

[Book review] "The Dialectics of Oppression in Zaire by Michael G. Schatzberg"

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## BOOK REVIEWS

*The Dialectics of Oppression in Zaire* by Michael G. Schatzberg, Bloomington and Indianapolis, Indiana University Press, 1988, xiv+193 pp.

During the 1980s the field of African studies witnessed a rapid growth of research that examined the state. The noteworthy feature of the discussion carried on in this research was that it did not necessarily concern itself with the so-called elements composing the state, elements such as the government, officialdom, the military, and other such components. Rather this discussion took as its object of study the state as an entity of power and how it relates with society. This increasing interest in the states of Africa grew out of the concern for the persistent social and economic crises affecting these states. These crises have become chronic, and the growing opinion is that the African states have shown a remarkably lack of ability (in government and in the execution of policies) to overcome these crises. This in turn has brought about a heightened interest in the nature and character of African states.

The present book is Schatzberg's second, and like his first, it is a study of Zaire. In his first work he delved into the character of Zaire's ruling class;<sup>1</sup> in this second book the state has become his primary focus of study. After setting forth his conceptual framework for the state, the author explains the policies and methods of control used by the ruling authorities and the resistance against this control. Schatzberg's study is an attempt to see the relationship between the state and society from the two perspectives of control and resistance.

This second book, like the first, is based on materials the author gathered while residing in the provincial town of Lisala during the 1970s. More than ten years elapsed between the time of the author's field work and this new book, but the author breaks significant new ground with his use of new sources including documents from the files of the secret police, the Centre National de Documentation (CND). Handling his wealth of data with great facility, Schatzberg presents a persuasive discussion of the system of control in Zaire.

The book can be divided into two major sections. The first sets forth the author's cognitive framework. Here Schatzberg presents his own view of the social dynamics at work in Africa. He perceives these dynamics as forming a "triple helix" meaning that he sees the three elements of state, class, and ethnicity as intertwined and continually affecting each other, and out of this mutual interplay is generated the dynamics of society. In his first work Schatzberg developed Southall's idea of "ethnicity as a contextual notion"<sup>2</sup> by applying it to the notion of class. Like ethnicity, Schatzberg argued that class too is a contextual notion, and in this new book he has now applied this notion to the state. In this way he also sees the state as an entity capable of altering its makeup in accordance with circumstances.

<sup>1</sup> Michael G. Schatzberg, *Politics and Class in Zaire: Bureaucracy, Business, and Beer in Lisala* (New York and London: Africana Publishing Co., 1980).

<sup>2</sup> Aidan W. Southall, "The Illusion of Tribe," *Journal of Asian and African Studies*, Vol. 5, Nos. 1-2 (January-April 1970).

Based on this cognitive framework, the second and larger section of this book takes up the various policies and methods of control in Zaire and resistance against this control. Schatzberg deals with three forms of control: the CND and its control over information, the army and police and their control through the use of force, and ideological control using the symbols of family and ethnicity. Through these policies and methods the state endeavors to control society. But at the same time the author maintains that the state does not have sufficient ability to retain adequate control. The result is increasing instability for both the state and society. One example is the CND's far from outstanding ability to collect information. This leaves the leadership uncertain of its control over the people and in constant fear of rebellion. Another example is the country's financial crisis which causes delays in salary payments to the soldiers and police. These people then intimidate and steal from the population to provide for themselves. Schatzberg calls this intensifying oppression which grows out of the instability of the state "the dialectics of oppression"; hence the title of this new book.

The wealth of data used in writing this book has been handled well and in new ways, and one of the outstanding points of this new work is its strong grasp of the realities of Zaire; it goes beyond presenting facile applications of the theory being propounded. One example is the author's perception of the oft discussed problem of political corruption in this country. Up to now the debate about this problem has fallen back onto such arguments as corruption being an idiosyncratic characteristic of the bourgeoisie,<sup>3</sup> or due to patron-client relationships.<sup>4</sup> The perception has thus been one of seeing corruption as an inevitable feature of Zairian society. Schatzberg does not accept these fatalistic arguments. Rather he undertakes to find the source of the problem within the existing system of political administration, and he finds it in "the dialectic of oppression." Grounded solidly in the realities of Zaire, Schatzberg's method of comprehension carries real persuasive power, and herein lies its great value.

But the book is not without problems. There are points which I feel the author has not sufficiently proven. His "triple helix" notion, while fascinating, is hardly referred to in the latter half of the book where he sets forth his evidence; and as a conceptual framework, after presenting the notion at the start of the book, he does not deal with it anymore. Another problem is that though he uses the neo-Marxist notion of the "relative autonomy of the state," he only baffles the reader when he functionally defines the state as "a congeries of organized repositories of administrative, coercive, and ideological power" (p. 5). If the state is to be understood functionally, it cannot be discussed at the identical level with class and ethnicity which themselves can be a power. Another problem is in the presentation of his idea of control exercised by the state and resistance within society to this control. The author centers his discussion of the former around the various policies and methods of control employed by the state, but in treating the resistance that comes from society, he brings up only the example of religious groups. The collapse during the 1970s of local administrative reform and of state-led economic policy is clear proof that the state failed to gain control over the society, but the book gives the impression that Zairian society is simply being suppressed unilaterally by the state. It would seem that there exists a more vigorous and mutually active relationship between the two.

<sup>3</sup> An example is David J. Gould, *Bureaucratic Corruption and Underdevelopment in the Third World* (New York: Pergamon Press, 1980).

<sup>4</sup> An example is Robert H. Jackson and Carl G. Rosberg, *Personal Rule in Black Africa: Prince, Autocrat, Prophet, Tyrant* (Berkeley, Calif.: University of California Press, 1982).

Even with the problems I have mentioned, this book still remains a highly valuable work on the political system of the Mobutu regime's Second Republic (1965-90). Zaire is now caught up in the flow of democratization and its own harsh realities. To perceive the direction that the country is henceforth going to take, it is essential that scholars study the political system under Mobutu's Second Republic. Schatzberg's work is a significant contribution to this study. As the author continues his research on Zaire, I hope to see further elaboration of the conceptual framework he has laid out in this book. (Shin'ichi Takeuchi)

*Lectures on Developing Economies: Japan's Experience and Its Relevance* by Kazushi Ohkawa and Hirohisa Kohama, Tokyo, University of Tokyo Press, 1989, xv+324 pp.

This book, originally written as lectures for economic development training courses run by the International Development Center of Japan (IDCJ), aims at analyzing the major problems facing developing countries and at showing what lessons can be learned from the Japanese experience of development over the last hundred years.

The authors approach development from two directions: First an attempt, much along the lines of "A Century of Japanese Economic Growth" (1965)<sup>1</sup> which Professor Ohkawa coauthored with Professor Henry Rosovsky, is made to examine the process of Japanese economic development by a phase analysis, and to compare and contrast the Japanese experience with that of the present-day developing countries. The second approach is concerned with the analysis of some of the major determinants of development. These include capital, technology, human resources, and the role of government.

In the phase analysis, two major phases of the Japanese economic development over a century are demarcated. The first phase extending from 1868 to 1919, is divided into two subphases: with the turn of the century as the dividing point. The second phase, covering the period between 1920 and 1975 (by which year, the authors feel, Japan had become a developed country) is identified as the "semi-industrialized" phase. The second phase is also divided into two subphases: 1960 is taken as the dividing line.

According to the authors, in the first phase the traditional sector played an important role in the initiation of modern industrialization by providing additional resources through the export of traditional products such as silk cocoons, tea, and agricultural products, produced by small farmers operating within the framework of existing land-tenure relationships. The traditional sector developed through the backlog of technology and innovations originally introduced into the Tokugawa Japan. In the second subphase, light industrialization such as cotton textiles provided the basis for primary export promotion. By this time, the growth potential of traditional agriculture had reached a plateau requiring modernization of agriculture. This process was accelerated by the decline in the number of workers engaged in agriculture during the second

<sup>1</sup> Kazushi Ohkawa and Henry Rosovsky, "A Century of Japanese Economic Growth," in *The State and Economic Enterprise in Japan*, ed. W. W. Lockwood (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1965).