-0422261-8.

---

Edited volumes resulting from conferences (like this one from a workshop on 'The Politics of Nations and Nationalisms in Lusophone Africa' in 2007 at Oxford University) often feel disjointed and lack a coherent theme. This is decidedly not the case in *Sure Road? Nationalisms in Angola, Guinea-Bissau and Mozambique*, edited by Eric Morier-Genoud. Morier-Genoud, a scholar of Mozambique, makes a compelling case for examining nationalisms in these three disparate former Portuguese colonies based on a shared colonial history, late and contested paths to independence, and the opening (to varying degrees) of authoritarian political systems in recent years. The editor highlights a glaring lacuna of studies of nationalism in these three countries and argues that now is a propitious time to examine nationalism due to a growing interest among the young, and to the aging and dying of those who participated directly in the creation of these nations in the 1960s and 1970s. The book will be of interest to scholars because of its high calibre and the original insights of the individual chapters. A general audience will appreciate the analyses of contemporary nationalism in these PALOP (*Países Africanos de Língua Oficial Portuguesa*) countries.

The book consists of eight case studies (four on Angola, three on Mozambique, and one on Guinea-Bissau), as well as a thoughtful introduction by Morier-Genoud and a provocative chapter by Michel Cahen, who interrogates the idea of what nationalism means in the context of post-colonial Luso-Africa. A final chapter by Gavin Williams summarizes the book and provides an overview of recent political developments. Case studies include two chapters on unsuccessful nationalisms, both from Angola. Contributors include leading scholars with years of experience, though it is unfortunate that none are based in or come from any of the countries profiled. The editor includes a country map at the start of each section, though for some reason the Angola map is located not at the start of the Angola section on p. 148, but on p. 176.

Cahen's chapter, 'Anticolonialism & Nationalism: Deconstructing Synonymy, Investigating Historical Processes. Notes on the Heterogeneity of Former African Colonial Portuguese Areas', ought to be required reading for students of nationalism and anyone interested in understanding contemporary Africa. Cahen argues that the post-independence elites, whether the PAIGC (Guinea-Bissau), MPLA (Angola) or FRELIMO (Mozambique), proclaimed nationalism projects that had little connection to any broad-based social movement. He goes on to argue that we stop talking about Angolan, Mozambican, or Guinean 'nationalism', but rather focus on 'nationism', which he defines thus: 'Nationism is not the political expression of a nation, but the nation-statist ideology of an elite that is opposed to the existing (first) nations, seeking to mimic a centuries-long European process in a few years, and to build the new nation regardless of the desires of other inhabitants' (24-25). An underlying argument made by Cahen is that the independence movements by and large created

nationalist narratives that put themselves front and centre whilst denying competing and alternative narratives. The next question addressed is how these political parties have maintained themselves in power despite dramatic changes in ideology and rather dismal records of governance, especially in the case of the MPLA.

The three chapters focused on Mozambique each examine the relationship between FRELIMO and Mozambican nationalism. Georgi Derluguian uses a World Systems analysis to conclude that FRELIMO's staying power is a result of its leaders' ability to mediate global alliances (101). In his chapter "An Imaginary Nation": Nationalism, Ideology & the Mozambican National Elite, Jason Sumich describes how FRELIMO's elite re-conceptualized its revolutionary modernist nationalism as a liberal nationalism that, in both instances, put FRELIMO at the heart of the modernist project, and thus privileged the skills and connections of the existing elite. In 'Writing a Nation or Writing a Culture? Frelimo and Nationalism during the Mozambican Liberation War', Maria-Benedita Basto examines the impact of the 1960s-'70s internationalism on Frelimo's construction of the Mozambican nation. This is one of the volume's most original and thought provoking chapters. Basto argues convincingly that Frelimo created a revolutionary culture that defined as national – and thus legitimate – any production belonging to the space-time of the armed struggle of liberation.

Of the four Angola case studies, those by Péclard and Pearce stand out as exceptional. Didier Péclard's analysis of 'UNITA and the Moral Economy of Exclusion in Angola, 1966-1977' builds on earlier work by Patrick Chabal and Christine Messiant to move beyond the reductionist ethnic explanation of the Angolan civil war. Péclard argues that in the wake of its military defeat during the civil war context of 1975-'77, UNITA used 'a broad narrative of exclusion according to which UNITA stood for those who had not only been unjustly excluded from power at independence but also pushed (again) to the margins of society in much the same way as had been the case during colonial times' (152). This 'narrative of exclusion,' combined with several other factors, bolstered UNITA's legitimacy among its supporters. Péclard's analysis highlights why so many Angolans have felt alienated from the MPLA's nationalist narrative.

In his chapter, 'Changing Nationalisms: From War to Peace in Angola,' Justin Pearce argues that since the 2002 assassination of Savimbi and the subsequent peace between the MPLA and UNITA, the MPLA's version of exclusive nationalist legitimacy is supreme, though, interestingly, there are challenges, albeit faint, coming from Angolan intellectuals (212). Historical revisionism offers a further challenge to the dominance of the MPLA's 'versions of history surrounding the storming of the Luanda prisons on 4 February 1961, and the attempted coup of 27 May 1977 and subsequent reprisals. This historical revisionism is notable in that it presents a challenge to the MPLA's preferred view of its historical role and to its version of nationhood. The reassessment of the prison attack undermines the MPLA's position as the progenitor of the Angolan nationalist struggle. The re-evaluation of the 27 May uprising challenges the MPLA's long-held assertion that race was not an issue in Angola' (214-15).

David Birmingham's short chapter, 'Is "Nationalism" a Feature of Angola's Cultural Identity,' picks up Pearce's point about deep tensions among Angolan nationalists (within the MPLA and between the MPLA and UNITA, for example) over the predominantly creole identity of the MPLA and its disconnect from Angola's 'African' or

'traditional' interior. Birmingham argues that the MPLA's promotion of Portuguese as the national language is a sign that "national identity" in Angola is rooted in imperial experience rather than in historic life styles' (218). He ends the chapter with a rebuke to what he describes as a culture of fear in Angola – the enemy of national pride and cohesion – and asks where the vast oil wealth is being invested (220).

The fourth Angolan case study, by Fernando Tavares Pimenta, focuses on the United Angolan Front, a Euro-African nationalist movement that arose after the Second World War. These white Angolans dreamed of independence under white settler control, though they neither mustered sufficient support to challenge the Portuguese *Estado Novo* nor built alliances or support from Angola's black-led nationalist movements. This is an interesting chapter, though I found it the least well integrated into the book's examination of post-colonial nationalism. It would work well in a compendium about settler colonialism.

Gavin Williams's concluding chapter pinpoints the contributors' timely aim 'to rescue histories from the authority of the victors, or from their denunciation, and to inquire into "historical processes which are contingent, contextual, and fought over", of which these histories are themselves a crucial and revealing part' (231). Indeed, 'rescuing histories from the authority of the victors' is one of the challenges facing scholars working in all of the PALOP states. It may be that this authoritarian legacy is one reason for the enduring relevancy of 'Lusophone' Africa as a framework for and subject of analysis.

**Jeremy Ball**

*History Department, Dickinson College*