CHAPTER ONE

ANTICOLONIALISM & NATIONALISM: 
DECONSTRUCTING SYNONYMY, INVESTIGATING 
HISTORICAL PROCESSES

Notes on the Heterogeneity of Former 
African Colonial Portuguese Areas

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In this chapter, the historical connections between anticolonialism and nationalism will require the discussion of universal concepts, while also exploring the particularities of Portugal's former African Empire. The general idea is to contest the interchangeable use of the words ‘anticolonialism’ and ‘nationalism’, as well as to understand why these words are used so interchangeably.

I do not support the theory of the African ‘imported State’, as put forward by Bertrand Badie some years ago,1 because in defining a State the first task is not to describe it, but to explain its functions or “duties”.2 From this point of view, African independent States, even if they are completely neo-colonial, are new States, new historical productions (even if globalized) and they are responsible for new tasks in linking their legitimacy with the world economy. Of course there can be no state without a certain historicity.3 But there was no such thing as a “colonial State transmission,” because there never was a “colonial State” in each of the

2 The same debate exists over the characteristics of the Portuguese state under the rule of António de Oliveira Salazar: the methodology of description of the state leads to the conclusion of huge differences with the regimes of Hitler or Mussolini, and therefore to a definition of the Portuguese state as ultra-authoritarian but not ‘fascist’ when the analysis of its functions militates for such a definition, which is my personal point of view. On this specific debate, see Michel Cahen, « Salazarisme, fascisme et colonialisme. Problèmes d’interprétation en sciences sociales, ou le sébastianisme de l’exception », Portuguese Studies Review (Trent University, Canada), vol. 15, no. 1, 2007 [issued 2009], pp. 87–113.
3 Jean-François Bayart, ‘L’historicité de l’État importé,’ in J.-F. Bayart (ed.), La greffe de l’État, Karthala, Paris, 1996, p. 11–39. It is worth noting that Bayart maintains the idea of ”imported state”, nevertheless insisting on its historicity, which seems to me quite contradictory ...
colonies.\textsuperscript{4} What there was is an imperial administrative apparatus of European States. The imperial administrative apparatus was not a State, or even a proto-State, any more than the Nazi police and State were a local State in France during World War II. They were a part of the German State. One may consider the imperial state apparatus as a kind of nationalization of Chartered Companies, which existed previously, a kind of estate but not a state.\textsuperscript{5} The colonial administration did not “prepare” the African independent State, except during the very late years, a very short period of time on a historical scale. On the contrary, over a far longer period, the colonial administration first broke the African States, and then went on to weaken the African tradition of the State. The colonial period was a time of State recession in Africa. African countries are still paying for that, but their present states, which succeeded the European administrative apparatus chronologically, are new States, not States in which only the leadership has changed.

That said, I am not denying the existence of neo-colonialism, but the neo-colonial nature of the African State stems from the peculiarity of modern integration in the world economy, and not only from the sociology of colonial transmission. Here, the focus is on the very nature of the State. But beyond this level of analysis, when we look at social and cultural history, I am the first to acknowledge that there has been the sociological transmission of a huge range of things, not least ideology, all of which Balandier called a ‘colonial situation’.\textsuperscript{6} But this “transmission” paradigm applies not only to leaders, generals or social scientists from Africa; but also to European leaders, and to us, European social scientists, when we consider Africa.


\textsuperscript{5} The archetype would obviously be the « État indépendant du Congo » (1885–1908), but its official recognition by the Belgian state in 1908 did not change its nature. It is worth noting that, in the Portuguese empire, Chartered companies existed up until 1941.