"Transitions libérales en Afrique lusophone". *Lusotopie. Enjeux contemporains dans les espaces lusophones*

Monsieur Patrick Chabal

Citer ce document / Cite this document :


http://www.persee.fr/doc/cea_0008-0055_1997_num_37_147_1378_t1_0742_0000_3

Document généré le 02/06/2016
Niamey, confrontés à l’avancée hamaliste au milieu du siècle et qui se mobilisèrent pour protéger leurs savoirs et leurs pratiques, condamnés par ces prosélytes.

Il me paraît nécessaire de souligner, pour conclure, qu’à trop vouloir identifier un objet de réflexion per se (le « mouvement hawka ») l’anthropologie des rituels de possession dans des régions marquées par une religion universali ste (ici l’islam) se prive de réflexions préalables sur les rapports entretenus par ce complexe religieux dans son ensemble avec les tenants de l’islam: occultation d’autant plus regrettable, dans le cas précis des hawka, que les administrateurs coloniaux eux-mêmes, observant l’apparition de premiers cas de possession par ces nouveaux génies, ne manquèrent pas de souligner leurs formes difficilement acceptables par les musulmans.

Laurent Vidal.


“Transitions libérales en Afrique lusophone” is the third issue of Lusotopie, a journal on the Portuguese-speaking world which was launched in 1994 after much hard labour by its present editor-in-chief, Michel Cahen. I should at the outset declare an interest in Lusotopie: I supported Michel Cahen’s enterprise from the beginning and am presently a member of the “Conseil scientifique”. Since my job on the “Conseil scientifique” is, as I understand it, to assess the quality of the issues published and since I am a specialist in Lusophone Africa, it is perhaps not unreasonable that I should have accepted to review this volume for the Cahiers d’Études africaines.

This issue on political transitions in Lusophone Africa (Cape Verde, São Tomé e Príncipe, Guinea Bissau, Angola and Mozambique) comes out at the right time. Not only are we at this moment at a crucial stage in the political transition of postcolonial Africa, but the events which have taken place in Portuguese-speaking Africa are in many ways emblematic of what is happening on the continent. Indeed, if one were to try to find a cross-section of countries representative of the continent’s political complexities, one could hardly do better than to look at the experience of the five Lusophone countries.

Cape Verde, an archipelago of ten islands suffering from harsh Sahelian climatic conditions, is a creole society perhaps more akin to those found in the Caribbean than any other African island states. São Tomé e Príncipe, is yet another type of creole community, rather more “African” than Cape Verde socially and culturally. Guinea Bissau is distinct from the other four

40. Précisons à cet égard que la progression vers l’Est des disciples de Cheikh Hamallah ne s’est pas arrêtée à Bobo-Dioulasso (p. 109); en témoignent les zima Peul de la rive occidentale du Niger, dont les plus âgés gardent le souvenir du passage dans les villages de la région de ceux qu’ils appellent les läkiläki. Cf. L. Vidal, Rituels de possession dans le Sahel, Paris, L’Harmattan, 1990 (« Connaissance des hommes »).

41. By creole society, I mean one with a relatively homogeneous mixed race community, a recognisable common language and strong social bonds.
in being a small West African state, closely linked with and best compared to its neighbours in terms of history and of its ethnic, social, political and religious make up. For good measure, Cape Verde and Guinea Bissau are unique in Africa as having been separate independent countries ruled by the same party until 1980.

Angola and Mozambique are, of course, rather more similar in that they are both large, heterogeneous former settler colonies. Yet, even here, there are important differences which have had profound political consequences. Angola is in many ways comparable to its immediate neighbour Zaire both in its natural resources and socio/ethnic composition. Yet, Luanda (and to a lesser extent some of the other cities) was, and remains, a unique multi-racial creole community which has long provided the elite of the country. Mozambique for its part was also multi-racial in its composition—here with an Indian community composed of older established “Portuguese” Goans and a more recent Indian trading population—but much less multi-racial in its outlook. Mozambique too was far less successfully integrated as a “country” during the colonial period than Angola. Furthermore, although both countries have suffered vicious and protracted civil wars for most of their postcolonial history, these two conflicts have in many important respects been different (and these differences do matter for the present political “transitions”).

It is not possible here to summarise the recent history of Angola and Mozambique. Suffice it to say that, for a long time, the governments in Luanda and Maputo refused to negotiate with their enemies (respectively, União Nacional para a Independência Total de Angola, or UNITA and Resistência Nacional de Moçambique, or RENAMO). For a series of complex domestic, regional and international reasons which I cannot discuss here, exhausted and their countries largely destroyed, the Angolan and Mozambican governments eventually settled with their opponents. Peace agreements were signed in May 1991 in Angola and October 1992 in Mozambique. Elections were held first in 1992 in Angola under United Nations supervision. Contrary to expectations, they returned a majority for the government in power since independence. The ruling Movimento para a Libertação de Angola (MPLA) obtained 54% of the votes while UNITA got 34%. The presidential results pointed in the same direction. In the first round, the incumbent, José Eduardo dos Santos, polled 49.5% and the UNITA leader, Jonas Savimbi, 40.07%. A second round was due to be held since dos Santos was short of the 50% mark. The leader of the opposition refused the electoral verdict. War started again. Another peace accord (the Lusaka Protocol) was signed (although, significantly, not by the two leaders) in November 1994. Again a cease-fire was agreed and its implementation is now supervised by a much strengthened UN presence. Opposition and government are supposed to work together to allow the long-delayed process of political transition to be completed. Will it happen? There is at this stage very little cause for optimism.

The experience of the failures of the transition to peace in Angola helped the UN to support more strongly the consolidation of the cease-fire and the preparation of elections in Mozambique. These elections were held in October 1994 and, as in Angola but not as unexpectedly, they returned the same government and president to office. FRELIMO polled 44% of the votes and
got 129 seats (a majority) in the National Assembly: RENAMO received 38% and got 112 seats. In the presidential elections, the sitting president Joaquim Chissano was reelected with 53% of the votes as against his main RENAMO opponent, Afonso Dhlakama, who received 33%.

The outlook for Mozambique, though precarious, is immensely more favourable than it is in Angola, if only because RENAMO has accepted the electoral verdict and committed itself to working as a "loyal" opposition. Events since the elections have confirmed that the restoration of peace is on course, that RENAMO is making the transition to legitimate political organisation and is now attempting to negotiate the best possible political "deal" out of its not inconsiderable electoral success. It is, of course, much too early, to say what the democratic future of Mozambique actually is—or whether there can be a "democratic" future for the country. Nevertheless, even if the transition to multi-party politics brings nothing other than permanent peace in the country it will already be a most significant achievement in the political evolution of Mozambique.

The history of the transition in Cape Verde and São Tomé e Príncipe is both interesting and complex. In Cape Verde, the ruling Partido Africano para a Independência de Cabo Verde (PAICV) was forced to confront openly the issue of political liberalisation. Domestic pressure and internal debate led to the decision in September 1990 to introduce the constitutional amendment abolishing the one-party system and paving the way for a transition to multi-party politics. The main opposition was organised around a coalition, Movimento para a Democratia, or MPD, led by a dynamic lawyer, Carlos Veiga. The campaign was vigorous and open. The MPD swept to victory on a wave of anti-PAICV sentiment, obtaining 56 of the 79 seats at stake; the PAICV was humbled with mere 23 seats. The presidential elections which followed were even worse for the incumbent, Aristides Pereira, a widely respected figure at home and abroad, who was defeated—74% to 26%—by his opponent, António Mascarenhas Monteiro. The verdict was clear: a large majority of the population had had enough of the single-party regime.

Since then, politics in Cape Verde has been energetic. The transition has now been fully consolidated with the 1995 legislative elections being held in time and returning the MPD to power with an absolute majority of 50 out of 72 seats. The presidential elections, which the PAICV decided not to contest, have now also taken place. By the standards of the rest of Africa, then, Cape Verde’s experience is an unqualified success—especially when one takes into account the fact that this political transition has occurred in one of the poorest and least resourced countries in the world.

São Tomé e Príncipe’s story of political reform is equally startling. After independence, the dominant Movimento da Libertação de São Tomé e Príncipe, or MLSTP, moved to establish in the country a socialist one-party system much influenced by Angola’s (its closest partner in the region). Faced by a calamitous economic situation, due in part to the departure of the Portuguese and in part to the collapse of the cocoa plantation economy, the government was eventually forced (like most others in Africa) to turn to the World Bank.

43. The MPD obtained 61.3% of the votes, the PAICV 29.8% and the second opposition party, the Partido da Convergência Democrática, or PCD, 6.7%.
for succour. Under strong pressure to democratise, the MLSTP introduced in September 1990 a new constitution providing for a multi-party political system. Opposition parties soon formed and legislative elections were held early in 1991.

The results, as in Cape Verde, were emphatic. The sitting MLSTP was swept away by its main opposition rival, the Partido de Convergência Democrática/Grupo de Reflexão (PCD/GP). The MLSTP obtained 31% of the votes and 21 out of 55 seats while its competitor received 54% and took 33 seats. Having felt the wind change and fully aware of the humiliation of President Aristides Pereira in Cape Verde, the incumbent, President Manuel Pinto da Costa, withdrew from the presidential contest, allowing his long-time opponent, Miguel Trovoada to be elected unopposed—with 81% of the vote but abstention was at a very high 40%. Given the poor record of the new government and the growing sense of dissatisfaction throughout the country, President Trovoada eventually resolved to dissolve the National Assembly (as is his constitutional right) and to call for fresh legislative elections. Held in October 1994, the elections registered an unambiguous vote of no confidence in the PDC/GR government and voted the MLSTP back to power with a majority of seats\textsuperscript{44}. Thus, São Tomé e Príncipe became the first African country to return a formerly “non democratic” ruling party to power by democratic means.

Guinea Bissau’s transition to multi-party politics is instructive in ways different from those of the four other Lusophone countries. It follows a pattern found in several other African countries like, for example, Côte-d’Ivoire or Kenya. Bissau had been under structural adjustment since 1987 and, consequently, had experienced strong outside pressure to open up the political system and to organise multi-party elections. Although the constitution was changed in 1991, abolishing the single-party system, the moves towards genuine multi-party competition were exceedingly unhurried. Legislation to remove the impediments to multi-partyism was passed at leisure and many obstacles were put in the way of the legalisation of parties by the Supreme Court. Whether this contributed to the mushrooming of political parties and to their inability to coordinate their action is not entirely clear. What can be said with certainty, however, is that while the many opposition parties quibbled, the ruling Partido Africano da Independência da Guiné e Cabo Verde, or PAIGC, got on with the job of campaigning.

The legislative elections saw the not entirely unexpected (given opposition divisions and ineffectual campaigning) return of the PAIGC to power—which, with 46% of the vote, took 64 of the 100 seats in the Assembly\textsuperscript{45}.

The presidential contest was much closer. Although President Vieira had formally disassociated himself from the ruling PAIGC to stand as a “national” candidate, his main opponent Koumba Yalla ran a particularly vigorous, effective and forthright campaign against the President’s record. The result was

\textsuperscript{44} The MLSTP obtained 27 seats out of a total of 55; the third opposition party, the Açâo Democrática Independente got 14 seats while the PDC/GR came last with 13 seats.

\textsuperscript{45} The main opposition, Resistência da Guiné Bissau/Movimento Bafatá (RGB/MB), led by Domingos Gomes won 17 seats while the Partido para a Renovação Social (PRS), led by Koumba Yalla, got 12 seats. Two other parties shared the balance of seven seats.
that, much to his surprise, Vieira failed to secure the 50% vote required to be elected on the first round. A second round was held amid allegations of intimidation by Yalla. Vieira in the end won a narrow 52% victory which Yalla, despite early protests of vote rigging, was minded in the end to accept—as observers rejected claims of malpractice. Nevertheless, there is little doubt that President Vieira's position has been weakened.

“Transitions libérales en Afrique lusophone” touches on many of the issues concerning these political transitions and the volume taken as a whole will provide as good an introduction to the contemporary politics of these five countries as is likely to be found in a single volume today. With the possible exception of Cape Verde, the articles presented in this issue of Lusotopie offer both an excellent summary of the events of the last five years and a competent analysis of the nature of the transition which has taken place.

Following a vigorous, if somewhat idiosyncratic introduction by Michel Cahen, whose analysis of the causes of the transition should stimulate debate, this volume contains articles on Mozambique, Angola and Guinea Bissau which illuminate their very complex recent history. Among the most revealing of those, one will note the contributions of Jacques Marchand and Henri Valot on Mozambique, the extraordinarily acute analysis offered by Christine Messiant in the second of her series of three articles on contemporary politics in Angola and the excellent chapter by Carlos Cardoso on the transition in Guinea Bissau. One can only marvel at the achievement of the editor in bringing together such a rich collection of specialists on Lusophone Africa in one single volume.

Inevitably, these articles raise as many questions as they answer: how useful is it to compare these five countries? How likely is it that they will consolidate the transition to multiparty politics? How representative are they of the present political evolution of Black Africa? And, finally, how important is it to focus on the process of “liberal transition” for the understanding of Lusophone Africa today? There are, I would argue, two parts to the answer to these questions. The first is that there are merits both in looking at the experience of Lusophone Africa and in comparing it with that of the rest of Black Africa. The second is that, whatever form comparative political analysis of contemporary Africa takes, it can only achieve its analytical aims if it has enough historical depth.

It is true that the comparison of the experience of the five Lusophone African nations may appear an artificially analytical exercise given how different these countries are. Nevertheless, and because of their shared Portuguese colonial heritage, it is worthwhile to seek to understand the extent to which the legacy of the colonial period has influenced the modalities of the political evolution of African countries. In this respect, it is easy to see that Cape Verde stands apart, much as it in fact did in the minds of both Portuguese and Cape Verdeans throughout the colonial rule. Above and beyond this common framework, however, it becomes apparent that the events taking place in each of the Lusophone countries is very largely to be understood in relation to its own history rather than to its common colonial heritage or rather its colonial heritage is to be placed in the context of its longer African history.

46. Vieira got 46.17% of the votes cast and Koumba Yalla 21.89%.
Thus, to take only one example, it is difficult to understand the different outcomes of decolonisation in Angola and Mozambique without referring to events in the nineteenth century and even beyond. The civil wars in both countries can only be meaningfully explained if one can make sense of the historical forces which shaped the various segments of Angolan and Mozambican societies both before and during colonisation. This is, of course, not to say that the fate of these countries was “determined” by such distant history, but simply that their contemporary politics is in some sense the outcome of the multiple and complex ways in which their postcolonial polities come to terms with their colonial and pre-colonial history.

Having said that, however, the volume reviewed here is a most impressive attempt to make sense of such complex histories. The editorial team are to be commended for having put together a dossier that will surely become an indispensable instrument of analysis on Lusophone Africa in the French-speaking world. With this issue, Lusotopie has truly come of age and has now established itself as one of the leading journals in the world on the Lusophone world.

Patrick CHABAL.