Political Biography in the Black African Context

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In my book *Political Leaders in Black Africa* I present short biographical essays on several hundred politicians of the post-independence period.\(^1\) My brief was to write biographies of a multiplicity of individual politicians rather than, as is more commonly the case in political biography, to write about a single political actor. Also, the black African context creates a dissimilarity with most political biographies, because in most biographies the subjects are predominantly European or American, though there are occasional exceptions like Mao Zedong or Mohandas K. Gandhi. In spite of these differences the writing of political biography raises common questions and problems to which a comparative approach may be applied.

Political biography implies a recognition of the fact that individual political leaders are important and cannot be seen as mere corks bobbing about on an uncontrollable sea of impersonal social and economic forces. Individuals make decisions from a range of options which allow for different outcomes. While the choice of decision is necessarily constrained by factors beyond the individual, it is not predetermined. These decisions have consequences, and if the individual making them is powerful and influential, these consequences will have an impact on the political process. Thus an adequate understanding of politics involves an appreciation of the role played by individual political actors, especially those we could categorize as political leaders.

However, there is an inherent danger in this approach, because it could lead us back to a “great man” theory of political development in which everything is explained as the outcome of the actions, ideas and whims of an individual leader, who is praised or blamed for all that happens. Indeed, powerful political leaders may themselves encourage this approach through the development of massive personality cults (e.g. Adolph Hitler, Josef Stalin, Kim Il Sung, Kwame Nkrumah, etc.). Political biographers have to be acutely sensitive to the circumstances in which the individual under study is active politically. Biographers must consider a range of social, economic and historical circumstances. Since politics is the art of the possible, it is these
factors that determine what it is possible for actors to do. Biographers cannot make realistic assessments of an individual outside this context.

Good political biography involves an understanding of the two-way relationship between individual political leaders and their political environments. This may involve an assessment of how individual leaders misjudge the opportunities and constraints which face them; and that assessment requires biographers to consider political skills, which are very difficult indeed to specify.

During the development of political science over the last fifty years, political biography has not figured especially prominently. An emphasis on individuals has appeared antithetical to the various models of political systems that were developed and less than amenable to the mass statistical techniques that were favored in the profession. Some political scientists, of course, did write political biography, but when they did so, they were seen as political historians. I regard this distinction as artificial, although it might be the case that the pursuit of biographical studies outside "political science" has worked to the benefit of everyone, in that biographers have avoided the worst excesses of faddish "scientific" methodologies. Indeed I would regard it as retrograde if political biographers were now to feel the need to develop a biographical paradigm. A comparative study of different methodologies is an entirely different matter and should be welcomed.

BIOGRAPHY IN THE AFRICAN CONTEXT

In the literature on African politics, political biography has never had a prominent role, but its use has nonetheless fluctuated. In the 1960s, the first post-independence decade, there were a few political biographies of major nationalist leaders (Nkrumah, Julius Nyerere, Kenneth Kaunda, Jomo Kenyatta, etc.). A majority of these were written by journalists or by people who had worked with the leaders themselves, rather than by academics. This should not be taken as criticism, as I have a high regard for good quality journalism.

In the 1970s, biography tended to dry up because of dependency theory, according to which the workings of African political systems were to be explained in the context of international capitalism. This approach tended to relegate indigenous African factors to a position of secondary importance, epiphenomena of a globally-determined structure. It would be difficult to imagine a theoretical system less conducive to the focus on the individual.
In the 1980s, recognition of indigenous African factors as causal elements in structuring African political systems once again increased. This was due in part to a recognition of the importance of political leadership, heralded in 1982 by the publication of Robert H. Jackson and Carl G. Rosberg’s hugely influential *Personal Rule in Black Africa.* Their argument was that in Africa weak institutionalization tended to produce a situation in which individual leaders, of widely varying types, exercised a degree of political influence which would be more difficult to obtain in established systems. Personal rule was portrayed as an alternative to constitutional rule, and a renewed emphasis was placed on partrimonialism and clientelism, and on the essentially personal character of rulership. Although some writers had already commented on the importance of leaders in particular African states, this book was largely responsible for placing the individual at the forefront of attempts to explain African politics at a general and comparative level. Much of the writing on African politics since 1982 has attempted to develop, utilize and occasionally refute the centrality of personal rule. In this context Africanist political biography has received a boost from a methodological shift in political science.

Yet Africanist political biography remains inherently problematical. Some of the problems are common to political biography in general, but other problems may be unique or, at least, especially acute in the African context.

Black Africa lacks a biographical tradition in literature, although it does have a very strong oral tradition reflected in praise songs and stories concerning political leaders of the past. In some cases contemporary leaders have used this tradition by hiring praise singers to recount their glories publicly, but in the circumstances of such commercial transactions objectivity necessarily has a low priority. While this oral source is not to be neglected, and indeed often contains much instructive material, it is not directly comparable with other biographical traditions. Scholars working on political biography elsewhere are likely to have available from the start a whole series of biographies and autobiographies relevant to their work. Even if the individual with whom they are dealing has not been subjected to biographical portrayal, it is very likely that many colleagues, friends and opponents have had their activities recorded, and so useful material and ideas can be gleaned from such sources. As an example of the problems facing Africanists because of a lack of a biographical tradition, I would mention a personal experience. I was approached recently by a publisher who wanted me to write a biography of the president of a small West African state on which
I have done a considerable amount of research. One of the reasons why I turned down this offer was that there exists not a single biography or autobiography of any politician in this state from any stage of its history.

For the Africanist biographer even the most basic biographical information, such as the year of birth of an individual, is often unobtainable. All of Africa’s post-independence political leaders were born in the colonial period. It is likely, especially if they were born and raised in the rural areas, that there simply are no written records of their early life. Even if records were kept, the deterioration of the archival resources in most African states, due both to the climate and to poverty (and sometimes to willful neglect) makes information retrieval a very chancy business. As an extreme case I would cite President Ali Soilih of the Republic of the Comoros, who ordered all government records and archives burnt in 1977.

The element of personal rule in many African political systems, especially when combined with a “closed” authoritarian system, poses problems for biographical works which do not focus on the dominant individual leader. This is most evidently the case for a work comprising multiple biographies, such as my own book. In a number of states, such as Gabon, Malawi, Côte d’Ivoire and Zaire, the political system has been overwhelmingly dominated by an individual leader (Albert Bongo, Hastings Banda, Félix Houphouet-Boigny and Joseph Mobutu, respectively). Since these leaders came to power (Banda and Houphouet-Boigny at independence, Bongo and Mobutu after independence), they have eclipsed all other political leaders to such an extent that it is difficult to identify important politicians below the top level of government.

Furthermore, the occupations of even senior government officials are often transitory and entirely at the discretion of the ruler. The leaders mentioned above, and many others as well, have adopted a deliberate policy of blocking the emergence into politics of other individuals, because they might become rivals. The problems that this creates for political succession are obvious, and a key question in many African states is, What happens when President X dies? However, in some African states the problem is reversed. From 1960 to 1972 Benin (formerly Dahomey) had ten different heads of state, some of whom lasted for just a few weeks before being removed in a cycle of coups. It is difficult to make any sensible assessment of a leader who is in power for such a short period of time.
The question of assessment is a perennial one for political biographers. This is partly due to the individual-environment relationship discussed above: How much of the success or failure of a political leader can be attributed to environmental factors? This involves counterfactual judgements: how different would circumstances have been if a particular leader had not been in power at a particular time? Also political scientists tend to study living political leaders, or those only recently deceased. This has some advantages, such as the possibility of interviewing the individual in question or his close associates, but it also has disadvantages, in that it is difficult to decide if the subject is really of long-term significance or is merely of ephemeral interest. These issues pose particular problems in the black African context, because the post-independence period is relatively short in historical terms, amounting to three decades at most in the majority of cases.

In some modern nations there has been only one leader so far, and this obviously precludes comparison other than across national boundaries. Such cases also make it difficult to judge the durability of the system which the leader has established. In Guinea, for example, the political and institutional system established by Sekou Touré between 1958 and 1984 survived for only a few days after his demise. By contrast the system which Seretse Khama established in Botswana survives intact more than a decade after his death in 1980. Perhaps the most difficult task for African political leaders is to make themselves dispensable.

I hope that the work I have been doing on multiple biographies of African politicians will produce results which have a wider interest than the assessment of the particular individuals surveyed. One possibility is that these short biographies might form part of a database for general comparative use, covering information on education, ethnicity, generational cohort, regional factors, religion, parental background, former occupation, etc.

One very firm conclusion that has emerged so far is that it is extremely hazardous and insecure being a political leader in Africa. The number of African political leaders who have died as a result of violence in politics is extremely high, and there are many who have spent long periods in prison or exile. Even more disturbing is the random way that such reversals of fortune occur. Biographies of politicians in the black African context may be short and ill-documented by European and American standards, yet they are anything but dull.

I append five biographies of black African politicians as examples:
DAWDA KAIRABA JAWARA: THE GAMBIA

Jawara has been the dominant figure in Gambian politics since independence, and he has been instrumental in preserving a democratic and largely stable political system.

Born in Barajally in 1924, he was known as David before converting to Islam. The son of a Mandinka farmer, he was educated locally and in Ghana before going to the University of Glasgow, Scotland, where he graduated in veterinary medicine in 1953. He was the first person from the up-river rural areas of The Gambia to hold a university degree. Returning home, he worked as a veterinary officer in the colonial administration. In 1959 he was one of the founders of the Protectorate People’s Party (PPP, later the People’s Progressive Party), which was formed to defend the interests of rural people, who had hitherto been neglected.

With the extension of the franchise to the whole of the population the PPP won the 1962 election, and Jawara became prime minister in the pre-independence government. He retained this position after independence in 1965, and was knighted by the British in 1966. Shortly after independence he held a referendum on a proposal to change the country to a republic, but it was narrowly defeated. A second referendum on the subject was held in 1970, and this time it received majority support. This meant that Jawara became president of the new republic, and the British monarch ceased to be the formal head of state.

The Gambia has retained a multi-party liberal-democratic political system throughout the post-independence period, but in spite of the existence of lively opposition parties, the PPP under Jawara’s leadership has won a majority of seats in each election. The president has exhibited a strong personal commitment to democracy and has strongly resisted any suggestion that The Gambia should become a one-party state.

Although his initial success was based on the support of up-river rural people, once in power he worked to develop a truly national base for the PPP. This led to accusations that he was neglecting the interests of his own Mandinka ethnic group, the largest in the population, but he refused to be drawn into policies of ethnic favoritism. He has shown enormous skill in balancing the interests of the various ethnic, regional and religious groups within the country.

In July 1981, the political tranquillity of The Gambia was temporarily shattered by an attempted coup mounted by members of the paramilitary section of the police and discontented urban youths. Jawara was in Britain attending a royal wedding when the coup took place, but several members of his family were taken
hostage by the rebels. To help put down the revolt, the president arranged for assistance from the army of neighboring Senegal under a mutual defense pact. In the event the rebels were defeated and the hostages released, but many people died in the fighting. In the ensuing trials due process of law was strictly followed, and judges were brought in from other Commonwealth countries to help in hearing the cases. The attempted coup appears to have been an isolated and atypical incident, and by the following year general elections were held in the usual manner. During the elections Jawara narrowly escaped death in a helicopter crash which killed some of his travelling companions.

One outcome of Jawara’s strategy in reversing the attempted coup of 1981 was the creation of a new confederal structure linking The Gambia and Senegal. This proved difficult to implement, because of Gambian fears of domination by the larger and more powerful Senegalese state. After several years of very slow progress, marked by disagreement and tension, the confederation finally broke down in 1989.

Although The Gambia is one of Africa’s smallest and poorest states Jawara’s record over the long period he has been in power is impressive. An intelligent, skillful and modest man, he will be a hard act to follow.

KWAME FRANCIS NWIA KOFIE NKRUMAH: GHANA

Nkrumah was the leading figure in the nationalist movement in Anglophone Africa, and arguably in the whole of black Africa. He was also the principal leader in the pan-Africanist movement, and the first president of Ghana. Although he was overthrown by a coup in 1966 and died in exile in 1972, his memory is still a powerful influence in many parts of Africa today.

Born the son of a goldsmith in Nkroful in southwestern Ghana in 1909, Nkrumah belonged to the Nzima ethnic group. Educated locally, he moved to the USA for higher learning. There he received bachelor’s and higher degrees in sociology, theology and education, and was appointed to an academic post at Lincoln University, Pennsylvania. He was also elected president of the African Students Organization of the USA and Canada. During this time he was much influenced by the writings of Karl Marx, Gandhi and particularly Marcus Garvey, who was the major source for his pan-African beliefs. In 1945 he moved to England to study law, although he probably spent more time working for a variety of pan-Africanist organizations and editing the New African Magazine.
In 1947 he returned to Ghana to become general secretary of the recently formed United Gold Coast Convention, a post to which he brought remarkable vigor. In 1948 he was arrested along with other UGCC leaders following serious rioting. After their release, major policy splits developed within the UGCC leadership, with Nkrumah favoring a much more radical, activist approach to pressing for the end of colonial rule. In 1949 he broke away to form his own Convention People's Party (CPP), which rapidly developed into the major nationalist party in Ghana. It formed close links with trade unions and the urban working classes. In the 1951 elections the CPP was the majority party, and Nkrumah became leader of government business, and then in 1952 prime minister. Following repeated election victories he retained this position at independence in 1957, and with the creation of the republic in 1960 he became president.

After independence there were two distinct aspects to Nkrumah's politics: the international and the domestic. On the international front he acted to inspire those Africans still under colonial rule. He worked ceaselessly but ultimately unsuccessfully to bring about a political union amongst the newly emerging states of black Africa, spending large amounts of Ghanaian money on this project. The creation of the Organization of African Unity in 1963, which represented a bare minimum of cooperation, was a disappointment for him, but he regarded it as a starting point for a more thoroughgoing union in the future. On the world stage he was the most significant African leader of his generation.

In Ghana itself Nkrumah's period in office was marked by economic incompetence and a frightening build-up of political repression and corruption. As early as 1958 he introduced a preventive detention act which permitted arrest without charge and imprisonment without trial. Many opposition leaders were victims of this act. Later he moved against all potential centers of opposition, including the trade unions, the judiciary, the universities and the traditional leaders. A rigid state censorship was introduced which resulted in the destruction of all parts of the mass media which were not totally supportive of himself. In 1964 all opposition parties were banned, and he proclaimed himself "president for life." Throughout this period a massive personality cult was erected around Nkrumah as he acquired titles such as "star of Ghana," "the redeemer" and "initiator of the African personality." Increasingly surrounded by sycophants, he became cut off from reality as the country plunged into economic crisis. Doubting the loyalty of the army he built up a separate military force, the President's Own Guard Regiment, answerable only to
himself and better equipped and paid than the regular armed forces.

In February 1966, when Nkrumah was out of the country, the army staged a coup which met virtually no resistance and was popularly welcomed. He went into exile in Guinea where he was granted the honorary title of co-president by his friend and fellow pan-Africanist Sekou Touré. While in exile he wrote a number of books, but his health began to fail, and in 1972 he died of cancer in a Rumanian hospital.

Kwame Nkrumah was inspirational in asserting black African dignity, but for Ghana his period of rule was an unqualified disaster.

SERETSE KHAMA: BOTSWANA

Khama was a politician of immense skill and integrity, and he was the founding father of modern Botswana (previously the Bechuanaland Protectorate).

Born in 1921, Khama was a grandson of Khama the Great and the undisputed heir to the powerful Bamangwato chieftaincy. When his father died in 1925 Seretse was only four years old; his uncle Tshekedi was made regent until Seretse came of age and completed his education. While reading law at the Inns of Court in London, Seretse married a white woman, Ruth Williams, in 1949. Although his marriage was accepted by the Bamangwato, the British government, under pressure from the newly elected nationalists in South Africa, banned Seretse and his wife from his homeland and stripped him of his hereditary rights to the chieftaincy. Although this action devastated Seretse at the time, it played an important part in his later political success. He maintained his enormous traditional prestige in the country, where his people continued to regard him as their rightful leader, but he was never encumbered with the very considerable but essentially mundane day-to-day duties which went with the chieftaincy. Khama emerged as a modern, well-educated leader who gained widespread support, not merely local tribal loyalty. The Botswana Democratic Party (BDP), which he was instrumental in founding in 1962, won sweeping victories in every subsequent election and has proved itself a truly national party. Khama was a traditional leader who used his prestige to transfer the traditional powers of chiefs to the new democratically elected central government. And he was also the leading Bamangwato who reduced inter-tribal animosities and encouraged his people to leave tribal loyalty behind and to identify with the new national state.
Seretse Khama was president of Botswana from independence in 1966 until his death in 1980. Under his leadership this period was one of quite remarkable progress. Economically the country was one of Africa’s success stories: real national per capita income tripled as both agriculture and mineral extraction boomed. A unified, efficient and non-corrupt state structure was created to replace the loose aggregation of tribes, held together by a tenuous and half-hearted colonial administration. During his tenure the political system continued to be both stable and democratic with a full range of civil liberties and regular free and fair elections. Seretse’s personal abhorrence of racial discrimination and apartheid led him to pursue a successful policy of non-racialism within the country, and relations there between black and white were marked by an absence of tension.

Khama also emerged as an international statesman of great repute and as a force for moderation among the frontline states. He played an important role in solving the Rhodesia/Zimbabwe crisis. His commitment to human rights did not extend merely to attacks on white racism. He was one of the few African leaders who openly criticized the rule of Idi Amin in Uganda while Amin was still in power. As a protest against the atrocities of the Amin regime, Khama refused to attend the Organization of African Unity summit when it was held in Kampala. Khama was always a skillful politician, never a tyrant, and he was a natural conciliator. The extent of his success is all the greater when seen in the context of Botswana’s distinctly unfavorable location—land-locked and surrounded by strife-torn southern Africa.

Khama’s greatest legacy to Botswana was to have made himself dispensable and to have built up a system that could survive his departure. Since his death from cancer in July 1980 Botswana has remained a democratic and prosperous state, running on the lines he laid down.

AHMED (MATHIEU) KEREKOU: BENIN

Since seizing power in a coup in 1972 Kerekou proved to be much the most durable of Benin’s post-independence heads of state, most of whom lasted only a short time in office. In March 1991 he was defeated in the first competitive presidential election to take place in Benin for several decades.

Born into the Somba ethnic group in 1933, Kerekou completed his military training in France, transferring from the French to the Dahomean army in 1961. From 1961 to 1962 he served as an aide to President Maga, and his progress through the army command structure was helped by the fact that he was the
cousin of Colonel Kouandete, who acted as his patron. Kerekou assisted his cousin in staging a coup in 1967, and he was made president of the revolutionary military committee. After the return to civilian rule in Dahomey in 1968, Kerekou went to France for further military training and was not involved in his cousin’s second coup of 1969. In 1970 he was appointed deputy chief of staff of the army.

In October 1972 Kerekou led his own coup, overthrowing the government of Ahomadegbe. He then purged the army of officers senior to himself and became army chief of staff as well as head of state. Although Kerekou had previously exhibited little interest in political ideologies, he suddenly announced in 1974 that the country had been transformed into a Marxist-Leninist state. But it was not until the following year that the Benin People’s Revolutionary Party (PRPB) could be fully established as the only legal party; Kerekou was its leader. In 1975 he changed the name of the state from Dahomey to Benin, an ancient African kingdom. His declaration of Marxism-Leninism was accompanied by large-scale nationalization of the economy and a massive expansion of the bureaucracy. At one stage bureaucratic salaries were costing 92 per cent of the state budget, though they were paid in an erratic fashion.

In 1977 Benin adopted a new constitution, creating a revolutionary national assembly. In 1979 there were elections, for which only PRPB members were enfranchised. In 1980 this body formally elected Kerekou as president. In theory Benin then had a civilian government, although military influence remained strong, and it was not until 1987 that Kerekou officially resigned from the army.

In 1980 Kerekou converted to Islam while on a state visit to Libya, changing his first name from Mathieu to Ahmed. For a time Benin enjoyed very cordial relations with Libya as Kerekou sought to project a “radical” international image. By the mid-1980s, however, he was seeking closer ties with western countries in order to gain financial aid for his bankrupt economy. In 1985 he announced to the PRPB congress that he had approached the International Monetary Fund for assistance, and since then the Marxist rhetoric of the regime has been considerably toned down and eventually abandoned.

Towards the end of the 1980s domestic pressure on the regime grew, and in February 1990 Kerekou agreed to allow for the re-introduction of a multi-party system. In the interim period he retained the presidency but agreed to relinquish his defense portfolio. In March 1991 he was convincingly defeated in the presidential election. However, although he was eventually
ousted, he has to be judged a remarkable survivor. Prior to his nearly two decades in power the country had ten changes of ruler, mostly violent, in twelve years. Through a mixture of political skill and oppressive force he managed to engineer a precarious stability for his regime.

JULIUS KAMBARAGE NYERERE: TANZANIA

Nyerere has been one of Africa’s most highly regarded statesmen in the post-independence period. He was head of state until retiring from the presidency in 1985.

Born in 1922 in Butiama into one of the smallest ethnic groups in the country, the Zanaki, he trained as a teacher in Uganda and taught for several years in Tabora. From 1949 to 1952 he was a student at the University of Edinburgh where he became his country’s first graduate. He returned home to teach and begin his political career. In 1954 he founded the Tanganyika African National Union (TANU), which was to become the ruling party, and became its president. In the 1958 and 1960 elections TANU won overwhelming majorities and became one of the very few nationalist parties to experience no serious opposition in the late colonial phase. Nyerere became chief minister in the pre-independence government and in December 1961 the country’s first post-independence prime minister. Shortly afterwards he resigned the premiership for a few months to devote himself to reorganizing the party, and with the creation of a republic in 1962, when the British monarch ceased to be the formal head of state, he became the country’s first president.

There is little doubt that under Nyerere’s leadership Tanzania has been amongst the more politically stable states in Africa, although there is considerable debate as to how far this is a result of leadership or how far it is due to an absence of significant ethnic and regional cleavages of the sort which have afflicted other African states. It is probably accurate to say that Tanzania has faced less intractable political difficulties than most states in black Africa. Apart from an army mutiny in 1964, which was not a coup and was easily dealt with by British forces, and a genuine but unsuccessful coup attempt in 1983, the regime has not been subjected to any very serious challenges.

In 1964 Nyerere negotiated the union of mainland Tanganyika and the offshore island of Zanzibar to form a single state, although for many years the union was stronger on paper than in fact and still contains unresolved tensions. Before the 1965 elections he altered the political system in Tanzania (excluding Zanzibar) to a single-party state, but with some allowance for
electoral competition between candidates within TANU. In 1977 a new party, Chama cha Mapinduzi (CCM—Party of the Revolution) was formed with the merger of TANU and the Zanzibari Afro-Shirazi Party (ASP). Nyerere was continuously leader of TANU and CCM until he retired from the leadership of the latter in 1990. In 1967 the Arusha Declaration established a leadership code for party and government elites in an attempt to prevent single-party dominance leading to abuse of office, but it is generally agreed that this has been at best only partially successful. Although he was for many years the most articulate defender of the single-party state in Africa, by the late 1980s Nyerere was becoming increasingly critical of this form of government and was arguing that lack of opposition had produced complacency and neglect of the public interest in Tanzania. Some of his critics put it more strongly and claimed that the dominance of TANU and CCM had created a new elite which had used its undisputed control to further its own interests.

In terms of economic development the period of Nyerere’s presidency produced extremely disappointing results. Following the adoption of “African socialism” the most significant sectors of the economy were nationalized and placed under the control of the state and the party, but performance standards have been very poor. In the 1970s a major attempt was made to restructure agricultural production with the creation of “ujamaa” (communal) villages. At first this was done on a voluntary basis, but when the peasants failed to respond, compulsion, often involving high levels of coercion, was used. The whole scheme is now recognized as a failure. By the late 1980s Tanzania was moving slowly toward a more liberal form of economic policy.

In the international arena Nyerere has rightly been regarded as one of Africa’s leading statesmen. Although Tanzania has received aid from a variety of sources, especially the USA, it has managed to follow a policy of genuine non-alignment. Nyerere has been amongst the leading critics of apartheid in South Africa but has also attacked abuses of human rights in black-ruled states, and in 1979 the Tanzanian army overthrew the despotic rule of Idi Amin in neighboring Uganda. Nyerere has also been a leading supporter of economic cooperation between the black-ruled states of the Southern African region. He has also emerged as the leading intellectual amongst Africa’s political leaders, and his numerous writings on “African socialism” have been extremely influential, although by the 1990s they were viewed with increasing criticism. His literary achievements include the translation of Shakespeare’s plays into Swahili.
In 1985 Nyerere retired from the presidency, although he continued to lead the ruling party until 1990. Although the fruits of his period in power were not entirely positive, nobody can doubt his integrity, personal humility and dedication to improving the lot of the Tanzanian people who continued to respect “Mwalimu” (Swahili for “teacher”) in spite of the problems that Tanzania has continued to experience.

NOTES
1 Aldershot, England: Edward Elgar, 1991. The five sample biographies at the conclusion of this article are drawn from the text of this book.
2 Political biography, however, is perhaps becoming more important in political science. Professor Olof Ruin of the University of Stockholm has outlined this issue in the terms of reference for the Workshop on “Political Biography” for the European Consortium for Political Research Joint Sessions, held at Bochum, Germany, April 2-7, 1990. He commented that an “interest in political biography seems to be rising in political science” and that this “growing interest is in turn correlated with growing interest generally in the problems of political leadership.” However his remark that in “the ideological climate of today single individuals tend to be in focus” is problematic for me, because it seems to suggest a depersonalized “guiding hand.”
4 See, for example, my “Botswana: The Achievement of Seretse Khama,” The Round Table, no. 280 (October 1980), pp. 409-14. This was not written within a framework that stressed personal rule, nor did it stress clientelism.