Robert H. JACKSON and Carl G. ROSBERG, *Personal Rule in Black Africa: Prince, Autocrat, Prophet, Tyrant*. Berkeley, Los Angeles, and New York: University of California Press, 1982, 316p.

In this major work, Robert Jackson and Carl Rosberg offer an original and appealing approach to a comparative understanding of African politics. The kernel of their argument is that the core institution in the contemporary African polity is the ruler. In the face of a civil society relatively lacking in corporate structures, and a state apparatus whose institutional rationality (in the Weberian sense) has eroded, the exercise of power has become quintessentially personal.

If this diagnosis is accepted, the challenge to theoretical analysis becomes clear — and humbling. The categories and concepts which have served as analytical building blocks crumble: ''party,'' ''army,'' ''bureaucracy,'' ''bourgeoisie,'' ''hegemonic bloc'' — these notions and their sundry affines are reduced to debris, and the analyst has only the shifting sand of the idiosyncracies, whims, and lusts of personal autocrats from which to structure our understanding. The great merit of Jackson and Rosberg is to construct an architecturally solid statement from such formless materials.

The style, we might suggest, is neoclassical. The footnotes are populated by conceptual references to Machiavelli, Hobbes, Friedrich, Oakeshott, and Strauss, rather than Marx, Poulantzas, Frank, Amin, Leys, Parsons, or Almond. The most important source of theoretical and methodological inspiration is Weber, although his ideas have required reformulation.

Specifically, Jackson and Rosberg build their argument by extracting general patterns in the *modus operandi* of personal rule in sixteen Black African states. To order their materials, they categorized personal rulership into four (Weberian) ideal types: the prince, the autocrat, the prophet, and the tyrant. The ''prince'' rules through the loyalty and support of notables and oligarchs, and the manipulation of their struggle for preferment; Senghor is the prototypical example. The ''autocrat'' — a category difficult to distinguish in practice from the ''prince'' — operates by imperious command rather than cunning orchestration, treating the country as a personal estate; paradigmatic ''autocrats'' are Houphouet-Boigny and Ahidjo. The ''prophet'' brings to personal rule a vision for reordering society. His exercise of power thus has a purposive component beyond mere maintenance of power; the blueprints generally derive from the corpus of socialist thought. Nyerere is an obvious example for this category. Finally the ''tyrant'' is — as he was for the classical Greek philosophers who coined the term — a corrupted form of personal rule. All moral and legal restraints on the naked exercise of power disappear. With all legitimacy gone, fear is the sole currency of power, sustained by brutality and capricious violence. Amin and Macias spring at once to mind as serviceably repulsive specimens to represent this ideal type.

To flesh out their design, the authors sketch a series of vignettes of the exercise of power in the sixteen exemplary cases. For the most part, these are insightful and well-informed resumes (though some, such as Bongo and Gabon and Ahidjo and Cameroun, are skimpy). Indeed, part of the value of the book is the comprehensive coverage of the post-independence era which comes as by-product.

Jackson and Rosberg admirably succeed in occupying new theoretical space. In recent years, much of the most creative work on African politics has derived from a ''political

economy'' perspective; its problematic has been class formation and struggle on the one hand, the impact of the global structures of capitalism on the other. While understanding has been enriched by this analytical school, it is vulnerable to the criticism that the political process tends to be swallowed up by its vast abstractions (the ''modern world-system''). Formerly dominant paradigns of ''structural-functionalism'' or ''behavioralism'' can also be charged with depoliticizing politics through the imposition of conceptual categories in which the concrete institutions and processes by which state power is articulated are eclipsed.

Jackson and Rosberg are admittedly not the first to place personal rule in the forefront. Moore had utilized the notion of ''presidential monarchy'' to unravel Tunisian politics more than a decade ago, as did Bretton for Nkrumah's Ghana. But they do innovate in developing a systematic and comparative framework for the application of the premise that personal power is central.

However useful, the book cannot stand alone as a general theory of African politics. It should be seen as a supplement to, and not a replacement of, ''political economy'' and other perspectives. Indeed, its weakest points are the inadequate consideration of the constraints upon personal rule imposed by the peripheral location of African states in the international system, and the structural cleavages — class and cultural pluralism — within the civil societies personal rulers seek to govern, even if not embodied in corporate structures. In particular, an opportunity was missed in dealing with the external dimension. In reality, the assymetrical linkages of African states to the world arena do not occur through such reifications as ''dependent state,'' ''lumpenbourgeoisie,'' and ''international capitalism,'' but through the highly specific and partly personal connections between, say, a Mobutu and the Giscard d'Estaings, Friedmans (Citibank), Devlins (CIA), and Tempelsmans (diamond merchant) who people his external network.

These blemishes notwithstanding, the book certainly belongs on the shelf holding the dozen most important conceptual statements on African politics.

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Mukala KADIMA-NZUJI, *Jacques Rabemananjara*. Paris: Présence Africaine, 1981, 186p. (Collection Approches.)

Mukala Kadima-Nzuji's book is a welcome addition to earlier studies of the Malagasy poet Jacques Rabemananjara. Eliane Boucquey de Schutter's study was published in 1964, and Donat Bédard's ''mémoire'' for the University of Sherbrooke in 1968. Both concentrated on Rabemananjara's poetry. Bédard's study in particular included a relatively detailed analysis of Rabemananjara's language, imagery and symbolism, a fairly lengthy glossary and a good bibliography. Both these books are still indispensable to the serious student of Rabemananjara's work.